

Luther Seminary

## Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary

---

Doctor of Ministry Theses

Student Theses

---

2021

### Power Perfected in Weakness: The Effectiveness of Spiritual Practices on Personal Power in the Lives of Men

Steven B. Cauley

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/dmin\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/dmin_theses)



Part of the [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Cauley, Steven B., "Power Perfected in Weakness: The Effectiveness of Spiritual Practices on Personal Power in the Lives of Men" (2021). *Doctor of Ministry Theses*. 77.  
[https://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/dmin\\_theses/77](https://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/dmin_theses/77)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses at Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Ministry Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. For more information, please contact [tracy.iwaskow@gmail.com](mailto:tracy.iwaskow@gmail.com), [mteske@luthersem.edu](mailto:mteske@luthersem.edu).

POWER PERFECTED IN WEAKNESS:  
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES  
ON PERSONAL POWER IN THE LIVES OF MEN

by

STEVEN B. CAULEY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

2021

© 2021 by Steven B. Cauley

All rights reserved

## ABSTRACT

*Power Perfected in Weakness: The Effectiveness of Spiritual Practices on  
Personal Power in the Lives of Men*

by

Steven Cauley

This mixed methods Action Research project studied the effects of spiritual practices in the life of men in a Lutheran congregation. The project was framed by Janet Hagberg and her work on personal power in “*Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations*,” Narrative Theory, and masculinity. These frames were integrated with biblical and theological lenses of the theology of the cross, spiritual practices, and Trinitarian theology, including a significant lens from Richard Rohr and his book, “*Adam’s Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation*.”

The study offered insight into the impact of specific spiritual practices with the intent of shifting awareness in men's lives from an external sense of power to inner meaning. The results showed the effectiveness of engaging in communal spiritual practices to help men understand the importance of personal power.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to participate in this program. This research project would not have been possible without the assistance of a large community of support. I am grateful to Drs. Alvin Luedke and Dan Anderson, and the faculty of the CML program at Luther Seminary for their dedication to the Doctor of Ministry program. Additional thanks to all who took time out of their busy schedule to participate in interviews, questionnaires, monthly interventions, and the time invested in trying out a new spiritual practice. I am thankful for the fellow learners who have expanded my knowledge and appreciation of how God works through the church around the globe. Little did I know when I began the program in 2017 that I would meet a diverse group of classmates who richly added to my learning. I truly appreciate our class discussions and the work we accomplished together.

I must express my thanks to the study participants who assisted with this project and their willingness to give so freely of their time for the six-month study. I am thankful that they continued to participate and stay engaged when COVID-19 created challenges. They also supported this project by participating in spiritual practices throughout the month and providing me with their honest reflections after each monthly practice. I sincerely hope that this project and the work we did together as a group increased their Christian discipleship and daily walk with Christ throughout their lives.

I am grateful for the support I have received from wise mentors and spiritual guides who offered me a word of encouragement or support. These mentors, many of whom are dedicated servants of the church, stood by me, showed me feedback on my work, and truly stepped up their support through their calm presence. Their confidence in

my work propelled me to complete this project, especially during the trying time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am tremendously grateful for my family, who supported me in this work. There were many days when I had to focus my efforts on writing and researching, leaving little time. I did my best to share my time between my professional work, this program, and my beloved family. This focus did not come without a cost, especially managing the anxiety and uncertainty beginning March 2020 when the Coronavirus started to spread. I cannot offer enough thanks to my wife—Karen, and my three beautiful daughters—Analise, Linnea, and Norah. Karen, thank you for your love and support throughout this process—this project could not have been completed without your encouragement and help. Girls, I hope you are inspired by my hard work to achieve what you want out of your own life. You all have shown me a living example of God’s grace, and honestly, I would have never considered this program if it were not for you—my beloved family—my gift from God. I would also be erroneous if I did not mention my faithful companion who stayed by my side as I wrote and researched—our dog, Wallace—who was a part of this project in his own unique and loving way.

To God be the Glory! The blessing of God has offered me the patience and time I needed to complete this work over four years (2017-2021). I never thought I would do anything like this program, and I am so thankful God allowed me this opportunity. I always stand in awe of what you are up to, God! *Soli Deo Gloria!*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	x
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Introduction to the Research Topic .....	1
Research Question .....	4
Variables.....	5
Importance of the Research Question .....	7
Research Methodology .....	10
Interventions .....	14
Intervention One.....	15
Intervention Two .....	16
Intervention Three .....	17
Intervention Four.....	17
Intervention Five .....	18
Intervention Six .....	19
Qualitative and Quantitative Data Gathering .....	20
Theoretical Lenses and Literature .....	22
Personal Power .....	23
Narrative Theory .....	24
Masculinity.....	24
Biblical Lenses .....	26
Genesis 1-2: The Gift of Power.....	26
John 2: A Story of Power .....	27
John 13: Jesus’ Display of Power and “Privilege” .....	28
Theological Lenses .....	28
The Theology of the Cross .....	28
Spiritual Practices.....	29
Trinitarian Theology .....	31
Other Matters.....	32
Definitions of Key Terms.....	32
Ethical Concerns .....	33
Summary of the Study’s Significance .....	34
2. KEY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	36
Personal Power .....	37

Hagberg’s Stages of Power .....	43
Leadership Theory.....	48
Leadership and Power .....	53
Narrative Theory .....	55
Stories.....	57
Narrative Theory and the Concept of Power.....	60
Masculinity—A Modern Crisis for Manhood? .....	62
Towards Radical Compassion and Active Empathy .....	69
Chapter Summary .....	72
3. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK .....	73
Biblical Framework .....	73
Three Examples of Power in the Biblical Narrative .....	75
Genesis 1:1-3—The Gift of Power .....	75
John 2—A Story of Divine Power .....	76
John 13—Jesus’ Display of Power and “Privilege” .....	78
Masculinity Studies in Modern Theology .....	79
Theological Framework.....	82
The Theology of the Cross .....	82
Spiritual Practices.....	85
Rituals—the Role of Rituals in Spiritual Practices .....	88
Trinitarian Theology .....	90
Chapter Summary .....	93
4. METHODOLOGY .....	95
Action Research.....	95
Biblical and Theological Grounding.....	97
Research Design .....	98
Development and Use of Research Instruments .....	101
Analysis of Data .....	103
Qualitative .....	103
Quantitative .....	103
Action Research Interventions .....	104
Intervention One—Life Is Hard .....	106
Intervention Two—You are Not That Important .....	110
Intervention Three—Your Life is Not about You.....	112
Intervention Four—You Are Not in Control.....	115
Intervention Five—You are Going to Die.....	118
Intervention Six—The Common Wonderful.....	119
Chapter Summary .....	123
5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS.....	124
Review of the Research Process.....	124
Baseline Qualitative Results.....	126



Focused Codes.....	131
Axial Codes.....	133
Theoretical Coding.....	138
End Line Qualitative Results.....	140
Quantitative Results.....	144
Background Information.....	145
Open-ended Comments from Quantitative Surveys.....	151
End Line Questionnaire.....	151
Intervention Report Forms.....	155
Intervention One—Life Is Hard.....	156
Intervention Two—You are Not That Important.....	159
Intervention Three—Life Is Not about You.....	162
Intervention Four—You Are Not in Control.....	164
Inferential Statistics.....	166
Independent t-tests.....	166
Paired t-tests.....	167
Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Data.....	169
Chapter Summary.....	170
6. CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS.....	171
Mixed Methods Discussion.....	172
Emerging Hypothesis.....	173
Reflections on Findings.....	173
Theoretical Lenses.....	174
Personal Power.....	174
Narrative Theory.....	176
Masculinity.....	178
Biblical Lenses.....	179
Genesis 1- The Gift of Power.....	179
John 2-A Story of Divine Power.....	180
John 13: 1-5-Jesus’ Display of Power and “Privilege”.....	182
Theological Lenses.....	183
The Theology of the Cross.....	183
Spiritual Practices.....	184
Trinitarian Theology.....	186
Implications of Research.....	187
Limitations of the Study.....	188
Questions for Future Research.....	189
Chapter Summary.....	190
EPILOGUE.....	192
APPENDIX A: PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT LETTER.....	194
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS.....	196

APPENDIX C: GUIDELINES FOR GROUP DISCUSSIONS .....	198
APPENDIX D: BASELINE INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL .....	199
APPENDIX E: IMPLIED CONSENT LETTER FOR SURVEYS.....	200
APPENDIX F: BASELINE QUESTIONNAIRE.....	201
APPENDIX G: END LINE QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS .....	211
APPENDIX H: FIRST INTERVENTION MATERIALS .....	213
APPENDIX I: FIRST INTERVENTION FEEDBACK FORM .....	217
APPENDIX J: SECOND INTERVENTION FEEDBACK FORM.....	218
APPENDIX K: THIRD INTERVENTION FEEDBACK FORM.....	221
APPENDIX L: FOURTH INTERVENTION FEEDBACK FORM .....	224
APPENDIX M: <i>IN VIVO</i> CODES FROM BASELINE INTERVIEWS .....	227
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	241

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Axial Code
AR	Action Research
BC	<i>The Book of Concord</i>
COVID-19	Corona virus disease of 2019
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
IBM SPSS	International Business Machine Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
ILC	Immanuel Lutheran Church
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LGBTQA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer/questioning, plus allies
LW	<i>Luther's Works</i>
MTV	Music Television
MROP	Men's Rights of Passage
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### Tables

Table 1. Hagberg’s summary of leadership and power at each stage of power.....	52
Table 2. Baseline interview participants’ profile.....	127
Table 3. Baseline qualitative definition of personal power.....	129
Table 4. Baseline focused codes.....	132
Table 5. Axial coding.....	133
Table 6. End line focus group participants.....	141
Table 7. Frequency and percentage, background information.....	145
Table 8. Prior church experience.....	148
Table 9. Frequency in spiritual practices.....	148
Table 10. Participants’ feedback on interventions.....	152
Table 11. Open-ended responses to last end line question.....	153
Table 12. List of fears and hopes from intervention one.....	157
Table 13. Second intervention report on mindfulness.....	161
Table 14. Independent t-test: personal power.....	167
Table 15. Paired t-test, personal power.....	169

### Figures

Figure 1. An overview of the research design process .....	14
Figure 2. Hagberg's model of personal power .....	43

Figure 3. Grenny's "Path of Action" model .....	58
Figure 4. Cyclical pattern of Hegemonic Masculinity .....	68
Figure 5. Research design chart .....	100
Figure 6. Factors that inform personal power .....	137
Figure 7. Inner and outer factors determining personal power .....	139

CHAPTER ONE  
INTRODUCTION

**Introduction to the Research Topic**

This research project has been a subject of interest to me for many years. My Christian discipleship has been nurtured and supported by other men of faith. When I thought I was *done* with religion and ready to walk away from church life, it was the tug of older men—mentors—whom I looked up to that brought me back into the fold. I have a more profound understanding of my life purpose and experiences due to being in community with other men as brothers, elders, and learners.

This study examines a particular group of men in learning awareness of how one uses personal power to make the world better and worse for others. The benefit of studying personal power is about finding common ground between all people with regard to human equality. All people can enhance their understanding of personal power.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> This is not, at all, to diminish the support and encouragement I have received from sisters in the faith who have shared life and their experiences of God in so many incredible ways. My faith has been strengthened by many women whose encouragement and support have deep meaning and relevance in my life. My interest in this topic, however, comes from a perceived gap between the spiritual needs of men and the spiritual guidance they receive in their faith communities. This project takes the approach that men have a duty—and a right—to approach a deeper understanding of their spirituality and their personal power.

There is no such thing as “typical” when describing people—this is true for people of all gender expressions. Increasingly we are coming to a deeper (and more complex) understanding of all the different components that define human beings. We are infinitely complex beings created in the image of God. Each of us are uniquely spiritual beings and so we can never speak about anyone—or any groups of people—with the assumption that they are all the same. This implies that the conversations we have about gender should never be prescriptive and only in one normative approach.

I also do not claim that this study is *only* for men, or, that men alone can only possess certain characteristics. Neither do I make a claim that there is a gender virtue (or vice) between any gender (e.g., “*mildness*” =feminine, or “*bravery*” =male). Rather, I hope that this project would show that paradoxically,

I have been a supporter for men's work (ministry with men) since 2006, when I had a transformational life experience through my participation in the Men's Rites of Passage (MROP) shaped and led by Father Richard Rohr of the Center for Action and Contemplation<sup>2</sup> in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I have facilitated men's groups in congregations, presented and led workshops for men, participated with other men in faith development, and sat with men when they have encountered a rough spot on the road of life. I find the topic of men's work in the congregation inspiring yet challenging, and I am heartened by some of the conversations occurring within faith communities of men of faith.

Many men find themselves in a difficult place from mixed cultural messages about what it means to be male and express their "manliness."<sup>3</sup> Rapidly changing sexual mores and gender norms, the #MeToo movement's exposés, cover-ups, exposures, and masculine expectations relegated by our American culture are far different from the expectations of many men in their youth. This has led to confusion for many men.

Culturally, many men are conditioned to be firm yet docile, stoic and emotionally available, mighty but sensitive, financial contributors who work many hours yet available as fathers and partners in North American society. Men are bombarded daily with these types of mixed cultural messages. Old gender stereotypes and unhelpful attitudes about

---

human beings are "both/and," not "either/or." As a species, we have much more in common with one another than we realize, and gender expression is a deeply personal part of individualism, yet only one facet of our collective humanity. Finally, I am making no claim that any gender (and expression) is superior than any other.

<sup>2</sup> For details visit <https://cac.org>.

<sup>3</sup> "Manliness" is a term used to denote a gender expression for those who identify as men. See: Joan Ferrante, ed., "Gender and Sexualities: With Emphasis on Gender Ideals" *Sociology: A Global Perspective* 7th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2013), 269-72.

gender are slowly fading but are still present, while new norms with a broad range are being ushered in along with the new era. The seemingly swift-moving cultural changes for many men seem to be shifting too quickly—all of which can feel like a cultural tsunami.

Sociologist and distinguished scholar Michael Kimmel develops the necessity of this project further. States Kimmel:

I believe that we are, at this very moment, having a national debate about masculinity in this country—but we don't know it. For example, what gender comes to mind when I invoke the following current American problems: "teen violence," "gang violence," "suburban violence," "drug violence," "violence in schools"? And what gender comes to mind when I say the words "suicide bomber" or "terrorist hijacker"?<sup>4</sup>

Kimmel continues that commentators gloss over gender in these issues of violence as he raises awareness about the visibility of gender, for both men and women, that we will not adequately address these complex issues.<sup>5</sup>

I am not saying that these shifts in American culture are not justified and for the better. I also want to make clear that I do not believe that men are in any way inherently wrong or hurtful—quite the opposite. I am saying that many men in (and outside) faith communities are not getting the support needed to navigate the incredible cultural and personal changes. It is encouraging to hear stories that illustrate how—with assistance from other men—men can discover new behaviors and become better human-beings and disciples of Christ created in God's image.

---

<sup>4</sup> Michael Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, 5<sup>th</sup>. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9.

<sup>5</sup> See: Kimmel, 10.



I do believe that every man can benefit from being part of a community of other men. The most significant benefit, in my opinion, is the support that men receive from the community and trusting in relationships with other men. Pastor Glenn Berg-Moberg of St. Anthony Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minnesota fittingly wrote:

men want to hang out together. That has been true since caveman days, and it is unlikely to change. What should a men’s ministry look like? The number of seismic cultural shifts that have played out in recent decades have challenged and changed every structure and institution we know.<sup>6</sup>

Pastor Berg-Moberg’s question about men’s ministry is challenging. What exactly does ministry with men look like? Is pastoring men and ministry with men worth the amount of time and effort it takes to engage and motivate men? Would they miss meeting with other men if the support ceased to exist?

### **Research Question**

Based on what we see on the news and current events that often feature men who display violence as a means of lashing out, I believe it is time to consider what needs of men are not being met in communities of faith. It is time to begin to think about ways to assist men in discovering a more profound sense of personal power in their lives. For too long, human culture and society have emphasized the differences between men and women rather than their underlying unity. In the Bible, **all** humanity is created in the image of God (Gen.1:27), and only **after** the distinction between man and woman is their original unity (Gen. 2:18-23).<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Glenn Berg-Moberg, “Men and Church,” *Word & World* 36, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 45-52.

<sup>7</sup> All Scripture references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation.

A sociological distinction clarifies the reality of the crucial point between men and women. Here, I turn to the work of scholar and author James B. Nelson for language. About the term “sex” to describe a person, Nelson writes that people are either “male or female depending on their sex organs and genes.” Gender is another sociological term that is relevant to my topic that will be discussed in chapter two. Nelson states that gender is a “psychological and social term. It [gender] refers to our subjective feelings of maleness or femaleness (gender identity) and to the social evaluation of our behaviors as masculine or feminine (gender roles).”<sup>8</sup>

Author Janet Hagberg has studied personal power for several years. Her claim is simple—Western society has a profound misunderstanding regarding what *real* power is. In her book *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations*, Hagberg concludes that “power” is most often perceived as power due to the influence inherent in a particular role or position.<sup>9</sup> Hagberg’s work on personal power leads me to the research question which lies at the heart of this thesis:

*How might Action Research interventions involving spiritual practices of men affect the personal power in their lives?*

#### Variables

This research project’s independent variables are the Action Research interventions, including five interventions using five lessons for men from Father Richard

---

<sup>8</sup> James B. Nelson, *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminister Press, 1988), 20.

<sup>9</sup> Janet Hagberg, *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Press, 2003).

Rohr's book *Adam's Return*<sup>10</sup>. A sixth intervention was planned to serve as a time to debrief the previous five interventions; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>11</sup>, the fifth and sixth interventions were combined due to the hiatus of in-person meetings.

According to Rohr, most human cultures have had some form of initiation rites and rituals they made their adolescent boys go through before they could be considered a "man." Rohr argues that the majority of Western cultures have lost their sense of initiating boys.<sup>12</sup> As a result, many men have little personal knowledge of how to act and "be" a man. Each of the interventions included a time of discussion about the spiritual practice, along with an overview of Rohr's teaching in *Adam's Return*.

The primary dependent variable in this research was the effect of each of the interventions of spiritual practices on the awareness of personal power in men. The purpose of several interventions was to build a capacity of self-awareness of the stage of power in which the man finds himself.<sup>13</sup> The intervening variables included such factors as age, participation in the six planned interventions, the COVID-19 pandemic, personal faith history, duration of membership in the congregation, life experience, and the length of time a person has participated in any of the men's ministry of the congregation. Other significant intervening variables of this study included socio-economic status, race, age, and education.

---

<sup>10</sup> For details on the five male initiations, see Richard Rohr, *Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> COVID-19 is an abbreviated form of Coronavirus-19. A severe acute respiratory syndrome from the virus SARS—Cov-2.

<sup>12</sup> Rohr, *Adam's Return*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> In her book, *Real Power*, Janet Hagberg posits there are six stages of personal power. Details of Hagberg's stages of personal power are presented in chapter two.

## Importance of the Research Question

The church's opportunity to engage and enrich the lives of men is abundant, and yet, there is a profound discontent with the number of men in churches who are not committing to more thoughtful discipleship. There is potential for a man to have a transformational life experience when he considers the source of his power—either internal or external power. Rohr writes:

[W]e are not a healthy culture for boys or men. . . Most men are over-mothered and under-fathered—now even more in the age of single parents. The effects of this are lifelong for all genders, creating boys who never grow up and want to marry mothers instead of wives, and girls who want securing and affirming daddies instead of risk-taking partners.<sup>14</sup>

Sociologist Robert Putnam points out that the “demographic slice of the population that is most rapidly turning away from religion is young men.”<sup>15</sup> Men are turning away from religion at a rapid pace. Much of the men’s ministries in the church does not go very deep and assume men prefer to stay “at the shallow end of the pool.” Men do not get much beyond sports talk or the weather. However, the needs and experiences of men are significant and need tending. Men are often mocked by other men who openly express their most profound feelings of joy, sensitivity, and pain. All of this leads men to suppress their emotions of both great pleasure or pain. Men need other men as companions on their spiritual journeys to help process and mentor one another through the hurts and wounds of life.

---

<sup>14</sup> Rohr, *Adam's Return*, 12-13.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Putnam, David E. Campbell, and Shaylyn Romney Garrett, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 57.

There are many reasons why congregations would want to reach out to men. Increasingly, men are in trouble. Moreover, the situation men are in distresses everyone.<sup>16</sup> The effects of the lack of men mentoring other younger men are staggering. Men are often lonely, and many live isolated lives. In North America, and increasingly around the world, news reports are full of men who have committed heinous crimes or acted out in hurtful ways, often to the detriment of their communities and places of employment. The effects of feeling powerless over life, and, in particular, a variety of addictions, have led to public health crises, including suicide, gun violence, and drug addictions.

One facet affecting men's livelihood is education. Younger men are increasingly disappearing from college. Whereas in previous generations men comprised most college graduates, women have become the majority in recent years, and the gap between sexes is growing. Similar demographic shifts are occurring in trade schools around the nation. More women are seeking vocational educational training and trade schools than men.<sup>17</sup> In recent years, women have surpassed men in various leadership roles and positions, educational opportunities, and career advancements.

A recent article in *The Atlantic* magazine illustrated the concern with men enrolling in college class creating a widening gap between men and women:

---

<sup>16</sup> Father Richard Rohr argues that the trouble men are in impacts us all. Further, Rohr states if we went back far enough, we would find that we all come from indigenous communities that intentionally prepared us for adulthood. We have since traded that for "pseudo" rites of passage. Things like graduation from high school, getting a driver's license, turning 21 and being able to drink. These things cannot really be said to make us adults. If anything, they permit us to prolong adolescence for decades. When men are not mentored by others who have more life experience, they tend to abuse their power. See: Rohr, *Adams Return*, 11-14.

<sup>17</sup> The number of female students was 10 percent higher in 2016 than in 2006, while the number of male students was 14 percent higher. Although male enrollment increased by a larger percentage than female enrollment between 2006 and 2016, the majority (56 percent) of students in 2016 were female. For further details see: National Center for Educational Statistics, "Fast Facts/Enrollment" <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98> (Accessed on September 23, 2019).

This fall, women will comprise more than 56 percent of students on campuses nationwide, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Some 2.2 million fewer men than women will be enrolled in college this year. And the trend shows no sign of abating.<sup>18</sup>

We can celebrate the growing number of women as they continue their education, or when they achieve a job promotion in a leadership position. Simultaneously, we can have concern for young men's struggles for identity, education, and vocation. What is at stake in this example is the number of male mentors who will help guide young men into adulthood and the correlation between education and lifetime earnings, in addition to the quality of life.

Orthodox Archbishop Weldon Hardenbrook creates a deeper awareness about the frightening effects of the patterns of failure among men and boys:

Over ninety-four percent of all inmates are male. Not only do men live an average of seven years less than women, but they suffer far more than their female counterparts from ulcers and other stress-related diseases. They are more likely than women to die sooner from the fifteen leading causes of death. . . Over eighty percent of all suicides are men. In the twenty-twenty-four age bracket, males commit suicide almost six times as often as females. When men are over eighty-five, they are often fourteen times as likely to commit suicide as women of the same age. Men are hurting.<sup>19</sup>

Using the research of Robert Putnam, author Peter Block points out the advantage of social capital and a community's well-being. States Block:

we have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbors, and our democratic structures—and how we may reconnect. He [Putnam] warns that

---

<sup>18</sup> Jon Marcus, "Why Men Are the New College Minority" *The Atlantic*, August 8, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/08/why-men-are-the-new-college-minority/536103/> (Accessed on July 31, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Weldon Hardenbrook, *Missing in Action: A Powerful Historical Response to the Crisis among American Men* (Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1996), 15.

our stock of social capital—the very fabric of our connections with each other—has plummeted, impoverishing our lives and communities.<sup>20</sup>

Ministry with men in the church continues to experience a negative impact by the erosion of social capital, including how men fashion communities of support with (and for) one another.

I believe many men have fallen through the cracks of the church. Has the church failed these brothers in Christ? Have we not equipped men as God's beloved? Have we not taught men about their personal power and how they might gain a greater understanding of power through various spiritual practices? While other internal and external factors influence personal power,<sup>21</sup> my goal is to explore how men's spiritual practices might support and influence personal power.

### **Research Methodology**

This project's social science research methodology was Action Research (AR) using a mixed methods design. The mixed-methods approach included a concurrent equal emphasis of quantitative and qualitative data from the adult male members of Immanuel Lutheran Church (ILC) in Manville, Iowa.<sup>22</sup> A biblical example of Action Research comes from the gospel account of Peter stepping out of the boat of his safety and comfort

---

<sup>20</sup> Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009), 32.

<sup>21</sup> Janet Hagburg suggests personal power can be derived from external sources such as organizational and political positions, degrees, titles, expertise, control, responsibility. Inner power develops from introspection, personal struggles, evolution of one's life purpose, spirituality, and self-acceptance. See: Janet Hagberg, *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Press, 2003), xxi.

<sup>22</sup> Immanuel Lutheran Church, Manville, Iowa, and all proper names are pseudonyms used in order to protect the identity of the people and congregation who participated in this research.

zone to follow Jesus on the stormy Sea of Galilee.<sup>23</sup> In this example, Peter follows the cycle of Planning Action—Taking Action—Evaluating Action.<sup>24</sup>

Action Research is an appropriate method because of the broad categories of characteristics involved in this study. Features that make Action Research appealing include: a method that is research in action, that features an equal partnership between the researcher and the participants, and the technique is sequential in its approach to problem-solving.<sup>25</sup> Further, Action Research is done **by** and **with** a group of people and not just **to** or **on** them.<sup>26</sup> The participants in this project shared their knowledge, built upon all participants' experiences in the community, not only information and knowledge from the researcher.

The research was conducted using a concurrent equal emphasis approach, which simultaneously included both qualitative and quantitative data collection at the baseline of the research. The baseline data consisted of a census survey of the men of the congregation age eighteen and over. In addition to a baseline census, face-to-face interviews with a panel of six men from the congregation were held early in November 2019. The panel of men was selected using non-probability quota sampling so that a variety of life experiences was assured for a diversity of perspectives.<sup>27</sup> Authors Rubin

---

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 14:22-33.

<sup>24</sup> David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publication Ltd., 2014), 13.

<sup>25</sup> Coghlan and Brannick, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Coghlan and Brannick, 6.

<sup>27</sup> Many attributes influence one's perception of and actualization of personal power, especially race. The population available for this study was fairly homogeneous in terms of race, age, social location, and religious background. In seeking to explore the depths of personal power in this project, a personal invitation was extended to men who comprised a diversity of life experiences in the above areas. Further study should continue to probe these attributes to explore how they impact one's relations with personal



and Rubin define *cultural* qualitative interviewing style as looking at the “norms and values that define expected behaviors within a given group, organization, or society. . . because cultural norms and values are often taken for granted, they are often invisible to those being studied.”<sup>28</sup>

The quantitative data collection for this project was collected using SurveyMonkey.<sup>29</sup> A link to the baseline and end line questionnaires was emailed out to the congregation's men, and a link was provided on social media. Paper copies of the questionnaires were created for men who did not have the electronic questionnaire option or who preferred to complete a questionnaire on paper.<sup>30</sup>

Following the baseline survey and face-to-face interviews, five interventions were held beginning in November 2019 through May 2020. Interventions are actions or practices that are introduced into a system to cause change. David Bargal describes Action Research as utilizing a cycle of “problem identification, diagnosis, planning intervention, and evaluation of the outcomes.”<sup>31</sup> In particular, Bargal notes the impact of

---

power. Among these, race is of particular importance and relevance. For supporting details of non-probability quota sampling see Peter Nardi, *Doing Survey Research: A Guide to Quantitative Methods*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge Press, 2018), 127.

<sup>28</sup> Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 33.

<sup>29</sup>SurveyMonkey is a web-based survey development tool used by individuals and organizations to create, distribute, receive, and analyze customizable questionnaires. I utilized the service to assist with the creation, distribution, reception, and analysis for my research. SurveyMonkey is a product of SurveyMonkey, Inc., located in Palo Alto, CA. More information can be found at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

<sup>30</sup>The baseline questionnaire is found in appendix F.

<sup>31</sup>David Bargal, “Action Research,” *Small Group Research* 39, no. 1 (2008): 17.

Action Research in the attempt to bring about social change through the “improvement of intergroup relations.”<sup>32</sup>

A new spiritual practice was introduced at four of the five scheduled monthly interventions. The group tried out the spiritual practice throughout the monthly intervention. After the first four intervention sessions, participants were given a journal to use for the month to record data on how they interacted with the spiritual practice. After each of the first four interventions, the journals from the intervention were collected. Qualitative data were recorded about how the participants interacted with the spiritual practice throughout the month. For each of the interventions, monthly advertisements were included in the congregation newsletter, email announcements, social media posts, and worship bulletins. A personal invitation to participate was offered to the current Men’s Bible study along with Sunday morning announcements.

The data collected from both the interviews and journals were analyzed utilizing the data analysis method set forth by Kathy Charmez in her book, *Constructing Grounded Theory*.<sup>33</sup> The process of data analysis of interviews included a multi-step process of transcribing, coding, sorting data into files, sorting materials within each file, integrating, and generating theory to explain the descriptions presented.<sup>34</sup> The data from the baseline face-to-face interviews were compared to the data received in the end line focus group, and any difference in concepts, themes, and examples are noted in chapter five.

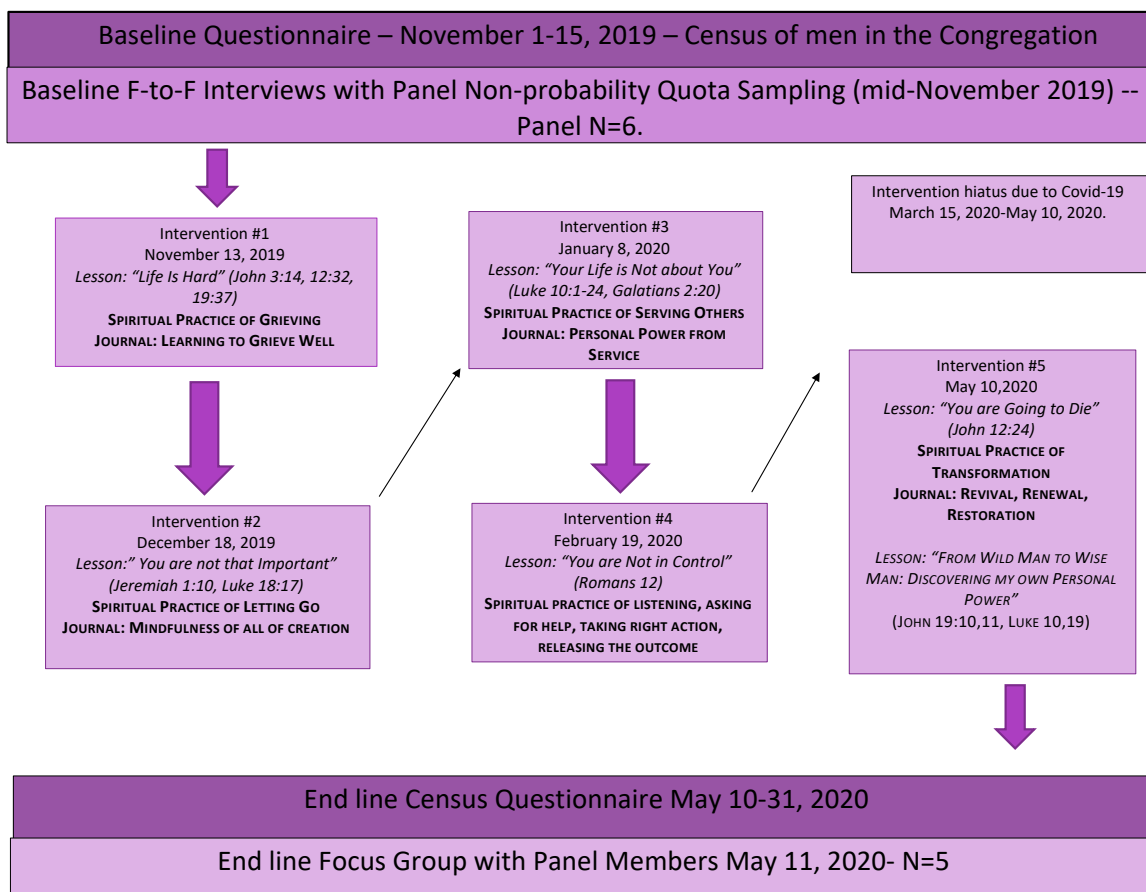
---

<sup>32</sup> Bargal, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London: SAGE Publications, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 190.

By utilizing a focus group at the end of the study, participants listened to other participants' experiences, which enabled everyone to learn from one another. While it was planned to have the focus group meet in person, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the group to meet online using an online meeting platform. Figure 1 presents an overview of the research design process used for this project.



**Figure 1. An overview of the research design process**

### Interventions

The interventions began on November 13, 2019. The dates were all on Monday nights, with each intervention starting at 6:30 PM. All five interventions lasted about an hour-and-a-half. A light meal was served at the interventions beginning at 6:00 PM. For each of the interventions, a new monthly topic for each session was introduced, followed

by a time for discussion and a time to run-through the practice. Each monthly theme (as illustrated in the research design figure) was developed and based upon one of five truths from Father Richard Rohr's lessons for men.<sup>35</sup> Rohr writes concerning these truths:

You will perhaps be shocked by the seemingly negative character of these five truths, which probably shows how untraditional we have become. . . At this point in history, we have some major surgery to do; separation from codependency, separation from limited self-image, separation from the autonomous ego, separation from the securities of boyhood and an almost coercive push into the responsibility of manhood. This will appear negative and demanding to Western people.<sup>36</sup>

Author Margaret Wheatley utilizes the notion of disturbances as an opportunity for growth. Wheatley writes regarding the ability to lead change in an organization (and the awareness of personal power), "disturbances could create disequilibrium, but disequilibrium could lead to growth. If the system had the capacity to react and change, then disturbances were not necessarily a fearsome opponent."<sup>37</sup>

### Intervention One

The first intervention was held on November 13, 2019. The spiritual focus for the month was on the theme "Life is Hard". The biblical text for the month was taken from John (3:14, 12:32, 19:37). This intervention was designed to help men process the truth that pain and loss are part of what it means to be human. No one is immune from this universal human truth. The question becomes what we do with our hurts and pain. Behind

---

<sup>35</sup> Richard Rohr, *Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004), 32.

<sup>36</sup> Rohr, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc, 2006), 79.

this teaching is the belief that what happens in life is relatively unimportant. How one responds to what happens is most important.

At the intervention, a discussion on grief was shared among the participants. Resources about grief were shared, and the participants joined together in going through a grief ritual created and led by the researcher. At the end of the session, a grief ritual report form was given to the participants to record data about the grief ritual they created themselves. The data from these journals were collected at the next monthly session.<sup>38</sup>

### Intervention Two

The second intervention was held on December 18, 2019. The theme of this intervention was “You Are Not That Important.” The intervention included the practice of mindfulness, which was practiced throughout December and into the January session. An explanation of the practice of mindfulness and teaching about the scripture and the topic was included in an introductory presentation. “Mindfulness is a moment-to-moment of one’s experience without judgment. In this sense, mindfulness is a state [of being] and not a trait.”<sup>39</sup>

The men were asked to begin with practicing two minutes of mindfulness and add to that time throughout the month. Like the first intervention, journals were handed out for participants with information on mindfulness practice. Data were obtained from

---

<sup>38</sup> See appendix H for the grief handouts including the spiritual practice journal used for this intervention.

<sup>39</sup> Daphne M. Davis and Jeffrey A. Hayes, “What Are the Benefits to Mindfulness,” *American Psychological Association*, July/August 2012 Vol. 43, No. 7, 64. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner>, accessed June 9, 2020.

participant journals, including the amount of time the participant was able to build up through the month and feelings before and after the mindfulness session.<sup>40</sup>

### Intervention Three

The third intervention was held on January 8, 2020. A debrief on the spiritual practice of mindfulness was incorporated at the beginning of this intervention. Comments about mindfulness were recorded as qualitative data and are noted in the chapter on results and analysis.

The third intervention was titled “Your Life is Not About You.” The scripture for this intervention was from Luke 10 and Galatians 2. In this month’s spiritual practice, participants worked on the spiritual practice of active listening. Active listening is a process in which one is listening to understand the other without feeling the need to respond to what is being said. When we let go of our need to respond to others, we are more open to understanding that life is not all about the individual, but rather, life is a communal process. This is modeled in the Gospel in Luke 10, with Jesus sending out the seventy in a reverse mission, where we are changed and helped by those we think we are serving.

### Intervention Four

The fourth intervention was held on February 19, 2020. At this intervention, ensuing the conversation about the previous month’s spiritual practice, the fourth spiritual practice was introduced. The topic of the intervention was “You Are Not in Control.” The biblical basis of this intervention was from Romans chapter 12. During this session,

---

<sup>40</sup> See appendix J for the participant journal.

participants explored how we are not in control over much that happens in life. One's manner of response to the actions and events of life is where one's personal power is heightened.

Much of the self-help teaching today focuses on what steps a person needs to control his/her life. As we age, our bodies, souls, and especially the life endeavors in which we have failed teach us that we are not in control. Life is a series of surprises. That is where reality lies—in the unexpected and the unpredictable. We are not in control.

Rohr shares the following about the need for control:

Learning that you are not in control situates you correctly in the universe. You cannot understand the joy and release unless you have been there. You come to know that you are not steering this ship. It is essential if one is to feel at home in the world, and it is found in all classic heroes, mystics of all religions, and the Christian saints.<sup>41</sup>

During February through March, I invited the men who participated in this practice to allow themselves to think about two things they have control over—their attitude and their effort. Many men have been culturally conditioned to *not* ask for help to solve their problems and be in charge. This spiritual practice teaches men just the opposite—the one thing we can control is how we respond to what happens.

#### Intervention Five

The fifth intervention was scheduled for March 16, 2020. This intervention was postponed due to COVID-19. Because the theme was directly related to the subsequent sixth intervention—resurrection, revival, and renewal—the fifth and sixth interventions were combined and held virtually on May 10, 2020. The theme for this practice was

---

<sup>41</sup> Rohr, *Adam's Return*, 67.

“You Are Going to Die,” and it was well-timed during the season of Lent and during a pandemic. The wisdom of the order of the practices is that they built upon one another and climaxed with the truth that every living thing will die one day. The scripture text for this lesson was based upon John chapter 12. The underpinnings for this practice are resurrection, revival, and renewal.

Study participants were encouraged to seek out those things that need to be removed from their lives that do not serve any purpose. This calls for personal introspection to discern what in their life they need to keep doing (practicing), what practices they need to let go of, and what practices they need to revive. Rohr writes concerning this practice, “Death in any form, is the great human enemy. A man constructs much of his life to avoid it, to delay it, to deny it. He seeks to ground himself in something eternal, or at least lasting.”<sup>42</sup>

### Intervention Six

The final combined intervention was held on Monday, May 10, 2020. During this intervention, the previous five interventions were summarized for the previous five months. The spiritual insight for the month was what Rohr calls “The Common Wonderful.” The Common Wonderful are Jesus’ Five Messages that offer:

collective beauty and security that healthy people live within, no matter what words they use for it. [T]he Common Wonderful is a cosmic egg of meaning that will hold you, help you grow, and give you ongoing new birth and beginnings. It is your underlying worldview, your matrix for life, your energy field that keeps you motivated each day; it answers the basic question of life. It operates largely subliminally, but very powerfully.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Rohr, 92.

<sup>43</sup> Rohr, 152-53.



Following the Common Wonderful discussion, we turned our thoughts and the center of our attention to our sense of power. I introduced and taught the men selected sections of Janet Hagberg's work on personal power.<sup>44</sup> I invited the men to share how they believe the spiritual practices that were introduced shaped or influenced their understanding of power.

### **Qualitative and Quantitative Data Gathering**

Following the five interventions, in May 2020, I administered an end line questionnaire that was extended to the entire male population of the congregation over the age of eighteen. Study participants were invited to participate in the end line questionnaire through vocal announcements, worship bulletins, and monthly newsletters. I tracked and compared baseline survey results with end line survey results and conducted both independent and paired t-tests to measure potential significant statistical change following the interventions. I utilized IBM's *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS)<sup>45</sup> to measure the baseline questionnaire's statistical change to the end line questionnaire.

I included in all tables and analyses the total number of respondents (N), the frequency of the respondents by category (n), the percent of respondents by category, and the mean where appropriate. I also noted relevant comparisons of data between the baseline and the end line surveys. On the end line questionnaire, I asked the participants whether they attended each of the scheduled interventions and how helpful the

---

<sup>44</sup> Janet Hagberg, *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2003), i-xxi.

<sup>45</sup> International Business Machine Corporation released 2019. IBM SPSS Statistics Grad Pack 26.0 STANDARD. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.

intervention was in introducing a new spiritual practice. Furthermore, I asked if those who participated in the interventions felt the intervention had any effect on their understanding of power. I paired the data received from the baseline and end line questions by asking for the individual's initials and birth date.

In late-May 2020, I held a focus group with a panel of five participants to ask again the same questions I asked in my baseline interviews. I had a panel discussion for the men to learn from one another as they processed and discussed their experience from the spiritual practices and their impact upon their sense of power. In the focus group, my role was to act as the facilitator of the conversation. Authors Rubin and Rubin suggest that the facilitator's role is to help keep the conversation on track and “move the conversation along.”<sup>46</sup> The type of qualitative data gathering used throughout this study included responsive interviewing. Rubin and Rubin state:

Responsive interviewing emphasizes the importance between the interviewer and the interviewee that leads to more give-and-take in the conversation. The tone of questioning is basically friendly and gentle, with little confrontation. The pattern of questioning is flexible; questions evolve in response to what the interviewees have just said, and new questions are designed to tap the experience and knowledge of the interviewee. Even with this style of interviewing, there is room to adjust what you do and how to present yourself according to your own personality, the topic at hand, and the needs of your interviewee.<sup>47</sup>

Evaluation of the qualitative data began with the transcription of the recorded conversation into files. Once the transcription of the audio from the interviews was complete, I started coding the data. Coding the data is the crucial link between the qualitative data collected and making sense of what the data indicate through analysis.

---

<sup>46</sup> Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 30.

<sup>47</sup> Rubin and Rubin, 36.

Rubin and Rubin recommend marking a “word or phrase that represents what you think a given passage means.”<sup>48</sup> Carefully coding the data helped me in the process, as the researcher, from inserting my own motives or preconceptions into what has been said by persons participating in either the interview or focus group. In her book, the coding process used in this study relied upon the steps outlined by Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*. More details on the qualitative analysis can be found in chapter four.

Once the data were organized and coded, I began to generate my theories by explaining my findings by combining themes to create a conclusion. Regarding reaching conclusions for the qualitative data, Rubin and Rubin state:

As you work out your theory, you need to test each proposed new theme or causal mechanism by reexamining your code data. First, make sure that the data actually do support the theme, that the examples are consistent with it; then, check your emerging ideas by testing them against alternatives; that is, act as your own devil’s advocate. . . . As you move from themes to theory, you want to ask yourself if your explanation is complete and balanced and whether it seems credible.<sup>49</sup>

The final step in data analysis was to generalize my study's findings and offer a conclusion of the data.

### **Theoretical Lenses and Literature**

Overall, this project could envelop a vast array of theoretical lenses. To narrow the scope, I intended to examine my research question through three lenses: *leadership theory (personal power)*, *narrative theory*, and *masculinity*. I believe these three lenses helped to ground the research project.

---

<sup>48</sup> Rubin and Rubin, 192.

<sup>49</sup> Rubin and Rubin, 207-08.

## Personal Power

For the leadership theory lens, my primary resource was drawn from Janet Hagberg's book, *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations*. Personal power and self-empowerment directly influence leadership and the interaction between the leader and those who follow. In her model of personal power, Janet Hagberg lists six distinct stages. Each stage of power in the model has implications on leadership and one's ability to provide (and receive) leadership.

For centuries, males have been encouraged and rewarded for living an "outer" life of performance (Hagberg's Stage Three power).<sup>50</sup> The characteristic of this stage of power most often resembles a game in which there are winners and losers. Winning, in this sense, is not the complete picture of leadership and power. Succeeding in this sense is about external power and control. There is an internal component to personal power that may lack a "win at all cost" mentality.

Writing from an African context, Harvey Kwiyani writes about the life philosophy that has been at the foundation of African life for centuries. The concept of *umunthu* (personhood) and the relations between the person (self) and the wider community is of great interest in this theoretical lens. States Kwiyani, "leaders with *umunthu* realize that they cannot be good leaders in isolation. The principle of I am because we are is at the heart of the matter. No leader can handle every detail all by himself/herself."<sup>51</sup> The African philosophy of *umunthu* in Hagberg's stages of

---

<sup>50</sup> An overview of Hagberg's levels of personal power will be presented in chapter two.

<sup>51</sup> Harvey Kwiyani, "Umunthu and the Spirituality of Leadership: Leadership Lessons from Malawi," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 55.

development of personal power would score in a higher stage of power because it shows a marked contrast of an internally-oriented sense of power and leadership.

### Narrative Theory

The stories we fashion about life are the way humans create meaning and make sense of the world. Stories form our identity, both individually and within social units, including family units and faith communities. Narrative theory is based on the idea that people's lives and their sense of being and acting in the world are shaped by the "stories" individuals and communities of people develop to give meaning to their experiences. These 'narratives of meaning' do not just reflect our lives; they essentially shape and constitute how we make meaning.

Dwelling in the Word is an excellent practice in narrative theory.<sup>52</sup> During this practice, two individuals are tasked with listening to each other as they share what in the biblical text captured their imagination and what question(s) the text raises for the person. After sharing, each partner shares with the larger group what they heard—not what they said.

### Masculinity

Gender roles in the post-Industrial Age have shifted. The influence of a feminine perspective throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century with the woman's suffrage movement and the participation in the labor force combined with a growing presence in leadership positions has led to questions about masculinity and especially gender studies.

---

<sup>52</sup> Patrick Keifert and Nigel Rooms, *Forming the Missional Church: Creating Deep Cultural Change in Congregations* (Minneapolis, MN: Church Innovations Institute, 2006), 21.

All the cultural shifts and changes have led to certain cultural stereotypes about the male gender and what constitutes a “man.” Traditionally, men (males) have been expected to display physical prowess and agility. Men were to be goal-oriented and driven with a focus on achievement and progress. Showing emotions was considered a sign of weakness, and a man’s physical strength overshadowed intellectual abilities.

As the influence of the Industrial Age has waned, the stereotypical image of maleness has increasingly transformed. In today's changing description, many men find more cultural emphasis on intellectual abilities and increased strength in inter-personal skills. It is quite common for many men to define themselves by what they do or what role they hold in an organization. Some stereotypes of men seem hard to change—a man’s work is often a benchmark of his value and worth in society (which directly influences his self-esteem), and many men still hold back emotional expressiveness as a perceived sign of weakness.

Author James B. Nelson has much insight into the shifts in modern masculinity and masculine spirituality. States Nelson:

While many in this movement [Men’s movement] are men of the church, specifically Christian and theological dimensions of men’s reassessment and change have been slow to appear. But now they are coming. Some local church men’s groups that used to specialize in pancake breakfast and movies of the last World Series have shifted to serious study and the sharing of men’s lives in biblical-Christian perspective. National church men’s gatherings now show the impact of the men’s quest for new identities. And now, belatedly, we are even beginning to write down some theological reflections about these things.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Nelson, *The Intimate Connection*, 19-20.

### Biblical Lenses

While there are countless stories in the Bible concerning personal power, I approached this subject using a few stories that assisted me in my thesis question. Further, and equally important, are the theological lenses discussed in another section, but I believe my biblical hermeneutic should support my theological lenses. The three biblical lenses I selected move from a comprehensive understanding of personal power towards a specific instance in the life of Christ as he offers a deeper appreciation of an inner sense of power. A discussion of the biblical lenses used in this project can be found in chapter three.

#### Genesis 1-2: The Gift of Power

Power is a divine gift that is fundamentally given to all of humanity through the story of creation. The early chapters of Genesis speak eloquently of God’s power and ability to create *ex nihilo*<sup>54</sup> by merely speaking the words, “Let there be. . .”<sup>55</sup> Also recorded in Genesis is the story of humans grappling with their sense of power made manifest in God’s command to develop their power. “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28). This command is a positive use of power in which God has entrusted humanity with power in creation. In this sense, human power is for the flourishing of all creation. Through the Creator’s

---

<sup>54</sup> “Out of nothing.”

<sup>55</sup> All biblical references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

reckoning, humans fill the earth though not just for their succeeding, but to bring the entire creation to its fulfillment.

Of course, the Genesis story does not stop with this optimistic view of human power. There is a tragic twist to the gift of human power shortly following the creation account. It is the story of using human power (displayed in freedom of choice), and rather than flourishing, the result of this form of power leads to ruination. God's command of dominion and delight turn into domination and exploitation. The biblical story of God's people and their trials and tribulations leads us to God and the story of what we call the New Testament. The next biblical example of power comes from an early account of God the Son (Jesus) and his display of divine power through a story in John's Gospel.

#### John 2: A Story of Power

Early in John's Gospel, Jesus performs a deed of pronounced power by turning water into wine. The use of miracles in the biblical imagination indicates that Jesus has a sense and control of the divine power that humans do not possess. Especially in the Gospel of John, the stories of Jesus' miracles suggest that the display of Jesus' power is central to understanding his mission on earth. There is much meaning in this display of power, but ultimately this is not a story solely about water and wine, or even a wedding. This is a story about a sign—something that points beyond itself to a deeper meaning. For the gospel writer John, the story of Jesus turning water into wine is a story of the power and a display of God's glory in (and through) a miracle. This story serves as a foretaste of what is to come later in the Gospel—a time of God's glory and power over the universal human condition—death.



### John 13: Jesus' Display of Power and "Privilege"

The idea of anyone giving up their sense of power seems counterintuitive, but that is what Jesus displays in the story of his washing the disciples' feet. Moreover, the Christian theological position that holds in his death, Jesus revealed great power in his resurrection. The irony in this story is that we are all powerless in our death, and yet, a central tenet of the Christian faith is the power of the resurrection through a helpless human reality. There is a sense of Jesus giving up his power through his nonviolent service to others, yet the ultimate truth is that he displaces and models a deep inner-core and sense of personal power through his giving up his power.

What is lovely in this account is that there is no point in the story in which Jesus gives up his personal power. Instead, in the washing of the disciples' feet, Jesus is merely displaying his power. He gives up privileges and prestige but his inner power remains.

### **Theological Lenses**

This project was informed by three theological lenses—*the theology of the cross*, *spiritual practices*, and *trinitarian theology*. When combined with the theoretical lenses, the above-mentioned biblical lenses informed the related theological views that provided a framework for this project. A comprehensive discussion of the theological lenses is found in chapter three.

### The Theology of the Cross

The cross has always been of principal significance to the Christian faith. In his classic volume, *The Crucified God*, Jürgen Moltmann appropriately remarked that the

“*theologia crucis*”<sup>56</sup> is not a single chapter or theme in theology, “but the key-signature of all theology.”<sup>57</sup> Particularly for Martin Luther and his production of the Heidelberg Disputation—the cross *is* our theology. States Luther, “A theology of glory [*theologia gloriae*] calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross [*theologia crucis*] calls the thing what it actually is.”<sup>58</sup>

It is one thing to engage in the theological study of the cross of Christ and the role the cross plays in the Christian faith. It is far another thing to encounter a contextually relevant missiology of the cross in which meaning is articulated and a hermeneutic for life. The suffering of Jesus shows us that God is not far off from our trials and tribulations. God does not heal our pain from heaven afar, but God participates in human suffering with all of creation. Redemptive suffering and the hope that springs forth from human pain is at the heart of the good news of the theology of the cross. Paul states in the letter to the Colossians, “I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.”<sup>59</sup>

### Spiritual Practices

This lens's primary text will be Father Richard Rohr’s book *Adam’s Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation*. In this resource, Father Rohr discusses the ancient

---

<sup>56</sup> “theology of the cross.”

<sup>57</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), in *LW* 31:39-40.

<sup>59</sup> Col. 1:24.

practices of initiation rites and rituals used in most primitive cultures around the world.

Rohr argues that “patterns of initiation [rituals] are the oldest system of spiritual instruction that we know of, predating all institutional religions.”<sup>60</sup>

Rituals and spiritual practices are related, but not the same. Rituals are “a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and performed according to set sequence.”<sup>61</sup> Spiritual practices are intended to assist one in spiritual development. Often spiritual practices are concerned more about a journey or path than towards a goal.

Benjamin Connor has suggested that Christian spiritual practices are communal.

States Connor:

Christian practices are the Spirit-filled and embodied signs, instruments, and foretastes of the kingdom of God that Christian people participate in together over time to partake in, partner with, and witness to God’s redemptive presence for the life of the world in Jesus Christ.<sup>62</sup>

Connor suggests that the Holy Spirit is at work in us when we partake in a spiritual practice. It takes time to allow the Holy Spirit to work. One cannot just participate in a spiritual practice only once or twice and expect to experience the Holy Spirit’s movement for the rest of their life. When one engages in a spiritual practice, they must trust in God’s slow and ever-present work.

---

<sup>60</sup> Rohr, *Adam’s Return*, 2.

<sup>61</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “ritual”, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ritual>.

<sup>62</sup> Benjamin Connor, *Practicing Witness: A Missional Vision of Christian Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 94.

Author Dorothy Bass shares three conceptions about spiritual practices in her book, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*.<sup>63</sup> The first conception Bass proposes is that practices address fundamental needs and conditions through concrete human acts. Practices must have a practical purpose (to heal, to shape a community, etc.). The second notion about spiritual practices is that they are done together and over a while. Practices are intended and designed to be repeated, and they have a common purpose, though, often spiritual practices are performed alone and are reflected upon by a group. Bass' third concept is that practices possess a standard of excellence. By definition, a practice is performed repeatedly or regularly to improve one's proficiency in an activity.

### Trinitarian Theology

Trinitarian theology is a distinctively Christian understanding of the nature of God. In the opening line of the first section of the Apostles' Creed, faithful Christian believers confess, "I believe in God the Father almighty . . .". What is meant by the word "almighty?" In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther offers, "I believe that God has created me and all that exists. He has given me and still preserves my body and soul with all their powers."<sup>64</sup>

There is a divine power (energy) within the perichoretic relationship of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. This power informs the life of the world through God's inner

---

<sup>63</sup> Dorothy Bass, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 6-8.

<sup>64</sup> SC, 2, in *BC*, 354.

being. God’s sense of power is not humanity’s power, although human power has been created in the *imago Dei* (image of God).

## Other Matters

### Definitions of Key Terms

**Personal power:** The term “power” is elusive and can be confusing (perhaps that is why it is so powerful). Scholar Peter Northouse writes regarding power (as a function of leadership)—“power is the capacity or potential to influence. People have power when they have the ability to affect others’ beliefs, attitudes, and courses of action.”<sup>65</sup> In this sense, power is understood as an external influence and action on those who follow. Conversely, Janet Hagberg distinguishes between external and internal power in her book, *Real Power*. States Hagberg, “Personal power results from combining external power (*the capacity for action*) with internal power (the capacity for reflection).”<sup>66</sup> The latter definition of personal power will be my working definition for this project.

**Masculinity:** A set of attributes, behaviors, and roles associated with boys and men. As a social construct, masculinity is distinct from gender or biological sex. Both male and female persons exhibit masculine traits and behaviors.<sup>67</sup>

**Missio Dei:** Literally translated, *missio Dei* means the “sending of God.” This term was the result of the renewal of trinitarian studies in the 1950s as a way in which to

---

<sup>65</sup> Peter Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publishing, 2019), 9.

<sup>66</sup> Hagberg, *Real Power*, xxi.

<sup>67</sup> Joan Ferrante, *Sociology: A Global Perspective*, 7<sup>th</sup>ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth Press, 2013), 269-72.

understand the missional activities of the triune God. In his seminal work, *Transforming Mission*, author Dave Bosch emphasizes the need to distinguish between the word *mission* (singular) and *missions* (plural). States Bosch:

The first [mission] refers primarily to the *missio Dei* (God's mission), that is God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate . . . Missions refers to the particular forms, related to specific times, places, or needs, of participation in the *missio Dei*.<sup>68</sup>

**Narrative Theory:** The way stories inform, create, and make meaning for humans. According to narrative theory, "story" refers to all the building blocks you start out with: you have got a bunch of events, people, and places. We order each of these phenomena to make sense of the world around us. Narrative, then, refers to how one weaves the story material together and gives it shape.

**Action Research:** A social science research method that is conducted with three elements—action, research, and participation.<sup>69</sup> Action research seeks to be participatory and democratic and a key feature is that action research aims to enable some change through the process.

### Ethical Concerns

This research was conducted and conformed to the IRB standards set forth by Luther Seminary. The records and data collected will remain confidential and only be shared with my faculty advisors. If any reports are published, all information will include

---

<sup>68</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017), 10.

<sup>69</sup> Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2007), 6-7.

pseudonyms and the information contained in the reports will not make it possible to identify any participants or places.

Those individuals involved in the study agreed to implied consent before completing any questionnaire.<sup>70</sup> Any individual who participated in an interview or focus group signed an informed consent before being interviewed or participating in the study. While I made every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. Pseudonyms are used for all places and people. I received the professional service of a data transcription company that transcribed the qualitative interviews. The transcription company embraces a strict non-disclosure policy for employees and any information shared with the transcription company remains strictly confidential.<sup>71</sup> All data collected from this study are saved on a locked file on my personal computer and on a password secure external hard drive. Any data collected will be retained according to federal guidelines until June 4, 2024.

My research population group consisted of men of the congregation who are at least eighteen years of age and older. Thus, I limited any exposure to vulnerable populations, including youth. There were no additional risks to this project other than everyday life exposures.

### Summary of the Study's Significance

This research project created an opportunity for men to examine their understanding of power in their life. There has been limited study involving men's

---

<sup>70</sup> See appendix E.

<sup>71</sup> I used "rev.com" an online data transcription company to assist my data transcription for this project. More information on their non-disclosure policy can be found at: <https://www.rev.com/transcription>. The informed consent is found in appendix B.

knowledge of personal power and the role spiritual practices play in influencing a man's sense of power. This study set forth to gain a greater understanding of the effects of spiritual practices and how they might affect a man's assessment of power. This study helped determine how the introduction to and use of spiritual practices might influence men's personal power in a mainline congregation.

The next chapter will begin with a discussion of the critical theoretical framework that informs this study. This discussion includes Janet Hagberg's Stages of Personal Power, narrative theory, and the study of modern masculinity. Each lens is helpful in defining this research project.



## CHAPTER TWO

### KEY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter outlines the theoretical lenses used in framing this research project. We all understand and make meaning of our lives through various lenses through which we observe the world in which we live. Often the lenses of life are in our subconscious's background, and we are not wholly aware of our lens (hermeneutic) and the effect the lens has on the meaning we create. Many people are in the habit of living a lot of the time unconsciously—totally unaware of thoughts and how our thoughts control how we feel.

Whether good, threatening, horrible, terrifying, or pleasant, every event that we experience in life is emotionless. What varies is the response to the situations and events along with the meaning we create based on our experiences of what happens. Each person reacts differently and assigns different meanings and emotional responses as a result of external stimuli.

This project could be examined through several different theoretical frames that inform the meaning of the research. Three lenses are especially helpful in informing this study—*personal power*, *narrative theory*, and *masculinity*. Each of the lenses directly affects the other two lenses, and each of these lenses supplements each other. Each of the three lenses will be reviewed in this section. A brief discussion on the expanding literature on masculine studies is a most helpful hermeneutic for this study.

## Personal Power

The question of power has been a topic of interest for humanity since the establishment of civilization.<sup>1</sup> The implication of power as a function of leadership has directly influenced and built society as we know it. More importantly, leadership and its function of power will set the course for what is to come. With power comes energy and the energy that comes forth as a profound change agent for any society or organization. Over the centuries, countless people have tried to explain and appreciate the subject of power and even figure out exactly how to study it.<sup>2</sup>

Personal power is, of course, about an individual's life. But it has implications beyond individual functioning—it impacts how one relates with others. As will be seen in the results, personal power is less of a possession and more of a responsibility. How one engages with personal power relates to leadership in profound ways. I would hypothesize that the deeper the understanding one has of one's personal power, the more effective that person can become as a leader.

Philosopher Hannah Arendt writes about power as a group phenomenon:

Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is “in power” we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name. The moment the group, from which the power originated to begin with . . . disappears, “his power” also vanishes.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> For an overview and use of human power see: Robert Firestone, Ph.D. “Personal Power: There Is a Clear Distinction Between Personal and Negative Power,” *Psychology Today* (blog), April 12, 2009, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-human-experience/200904/personal-power> (accessed June 10, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1976), 211-217.

Arendt insinuates that people are often unaware of how power operates in their lives, communities, or society. The concept of power is invisible, often it is unconscious, and sometimes the motivating factors for power are hidden. Power is not necessarily seen, but it is usually felt as the dynamics and impact of power touches our lives.

In 1881, the atheist German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote that human motivation's fundamental driving influence was power. States Nietzsche:

Not necessity, not desire. No, the love of power is the demon of a man. Let them have everything—health, food, a place to live, entertainment—they are and remain unhappy and low-spirited: for the demon waits and waits and will be satisfied.<sup>4</sup>

Though Nietzsche deemed power as something worthy of being understood, many people living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are much more suspicious of the concept of power, not to mention the desire for power. “Power corrupts,” as the famous saying goes, “and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”<sup>5</sup> However, the issue of personal power is crucial in everyone’s life and cannot be circumvented.

Because the subject of power is relative to all people, we cannot say that all power is corrupt. While many people, like Nietzsche, believe that power is intrinsically evil or misused, there has to be a fair use of human power. We see too often on the evening news reports that many people (mostly men) do not know how to handle their personal power properly. In Western society, we often understand personal power in all-or-nothing

---

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on Prejudices*, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 146.

<sup>5</sup> This quote is taken from a letter written by Lord John Dalberg-Acton, a member of the British Parliament, which was addressed to Bishop Mandell Creighton. *Letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton*, written April 5, 1887. Transcript of, published in *Historical Essays and Studies*, edited by J. N. Figgis and R. V. Laurence (London: Macmillan, 1907).

thinking and fail to recognize power's paradoxical nature.<sup>6</sup> Just because someone has the talent and capacity to earn big money, hold an important job, buy a big house does not mean that they have insight into their sense of personal power. In this respect, power is limited to a narrow view of external influence over/upon other people.

The concept of power is intangible and quite puzzling—is power a good or bad phenomenon as Nietzsche suggests? Is power corrupt, controlling, dangerous, or is it freeing? Each description of power is true to a certain degree. The extent of the subject of power is complex and multi-layered. The results of power are often very evidently **displayed**—and yet, paradoxically—power is also frequently **hidden**, creating an elusive force somewhere between good and evil.

Michel Foucault provides a useful framework to understand power and its relationship between displayed and hidden power as well as good/evil human power.<sup>7</sup> Foucault advises that whenever power is present, suppression and emancipation both exist. The concept of power is complex and cannot be reduced to simplistic categories of good or bad. There is no simple way to allocate people into camps of either on the “good side of power” and those who are “on the side of resistance.”<sup>8</sup>

When entirely understood, personal power can create value and add to a more profound sense of meaning in life. Power in this sense is a magnificent gift from God—the Giver of power. It forms one’s character and bolsters emotional intelligence and

---

<sup>6</sup> I will offer a comprehensive discussion of the paradox of power in a subsequent section in this chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, eds. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S. Rose (New York: The New Press, 2003), ix.

<sup>8</sup> Foucault, x.

physical health. Real power is to know and realize one's truth and integrity. Personal power is not given away to those who manipulate or seek to inflict harm but is meant to protect one's self-integrity, self-worth, and well-being. Hence, power resides in a core of self-love and respect, authenticity, worth, and the integrity of one's character.

What we might deem to be powerful is indeed **not** power but something else. Personal power has little or nothing to do with being aggressive or inflicting pain and fear on oneself or others.<sup>9</sup> Manipulation of others is not power, nor can we say money is power. Our place in society, and whether one is born into privileged positions and entitlement, does not inevitably create personal power. The discussion of power could be framed as *power over* and *power with*. *Power with* is seen as a more positive use of power—egalitarian and collaborative. *Power over* is understood as negative—abusive, oppressive, and domineering.

In each of these examples, we may suppose—and are culturally conditioned to believe—power resides with the privileged, personal strength, size, orientation, gender, prestige, and level of attention we receive. In each of these, one might have an opinion and preference for specific characteristics that show one's power, but the attributes themselves do not create power. On the contrary, anything that is truly powerful does not need to force, lie, cheat, or manipulate.

From a *power with* position and a deeper understanding of personal power, one has the actual ability to influence others for good. Power can help others find their true

---

<sup>9</sup> Hagberg maintains the position that aggressive forms of power such as inflicting physical pain, fear, aggression, and manipulation are immature forms of personal power. These characteristics are descriptions of powerlessness. "Powerless people feel they are constantly being manipulated by others . . .". See Hagberg, *Real Power*, 3-6.

self. Donald Winnicott developed the concept of “true self” in which he meant that “sense of being alive and real in one's mind and body, having feelings that are spontaneous and unforced. This experience of aliveness is what allows people to be genuinely close to others, and to be creative.”<sup>10</sup>

Nothing can be more powerful in life than living in an authentic truth of the “true self” by becoming the best version of oneself and then mirroring one’s power back into the world. This form of authentic personal power is unlimited and inextinguishable and never loses personal value. We are taught early in life that living in our true self creates power. The attributes of power have a profound effect on our worth, self-esteem, how we love and receive love, even our ability to understand painful emotions, and our powerlessness and defenselessness.

Alternatively, our false self is who we **think** we are. Our false self is our mind’s mental image of who we think we are. Some people spend their entire lives living in their false self, never identifying or even envisioning a true self. Roman Catholic theologian Richard Rohr states the following about the false self:

The false self is inherently fragile and needy because it has no metaphysical substance whatsoever. It is formed entirely in psychological and mental time and changes or dies easily. Yet most people spend their entire lives projecting, protecting, and maintaining this fiction. The false self is passive, whimsical, and utterly preoccupied with self-maintenance and not much more . . . . Once you learn to live as your true self, you can never be satisfied with this charade again; it then feels so silly and superficial.<sup>11</sup>

---

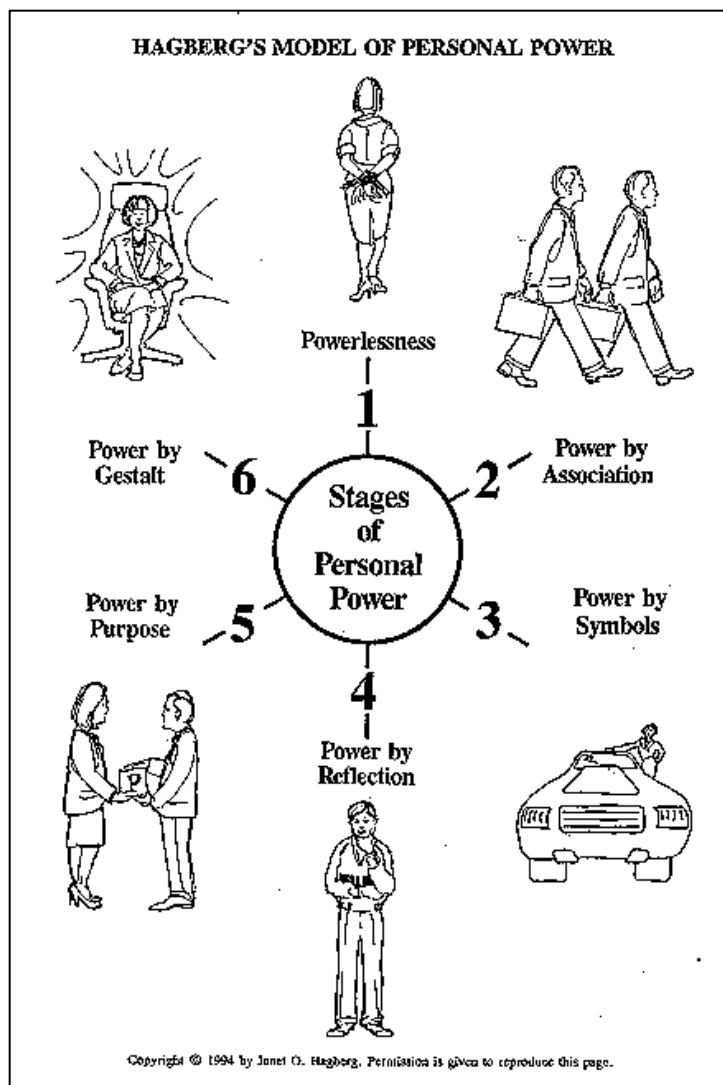
<sup>10</sup> Donald Winnicott, “Ego Distortions in Terms of True and False Self,” *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (New York: International UP Inc., 1965), 140-52.

<sup>11</sup> Rohr, *Adam’s Return*, 43-44.

Janet Hagberg is an author, scholar, spiritual director, and social activist who has studied personal power and writes about personal power stages in organizations. In her book, *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations*, Hagberg claims that Western culture suffers from a misinterpretation of real power. Hagberg expands the definition of “personal power” to incorporate both an **external** sense of power (the ability to influence others) and **internal** knowledge of power (the capacity for personal reflection).<sup>12</sup> The purpose of Hagberg’s book is to propose six stages of personal power as an evolving concept in which an individual develops characteristics that lead to the next phase of power. At each stage of power, the individual’s power is described and displayed, and each step of power is built upon and culminates with the previous stage of power. Figure two on the following page includes a visual overview of Hagberg’s model of the six stages of personal power.

---

<sup>12</sup> Hagberg, *Real Power*, xxi.



**Figure 2. Hagberg's model of personal power<sup>13</sup>**

### Hagberg's Stages of Power

The first stage of power, according to Hagberg, is that of "Powerlessness." People in this stage of power (Stage One) include infants, children, those addicted, unemployed, and undocumented people who do not control their life or current situation. Those in this first stage of power are utterly dependent upon someone else for their livelihood. These

<sup>13</sup> See: Hagberg, *Real Power*, xxiv.



people tend to feel stuck in their powerlessness and, at this stage of power, feel manipulated or controlled by others and “are rarely in the position of having access to resources themselves, whether those are people, information, skills, or money.”<sup>14</sup> To move forward from this first stage of powerlessness to Stage Two power, an individual must build competence, self-esteem, and skills.<sup>15</sup>

Hagberg’s Stage Two power is “Power by Association.” People at this stage of power do not experience much of their power but experience power through their relationship with people who have power drawn for their position. Examples of power by an association include one’s association with their boss or mentor. Not everyone moves beyond Stage Two power, but those who move on to Stage Three power experience a level of confidence in their abilities as they learn to take on more risk to move towards Stage Three—“Power by Symbols.”

The third stage of power, Power by Symbols, is the most masculine stage of power in Hagberg’s model of power.<sup>16</sup> This is the most “exciting, challenging, rewarding, competitive, and oriented to self-development of all the stages of power.”<sup>17</sup> Most white men are primed for stage three power as they are born into a culture of achievement and

---

<sup>14</sup> Hagberg, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Hagberg, 3.

<sup>16</sup> In her introduction, Hagberg states that Stage Two appears to be more feminine, Stage Three appears to be more masculine. Stage Four combines masculine and feminine behaviors and Stages Five and Six go beyond gender. See: Hagberg, xxx.

<sup>17</sup> Hagberg, 53.

success measured by the outward symbols of achievement and status—material possessions, social status, titles, and the ability to move up the social ranks and status.<sup>18</sup>

The first three stages of power are all external. To move through the early three stages, one must achieve higher power by external achievement. According to Hagberg, most people never surpass Stage Three power.<sup>19</sup> Because the first three stages of power involve power that lies externally through titles, positions, possessions, and other symbols of status, there is no need to think of power in any other way. Hagberg states:

People in Stage One through Three may also be growing and developing on the inside, but the balance is clearly in favor of growth for the sake of external recognition or career movement. That is why it is possible to identify some jobs or job families with Stage One, Two, or Three, although all individuals in these jobs are not necessarily in these stages.<sup>20</sup>

Most power in Western society is thought to be understood as having power over someone or something—a masculine form of power. Power can also be perceived in a feminine expression as “power with” or “power for.” Most professional offices are organized with masculine power structures—a hierarchy with one person having control and power over their staff. This masculine form of power is not the only way to think about power. “The more feminine concept of power in which individual members are

---

<sup>18</sup> Hagberg points out that men used to be totally in charge of the realistic and competitiveness of organizations, and that they still are, for the most part. Hagberg states, “many more women and people of color have entered this arena in the last few decades.” See: Hagberg, 59.

<sup>19</sup> Hagberg states the first three stages of power “describe the development of individuals who live and work in the United States of America in the first half of the twentieth century.” See: Hagberg, xxxiii.

<sup>20</sup> Hagberg, xxxii.

accountable to the group conscience. Neither type of power is better than the other, and both (masculine and feminine) have a place in our lives.”<sup>21</sup>

A movement to Stage Four power requires inner work and a long process of self-reflection. Hagberg indicates that it is possible to operate between a variety of stages of power throughout life. States Hagberg, “people can be in different stages of power in different areas of their lives, at different times, and with different people. However, each of us has a ‘home’ stage that represents us more truly than the others.”<sup>22</sup>

People in Stage Four power are reflective individuals who are competent, strong, emotionally intelligent, and comfortable with themselves. They are wise mentors, and they lead from “a base of strength, not weakness.”<sup>23</sup> Stage Four power is marked by a deep inner questioning and confusion about one’s life purpose.<sup>24</sup>

Movement from Stage Four to Stage Five power requires an individual to go through a wall. Hagberg describes this process as a “stopping place”<sup>25</sup> between the two stages. The wall confronts people with their limitations and weaknesses and to “move beyond their intellect and their need for control.”<sup>26</sup> The purpose of the wall is for individuals to experience their core, “who they really are.”<sup>27</sup> To move beyond Stage Four

---

<sup>21</sup> Dan Griffin, *A Man’s Way through the Twelve Steps* (Center City, MN: Hazelden Publishing, 2009), 26.

<sup>22</sup> Hagberg, *Real Power*, xxv.

<sup>23</sup> Hagberg, 109.

<sup>24</sup> Beginning in chapter four, Hagberg begins to explain the effects Stage Four power has on a deeper inner level of self-examination. See: Hagberg, 124ff.

<sup>25</sup> Hagberg, 125.

<sup>26</sup> Hagberg, 127.

<sup>27</sup> Hagberg, 133.

power (most people never move beyond the wall) to Stage Five requires individuals to engage with their Higher Power (i.e., God) and embrace pain as an opportunity for growth.<sup>28</sup> While people in Stage Five, “Power by Purpose,” could be perceived by others as innocuous, impractical, and immature, they are, according to Hagberg, more “fully integrated individuals whose internal and external lives are more congruent.”<sup>29</sup> Stage Five power characteristics include self-accepting, courage, calm, conscience of the organization, and humility.<sup>30</sup>

The final stage, Stage Six, in Hagberg’s model of power, is “Power by Gestalt [Wisdom].” In Stage Six, people are not only aware of their weaknesses, but they have learned to appreciate them and integrate their weaknesses into their lives. The description of people in Stage Six power is self-sacrifice.<sup>31</sup> People in Stage Six power are not afraid of death and recognize their powerlessness. They are conscious of the world and go about their service to others without much fanfare or others noticing them.

In this final stage of power, Hagberg states people are thought to be different or strange:

They [people in Stage Six] live in domains that are not totally accessible to others. Their habits generally include periods of solitude, silence, and reflective thought. They need to do this because they are so oriented to giving, to being available, to listening intently that they can become depleted without being aware of it. The energy they possess comes from a spiritual source beyond them, so being continually open to that source is part of the way they live their lives.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Hagberg, 144 ff.

<sup>29</sup> Hagberg, 145.

<sup>30</sup> Hagberg, 149-152.

<sup>31</sup> Hagberg, 179.

<sup>32</sup> Hagberg, 178.

Examples of Stage Six individuals include Mother Theresa, Mahatma Gandhi, the biblical prophet Elijah, Martin Luther King Jr., and Moses. Sages and people who deliberately choose to live lifestyles of simplicity are people in Stage Six power.<sup>33</sup> The implication of her model of the stages of personal power on one's leadership is the focus of the second half of Hagberg's book.

People can be leaders at any stage of power in Hagberg's model, but she states, "only true leadership begins at Stage Four—Power by Reflection."<sup>34</sup> By "true" leadership Hagberg means that true leaders are people who display integrity and that "as they resolve crises in their work and lives the issue of integrity is not the major ones they face."<sup>35</sup> The issue of leadership is the subject of discussion for the next theoretical lens and I will explore the topic of leadership theory more comprehensively.

### Leadership Theory

"Leaders change the way people think about what is possible."<sup>36</sup>

There is a need for a developed definition of leadership and power in every organization for organizational clarity. Those who follow typically grant a certain degree of power to shape and direct the organization. An ensuing discussion on power will be presented in a subsequent section of this paper. However, a discussion on leadership theory is a helpful lens from which to view this project. As a leadership function,

---

<sup>33</sup> Hagberg offers a list and description of Stage Six individuals in "Let's Meet Some People at Stage Six," Hagberg, 196ff.

<sup>34</sup> Hagberg, 201.

<sup>35</sup> Hagberg, 201.

<sup>36</sup> Colleen M. Conway, *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality*, Brian Dunning, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 77.

personal power begins with a unique understanding of one's own personal power. Peter Northouse offers a difference between positional power and personal power.<sup>37</sup> The implications of this project directly impact how one understands his personal power regarding his leadership.

There are a variety of ways in which to define leadership. One function of leadership is to create change as Peter Northouse advocates in his book *Leadership*. It is somewhat of an abstruse term that has voluminous meanings. For this paper, I offer a working definition of the term leadership conceptualized by author and scholar Peter Northouse. He states leadership is "a process whereby a person influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal."<sup>38</sup>

Leadership in this sense is less about a role or a particular personality type. Instead, it is an action that occurs between the one(s) who leads and the followers. Northouse's definition of leadership implies that the leader holds a position of power in a group. The power and influence of the leader facilitate the group to press towards a commonly defined goal. Without a source of power, there can be no leadership.

This definition of leadership suggests that the function of leadership is a fundamental component in human relationships. States Northouse on leadership, "it is much like the words democracy, love, and peace. We intuitively know what we mean by such words, the words can have different meanings for different people."<sup>39</sup> Further, Northouse asserts that the exchange of leadership is not visual. One cannot see the

---

<sup>37</sup> See: Northouse, *Leadership*, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Northouse, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Northouse, 2.

exchange of leadership between people, but we can sense leadership influence in non-material energies in organizations.

Author Margaret Wheatley compliments Northouse's definition of leadership in her book, *Leadership and the New Science* when she holds the position that, "Hierarchy and defined power are not what is important," in the process of leadership, "what's critical is the availability of places for the exchange of energy."<sup>40</sup> The energy created by the process of leadership creates certain behaviors that are influenced by the transparent process of leadership. Additionally, Wheatley points out that, "we can never see a field [of leadership energy], but we can easily see its influence by looking at behavior."<sup>41</sup> The process of leadership creates energy which shapes the culture, values, ethics, vision, and mission of organizations whereby power is created through the vision produced by the process of leadership in an organizational system. Northouse emphasizes leaders "change the way people think about what is possible."<sup>42</sup> The change in organizational life is possible by the participation and adaptation of the followers to the leader's influence.

The relationship between leaders and followers is crucial in the leadership exchange. Northouse shares the value of followership as the task of a leader. Similar to his definition of leadership, Northouse establishes a definition of followership as "a process whereby an individual or individuals accept the influence of others to accomplish a common goal."<sup>43</sup> Further, Northouse then breaks down followership into two categories

---

<sup>40</sup> Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, 72.

<sup>41</sup> Wheatley, 55.

<sup>42</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 14.

<sup>43</sup> Northouse, 295.

–role-based and relationship-based.<sup>44</sup> Role-based followership is based upon the position, or role, the leader, has in an organization. Whereas role-based followership is focused on the leader's formal role, relationship-based followership is based upon the interactions between the leader and the followers. Northouse concludes that rather than focusing on roles, it [relationship-based followership] focuses on the interpersonal process and one person's attempt to influence and the other person's response to these influence attempts.<sup>45</sup>

In chapter eight of *Real Power*, Hagberg makes a strong claim that the world is in critical need of “true” leadership. “The quality of the person is what determines true leadership,”<sup>46</sup> according to Hagberg. Continuing, Hagberg defines certain characteristics of “true” that include leadership that is derived from a calling, empowering others, the ability to be vulnerable and reflective, have a life balance, and other such traits.<sup>47</sup> Thus, Hagberg advances, we are in critical need of leadership from people who function in Stages Four through Six. States Hagberg:

In order to survive in this new century, we must go beyond our traditional definitions of power and leadership (stage three—Achievement) and develop or encourage leaders who operate at higher stages (Stages Four and Five—Reflection and Purpose).<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Northouse, 295.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Hagberg, *Real Power*, 202.

<sup>47</sup> Hagberg offers a list of major characteristics of “true” leaders. These characteristics show up in leadership in the latter stages of personal power—Stages Four through Six. See Hagberg, 205.

<sup>48</sup> Hagberg, 204.



Regarding power in the function of leadership, Hagberg states no matter what stage of personal power a person is in, “people can be leaders at any stage of personal power.”<sup>49</sup> In each stage of power, the sophistication of leadership is enhanced by one’s understanding of the process of leadership and the result of the leadership process. Table 1 offers a summary of Hagberg’s stages of power and leadership characteristics for each stage.

**Table 1. Hagberg’s summary of leadership and power at each stage of power<sup>50</sup>**

Stage	They Lead By	They Inspire	They require
Stage One	Domination, fear	Fear or being hurt	Blind obedience
Stage Two	Sticking to the rules	Dependence	Followers to need them
Stage Three	Charisma, personal persuasion	A winning attitude	Loyalty
Stage Four	Modeling integrity, generating trust	Hope for self and organization	Consistency, honesty
Stage Five	Empowering others, service to others	Love and Service	Self-acceptance, calling
Stage Six	Wisdom, a way of being	Inner peace	Anything/ Nothing

<sup>49</sup> Hagberg, 201.

<sup>50</sup> See Hagberg’s chapter eight, “Leadership and Power,” 201-20.

## Leadership and Power

Using Northouse's definition of leadership as a process of influence, deploying one's power is subject to the leaders' ability to create influence in the actions and behaviors of others. Northouse states, "the concept of power is related to leadership because it is part of the influence process." There are two forms of power, according to Northouse—positional and personal. Positional power is derived from a position a person holds within an organization. Personal power is granted to leaders by those who follow because the followers believe the leader has either expert knowledge or something of value that creates power for the leader.<sup>51</sup>

Positional power is derived from a particular position or office, such as the office (position) of ordained clergy. Conversely, personal power comes from the relationship one has with those who follow and can be held by anyone in the organization. In their work on the basis of influence and power within organizations, social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven identified six common and important bases of power—referent, expert, legitimate, reward, coercive, and informational power.<sup>52</sup> In each of these six bases of power, the end goal is to influence other people in the leadership transaction between the leaders and those who follow.

Peter Northouse defines the term personal power concerning organizational leadership as a combination of referent and expert bases of power. States Northouse, "when leaders act in ways that are important to followers, it gives leaders power."<sup>53</sup> This

---

<sup>51</sup> Northouse, 15.

<sup>52</sup> Bertram Raven, "Social Influences and Power," *Current Studies in Social Psychology*, eds. I.D. Steiner, M. Fishbein, 371-82 (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston).

<sup>53</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 11.

type of power is different from power that is derived from one's position in an organization. Northouse defines positional power as "the power a person derives from a particular office or rank in a formal organizational system."<sup>54</sup> The terms *power* and *authority* are often used interchangeably. Both terms indicate a degree of control over a system or organization. In Hagberg's model of personal power stages, as a person moves to a higher stage of power, a greater inner sense of one's power and authority is critically important. It directly influences one's ability to provide leadership.

This study focuses on men's experiences of power. A related topic for further study is the way men and women deploy power through the leadership process. However, a lot of scholarship and research have been studied regarding gender and leadership since the 1970s. An increasing number of women entering leadership positions and the number of women who have entered academia fueled further study into leadership effectiveness.<sup>55</sup>

There are good arguments that assert there are indeed differences in leadership styles of gender types and that women's leadership is more effective in contemporary society. Northouse states regarding the differences in leadership styles:

Empirical research supports small differences in leadership styles and effectiveness between men and women. Women experience slight effectiveness disadvantages in masculine leader roles, whereas roles that are more feminine offer them some advantages. Additionally, women exceed men in the use of democratic or participatory styles, and they are more likely to use transformational leadership behaviors and contingent rewards, which are styles

---

<sup>54</sup> Northouse, 10.

<sup>55</sup> See: chapter 15 "Gender and Leadership," Northouse, 403-31.

associated with contemporary notions of effective leadership . . . . However, women are less likely to self-promote and negotiate than men.<sup>56</sup>

Feminist thought offers a different perspective on the capacity for leadership as reflected by Peter Northouse. According to Christina Hughes, feminist thought on personal power in organizations is more relational based upon the organization's nature. This relational nature requires a different use of power than would be presented in a patriarchal organization. In her book, *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research*, Hughes proposes themes of personal power from a feminist perspective that include equality, difference, choice, and experience.<sup>57</sup> Hughes suggests a theme that shows up frequently in studies of power is that a common theme of measurement of power and equality is “white middle-class masculinity,” even though this is clearly a limited measure.<sup>58</sup>

### **Narrative Theory**

Stories help people make meaning in their lives. In this sense, stories are crucial in understanding and bearing our reality. Narrative therapist and scholar Gerald Monk states, “meaning is not made for us, instead, we as individuals make our own realities base from our lives’ narratives.”<sup>59</sup> We find meaning through various ways—how we speak as well as the things we say and do. Even certain cultural discourses are handed to

---

<sup>56</sup> Northouse, 409.

<sup>57</sup> Christina Hughes, *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2002).

<sup>58</sup> Hughes, 37.

<sup>59</sup> Gerald Monk, John Winslade, et al. *Narrative Therapy in Practice: The Archaeology of Hope*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Wiley Publishing, 1996), 33.

us to make sense and meaning of the events in our lives. Thus, we make sense of our lives in the context of our social locations and personal history. We shape stories about the groups to which we belong and how we came to be who, how, and where we are.

Theologian Herbert Anderson shares the claim stories make on our hearts, often before we know such stories' power on our hearts and minds. States Anderson:

Stories are not simply heard or read or told; they are created. We use stories to construct meaning and communicate ourselves to another. Stories help us organize and make sense of the experience of life. Sometimes, however, we use stories to fashion a view of life for ourselves that avoids reality . . . . Whatever the purpose, we construct stories to integrate the disparate elements of our lives . . . . For this reason, it is not exaggeration to say we are our stories.<sup>60</sup>

The Narrative Theory method to meaning-making seeks to connect the stories individuals share in constructing individuality. These stories provide the background context that gives the possibility of coherence to our lives.<sup>61</sup> The theory is based on the supposition we all have a story to tell through life. Next to food, water, and the air we breathe, stories are vital for human life. However, we are not the sole author of our stories. Each of us speaks our truth that is informed by our life narrative. The narrative theory seeks to uncover our life narrative by generating stories and asking honest, open questions.

Many of the dominant stories that shape our lives were generated externally in experiences from our youth, at school, places of employment, in our families, in our churches, and in our social environments. All these institutions then give shape to the broader social constructs in which we live. Many of the dominant stories influence what we think about ourselves or what we might imagine to be true. Often, the stories we

---

<sup>60</sup> Herbert Anderson, Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Wiley Publishing, 2001), 5.

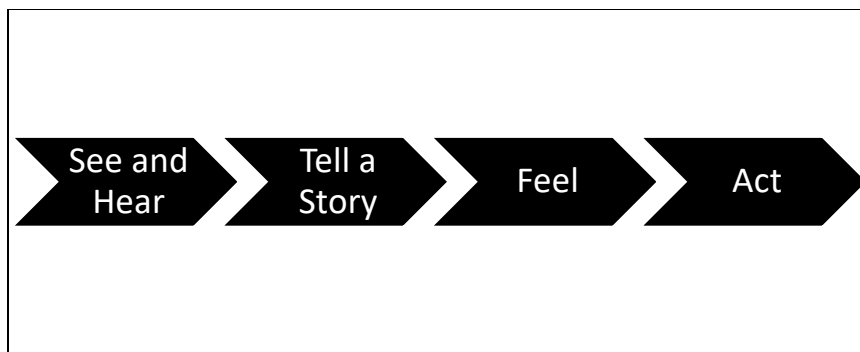
<sup>61</sup> See: Monk, Winslade et al. *Narrative Therapy in Practice*, 33ff.

shape cause problems for us because of the negatively assigned meaning we attach to our stories.

### Stories

If we associate ourselves with a storyline as “smart” or “ugly” or “mischievous,” then we tend to live life according to the stories that we have laid out for ourselves. The descriptions of the stories we create about ourselves stick like glue to us, and it is difficult to escape from the personal description we have created based upon the stories we believe. Our narratives create feelings we have about self-perception and the way we relate to the world around us. Just after we observe others’ actions and just before our feeling about any situation, we create a story that informs our feelings about the situation. In this manner, we add meaning to the actions of others.

Consequently, the process of action for narrative theory includes an observation through our five senses, creating a story based upon the observation, attaching a feeling to the story based upon the observations, leading to action and behavior. Narrative Theory and subsequent Narrative Therapy operate under the assumption that one can take back control of one’s own emotions by telling a counter-narrative which creates a point of leverage about the feelings one has attached to the story. Suppose one can find a way to control the narrative, by reframing. In that case, one can associate an alternative feeling that can lead to an alternative action or response to the narrative. As we come up with our own meaning, our bodies might respond with strong feelings or emotions. The emotions we feel are directly related to the judgments we make about right/wrong, good/bad, kind/selfish, fair/and unfair, etc.



**Figure 3. Grenny's "Path of Action" model<sup>62</sup>**

Organizational consultant, Joseph Grenny, has created a narrative theory model in what he calls “The Path of Action” to describe human beings' process of making meaning via stories. The purpose of Grenny’s model is threefold. The first purpose is to show that even if one does not realize it, one is creating stories. Story telling happens swiftly and often without much knowledge of the process. According to Grenny, the second purpose is to propose that any set of facts can tell an infinite number of stories—there is an assortment of stories that can fit any facts. Thirdly, Grenny’s model points out that if we cannot take control of our stories, then our stories will take control of us. States Grenny:

People who excel at dialogue are able to influence their emotions during crucial conversations. They recognize that while it is true that at first, we are in control of the stories we tell—after all, we do make them up on our own accord—once they are told, the stories control us.<sup>63</sup>

We need stories to create meaning by remembering past events to perceive what is happening in the present and what we might predict for the future based on the sense we have created from the past stories. Our stories can also be intended with an external purpose when we communicate ourselves to others. The narratives we hold have an

---

<sup>62</sup> See: Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes Are High*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2012), 109.

<sup>63</sup> Patterson et al., 111.

abundance of power derived from the meaning that is created. The meaning we create from stories can influence and shape our behavior and our response to stimuli, often based upon our previous experience in a similar situation.

Stories have the power to transform. Theologian Herb Anderson shares:

Stories are mighty not only because we shape our lives through them but also because they have the power to unsettle the lives we have comfortably shaped by them . . . . When we weave together the human and the divine, we are attentive to another story that is not completely our own, a narrative that has the power to transform . . . . Weaving together the human and the divine enable us to hear our own stories retold with clarity and new possibility. And when our own stories are retold, our lives are transformed in the telling.<sup>64</sup>

Narrative theory was an essential lens for this project concerning the qualitative interviewing that took place in the baseline interviews and during the end line focus group. At some point in the interview, each interviewee shared a story to help frame his response to the interview question. Not one interviewee could fully explain his response without sharing a personal narrative that helped explain the reasoning behind his response.

Everything that happens is neither good nor bad; the stories we create based upon our senses provide us a rationale for what is going on around us. From creating our stories, we then create feelings and emotions, which then lead to our actions. Stories are interpretations and perceptions of the facts. “They [stories] help explain what we see and hear. They are theories we use to explain *why*, *how*, and *what*.”<sup>65</sup>

Individuals are not the only beings that need stories to create meaning. Every human institution has a narrative about itself that it believes to be true. Authors Heifetz

---

<sup>64</sup> Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 7.

<sup>65</sup> Patterson et al., *Crucial Conversations*, 109.



and Linsky write about the dangers of altering the narrative of an organization in need of change. “Asking an entire community to change its ways [read: narrative] is dangerous. People do not resist change, per se. People resist loss.”<sup>66</sup> The perceived loss that is felt through the process of leadership is, in fact, an altered story about the organization. In altering the narrative of an organization, the perceived loss of meaning from the previous operation is felt when a leader inserts an adaptive change into the organization.

Thus, Heifetz and Linsky concluded, “the hope of leadership lies in the capacity to deliver disturbing news and raise difficult questions in a way that people can absorb, prodding them to take up the message rather than ignore it or kill the messenger.”<sup>67</sup>

Similarly, Grenny warns against the self-defeating narratives that have great potential to diminish personal power. Grenny calls these counter-narratives of delivering difficult news while maintaining one’s personal power “clever” stories. States Grenny:

Either our stories are completely accurate and propel us in healthy directions, or they are quite inaccurate but justify our current behavior—making us feel good about ourselves and calling for no need to change. It is the second kind of story that gets us in trouble. For example, we move to silence or violence, and then we come up with a perfectly plausible reason for why it is okay.<sup>68</sup>

#### Narrative Theory and the Concept of Power

The concept of power can operate through these invisible, unconscious, or even hidden stories. In his book, *Structured for Mission*, Alan Roxburgh defines “legitimizing

---

<sup>66</sup> Martin Linsky and Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2002/04/18/, 2002). [https://amazon.com/Leadership-Line-Staying-through-Dangers/dp/1578514371/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1510344533&sr=8-1&keywords=leadership+on+the+line](https://amazon.com/Leadership-Line-Staying-through-Dangers/dp/1578514371/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1510344533&sr=8-1&keywords=leadership+on+the+line).

<sup>67</sup> Linsky and Heifetz, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Patterson et al., *Crucial Conversations*, 116.

narratives” as the overreaching stories of groups that reveal their underlying beliefs, commitments, and values.<sup>69</sup> These narratives form group identity and shape the culture and attitudes of the group. Roxburgh indicates that structures and institutions embody legitimating narratives but continue to be shaped and reshaped in a continual process of negotiation between competing narratives.<sup>70</sup> The challenge Roxburgh addresses is the rejection of the counternarrative. This counternarrative misshapes the legitimating narratives that address both the attitude and effort either for an individual or within an organization or structure.

Like Roxburgh’s description of “legitimizing narratives,” Janet Hagberg addresses narrative theory as a crucial role in Stages Four through Six of her model of personal power. Without narrative theory and internal reflection (which then leads to creating meaning) one cannot get to a deeper sense of personal power. States Hagberg:

Personal power at the highest stages includes the power derived from external sources represented by organizational and political positions, expertise, titles, degrees, control, material goods, responsibility, and authority but combined with the power that can be derived only from within. Inner power develops from introspection, personal struggles, the gradual evolution of life purpose, a spiritual connection with a source beyond yourself, and from accepting and valuing yourself.<sup>71</sup>

Equally crucial to sharing a narrative is listening to the meaning of the narrative. Space for listening must be made so the story can generate that meaning. Storytelling allows one to be vulnerable, pass along one’s values and traditions, confess shortcomings, seek redemption, find hope, and strengthen community.

---

<sup>69</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh, *Structured for Mission: Renewing the Culture of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 32.

<sup>70</sup> Roxburgh, 39-41.

<sup>71</sup> Hagberg, *Real Power*, xxi.

Because of the vulnerability that comes with sharing personal narratives, group guidelines were established and reviewed at the beginning of each intervention.<sup>72</sup>

Regarding the circle of trust when sharing a vulnerable story, author Parker Palmer shares:

When we tell our personal stories in a circle of trust, the ground rules prohibit people from helping us “solve” whatever problem may be embedded in those stories. But storytelling in such a circle often yields powerful “solutions” nonetheless—in the lives of those who speak *and* of those who listen.<sup>73</sup>

Personal power emerges when one can acknowledge one’s constraints without becoming a victim to them.

### **Masculinity—A Modern Crisis for Manhood?**

There are a variety of perspectives on masculinity that exist today. Nevertheless, whatever is meant by “masculinity” seems to be shifting and changing. There is no such thing as one form (or expression) of masculinity. As Susan Faludi proposes, the task for men is not “to figure out how to be masculine—rather their masculinity lies in figuring out how to be human.”<sup>74</sup> This project was an invitation to male study participants to reimagine their personal power by developing their humanity more fully through five spiritual practices.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> See appendix C.

<sup>73</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2004), 125.

<sup>74</sup> Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Male* (New York: William Morrow, 1999), 607.

<sup>75</sup> The five spiritual practices are discussed in chapters one and four.

Most people are comfortable dividing people into two categories—male and female. If asked to explain the difference between the two categories one might explain the difference in biology—male and female bodies are different. They (males and females) have different reproductive organs and hormones. However, there is a great variety in how women and men vary in their perceptions and society’s femininity and masculinity ideals. Simple biological features do not necessarily ensure that a person acts “womanly” or “manly.” There is something more complicated than biological differences between people.<sup>76</sup>

There are many expressions of gender identity currently recognized. The ELCA 2015 social statement, “Gender-Based Violence” defines “gender” as “categories into which cultures/societies separate behaviors and characteristics that are usually considered masculine or feminine. The most common gender identities are *woman* and *man*. Still, other identities exist and are become more widely used and understood.”<sup>77</sup> Additionally, the social statement includes the definition of “gender non-conforming,” which is defined as:

. . . people whose gender identity, gendered way of acting in the world, and biological characteristics do not completely fit within predominantly expected ways of acting as a man or a woman. There are many identities and experiences included under the umbrella of gender non-conforming.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> See: Joan Ferrante, ed., “Gender and Sexualities: With Emphasis on Gender Ideals” *Sociology: A Global Perspective* 7th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2013), 269-72.

<sup>77</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). “Gender Based Violence,” (2015), <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Gender-Based-Violence> (accessed July 3, 2020).

<sup>78</sup> ELCA, Gender Based Violence, 1.

Gender is not binary; it is not *either/or*, and in many cases, gender is a *both/and* identity.<sup>79</sup> No one is their gender, nor are they their nationality, ethnicity, skin color, or social class. None of these qualities are our true self in God. In this sense, gender is much like a hermeneutic in which gender terms—feminist and masculine—provide an opportunity to position oneself in relation to one’s cultural backdrop and to measure to larger social norms.

The field of masculine studies as it relates to biblical studies is relatively new and terminology related to the field has not yet been solidified.<sup>80</sup> Despite all the changes in North American culture that have taken shape over the past fifty years, old gender myths (read: patriarchy) and male patterns of dominance have persisted. Herb Anderson, theologian and essayist, writes, “real men, some still believe, hide feelings, talk tough, like football, keep distance, swallow tears, avoid dependence, ignore fear, and value action over thought. These patterns have endured so long that men still assume it is their nature to dominate. Rethinking masculinity is complicated.”<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Gender is comprised of many aspects of a person. Such aspects can include: Gender Identity (woman-ness or man-ness), Gender expression (feminine or masculine), biological sex (female-ness or male-ness), Sexual attraction and/or romantic attraction (woman/females/femininity or men/males/masculinity). See: “Genderbread Person v4.0,” a project of <https://www.hues.xyz>. accessed June 26, 2020, <https://www.genderbread.org>.

<sup>80</sup> Susan Haddox offers a historical perspective of the term “masculinity” and indicates that the field of masculinity as an academic discipline was developed in the 1970s as a result of the first wave of the feminist movement. This first wave of scholarship was followed by a second wave in the 1990s known as the “mythopoetic movement.” Because terminology has not been set, Haddox uses the terms “masculist” and “masculism” as constructed concepts of masculinity. See: Susan E. Haddox, “Masculinity Studies of the Hebrew Bible: The First Two Decades,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 14, no. 2 (2016): 176-206, accessed February 19, 2020. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1476993X15575496>.

<sup>81</sup> Herbert Anderson, “Leaving the Door to the Soul Ajar: Rethinking Masculinity” *Word and World* 36 (Spring 2016): 36.

Perceptions and expectations of men and masculinity in Western culture have been breaking down over the past fifty years. Shifts in work patterns that relied upon men's physical strength to work using the strength of their bodies have been replaced by robots, information, technology, and automation. Many of the social issues and cultural problems we face, in some way, relate to the collapse of masculinity—homelessness, drug use, single-family homes, gangs, men acting out sexually, and so on. Increasingly, men are beginning to realize the masculine spiritual crisis in their own lives in the form of loneliness, alienation, emptiness in their work, collapsed relationships have all led to an identity crisis in modern Western society. The problems we face are growing too large to avoid a public platform and to simply dismiss as “issues that will solve themselves.”

It is my intention with this project to make masculinity in the church more visible. This is to say, this project builds upon the feminist approaches to gender by also making masculinity visible. Michael Kimmel writes a persuasive reason why gender (specifically masculinity) needs to be made visible. States Kimmel:

Men are ubiquitous in universities and professional schools and in the public sphere in general. And it's true that if you look at the college curriculum, every course that doesn't have the word “women” in the title is about men. Every course that isn't in “woman's study” is de facto a course in “men's studies”—except we usually call it “history,” “political science,” “literature,” “chemistry.” But when we study men, we study them as political leaders, military heroes, scientists, writers, artists. Men, themselves, are invisible as *men*. Rarely, if ever, do we see a course that examines the lives of men as men. What is the impact of gender on the lives of these famous men? How does masculinity play a part in the lives of great artists, writers, presidents, etc.? How does masculinity play out in the lives of “ordinary” men—in factories and on farms, in union halls and large corporations? On this score, the traditional curriculum suddenly draws a big blank. Everywhere one turns there are courses about men, but virtually no information on masculinity.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (New York: Nation Books, 2013), 6.

This project attempts to create the space to allow men to perform some necessary inner-work to examine what is giving them energy, motivation, and the source of their inner-strength (personal power). Recent masculine biblical hermeneutics<sup>83</sup> has cast a new path of discussion for modern manliness including gender expression and what defines a “man.” Herbert Anderson comments that “Men who seek to turn patriarchy inside out and who long to discover masculine humanness will find sustenance for the journey by regular participation in communities that faithfully practice dying.”<sup>84</sup>

The term “Hegemonic Masculinity” has been frequently used to discuss social constructs in gender relations. The term has been attributed to Tim Carrigan and has been used to discuss masculinity vis-à-vis discussions of power.<sup>85</sup> Susan Haddox establishes Hegemonic Masculinity is a:

. . . specific gender construction that is dominant in cultural and political power structures. Even if no actual men embody that form of masculinity, the combination of the traits still dominates as the ideal masculinity because of its association with power. Thus, a particular gender construction is imitated and propagated by those who seek to rise in the hierarchy of status and power.<sup>86</sup>

The balance of power in a hegemonic masculinity construct always resides with men as a gap of inequality exists between men and women. In this model, gender is

---

<sup>83</sup> For an overview of masculine studies and its intersection with New Testament studies, see: Stephen D. Moore, “‘O Man, Who Art Thou...?’: Masculine Studies and New Testament Studies,” *New Testament Masculinities*, eds. S. D. Moore and J. Capel Anderson; (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 1-22. See also discussion in chapter one.

<sup>84</sup> Anderson, *Leaving the Door to the Soul Ajar*, 36.

<sup>85</sup> Tim Carrigan coined the phrase “hegemonic masculinity” in 1985 in which he critiqued the male sex role and domination of sexual partners. Carrigan proposed a model of multiple masculinities and power relations between genders. See: Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, John Lee, “Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity,” *Theory and Society* 14, no. 5 (September 1985): accessed February 2, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00160017>.

<sup>86</sup> Haddox, “Masculinity Studies of the Hebrew Bible,” 179.

expressed through a sense of power that some men have over others (including other men) and particularly over women. Michael Kimmel suggests that it is “impossible to explain gender without adequately understanding power—not because power is the consequence of gender difference, but rather because power is what produces those gender differences in the first place.”<sup>87</sup>

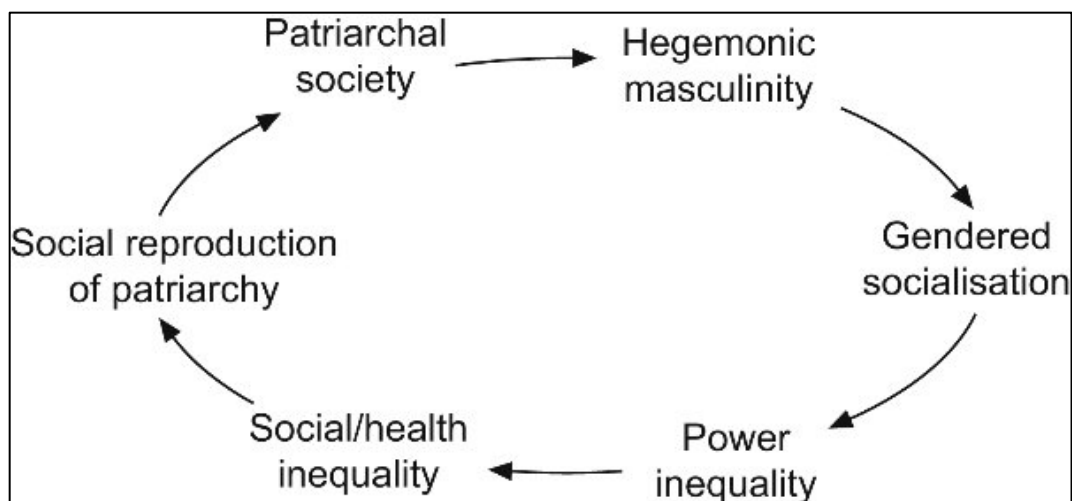
Hegemonic masculinity has been the root of a lot of problems in the Western world. The propagation of the cycle of patriarchy has been profound in the life of the church. Anderson emphasizes that in itself, “power is good. Power becomes a problem in life when it is used to control or dominate or abuse others.”<sup>88</sup> Men's use of power to dominate or control is the engine that runs the cycle of Hegemonic Masculinity as noted in figure four on the following page. The antidote to escape this cycle is living into a vulnerability of letting go of a need to control or dominate.

---

<sup>87</sup> Kimmel, *Angry White Men*, 119.

<sup>88</sup> Anderson, *Leaving the Door to the Soul Ajar*, 41.





**Figure 4. Cyclical pattern of Hegemonic Masculinity<sup>89</sup>**

Anderson advocates that to break the cycle of Hegemonic Masculinity, men must reclaim their masculinity by fully developing their humanity. States Anderson:

Men in our time are free to reclaim overlooked qualities like nurturing, grieving, paying attention, being a friend, sharing power, and acknowledging vulnerability that are common to being human . . . . Sharing power and acknowledging vulnerability need to be held together at the center of masculine humanness . . . . I believe this close connection between power and vulnerability are unavoidably linked because human beings are social creatures whose personal power is laced with vulnerability because power and autonomy depend on the recognition of others who cannot be manipulated.<sup>90</sup>

This study explores this intersection between masculinity and power. A support group for men to discuss life challenges, goals, and life is a helpful way for men to express power through acts of sharing vulnerability with one another. Power emerges when working through men's fears, understanding feelings, healing old wounds, sharing and enhancing their faith life, and showing up more powerfully in the world by working through perceived weakness issues. As men become more open to the world's hurts, more

<sup>89</sup> Sandra Trappen, "Who is a Feminist?" *Dr. Sandra Trappen blog post*, March 6, 2015, accessed April 9, 2021, <https://sandratrappen.com/2015/03/06/who-is-t-is-a-feminist>.

<sup>90</sup> Anderson, 37.

vulnerable with themselves, truer to themselves, the more love is felt because they are no longer hiding their false self and parts of life that are not true.

### Towards Radical Compassion and Active Empathy

Biblical scholar and Duke Divinity School professor, Stephen Wilson, shares the following insight in his book, *Making Men: The Male Coming-of-Age Theme in the Hebrew Bible*:

One of the most significant social and physiological transitions in a man's life is the change from childhood to adulthood. However, identifying and describing this transition in a particular culture is often difficult because the age or development stage at which a boy is considered a man, as well as the way that change is socially recognized, differs considerably among cultures . . . . Even in societies lacking a system of maturation rites—it is worth asking whether this theme [male initiation] is attested in the literature of ancient Israel found in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>91</sup>

In Western society, initiation rites, rites-of-passage, and coming-of-age rituals have vanished for decades. While there are a few religious exceptions (bar mitzvah for Jewish boys), and perhaps to a lesser extent—the Christian act of Confirmation in which an adolescent youth affirms his/her baptism as part of their identity, there are not many cultural markers indicating that a boy has become a man.

For many Western men, the boundary between boy and manhood is blurry. How does a boy know he is now a man? Is it due to physical maturation and physical characteristics like a deepening of his voice and facial hair growth? Or, the pseudo-rite-of-passage like obtaining a driver's license, turning eighteen, graduating, legal drinking age, or sexual debut?

---

<sup>91</sup> Stephen M. Wilson, *Making Men: The Male Coming-of-Age Theme in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

University of Michigan researcher and author Emily Yochim attempts to answer the questions of moving from boyhood into becoming a man in her book, *Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity*.<sup>92</sup> In her chapter titled, “Why is it the Things that Make you a Man Tend to be Such Dumb Things to Do?” Yochim uses a cultural example of young men goofing around from the frivolous MTV show from the early 2000s, “Jackass,” as she explains the issues underlying the changing perspectives on masculinity are not unique. For several decades cultural shifts have been taking place that have affected almost every aspect of modern life. Author and philosopher Sam Keen suggests what he calls the shifting “tectonic plates”<sup>93</sup> that have supported the modern world. States Keen:

The earthquake that is shaking men and women, their roles and interrelationships, is part and parcel of this shifting of the world culture’s tectonic plates. The changes in our gender roles are only one aspect of the upheaval that accompanies the death of one epoch and the birth of another. And we will be in the birth process for several generations.<sup>94</sup>

How do men find a balance being a father, a brother, a son, a husband or partner, and an ally in the modern world? Author Michael Kimmel maintains in his book, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of An Era*, that we are at the end of an era, not of men, but the end of the era of men’s entitlement. States Kimmel:

The end of the era in which a young man could assume, without question, it was not only a ‘man’s world’ but a straight white man’s world. It is less of a man’s world, today, that is true—white men have to share some space with others. But it is no longer a world of unquestioned male privilege. Men may still be “in power” and many men may not feel powerful, but it is the sense of entitlement—that

---

<sup>92</sup> See: Emily C. Yochim, *Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010) accessed January 31, 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/book.7240>.

<sup>93</sup> Sam Keen, *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 5.

<sup>94</sup> Keen, 5.

sense that although I may not be in power at the moment, I deserve to be, and if I am not, something is definitely wrong.<sup>95</sup>

In light of the traditional male-dominated leadership in the church, much of church life and ministry is made up of women. From this perspective, fortunately, many in the church have come to understand the narrow-sided perspective and patriarchal characteristics of a single-gender, male leadership model over the past four decades.

Modern thought and inclusion have led to a more diverse leadership field in the church that reflects a broad spectrum of an assorted culture like that of North America. Yet, the work of striving for diversity is one that is desperately needed if the church is to remain culturally relevant to an increasingly diverse North American society. In the last four decades, many (men) in the church have examined the effectiveness of the patriarchal characteristics and have owned up to the suppression of women's leadership. This work is far from over, but the rate and numbers of female rostered leadership in the ELCA is encouraging as increasingly more women are rostered in either Word and Sacrament or Word and Service ministry.

For some men, this journey of diversity is painful and feels as though power is being taken away from traditional models of ecclesial leadership. We can and should celebrate the diversity and richness of greater equality and an increased capacity for the Gospel and the grace of God to be shared with an ever-increasing diversity of people. Indeed, we celebrate the difficult work to build up a more inclusive, diverse leadership for the church, with many engaged in the work and devotion to making more room for a

---

<sup>95</sup> Kimmel, *Angry White Men*, xiii-xiv.

diversity of voices to free the church from a male-dominated, hegemonic masculinity-oriented ecclesial captivity.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of three key theoretical lenses that inform this study of the effects of spiritual practices in men's lives. The three lenses are personal power and an examination of Janet Hagberg's personal power stages related to leadership theory with respect to power as a function of leadership, narrative theory including the essential role of stories in meaning making, and a discussion of the challenges to modern masculinity.

The following chapter will deepen these theoretical lenses through a discussion of biblical and theological perspectives. Following the theoretical lens of personal power in this chapter, a continued discussion of examples of power found in the Bible along with stories of the three forms of biblical power is engaged. Theological framing of this project will include the theology of the cross, spiritual practices, and a discussion of trinitarian theology that will further enhance this project and tie together the theoretical lenses used in this project.

## CHAPTER THREE

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The words of scripture and the theological lenses that support the concept of power and its effect on people of faith—both biblical characters and followers of Jesus today—are critical for this project. There are many ways in which “power” is used throughout the Bible, and in this chapter, the concept of power will be explored. Another beneficial lens includes the hermeneutic of biblical masculinity. Masculinity as a biblical hermeneutic has emerged in scholarship only in the last fifty years and the field is expanding.<sup>1</sup> A hermeneutic of Luther’s Theology of the Cross is explored, as well as both spiritual practices and rituals, and Trinitarian theology as the source of all power. The following biblical and theological lenses are particularly noteworthy in studying how the spiritual practices in men's lives might affect their sense of personal power in their life.

#### **Biblical Framework**

The Bible contains many stories of God’s power and God’s empowerment of people as they serve the *missio Dei*. Both the Old Testament and New Testament recount God's mighty works amid the Israelites and then extending to the Gentiles through the

---

<sup>1</sup> Masculinity studies developed in the 1970s and 1980s as a response, in large part, to the feminist movement beginning in the 1960s. The first wave of study focused on exploring characteristics of men, especially reclaiming aspects of manhood as perceived to be lost by the decline of the industrial age. Susan Haddox indicates because masculine studies is “relatively new, terminology has not yet solidified. See: Haddox, 177.

reconciling work of Christ. Walter Wink advocates the position that “language of power pervades the whole New Testament.”<sup>2</sup> Wink continues:

On every page of the New Testament one finds the terminology of power: those incumbents, offices, structures, roles, institutions, ideologies, rituals, rules, agents, and spiritual influences by which power is established and exercised. The language and reality of power pervades the New Testament because power is one of the primary ways the world is organized and run. No human activity can be described without recourse to this language.<sup>3</sup>

Deeds of God’s power through divine interaction with humanity is a defining representation of the biblical story as scripture communicates the dramatic aspects of God’s organization of a specific people to undertake leadership roles in/for God’s plan. Yet, as Wink indicates, humans have structures, institutions, and a need for organized, pragmatic systems that include human agency and power to provide leadership.

The first form of power in the Bible begins with creation. Spirit, in the Old Testament *ruach*, is the power of God for life. In the six days of the creation of the book of Genesis, it is the *ruach* (spirit) of God which calls in order creation— “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” (Gen. 1:3). This word, *ruach*, can be translated in many ways (pneuma, spirit, breath). Jürgen Moltmann offers that the term is better defined as a “divine energy of life.”<sup>4</sup> States Moltmann, “The creative power of God is the transcendent side of the *ruach*. The power to live enjoyed by everything that lives is its immanent side.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 99.

<sup>3</sup> Wink, 99.

<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, Fortieth Anniversary ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 40.

<sup>5</sup> Moltmann, 42.

## Three Examples of Power in the Biblical Narrative

### Genesis 1:1-3—The Gift of Power

The first three chapters of Genesis lay the foundation for the entire Bible. So important are the creation stories in the first three chapters of the book of Genesis to the entire scope of the Bible that Richard Rohr suggests the Bible is a story about getting Adam back into the garden.<sup>6</sup> The beginning of the Bible, the creation stories, are set out to be stories of goodness and beauty resulting from God's good and creative power.

The source of power in the first creation account is from the voice and will of the Creator.<sup>7</sup> God speaks creation into being. "Let there be..." and with these words, power is not asserted nor is it imposed. Power, in the beginning, is simply an expression of the triune God. On each of the successive days, power is displayed through the creation and those who have been created then share in the divine power by yielding seed, bearing fruit, and having dominion over the creation. God said:

See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed, it was very good.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of the first chapter of Genesis, God gifts humanity power for the blossoming of all of God's handiwork. Humans become an image-bearer of the divine through this gift of God granting power for the service of God's creation. This sense of power—*power for*—is not to be misconstrued as *power over*. The image-bearers of

---

<sup>6</sup> Rohr, *Adam's Return*, xx.

<sup>7</sup> See Gen. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Gen. 1:29-31.



God's power in humanity do not exist for humanity's flourishing alone but to bring about the whole creation into fulfillment.<sup>9</sup>

### **John 2—A Story of Divine Power**

In the second chapter of the Gospel of John, after Jesus had called his disciples to follow him, Jesus attends a wedding in Cana of Galilee along with his mother and disciples. The wine, which ran out, was a predicament for the wedding host and a concern for Jesus. Following the established roles of hospitality at a feast, Jesus instructs the servants to obtain the six stone water jars and orders them to fill the jars with copious amounts of water. The servants follow Jesus' order (a form of power as a guest) and then they report to the chief steward, whose job it is to accomplish the plan for the banquet. What happens next in the story is the first recorded miracle in John's gospel.

When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the stewards called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now."<sup>10</sup>

From this first miracle story, we can learn several things about Jesus' power. The first is that Jesus' power does not run through predictable means. The laws of the natural world do not confine Jesus and his display of power. In addition to Jesus' supernatural power to perform miracles, there is also a social power dynamic that causes the servants and Mary to turn to him and follow his instructions. Later in the gospel, he commands power over the natural environment by calming the raging sea and saving his disciples'

---

<sup>9</sup> See Rom. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Jn. 2: 9-10.

lives.<sup>11</sup> Jesus' divine power is not subject to any human power or principality, nor the power of creation. John, the gospel writer, places this story of water turned wine to inform that Jesus' power is not from this world.

Secondly, Jesus' power, as John records, reveals God's glory. True power is about revealing the glory of God which leads to an unfolding of possibilities. John says, "Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed him."<sup>12</sup> In this miracle, Jesus deploys two distinct types of power—one is a supernatural kind of power, and the other type of power is Jesus' social/ personal power. The gospel writer John tells us Jesus' miracle intended to reveal God's glory, which led to the disciples believing and following Jesus' instruction. Jesus' appearance was not transformed, nor does he become the center of attention due to his power. We can presume there was no ego involved in Jesus' miracle—the glory in this story was about Jesus' identity, not ego. The glory displayed in this story reveals Jesus' true identity—the core of his being.

Thirdly, Jesus' power leads to an abundance, overflowing, and flourishing in the story of the wedding at Cana. Moreover, the story is about excellence and magnificence in that the wine created from the water was no ordinary wine—the chief steward recognized it as being superb. This excellence is repeated throughout the gospel as Jesus performs miracles with an abundance of blessings that result from his power. This leads to the fourth noteworthy thing about Jesus' display of power—it is hidden as much as it is revealed. The gospel writer, John, writes as though the reader of the gospel is in on a

---

<sup>11</sup> Jn. 6:16-21.

<sup>12</sup> Jn. 2:11.

secret about Jesus' power, but we cannot assume that the guests at the wedding had any idea about his display of power.

Such power that exists in the world may very well be invisible. If one is not looking for this divine power expressed in the humanity of Jesus, it may very well be looked over and go unnoticed even as the effects of power are seen, celebrated, and attributed to something other than God's power. In the story of the wedding of Cana, the one who gets the credit for the supply of outstanding wine is the bridegroom, but it is Jesus who, in the end, gets the glory. Glory, like Jesus' power, is hidden even as it is revealed. This story is about signs, not about turning water into wine or pleasing wedding guests. Signs point to something beyond themselves to a deeper meaning.

### **John 13—Jesus' Display of Power and "Privilege"**

In John's account of the washing of the disciples' feet before his passion, Jesus gets up from the table, removes his outer robe, and ties a towel around his waist. He then pours water into a basin and begins to wash feet.<sup>13</sup> By performing this act of washing feet, Jesus is doing the job of a lowly servant. Peter recognizes this act, interrupts it as being beneath Jesus' stature, and he protests Jesus washing his feet. Peter tells Jesus, "you will never wash my feet!" (Jn. 13:8). Here, then, Peter is protesting against his teacher and master's power. Who will win? This is an example of power in its most elementary form—the ability to convince someone else to obey a command or request.

---

<sup>13</sup> Paraphrase of John 13:4.

Jesus wins when he replies to Peter, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” And then Peter replies, “Lord, not my feet only but my hands and my head!”<sup>14</sup> Jesus maintains his ability to convince Peter to maintain his faithfulness to him, and in return, Peter, too, wins a place among those at Jesus’ table in his new kingdom. And yet, the story of power does not end with this exchange. Jesus then sits down and offers another reminder of his power. “Do you know what I have done to you,” Jesus asks. “You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am.”<sup>15</sup> Jesus displays no false humility here—he is revealing his glory and power—he has come from God and is going to God. He is secure in both his mission and his power from God.

The interesting twist to this account of Jesus’ power is that nowhere in the account does Jesus relinquish his power. This account, then, speaks to Jesus’ action of washing feet—a job for the lowest servant—as a sign of his own power. Jesus does not give up power, but he does give up his privilege and status. This story of Jesus washing feet follows a familiar pattern in the gospels—Jesus is powerful. He can heal, forgive, and feed thousands, yet he never accepts any privilege or secures social status as a result of his mighty deeds of power.

### **Masculinity Studies in Modern Theology**

*Jesus of Nazareth, a man [ανδρα] attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man. . .you crucified and killed. —Acts 2:22-23*

A Christian masculine theology centers on Jesus of Nazareth. According to Paul’s theology, though he was male, the Christ archetype is not gender-specific. Paul makes

---

<sup>14</sup> Jn. 13: 8-9.

<sup>15</sup> Jn. 13:12-13.

clear that those in Christ Jesus are all children of God through faith. Through Christ, there is a far deeper unity than any distinction between male/female, slave/free, Jew/Gentile.<sup>16</sup>

In the recently published *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality*, Professor Colleen Conway advises Masculinity Studies in New Testament scholarship is in its “boyhood” and has only recently begun to become a lens New Testament inquiry. States Conway:

Masculinity studies came to New Testament scholarship through a combination of different academic theories and disciplines. Across the humanities, the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century saw feminist, poststructuralist, gender, and queer theories working to unmask the constructed nature of gender categories. Categories once seen as essential aspects of human identity—male/female, masculine/feminine, sexuality and the body—were now understood as unstable cultural constructions subject to continues change.<sup>17</sup>

The study of masculinity, as Conway suggests, was aligned with the associated feminist movement in the late 1970s and 1980s. That masculine biblical study is only in its “boyhood” is quite ironic given the biblical interpretation for thousands of years has been of/by men. The operative mode for biblical interpretation was by men and for men.

Regarding this irony, Susan Haddox writes:

Until the past few decades, portrayals of men were interpreted as the human norm and not studied explicitly as the products of constructed gender. As the field of gender studies has grown and made its way into biblical criticism, the study of masculinity has gained increasing importance . . . . Because the field of masculinity studies is relatively new, terminology has not yet solidified. The lack of vocabulary that is parallel to ‘feminist’ and ‘feminism’ demonstrates the general unmarked nature of masculinity in cultural structures, including language.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Gal. 3:27-28.

<sup>17</sup> Conway, 77.

<sup>18</sup> Haddox, “Masculine Studies of the Hebrew Bible,” 176-77.

It is heartening that both feminine and masculine hermeneutics are studied in modern biblical scholarship given the history of biblical scholarship and the assumed masculine emphases. Within biblical criticism, both studies (feminine and masculine hermeneutics) complement the biblical text by examining the cultural constructs and power structures in the Bible.

Writing about masculinity in Luke's gospel, scholar Brittany Wilson observes that Luke does not reject prevalent concepts of masculinity. Wilson articulates that Luke “provides a refiguration of masculinity that is inextricably wed to his [Luke’s] understanding of God’s powerless power.”<sup>19</sup> Wilson claims that the gospel writer Luke refigures conceptions of power by making the claim that God’s power is paradoxically (and simultaneously) powerless.

In her parsing of the gendered implications of God’s power in Luke-Acts, Wilson maintains that Jesus’ death was unmanly and that Jesus’ death had far-reaching consequences. Although God takes the form of a gender-specific “man” (*ανδρα*), God “bends the gender rules in this masculine state by not acting accordingly to manly standards and dying an unmanly death.”<sup>20</sup> Because of this gender-bending death, Wilson argues that, “God suffers with humans (men and ‘nonmen’ alike) and overcomes the power of death by dying.”<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 263.

<sup>20</sup> Wilson, 262.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

Jesus is the personification of God the Father. At the core of Jesus hu(man)ity is the Immanuel—God in hu(man) flesh. The ministry of Jesus offers compelling archetypes for modern-day masculinity that moves beyond cultural and “traditional” masculinity. Turning toward Jesus, we witness an alternative to the aggressive, patriarchal, militant, and dominant masculinity. Jesus simulates a more profound understanding that includes compassion, humility, and purpose. The Gospel continually tells the story that Jesus is motivated by his compassion: he has compassion for the sick, the suffering, and the sinful. He does not hold back compassion by refusing to share it with anyone who comes to him in need—Jew, Samaritan, or Roman.

### **Theological Framework**

In this section, I address three theological frameworks that informed this project. Theology of the Cross and how the paradox of the cross (power in powerlessness) informs personal power is the first framework. The second theological lens is spiritual practices and the role ritual plays in shaping men's faith lives. The third theological lens articulates Trinitarian theology and how the power of God informs the life of the world.

#### The Theology of the Cross

At the heart of Christian theology is the crucifixion of Jesus. So important was the cross that Martin Luther understood it as the center of the Christian faith. Martin Luther argued that the whole theological language be revised considering the cross of Christ—“the cross alone is our theology” (*crux sola nostra theologia*) and “the cross puts

everything to the test” (*crux probat omnia*).<sup>22</sup> From the crucifixion event, we see that the paradoxical nature of power is that it is disguised as a form of weakness.

Herbert Anderson calls this paradoxical nature of power as “living into vulnerability the Jesus way.”<sup>23</sup> In light of the cross, divine power is revealed in the weakness of the cross. When appropriately used, Christian power is only about weakness—in terms of a cross—power hidden in the form of weakness.

Yet, paradoxically, the cross is simultaneously power in the form of weakness, but it is also a message of hope. Says Moltmann:

Whereas hope lives by the memory of the future of Christ, so here hope draws on the memory of Christ’s death. The gravity and bodily nature of the hope in God’s faithfulness to his promise is decided by the incarnation of this hope in the history of the suffering Christ.<sup>24</sup>

Our culture teaches us to move away from our suffering, to move out of uncomfortable spaces and situations. We are taught to pass over the challenging and difficult moments trusting that life will be easier and more manageable when things are going our way. But the gospel calls us to something altogether different. We are called to lean into suffering, to open ourselves to the stranger. We are encouraged to recognize and embrace the pain and not let go of it until we learn what it is trying to teach us.

Jesus knew of suffering from the moment he was born into poverty. Jesus knew the pain of physical torture and execution on a Roman cross. This suffering Jesus is the God whom we follow. With his coming, we learn that the most dangerous place for a

---

<sup>22</sup> *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), in *LW* 31:39-40.

<sup>23</sup> Anderson, 40.

<sup>24</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Hope: Theology for a World in Peril* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 4.



Christian is to be smug with ourselves—to be safe and secure—detached from others' pain and suffering.

Let us take, for example, the word power as it relates to the crucifixion. In light of the cross, power takes on a very different meaning as divine power is revealed in the weakness of death on the cross. Therefore, for a theologian of the cross, when we speak of divine power, we speak of the death of Jesus on the cross at the hands of evil powers and earthly principalities as a conquest of death and the anthesis of all human evil. When one talks of divine power, power is to be conceived of in terms of the cross—power that is hidden in weakness as St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

Professor Cameron Howard, writing about biblical masculinity, comments that:

the central Christian message of power in weakness—that the Savior of the world did not conquer the world but rather died on a cross at the hands of the world—is itself contrary to today’s hegemonic masculinity ideals of being a “real man,” one who should not show weakness [but power].<sup>25</sup>

In the book of Romans, Paul writes in chapter seven, “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate . . . For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it” (Rom. 7:15,18). Paul suggests that personal power is found in the counterintuitive wisdom that powerlessness is what emerges as power.

The spiritual master and contemplative, Father Thomas Keating, thought that this (wisdom of powerlessness) is the human condition. States Keating:

---

<sup>25</sup> Cameron Howard, “Preaching Texts of Multiple Masculinities to a World of Multiple Masculinities,” *Word & World* 36, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 74-81.

The first step highlights the fact that all human beings are deeply wounded. From earliest childhood we start out on the path to self-consciousness without any idea of what happiness actually is, apart from the gratification of our instinctual needs for survival and security, affection, esteem and approval, and power and control. But human nature being what it is, and the world being a hazardous place, we can't count on the fulfillment of our instinctual needs, and some children are terribly deprived in one or all of these three areas. . . . To be powerless means to be absolutely helpless . . . . This, oddly enough, is the best disposition to enter a spiritual journey . . . . Because the deeper one's awareness of one's powerlessness and more desperate, the more willing one is to reach out for help.<sup>26</sup>

The message of Jesus' temptation story recorded in the gospels teaches about powerlessness. This story's message seems to be saying that you will always abuse power unless one goes on journeys of powerlessness. If one has never had (or been rightly taught) about personal power, one likely does not know what to do with it (power). Essentially, one's ego is inflated and makes one misuse the power that has been granted.

### Spiritual Practices

The participants of this project were asked to engage in monthly spiritual practices in which they reflected how the spiritual practice informs their sense of personal power. Dorothy Bass offered a helpful definition of Christian practices in her book, *Practicing Our Faith*. States Bass: "Christian practices are things Christian people do together over time in response to and in light of God's active presence for the life of the world [in Jesus Christ]."<sup>27</sup> Further, to help clarify the role of spiritual practices for this project, a helpful understanding of spiritual practices can be any habitual act in which one enters with one's whole heart that takes one to a deeper place and understanding,

---

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Keating, *Divine Therapy and Addiction: Centering Prayer and the Twelve Steps* (Cincinnati, OH: Lantern Books, 2009), 11-12.

<sup>27</sup> Dorothy C. Bass, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 5.

especially regarding matters of faith. Some of these practices we might not think of as prayer and meditation: tending to a garden or yard work, a long, slow walk to no place in particular, a quiet moment at the end of the day. These are acts that can ground us in deeper dimensions of our life that matter to us.

Bass offers there are three core characteristics related to the practices.<sup>28</sup> The first is that practices address the fundamental needs and conditions through concrete human acts. Spiritual practices have a particular purpose, such as promoting hospitality, healing, discernment, and the creation of community. These are examples illustrating such purposes of engaging in spiritual practices.

Secondly, practices are done together often over time.<sup>29</sup> The intent of this study was both individual and communal in scope. The participants gathered monthly to engage and rehearse the spiritual practice during the monthly interventions, but the focus was also on an individual spiritual practice throughout the month. Regarding the paradoxical communal/individual nature of spiritual practices, Bass comments that:

. . .you say “yes” to God and no to the destructive forces in your life. Once in, you find that a practice has a certain internal feel and momentum . . . . It [spiritual practice] is ancient, and larger than you are; it weaves you together with other people in doing things none of us could do alone.<sup>30</sup>

Through spiritual practices, we find more profound meaning and discovery that our lives are connected to others and all of creation in ways we never before imagined. When engaging in spiritual practices, God becomes the author and the individual the receiver of

---

<sup>28</sup> Bass, 6-8.

<sup>29</sup> Bass, 6-8.

<sup>30</sup> Bass, 7.

the woven story of God’s interaction in creation. This leads to Bass’s third characteristic of spiritual practices, which is, “practices possess standards of excellence.”<sup>31</sup> Spiritual practices create a new, deeper narrative to one’s life story. States Bass:

The Christian practice of household economics is not just a matter of adding a warm spiritual glow to the work of homemaking. Instead, it is a matter of permitting the light of God to shine on the work we do and the money we spend, so that we can shape them in response to God’s activities in creating and providing for the care and redemption of the earth and all its inhabitants.<sup>32</sup>

In exploring the spirituality of younger men, authors David Anderson, Paul Hill, and Roland Martinson posit the following regarding the spiritual “hunger” of young men:

Spirituality represents the deepest level of the human quest for meaning and hope. Spirituality is associated with identity—who I am, and how I fit in the universe. Although not everyone would claim to be religious or even claim to believe in God, they are spiritual, they have a deeper sense of self and making meaning in the world. A person’s spirituality provides a frame of reference for the whole of life utilizing language, beliefs, values, personal morality, and public ethics.<sup>33</sup>

Through our spiritual practices, a deeper sense of our understanding of personal power can emerge as we understand we cannot earn God’s power by participating in any practice on our own—we always need a Companion and Friend to guide our spiritual intentions. Practices are designed to help us grow in our awareness and knowing God’s self and our relationship to God. We must experience our own powerlessness (theology of the cross), and this can only happen when we step aside and get out of our own way. Sharing in spiritual practices can help us do just that.

---

<sup>31</sup> Bass, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Bass, 7.

<sup>33</sup> David Anderson, Paul Hill, Roland Martinson, *Coming of Age: Exploring the Identity and Spirituality of Younger Men* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2006), 160.

## Rituals—the Role of Rituals in Spiritual Practices

Rituals and storytelling complement each other and are inseparably linked together. Narrative theory postulates that the stories we fashion about the world around us support us to make meaning and build community. Rituals assist us in understanding our interactions with one another and with creation. Ritual work joins word, symbol, and action together in one fluent expression of interior desire.<sup>34</sup> Rituals are a way of making something invisible, visible. Habits and rituals are different. Whereas habits are actions that frequently occur, a ritual helps us focus on being present in the moment and combines a routine habit (walking a dog, brushing your teeth) with the ritual and adds a depth of meaning to the habit. This project used rituals in interventions to invite participants into a time of reflection and communal exploration through engaging in spiritual practices including rituals.

Father Jim Clarke understands ritual to be an “ancient, traditional way of honoring human reality, using the language of the soul.”<sup>35</sup> Clark defines “ritual” as a:

Symbolic action or series of actions accompanied by meaningful words that encapsulate and express the culture and the personal values of the participants. A ritual gives body to the inner reality of the participants. This reality is then given power or affirmation by the presence of the witnessing community . . . . Rituals are meant to be unique for each person, group, or situation.<sup>36</sup>

Our vastly connected global modern culture is lacking and devoid of ritual as Father Clarke defines the term. Rituals, such as the holiday season, have largely lost much of

---

<sup>34</sup> Jim Clarke, *Creating Rituals: A New Way of Healing for Everyday Life* (New York: Paulist Press), 86.

<sup>35</sup> Clarke, 2-3.

<sup>36</sup> Clarke, 5-6.

their transformative power, and many participate in the cultural aspect of rituals, yet any deeper meaning is mostly lacking.

Yet, in every culture, in all parts of the world, in eras that span all of humanity, all have engaged in rituals, and through the practice of rituals have created meaning. Rituals have been used as a tool to express and release emotion, build a personal identity and position one in a particular tribe or organization, bring order to chaos, and most importantly, to bring a deeper layer of meaning to life. When any meaningful ritual is removed from cultures, a longing for meaning, satisfaction, and shared common humanity is lacking as a result.

Richard Rohr comments that America is a ritually starved culture. States Rohr:

True rituals (as opposed to mere repetition of civic ceremonies) intentionally create what anthropologists call “liminality,” or liminal space. The term “liminal” comes from the Latin word *limen*, meaning threshold. We all need to consciously spend time at the thresholds of our lives, and we need wise elders to create and hold such space for us.<sup>37</sup>

Liminal space is needed for the ritual to transform the one who engages the practice in the ritual. All rituals and spiritual practices should always be focused on reflection, which invites the participant to understand why they are engaging the ritual and what they are doing in the ritual. If this formation does not accompany the participant, the ritual becomes empty, and liminality does not occur. The ritual becomes rote without meaning. A good engagement with a ritual allows the participant to understand the importance as they engage in the ritual practice. Rituals must always be “owned” by those who participate as they help us understand who we are.

---

<sup>37</sup> Richard Rohr, “Introduction: Liminal Space,” *Oneing: A Publication of the Center for Action and Contemplation* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 17-20.

### Trinitarian Theology

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity expresses the notion of the relational nature of who God is as a divine being and the relationships between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This relationship is the being of the eternal God (*theologia*)<sup>38</sup> and it describes who God is regarding the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. Karl Rahner describes this relationship between the Three-in-One as the ‘immanent’ Trinity.<sup>39</sup> The purpose of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, according to LaCugna, is to “speak truthfully as possible about the mystery of God who saves us through Christ in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>40</sup>

The Cappadocian Fathers, especially Gregory of Nyssa, understood the theology of the Holy Trinity as an act of faith, not an exercise in philosophy. Accordingly, Greek theology was influenced by an understanding that God is a mystery and incomprehensible by human reason or language.<sup>41</sup> The data received from my qualitative interviews suggest that the interviewees might think analogously about the Holy Trinity as did the Cappadocians. Those who were interviewed may not have the theological language to describe God through a theology or doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Still, they certainly articulated an understanding of the *oikonomia*, the salvific actions of the Trinity.

Through their understanding, and in response to the *oikonomia* of the Trinity, they respond to God’s grace through their service toward the world as a proper response.

---

<sup>38</sup> For further details on the eternal nature of God see: Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, Harper Collins paperback ed., (New York: Harper San Francisco, 2006), 8ff.

<sup>39</sup> LaCugna, 211. See the distinction between Rahner’s ‘immanent’ Trinity and the ‘economic’ Trinity beginning on page 211ff.

<sup>40</sup> LaCugna, 320.

<sup>41</sup> LaCugna, 56.

LaCugna states, “confessing faith is incomplete unless it becomes a form of life.”<sup>42</sup> Faith in the triune God creates a way of living in the world that should oppose forces of evil and darkness to show forth the glory and praise of the Living God.

All power in the Trinity is found among the relationships of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Because of the relationship among the three figures, the symbol of the Trinity as a community is often thought of in terms of all that holds together a community by containing all the diversity that is within. Discerning this relationship is where we craft awareness of who God is and what God is up to in creation.

This discernment is a complete reversal to our common understanding of power—having our own agency and ability to protect our boundaries—yet God (through God’s relationship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) communicates to us that power is a result of dissolving our own boundaries. The key to this is understanding where power lies in our lives’ liminality—as modeled by the perichoretic nature of the Trinity. Liminality refers to a tension between one space and another (transitional moments) in which authentic transformation can happen. Liminal space is a necessary ingredient in the process of deepening one’s sense of personal power.

According to Jürgen Moltmann, the Father suffered and died in his Son.<sup>43</sup> God the Father is in solidarity with the suffering of the Son. This is a solidarity that is based on love and suffers in pain. When the Son suffers on the cross, the Father also suffers. By the cross, the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is involved in that suffering. The Father is affected and moved by the suffering of others. Moltmann’s

---

<sup>42</sup> LaCugna, 379.

<sup>43</sup> Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 200ff.



Trinitarian theology of the crucifixion of Jesus as one of the Trinity members is thought of as a bond of love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are in solidarity with each other.

Theologian Ted Peters proposes that God, “in the Godself is unchanging and eternal. The world, in contrast, is temporal and constantly changing in relation to God.”<sup>44</sup> The qualitative data collected in this project suggest the world is shifting and God is ushering in a new age. Perhaps with the unfolding events from the COVID-19 pandemic, participants in this project are more keenly aware of a reordering of global proportions. As they participate in the project, they know exactly how very little we (humanity) can control. Power lies with God, and as Peters suggests—the world is continually changing in its relationship to God.

Furthermore, Christian faith communities are unique communities in their mission. By the call of scripture (and the Holy Trinity's nature), all people are created as equals (Gal. 3:28). Authority (read: power) in the Church belongs to God and the power to shape the world rests with all people, not just an authorized agent (religious leader). All share the power to shape the world around us through our servitude to each other and to the Holy Trinity. The power in the Holy Trinity (according to Eastern Christianity) lies in the relationship between the individual names—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>45</sup>

In this sense, human power is always a gift from God. Yet, because of sin, humanity's use of power can result in idolatry and injustice. Yet, paradoxically, power is

---

<sup>44</sup> Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1993), 31.

<sup>45</sup> David Hahn, Missional Church Class handout. Luther Seminary. St. Paul, MN. July 24, 2018.

a sheer gift and a blessing from God for creation. Because of the magnitude and depth of the word “power” and the associated discomfort that comes with the term, we use a wide range of synonyms that soften the meaning.

Power is embraced by far more than just human beings. All of creation can participate in the function of power. At the most superficial level, all life exhibits power. An example is the power that causes yeast to rise and transform bread dough or the budding of flowers using energy from the sun.

Power in this broadest of senses is about making meaning out of the order of creation. Ironically, power that brings us fuller meaning to our humanity is also the source of what truly corrupts us at our worst. At the beginning of the Bible, power gifted to the earliest humans provided for humanity’s flourishing and development.

As each person of the Holy Trinity glorifies the other, we are invited to glorify God also. At the cross of Christ, we see the ultimate glorification of the Father as the Son lays down his life so that we might receive the power of the Spirit of adoption as children of God (Jn 12:28). Likewise, we are called to lay our lives down for others (Jn:15:13), glorifying God as we do. In this way, we carry on the *missio Dei*—the mission of the triune God.

### **Chapter Summary**

This research project has been informed by selected biblical and theological lenses that create a faith-formed setting for the project's delivery. Three biblical accounts were examined which illustrated power in the Bible. Each of the three accounts contains an example of the concept of power in scripture. The second part of the biblical lens section included an elaboration of the growing field of masculine studies in biblical

studies. Masculinity is increasingly becoming a topic of inquire in the New Testament as connections are sought between masculinity, power, theological witness, and long-held assumptions about masculinity in the scriptures.

Specific theological lenses were also taken into account for this project. These lenses included a discussion of the lens of the theology of the cross, spiritual practices including rituals, and concluded with Trinitarian theology. Chapter four contains the methodology used for this study, including a biblical rationale why Action Research was used for this project.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

This congregationally based research project sought to discover how the introduction of certain spiritual practices in the life of men might help shape and inform their personal power. Many men do not contemplate nor understand their power. Some men abuse their power (an immature understanding of personal power) or misuse or construe their personal power in self-serving ways. The focus of this research was to assist men in thinking about their own sense of power in relation to spiritual practices.

The specific research question was:

*How might Action Research interventions involving spiritual practices of men affect the personal power in their lives?*

This study involved Action Research with a mixed-method design. The mixed-method approach included a concurrent transformative equal emphasis of both quantitative and qualitative data from the adult male members of the congregation in order to measure change in participants' understanding of how engaging in spiritual practices affect personal power.

#### **Action Research**

Action Research (AR) is a research strategy that aims to generate collective knowledge and affect change within a group of people or organization through a series of designed interventions. Action Research refers to “the conjunction of three elements:

action, research, and participation.”<sup>1</sup> Each of the three elements is a vital component of the action research process.

If one of the elements is missing, the process of AR is not useful for taking action. States Greenwood, “AR is a research strategy that generates knowledge claims for the expressed purpose of taking action to promote social analysis and democratic social change. Action Research is adaptable to a wide variety of organizations and is approachable by a wide variety of people.”<sup>2</sup>

Action research is a flexible spiral process which allows action (change, improvement) and research (understanding, knowledge) to be achieved at the same time. The understanding allows more informed change and at the same time is informed by that change. People affected by the change are usually involved in the action research. This allows the understanding to be widely shared and the change to be pursued with commitment.<sup>3</sup>

Action Research is appropriate for this project because the process is interactive with the participants which produces a greater understanding as it adds information into the shared pool of knowledge “through the inclusion of the local stakeholders as coresearchers.”<sup>4</sup> Action Research is also research *in* action rather than research that is only *about* action.<sup>5</sup> This research method fits well with this project because of the emphasis on collaborative research with the men of the congregation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* 2<sup>nd</sup>. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Greenwood and Levin, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Bob Dick, “Action Research: Action and Research,” 2002, accessed January 10, 2020, [http://www.aral.com.au/resources/aandr.html#a\\_aar\\_what](http://www.aral.com.au/resources/aandr.html#a_aar_what)is.

<sup>4</sup> Greenwood and Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, 4.

Action Research was the method of choice because I wanted to measure the effects, through both baseline and end line data, of the role of spiritual practices in helping men gain a deeper understanding of their personal power. I sought a research method for this project that involved the possibility of social change as a result of the process. Authors Greenwood and Levin state about Action Research, “AR is a way of producing tangible and desired results for the people involved, and it is a knowledge generation process that produces insights both for researchers and participants.”<sup>6</sup>

### Biblical and Theological Grounding

In the story of Peter stepping out of the boat in Matthew 14:22-23, he leaves behind the safety that the boat provides from sinking in the water of the Sea of Galilee. In this Gospel account, Peter turns out to be the conjunction of the three AR elements: action, research, and participation.<sup>7</sup> Because of Peter’s actions and trust, the disciples are led into a deeper understanding of the divinity of Jesus.

This narrative, as written in Matthew’s gospel, comes immediately after the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. Jesus instructs his disciples to get into their boats and go on ahead while he stays behind to dismiss the crowds. Following their dismissal, Jesus goes up to a mountain and prays alone, joining the disciples later that evening. When night fell, a raging storm arose on the lake and beat against the walls of the disciples’ boat. Yet, at morning’s break, the disciples became

---

<sup>6</sup> Greenwood and Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, 51.

<sup>7</sup> Greenwood and Levin, 5.

aware of Jesus' presence walking on top of the water. Frightened and alarmed, they imagined Jesus to be a ghost, and they reacted to the situation with great fear.

Jesus speaks to them quelling their fears. It is Peter who, observing the figure to be Jesus, takes action by speaking up. Peter tests the figure (Jesus) to see if he is able to perform the miracles they had witnessed by Jesus. Peter says, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water" (Matt. 14:28). Jesus invites Peter to step out of the boat and walk. The winds rose and frightened Peter as he stepped out of the boat, but Jesus caught him as he began to sink and asked him, "you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt. 14:31).

In this biblical example, Peter follows a pattern of engaging in AR—he takes action (walking on water), he researches (Is this Jesus?), and he participates (reaching out his hand and walking with Jesus.) Matthew writes that because of Peter's AR process, those (disciples) who were in the boat worshiped Jesus and came to understand that "truly you are the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33). The consequence of Peter's action had nothing to do with him but resulted in Christ's glorification.

Theologically, the pastor's role—as the primary researcher—was to prepare, convene, teach, and process the results through discernment together with the research participants. The role was not to shape a plan or fashion a dogma of belief about an idea. Instead, the researcher's role as pastor was to extend an invitation to deepen the participants' awareness of God's presence.

### **Research Design**

As a researcher, I planned the overall framework of the research design, recruited research participants, and authored the initial draft of the quantitative and qualitative

instruments used in the research. After completing field tests of both my qualitative and quantitative instruments,<sup>8</sup> I administered the baseline questionnaire in November 2019. The baseline survey was held simultaneously with six baseline interviews using a process of nonprobability quota sampling with a group of men with a variety of life experiences.

The research design was convergent mixed methods, including qualitative narrative interviewing at the baseline, focus group discussion at the end line, and quantitative data obtained from questionnaires administered at both the baseline and end line. Figure 5 provides a graphic illustration of the mixed method study. As shown in figure 5, the research project began in early November 2019 with a baseline questionnaire advertised to all male members of the congregation over the age of eighteen.<sup>9</sup>

The project details were announced via the church newsletter in November 2019. After receiving the research project's approval, I included invitations in the church newsletter, weekend bulletins, and social media posts. I wrote a personal letter inviting all the men of the congregation over the age of eighteen to participate in supporting the project by taking the baseline questionnaire and attending the six planned intervention sessions.<sup>10</sup> The participants in this study ranged in age from early twenties to men in their eighties.

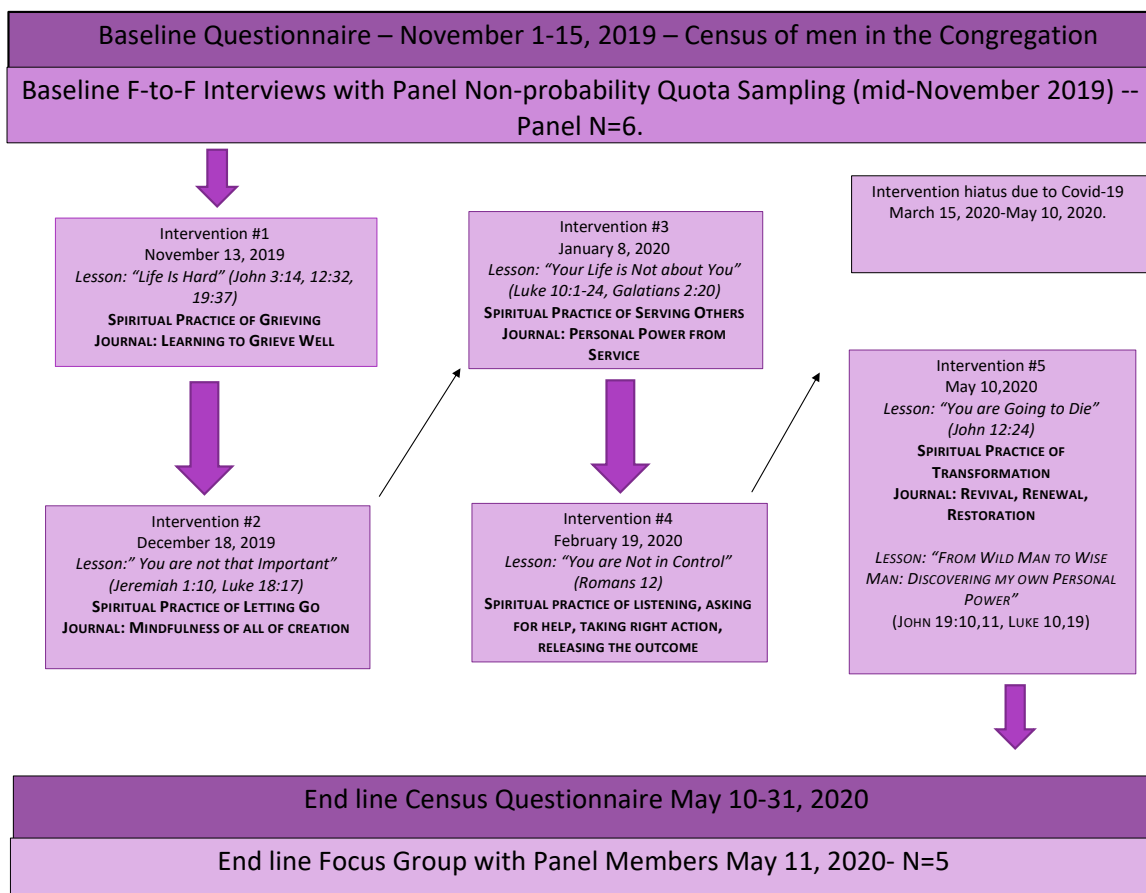
---

<sup>8</sup> A detailed description of field testing the research instruments will be provided in a subsequent section.

<sup>9</sup> See appendix F.

<sup>10</sup> See appendix A.





**Figure 5. Research design chart**

The study included a few research assistants who assisted with the set-up of rituals and meal preparation for each of the interventions. Research assistants helped compile the handouts at the workshop and were charged with printing the materials used for the study and setting up the gathering space. It was the role of the research assistant to provide hospitality at the interventions while a second research assistant checked in the participants and handed out the research folders that would be used by the study participants throughout the month. A group of four assistants (in addition to the primary researcher) gathered monthly to discuss the interventions and the overall research process. This time of reflection and discussion was followed by a conversation about the

research process components, including the interventions and the potential impact the study had on the participants.<sup>11</sup>

Six participants for the baseline interviews were selected based on various demographics, including age, marital status, and background. The interviews began in early November 2019 and were concluded before the first intervention held on November 13, 2019. Each of the interviews was digitally recorded and sent electronically to the online transcription company. The written transcription was printed and used for qualitative coding.<sup>12</sup>

The end line focus group consisted of five of the six participants interviewed at the baseline and was held on Monday, May 11, 2020. The baseline interview protocol was used for the end line focus group discussion. The group met online via Zoom<sup>13</sup> due to the in-person restrictions put in place because of COVID-19.

### Development and Use of Research Instruments

A quantitative questionnaire was developed to serve as a baseline and end line measure of the respondents' sense of power in their life.<sup>14</sup> The questionnaire measured nominal variables of gender, marital status, education, and type of daily work. The

---

<sup>11</sup> See appendix B.

<sup>12</sup> "Rev.com" an online data transcription company was used for data transcription. More information on their non-disclosure policy can be found at: [https://www.rev.com/transcription?utm\\_source=tc-nb&opti\\_ca=1011195022&opti\\_ag=53498074441&opti\\_ad=352530566361&opti\\_key=kwd-299004029902&gclid=CjwKCAjwk93rBRBLEiwAcMapUeWk48sqxq41ek-6aIMyhT2\\_tkDts5R80KZVRh--u8VznuTa45p-HRoC9qcQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.rev.com/transcription?utm_source=tc-nb&opti_ca=1011195022&opti_ag=53498074441&opti_ad=352530566361&opti_key=kwd-299004029902&gclid=CjwKCAjwk93rBRBLEiwAcMapUeWk48sqxq41ek-6aIMyhT2_tkDts5R80KZVRh--u8VznuTa45p-HRoC9qcQAvD_BwE)

<sup>13</sup> Zoom is an online virtual meeting platform created by Zoom Video Communications, Inc. For details visit: <https://us04web.zoom.us>.

<sup>14</sup> See appendices F and G.

instrument also contained ordinal levels of measurement that gathered data about the frequency of members' participation in personal faith practices. A Likert scale was used to measure the ordinal variable of strength of agreement with various statements about the relationship between spiritual practices and personal power. The end line questionnaire asked additional questions about participation in the interventions that were part of this project.<sup>15</sup>

A qualitative interview protocol for the baseline interviews was created using ten questions. The interview protocol questions included questions about the participant's spiritual background and sources of spiritual nourishment, admirable characteristics displayed in other men, and how the participant defines personal power. The six team members were all interviewed early-to-mid November before starting the first intervention on November 13<sup>th</sup>. Each of the baseline qualitative interviews lasted around sixty minutes. The same six individuals took part in the end line focus group.<sup>16</sup>

Both the quantitative and qualitative instruments were field-tested utilizing people outside the study population. Based upon the feedback received from the three individuals who completed the questionnaire, and three other people who agreed to be interviewed using the qualitative protocol, adjustments were made to the instruments before beginning the study in November 2019. The feedback from the men who tested the instruments was helpful in consolidating some of the quantitative questions and clarifying the interview questions.

---

<sup>15</sup> See appendix G.

<sup>16</sup> See appendix D.

## Analysis of Data

### Qualitative

The six baseline interviews were recorded and transcribed word-for-word. Coding began with a basic textual analysis. The transcriptions were coded *line-by-line*. This method was ideal, as described by Charmaz, because “line-by-line coding frees you from becoming so immersed in your respondents’ worldviews that you accept them without question.”<sup>17</sup> Following the line-by-line coding, *in vivo* codes were developed to simplify the categories.<sup>18</sup>

*Focused* codes were used to “synthesize and explain larger segments of data.”<sup>19</sup> Focused codes further developed categories and helped clarify the categories. Following the focused coding, *axial* coding was used to make clearer assumptions about the data and begin to make conclusions about the data.<sup>20</sup> I sorted data into single files and offered my summary of the data in chapter five.

### Quantitative

Quantitative data were collected using SurveyMonkey<sup>21</sup> for both the baseline and the end line questionnaires. Following the end of the questionnaires' collection period, the

---

<sup>17</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 51.

<sup>18</sup> Charmaz, 55.

<sup>19</sup> Charmaz, 57.

<sup>20</sup> Charmaz, 60.

<sup>21</sup> SurveyMonkey is a web-based survey development tool used by individuals and organizations to create, distribute, receive and analyze customizable questionnaires. I utilized the service to assist with the creation, distribution, reception, and analysis for my research. SurveyMonkey is a product of SurveyMonkey, Inc., located in Palo Alto, CA. More information can be found at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

data were exported to SPSS<sup>22</sup> to conduct statistical tests to determine the total, frequencies, and means for the data. Inferential statistics (paired t-tests and independent t-tests) were used to test for the possible rejection of the null hypothesis. The quantitative data were analyzed to determine the significance of the five interventions and if they any impact on the study participants as they engaged with the spiritual practices that were introduced. Descriptive statistics were included to describe the study participants which highlights characteristics important to this study.

### **Action Research Interventions**

I introduced five interventions with this project from November 13, 2019, to May 10, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the last two planned interventions were combined into one intervention held via Zoom.<sup>23</sup> The interventions were held on Monday nights beginning at 6:30 P.M. A simple meal (except for the final intervention in May 2020) was offered beginning at 6:00 P.M. before each intervention. Each of the interventions was advertised to the congregation via Sunday morning announcements, church newsletter articles, social media posts, and word-of-mouth invitations.

When the research participants arrived on Monday nights, the first stop was the registration table where study participants signed-in for a study folder. The monthly study folder contained information about the spiritual practice of the month, background information about the spiritual practice, and a qualitative research sheet to be filled out at the end of the month following the participants' engagement with the practice. Also

---

<sup>22</sup> IBM Corp. released 2019.

<sup>23</sup>Due to the restrictions put fourth because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the last two interventions were combined into one session.

available at the sign-in table were copies of an informed consent (if one had not yet been signed). One of the study participants (who was in town for the November intervention) left town for the winter months and was included in the monthly interventions via Zoom.

Each intervention lasted anywhere from an hour-and-a-half to two hours. Monthly interventions followed a similar pattern of welcome and introductions for some of the participants who were new to the study. Following the introductions, a review of the guidelines and ground rules were reviewed.<sup>24</sup> After the review of the guidelines, the participants then turned to a period of reflection using the process set forth by Pat Ellison and Patrick Keifert in *Dwelling in the Word: A Pocket Handbook*.<sup>25</sup> The missional practice of Dwelling in the Word was a new practice for the participants as it had not been utilized in the congregation before this study. Each month, a new scripture text that corresponded to the monthly theme was used for this time of reflection.

After the Dwelling in the Word exercise, the group reviewed the previous month's spiritual practice. Participants were invited to share any of their experience with the practice and were encouraged to share how their practice helped inform any sense of their understanding of personal power. The review of the prior month's spiritual practice lasted between twenty to thirty minutes.<sup>26</sup> After reviewing the previous month's practice, I presented a PowerPoint presentation on the topic of the month. Each of the monthly

---

<sup>24</sup> See appendix C.

<sup>25</sup> Pat Taylor Ellison and Patrick R. Keifert, *Dwelling in the Word: A Pocket Handbook*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (St. Paul, MN: Church Innovations, 2011), 23.

<sup>26</sup> Results from the monthly spiritual practices are included in chapter five.

interventions was informed by Richard Rohr's process of male initiation in his book, *Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation*.<sup>27</sup>

#### Intervention One—Life Is Hard

“For many men, in particular, it [grief] is the only emotion that shakes them at their core.”<sup>28</sup>

The first intervention was held on Monday, November 13, 2019, at 6:30 P.M. The theme for the evening was the spiritual practice of grief. The first item on the evening agenda was to go over some guidelines for the group discussion (the guidelines for discussion were presented at all subsequent monthly workshops as the first item of the night).<sup>29</sup>

The first intervention was titled “Life Is Hard,” and the month's spiritual practice was about grief. Rohr writes about the spiritual practice of grief:

All great spirituality is about what we do with our pain . . . . Ancient cultures taught young boys not to run from pain, and not to get rid of pain until he had first learned its lessons. It is finally about one thing: What are you going to do with your pain? Are you going to blame others for it? If we do not transform our pain, we will always transmit it in some form.<sup>30</sup>

Rohr suggests that if we do not deal with our grief, one or all of the following will happen to men: they will become inflexible, blaming, and petty as they grow older, they will need other people to hate in order to expel inner negativity, they will play the victim

---

<sup>27</sup> Rohr has spent decades learning about the initiation rites of many ancient cultures and has discovered, that, without exception, every ancient culture practiced initiation rites that taught boys how to be a man through enculturation rituals. See: Rohr, *Adam's Return*, 1-10ff.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Rohr, *Radical Grace: Daily Meditations* (Cincinnati OH: Saint Anthony Messenger Press, 1995), 282.

<sup>29</sup> See appendix C.

<sup>30</sup> Rohr, *Adam's Return*, 35ff.

in some form as a means of false power, they will spend much of their life seeking security and status as a cover-up for lack of a substantial sense of self, or they will pass their grief and pain on to their descendants—children, family, and friends.<sup>31</sup>

The spiritual practice of grieving was intended to present the participants with creating grief rituals they would practice through December and into the middle of January 2020. When many people think of mourning rituals, they think of *public* displays of bereavement such as funerals, wearing black clothing as an indication of mourning, religious ceremonies, or transcendent custom(s). The substance of such public rituals varies according to the faith tradition and cultural tradition.

Researchers at the Harvard School of Business, Michael Norton and Francesca Gino, studied the effects of mourning rituals following a loss. They define “ritual” as “symbolic activity that is performed either before or after a meaningful event which is intended to achieve some desired outcome—from alleviating grief to winning a competition.”<sup>32</sup> Norton and Gino’s research found that private rituals of grief and mourning were more widely practiced than those of public nature.

When Norton and Gino probed deeper into their research subjects' emotional and mental lives, they found that rituals help people overcome grief by counteracting the turbulence and chaos that follows loss. States Norton and Gino:

Rituals, which are deliberately-controlled gestures, trigger a very specific feeling in mourners—the feeling of being in control of their lives. After people did a ritual or wrote about doing one, they were more likely to report thinking that

---

<sup>31</sup> See chapter five: Rohr, *Adam's Return*, 35-50.

<sup>32</sup> Michael I. Norton and Francesca Gino, “Rituals Alleviate Grieving for Loved Ones, Lovers, and Lotteries” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 143, no.1, 266-272. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031772>, accessed January 16, 2020.



“things were in check” and less likely to feel “helpless,” “powerless,” and “out of control.”<sup>33</sup>

What was surprising about Norton and Gino's research is that public grief rituals were not the most helpful or relevant for looking at how rituals impacted mourners and those in grief. They found that most of those researched did not cite public or communal rituals as the most meaningful in their grief. What they did discover was:

- Only ten percent of the rituals people cited as meaningful were public.
- Only five percent of the rituals people cited as meaningful were religious.
- Only five percent of rituals were performed communally.

The overwhelming majority of grief rituals were private, secular (without religious attachment), and practiced alone.<sup>34</sup>

The research conducted by Norton and Gino suggests that healthy grieving and mourning include some type of ritual. The Old Testament contains stories of grief and lament, and grieving is taken seriously. Several books included in the Old Testament speak to the issue of human grief and pain.<sup>35</sup> Sadly, these books of the Bible have been often overlooked as being overtly negative or depressive and have been removed from many modern prayer books.<sup>36</sup> This practice suggests a fear of Christian expression of human grief and pain and overlooks grief and loss as a natural part of life.

---

<sup>33</sup> Norton and Gino, 271.

<sup>34</sup> Norton and Gino state ninety percent were private, ninety-five percent were secular, and ninety-five percent were done individually. Most of the meaningful rituals were described as “private everyday rituals that were unique to the individual—as opposed to publicly performed, commonly-utilized rituals.” Norton and Gino, 272.

<sup>35</sup>The books of Job, lament Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations are some examples of grief literature contained in the Old Testament.

<sup>36</sup> The *Lutheran Book of Worship* (copyright 1978) removed most lament Psalms which were deemed inappropriate to be included. The *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (copyright 2006) added the entire Psalms 1-150 into the hymnal.

After our discussion on grief rituals, the participants were asked to create their own grief ritual to help process a life loss. I created a grief ritual involving four stations of lament in the nave of the church. The four stations included a station for lament, petition, confession, and setting intentions. At the lament station, a table with a black tablecloth was placed with a large bowl of water and a smaller bowl containing salt. The participants were invited to mix a dash of salt into the larger bowl while speaking softly about their sorrows and grief for all that has been squandered or lost. By mixing the salt into the bowl of water, this ritualized the tears that have been created through mistakes, misguided actions, and how participants have hurt themselves or others.

The second station was petition. At this station, a light blue tablecloth was placed along with pinwheels in a box containing sand. At this station, participants were invited to petition God and ask God to be a Comforter and Friend and help guide them forward into the future. This was ritualized by blowing air into the pinwheel.

The third station was a table of confession. This table was draped in a white tablecloth and featured a place to write down fears and hopes. The participants were invited to ponder their hopes and fears.<sup>37</sup>

A fourth station was the station of intent. This table was draped in dark blue tablecloth and invited participants to give voice in their intention as they moved forward following their participation in the grief ritual. Saying aloud (or in the silence of their heart) something they would do to move their faith forward, participants then blended some black sand into the white, and marked their intention. Setting an intention was important in order for one to learn what grief had to teach.

---

<sup>37</sup> The responses to the cards are included in chapter five.

## Intervention Two—You are Not That Important

The second intervention was held on Monday, December 18, 2019. This intervention began going over the study guidelines followed by a Dwelling in the Word devotion from Luke 18. Lastly, the group debriefed the first intervention held in November.

The biblical grounding for this intervention is found in Gal. 6:3-6: “*For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor’s work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.*” Rohr writes concerning the message of “You are not that important”—“When I am not the king, then the Kingdom has its best chance of breaking through. When I AM king, I have a closed system. . . Get out of the way of your own self.”<sup>38</sup> From this perspective, powerlessness is the beginning of wisdom. When we let go of our need to control and open ourselves up to new possibilities, that is when we discover a more profound sense of personal power.

The spiritual practice that was introduced during this month was that of mindfulness. Mindfulness is an opening, non-judging attention to what is happening at the present moment and being aware of as each moment unfolds. Joseph Goldstein writes the following regarding the practice of mindfulness:

Mindfulness is the quality and power of mind that is deeply aware of what’s happening—without commentary and without interference . . . . Mindfulness keeps us connected to brushing our teeth or having a cup of coffee . . . . Connected to the people around us.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Rohr, *Adam’s Return*, 44ff.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Goldstein, *A Heart Full of Peace* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2007), 69.

Scientific research shows that the practice of mindfulness can positively affect stress resilience, physical and mental health, and the ability to sustain attention, self-regulation of emotions, interpersonal skills, and general well-being and happiness.<sup>40</sup> Practices of mindfulness have gained in popularity in recent years and are becoming more mainstream as a way to cope with anxiety, stress, and the busyness of modern life. This spiritual practice of mindfulness intends to teach one to pay attention and listen to one's own self. You are not the center of the universe. Take time to look around and notice everything around belongs—nothing goes without a purpose.

The practice of mindfulness is relatively simple. While there are various forms of mindfulness,<sup>41</sup> this project introduced the study participants to the most straightforward entry point into mindfulness—mindful breathing. Mindful breathing focuses the attention on the sensations of the breath creating an awareness of the present moment. It requires a comfortable position with minimal distractions. Ideally, mindfulness works best when seated comfortably; however, some practice mindfulness when standing or walking.

The mind is a busy place as thoughts come and go. The participant creates a sustained focus on breathing, while allowing thoughts to come and go. The mind then focuses on the repetition of the breath, which makes for mindful breathing. Mindful breathing is a way to stay present in the moment rather than getting distracted by worries or negative emotions. The key to this form of mindfulness is not to get distracted and annoyed with the mind wandering. One's ability to calm the mind down takes practice—

---

<sup>40</sup> For more details on the benefits of mindfulness see: Kate Rope, "The Future of Being Present," *Time*, October, 2019: 4-9.

<sup>41</sup> For a description of mindfulness practices visit: Kira M. Newman, "How to Choose a Type of Mindfulness Meditation," *Greater Good Magazine* no. 10, (October 11, 2016) accessed February 10, 2020, [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_to\\_choose\\_a\\_type\\_of\\_mindfulness\\_meditation](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_choose_a_type_of_mindfulness_meditation).

merely acknowledging the thought and letting it drift away are a keystone for this form of spiritual practice.

In my intervention, I asked the participants to begin with two minutes of mindful breathing practice. Throughout the month, and as the participants felt able, they were encouraged to add more time to their practice. At the conclusion of the month, the study participants were given a data sheet report to return about their experience of mindfulness. The results from this practice are recorded in chapter five.

### Intervention Three—Your Life is Not about You

*“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”* 1 Sam. 3:10

The third intervention was held on Monday, January 8, 2020. As with the previous two interventions, the session began at 6:30 P.M., preceded by a served meal beginning at 6:00 P.M. The intervention began with the practice of Dwelling in the Word. The text for this month was taken from Deuteronomy 34—the story of the death of Moses. Following Dwelling in the Word, the group debriefed our experience from the previous month’s practice of mindfulness, followed by the introduction to the topic of “Your Life is Not about You—the Spiritual Practice of Active Listening.”

The best place to start listening is with one’s self. When a decision is to be made, the time to sit in stillness and hold your questions about the decision, seeking discernment, is an excellent way to think about active listening. With practice, one can learn to discern between the voice of the inner ego and one’s true self. Through this process of active listening, self-awareness and trust are built around inner wisdom.

Listening seems to be in short supply in our culture. This intervention is all about the spiritual practice of listening. Listening to others for understanding is important, but

there are also other things to listen for—awareness of our surroundings, listening for quiet, listening to mundane sounds—all are forms of active listening. When we actively listen to what another is saying, we get outside of ourselves and listen for understanding. Am I listening to understand this person? Or am I listening merely to respond to what has been said?

There is a difference in the way we listen for understanding versus listening to respond. We are encouraged to listen to our hearts, inner voices, and guts, but rarely are we encouraged to listen carefully and purposefully to other people. Instead, we talk over one another, in church meetings, and even within our family and the ones we love the most. Online and in-person, it is all about defining yourself, shaping the narrative, and staying on message.

When we listen with the intention of understanding and not responding, we are making a connection point with everything else and not just our own need to respond to what has been said. Richard Rohr writes:

To know that your life is not about you is a major and monumental shift in consciousness, and it is always given and received with major difficulty. Understanding that your life is not about you is the connection point with everything else. This is good news because I don't have to have it all figured out. I don't have to be God. Only after we discover that can we fully participate. That's the point of life—participate with the Life that lives inside you.<sup>42</sup>

Understanding that life is not about you can mean that actively listening to others can be far more valuable than merely talking. Only by listening do we engage, understand, empathize, cooperate, and mature as human beings. It is fundamental to any successful relationship—personal, professional, and political. The critical point in making the

---

<sup>42</sup> Rohr, *Adam's Return*, 66-67.

connection between the topic, “Your Life is Not about You,” and the spiritual practice of active listening lies in the distinction between the terms “listening” and “hearing.”

Hearing is a natural and passive process, whereas listening is a physical and mental process that is active and a skill developed with practice.<sup>43</sup> Listening is a process that is developed by practicing and participating in the process of listening for understanding.

After this intervention, the participants were invited to participate in the spiritual practice of active listening for February. This spiritual practice intends to listen to the world around and not merely just other people. During weeks two and three of the spiritual practice, the participants were asked to take a few minutes to listen to identify as many sounds as they can hear (birds chirping, snowplow, kids playing, coffee maker brewing, tv).<sup>44</sup>

The final reflection question for this spiritual practice asked each participant about a time throughout the month they felt listened to and when they listened to another person. Two questions were asked regarding their sense of personal power:

- What did you gain from listening to someone else?
- What did you lose/give up to listen to another person?

The art of listening is not merely subject to oral communication between human beings, but listening to the spoken word is a skill that, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggests, is one of the most fundamental ways to express our love for/of others. Bonhoeffer states, “our love for others is learning to listen to them.”<sup>45</sup> Listening is a necessary tool of human

---

<sup>43</sup> “What’s the Difference Between Hearing and Listening?” *Healthline News*, accessed February 10, 2020, <https://www.healthline.com/health/hearing-vs-listening>.

<sup>44</sup> See appendix K for the data sheet that was handed out to the participants.

<sup>45</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian in Community* (San Francisco, CA: Harper One Publishers, 2009), 75.

communication and community, but other forms of listening (often unnoticed) are equally as important as listening in an oral form. Unspoken communication also has great significance in this spiritual practice. Nonverbal communication is an essential component of our relation to others through the written word and body language. The point of this spiritual practice is to be more attuned at listening for understanding and expand the notion of listening to include listening to nonverbal communication as a way of understanding.

#### Intervention Four—You Are Not in Control

The fourth intervention was held on Monday, February 19, 2020. The session began with the practice of Dwelling in the Word. The text for this month's Dwelling in the Word was taken from Luke 10:1-12. Following Dwelling in the Word, our group debriefed our experience from the previous intervention on the spiritual practice of redemptive listening. Subsequently, the new topic was introduced—"You are Not in Control: The Spiritual Practice of the Awareness of One's Attitude and Effort". The month's spiritual practice was thinking about the two things we can control—our attitude and our effort.

During each of the four weeks of the month, participants were asked to record their reactions to an irritating situation either in their home, news or world events, and at work or volunteering. The recording included how they responded to the irritation by noting their actions and effort. They were reminded of the definition of personal power as defined by Hagberg—"the capacity for action and the capacity for reflection."<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Hagberg, *Real Power*, xxi.



The topic's attentiveness is that we live with an illusion that we live in control until God leads us to the limits of our resources and abilities. Only after depleting our awareness and spiritual abilities is God able to teach us something new and good. Reality is in control, and we must allow what “actually is” to teach us. It is good to be reminded of this starting-block truth: We are not in control of what happens. All we can control is our response to what happens. We are response-able to that extent. Henri Nouwen writes the following about our perceived need to be in control:

We are preoccupied in our culture with staying in control. Our self-esteem is largely based on our ability to stay active, take the initiative, and set directions for our lives. We consider the active life a sign of being fully human (“Yes, he/she is still very active”). The reality is that we have very little control over our lives. Most things are done to us or not determined by us (the color of our skin, our nationality, social status, family of origin, education, and so on). And our common destination is death.<sup>47</sup>

The world is limited, and we are all limited, as is every else and everyone else. We learned this, once again, in March 2020 when the circumstances of COVID-19 disrupted our lives. Economically disadvantaged people learn about limits naturally; those from the overdeveloped world learn that they are not in control very slowly, if at all. This spiritual lesson's reality is that one must experience one's powerlessness before a real spiritual journey can begin. In her work, *Real Power*, Janet Hagberg describes this “powerlessness” as hitting a wall.<sup>48</sup>

Much of the self-help jargon tells us that we can take control of our life. But is this truly possible? Our need to be in control of our destiny, job, finances, and the

---

<sup>47</sup> Henri Nouwen, *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Everyday Life* (Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 2013), 155.

<sup>48</sup> Hagberg, *Real Power*, 125-30.

intimate details of our lives are an unquestionable value for everyone. Life is a series of surprises. That is where reality lies—in the unexpected and unpredictable. We are not in control. On a practical level, “taking control of one’s life” is true, yet, paradoxically, the opposite is also true—we are not in control.

Everything that lives ages—every person gets older, every soul ripens<sup>49</sup>, and everyone can learn from failures. Our failures become our teachers—we are not in control. In reality, we can control only two things in life—our attitude and our effort. We can control our response to what happens. Outside of these two, attitude and effort, we are not in control as much as we would like to think.

Men who do not know this truth will look for enemies—someone to blame—until they realize they are not in control. While this may sound negative to people in the West, this is not a negative discovery. One’s inability to be in control is a gift from God. To have our inner purpose, our fate, and our being led and used leads to a vocation and destiny—all of which are gifts from God. For many Western men, powerlessness and manliness are not compatible. A state of powerlessness is perceived as being weak, and therefore, has a connotation of weakness and inability to control one’s life. Author and therapist for men, Dan Griffin, shares, “For many men, feeling powerless is the opposite of feeling in control, and from a very early age as a man, you were probably taught (though you didn’t realize it) that you should try to be the master of your world as best you could.”<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Father Richard Rohr uses the metaphor of a ripening fruit to describe the spiritual growth of the body, mind, and spirit that develops over the course of time. See: Richard Rohr, “Introduction: The Ripe and Unripe Fruit,” *Oneing: A publication of the Center for Action and Contemplation* 1 no. 2 (2013): 1-2.

<sup>50</sup> Griffin, *A Man’s Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 19.

### Intervention Five—You are Going to Die

The fifth intervention was scheduled to take place on Monday, March 16, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the intervention was postponed for two months and took place virtually via Zoom on Monday, May 10, 2020. This topic was scheduled to take place over the Lenten season, focusing on introspection and spiritual transformation. The topic is heavy, yet death is a universal truth. Every living thing dies. Due to the nature of death and resurrection, the last two scheduled interventions were combined into one session.

The core issue with death is that death is our final enemy as Paul shares in his first letter to the Corinthians.<sup>51</sup> In many ways, death surrounds us—a human inclination to kill others in both a metaphorical and literal sense. We die to our own selves—to our egos, illusions of power, pretenses, narcissism, and the ways we put ourselves down with self-defeating talk. We, ourselves, die when we neglect to care for others and the entirety of creation when we neglect our stewardship of one another and for the earth. Death in any form it takes is the final enemy. We construct much of our lives to avoid, delay, and deny death. Yet, death is more than just a physical event. Death is a deeply personal and spiritual moment, we are most concerned with the medical aspect of death, but there are many dimensions in the process of dying.

Human beings are the only creatures on earth who seem to have an enhanced eschatology and knowledge of their death. All other living beings—plants, animals, cycles of life, and nature all seem to surrender to death as part of the cycle of life. Even as this thesis is written (March 2020), the world is anxious about the real threat of death

---

<sup>51</sup> See: 1 Cor. 16:26.

from an unknown coronavirus called COVID-19. This virus has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people around the world with no vaccine available in the near future.

“I die every day,”<sup>52</sup> Paul goes on to say in his letter. It is hard to know what Paul felt about his death, though he does indicate he was more than a “conqueror”<sup>53</sup> to death because of Christ Jesus and does not seem to be swayed away from facing his own death. For Paul, death brought an encounter with the sacred; death, in this sense, is a holy moment.

#### Intervention Six—The Common Wonderful

This intervention was combined with the fifth intervention due to the restrictions of in-person gatherings in the months of March-May 2020. The intervention was held on May 10<sup>th</sup>, and was attended virtually using Zoom's<sup>54</sup> online meeting platform. The two topics discussed in this intervention were “The Common Wonderful” and a review of the stages of power presented by Janet Hagberg.

---

<sup>52</sup> 1 Cor. 16:31.

<sup>53</sup> Rom. 8:37.

<sup>54</sup> Zoom Video Communication, Inc. <https://us04web.zoom.us>.

“The Common Wonderful”<sup>55</sup> is the paradoxically opposite of the five truths<sup>56</sup> presented in the first five interventions. While each of the five truths is seemingly negative, the opposite (and seemingly positive) of each is also true.

In the first intervention, Life is indeed *hard*, yet Jesus announces, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Mt. 11:28). Considering the paradoxical experience of this truth, Rohr states:

If your religion has no deep joy, has no inherent contentment about it, then it is not the real thing. If your religion is primarily fear of self, the world, and God, if it is primarily a need to tend to religious duties and obligations, then it is indeed a hard yoke and heavy burden and hardly worthwhile . . . I think the promise from Jesus that the burden is easy and light seeks to reassure us that rigid and humorless religion is not his way . . .”<sup>57</sup>

The opposite of the truth of the second intervention—“You Are Not That Important” is **that** you are important. To illustrate this truth, St. Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians, “For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor’s work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads” (Gal. 6:3-6).

Regarding this truth, Rohr elaborates:

If you have no foundational significance, you must constantly attempt to self-signify and self-validate. Everyone is then a competitor and rival. You cannot help but be pushed around by your neediness and your judgements, and you will push others around too . . . Your importance is given and bestowed in this universe, which is the unbreakable covenant between you and your Creator. You

---

<sup>55</sup> Richard Rohr uses the term “The Common Wonderful” to describe the “. . . collective beauty and security that healthy people live within. Some have called this the ‘the five positive messages.’ The common wonderful is a cosmic egg of meaning that will hold you, help you grow, and gives you ongoing new birth and beginning. . . It operates largely subliminally, but very powerfully.” See Rohr, *Adam’s Return*, 152-53.

<sup>56</sup> The five truths that were presented in the interventions include: Life is Hard, You are Not that Important, Your Life is Not about You, You are Not in Control, and You are Going to Die.

<sup>57</sup> Rohr, *Adam’s Return*, 154.

are declared important; you cannot declare yourself important. To attempt it is delusional behavior.<sup>58</sup>

Only when one is vulnerable to one's being and steps aside can personal power emerge. Powerlessness is the beginning of wisdom.

The opposite of the truth that "Your Life is Not About You"—the spiritual truth of the third intervention is that life is **indeed** about you. The scriptural reference for this third intervention is from the book of Colossians—"Your life is hidden with Christ in God. He is your life, and when he is revealed, you will be revealed in all your glory with him" (Col. 3:4).

Regarding this third intervention truth, Rohr states:

Great people do not need to concoct an identity for themselves; they merely try to discover, uncover, and enjoy the identity they already have . . . . It is probably the most courageous thing you will ever do to accept that you are just yourself . . . . So, we cannot really find ourselves at all; the great ones (read: spiritually mature people) consistently speak of being found, like a prodigal son.<sup>59</sup>

Life is not about you; you are about life. This is good news; we do not need to have everything in life figured out. The point of life is to participate in the Life that lives within our life.

The message of the fourth intervention's truth is seemingly easy to understand—"You Are Not in Control." While it is true that you are not in control, Jesus asks the question, "Can any of you, for all your worrying, add a single moment to your span of life?" (Lk. 12:26). We can only control our attitude and effort; everything else is outside

---

<sup>58</sup> Rohr, 156-57.

<sup>59</sup> Rohr, *Adam's Return*, 158-59.

the scope of personal control. Worry, anxiety, and stress are not helpful, and we need to let go of our need to control as Jesus advises in Luke 12.

We are not in control as much as we would like to think, and this is not a negative discovery, though initially, the feeling of not being in control feels like a loss of personal power. Only after we get through the difficult step of realizing that we are not in control can one discover real power.<sup>60</sup> Not being in control is a gift from God. To have our inner purpose, fate, and being led by God creates a sense of vocation and calling, all of which are gifts from God. Rohr refers to **being** in control by “surrendering to the divine.” States Rohr:

Surrendering to the divine flow is not about giving up, giving in, capitulating, becoming a puppet, being naïve, being irresponsible, or stopping all planning and thinking. Surrender is about a peaceful inner opening that keeps the conduit of living water flowing. It is a quiet willingness to trust that you are really a beloved son, which allows God to be your Father. It really is that simple.<sup>61</sup>

Surrendering to the journey of life, being open to the “divine flow,” is liberation from control. Knowing that we are being guided and relying upon divine guidance allows one’s journey to happen.

The final and fifth spiritual truth is “You Are Going to Die.” The book of Genesis places the truth of death in the beginning chapters— “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). Death is a common enemy to human life regardless of culture, religion, or social position. We all will die.

---

<sup>60</sup> Hagberg portrays this step of the loss of personal power as “the Wall.” The “Wall” is a “mysterious and excruciatingly wonderful part of our power journey where our will meets another more powerful Holy will. Our job is to relinquish our ego and our will. But when we approach the Wall our reaction is to kick it, or to remove one stone and put it back again. . . . We experience the Wall through self-reflection, tough love, prayer, meditation, journaling, therapy, and spiritual direction.” Hagberg, *Real Power*, 121.

<sup>61</sup> Hagberg, 163.

Yet, St. Paul writes that death is not final. He writes in his letter to the Romans, “I am certain of this, neither death nor life, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, nor any power, nor any heights nor depth, nor any created thing can ever separate us from the love of God” (Rom. 8:38-39). States Rohr:

It seems that we are all born with a longing and a deep desire for life to continue forever. Believers call this the indwelling presence of God. It is God in us that makes us desire God. It is an eternal life already within us that makes us imagine such an impossible thing as eternal life . . . . We are going to die, but we have already been given a kind of inner guarantee and promise right now that death is not final—and it takes the form of love.<sup>62</sup>

Love is eternal. There is no limit to the love of God that, as St. Paul mentions, can ever separate us (humanity) from the love of God.

### **Chapter Summary**

This mixed-method, Action Research project took place from November 2019 through May 2020. The research design included a baseline survey and six baseline face-to-face interviews before the five interventions. Upon completing the five interventions, an end line survey and end line focus group with six panel members were completed in May 2020. The instruments used in the study can be found in appendices D and F.

Due to the health threat from the COVID-19 pandemic, a departure from the research design occurred. The fifth and sixth interventions were combined and held in early May via Zoom, an online meeting platform. In the next chapter, results and an analysis of the study are presented and discussed in detail. Chapter five discusses the baseline and end line quantitative survey results and the qualitative research as it emerged from this study.

---

<sup>62</sup> Rohr, *Adam's Return*, 160.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

As discussed in chapter four, the research project results include analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data collected using questionnaires and qualitative interviewing. The research design was such that through each of the monthly interventions, data were collected on feedback forms for four interventions.<sup>1</sup> At the fifth intervention, the group processed and debriefed material presented at the previous four interventions. Also included in the research analysis are observational notes collected by the researcher during the interventions to capture the conversations that ensued following each of the spiritual practices. This chapter provides a summary of the results of a research project attempting to answer the research question:

*How might Action Research interventions involving spiritual practices of men affect the personal power in their lives?*

#### **Review of the Research Process**

This project's primary social science research methodology was Action Research (AR) using a mixed methods design. The mixed-methods approach included a concurrent equal emphasis of both quantitative and qualitative data from the adult male members of Immanuel Lutheran Church (ILC) in Manville, Iowa. Six research participants completed baseline interviews. Fifty-one adult male members of ILC completed a baseline

---

<sup>1</sup> The feedback forms used for this research can be found in the back matter of this report. See appendices I-L.

questionnaire. An average of seventeen people participated in five interventions, and twenty participants completed an end line questionnaire. Four of the six baseline interview participants joined an end line focus group to debrief and discuss the research. A research assistant assisted this project by creating copies of the interventions, preparing the space for interventions including creating a sign-in sheet, welcoming participants, and providing hospitality of a light meal before the five interventions.

The researcher created, collected, and analyzed the quantitative data by utilizing the online survey tool SurveyMonkey<sup>2</sup> and exporting the collected data to the SPSS<sup>3</sup> software for both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included information on frequencies, percentages, and the mean (where appropriate) to analyze demographical information collected in both the baseline and end line surveys. A comparison between the two surveys was examined and reported. Inferential statistics were used to examine if a significant difference occurred between the baseline and end line survey to conclude a statistically significant relationship between one intervening variable and a specific question.

Charmaz's process for qualitative coding data was used to create codes for data analysis.<sup>4</sup> Data that was collected and coded was received through the baseline

---

<sup>2</sup> SurveyMonkey is a web-based survey development tool used by individuals and organizations to create, distribute, receive and analyze customizable questionnaires. I utilized the service to assist with the creation, distribution, reception, and analysis for my research. SurveyMonkey is a product of SurveyMonkey, Inc., located in Palo Alto, CA. More information can be found at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

<sup>3</sup> IBM Corp. released 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Charmaz's process includes *in vivo*, focused, axial, and theoretical codes to assist in qualitative data analysis. See Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London: SAGE Publications, 2006).

interviews, information that was shared through conversation at monthly interventions, qualitative data obtained through participant monthly report sheets for the spiritual practices, and an end line focus group with four of the six participants in the baseline interviews. The end line focus group was used to inform the researcher of the impact that the overall study had on the participants' lives and determine through qualitative data how the study impacted the participants' understanding of their personal power through the spiritual practices introduced at monthly interventions.

### **Baseline Qualitative Results**

Baseline interviews were held in early November 2019 before the beginning of the interventions which began on November 13, 2019. A total of six baseline interviews were collected, transcribed, and coded. Interviews were based on a non-probability quota sampling from the population of adult male members of ILC. The researcher selected the six individuals based upon demographical traits for a diverse sample. All the participants in the baseline interviews come from a variety of life experiences and backgrounds. Each interview averaged about an hour in time and was digitally recorded and transcribed into individual documents for analysis. The demographic information for the baseline interview participants is included in table 2.

**Table 2. Baseline interview participants' profile**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Background</b>
Adam	20-30	Married	Father of young children
Barry	20-30	Single	Recent college graduate
Charlie	61-70	Remarried	Retired Educator
David	71-80	Remarried	Retired Factory worker
Edward	41-50	Married	Small business owner
Frank	51-60	Married	Company executive

Adam is a social worker with a young family. He has two children and is married. Adam has been a member of ILC for nearly his entire life. He holds a master's degree and is employed in the nonprofit sector. Adam's extended family are all part of the faith community.

Barry is a recent college graduate and is in his mid-twenties. He is the youngest interviewee, is a recent college graduate, and began his professional career as an educator. He has been a member of ILC his entire life. Barry is involved in the life of the congregation and synod. Barry identifies with the LGBTQA+ community.

Charlie has been a retired educator for the past fifteen years. He is involved with a local recovery group and has served in various leadership positions within ILC. He was involved with a faith community in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod before joining ILC in the early 1990s. Charlie is involved in sponsoring recovering alcoholics and serving with veteran's affairs on a national level.

David is not a member of ILC, but he participates in the congregation's ministry. David retired from his position in a local factory after working as a foreman. David (and his wife) are raising their teenage granddaughters who they adopted ten years ago. David is in his mid-seventies and still works side jobs as a handyman.

Edward is in his late forties. He has worked in the public sector for the past twenty years and began his teaching/coaching position following graduation from college. He and his wife (along with their children) are a bi-racial family. Edward recently became a small business owner and is fulfilling his dream of owning his own restaurant.

Frank holds a master's degree in engineering and is in an executive level position for a local industry. Frank is a recent grandfather and is beginning to think about what retirement will look like for him and his wife when he decides to retire in the next few years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Frank has decided to delay his retirement from work which he had been looking forward to for many years.

Of interest in the baseline qualitative interviews were the statements that describe how the participants understand their sense of personal power. From the statements made during the interviews, one can begin to see what stage of power the person falls into using Hagberg's model of personal power. Many of the statements the participants made

about personal power fall into Stage Three power (Power by Achievement). Also noticeable in the responses is that the respondent's age, social location, and life experiences informed how they understood their personal power at the beginning of the study. The following comments in table 3 were made during the baseline interviews about how they understood their personal power. Comments related to leadership and power are underlined.

**Table 3. Baseline qualitative definition of personal power**

---

Q 5. What does the term personal power mean to you?

---

- ability to influence, change, accomplish tasks, getting things done.—Adam
  - the title I have in my work and in my home.—Adam
  
  - what control you have on things.—Barry
  - people looking at you to lead things or to run things.—Barry
  - the ability to make a difference or really just be in control.—Barry
  - I like to think that I have a lot of control.—Barry
  
  - having the ability to give up my notion of being in control, or having to be in charge. —Charlie
  - having the ability and willingness to look to other resources to help out.—Charlie
  - knowing how to address things that have an emotional attachment and how do you deal with them and react to them.—Charlie
  - understanding another person and trying not to hurt the person.—Charlie
  - I take the approach that everybody feels like they came out satisfied rather than frustrated.—Charlie
  
  - ability to do my job without hurting anybody.—David
  
  - confidence in who you are.—Edward
  - not trying to fit in with everybody else. —Edward
  
  - ability to influence what happens to me personally and the ability to influence what happens to others.—Frank
-

One of the most powerful moments during the baseline interviews was when the respondents allowed themselves to express their personal power in terms of being open and vulnerable. Vulnerability and the feelings of being powerless, in many cases, actually led to a greater and heightened sense of personal power. Some of the statements about vulnerability in the baseline interviews included:

- Giving up power makes me feel good. —Charlie
- The ultimate of powerful is being able to say, “I am not sure you’re the one. You need to give that up to someone else.” Relinquishing power, whatever power you might have. —Charlie
- I think the power lies with me letting it go and not, I’d like to say, not letting it bother me even though it does, but muting that and not letting that interfere with that relationship. I think that’s where my power really lies, it’s like, yeah, it could definitely piss me off, or I don’t understand, but that’s just how it is and I got to deal with that. —Barry
- I give power away to my kids when I try to help them understand something about. When my kid cries, or having anxiety, who is she going to call? She calls me because I am going to be the voice of reason.—Edward
- I go through a process of looking at a situation saying “why is this a big deal to me? Why do I need to control this? What effect does it have on me?”—Charlie
- The only thing I can control is how I react to things.—Charlie

Based on the participants' statements, one can observe patterns in the responses and predict which stage of power the individual will likely fall into using Hagberg’s Stages of Personal Power model. Charlie exhibits a more profound sense of personal power and is probably in Stage Four or Five based upon his responses during the baseline qualitative interviews. Charlie is a retired professional and has years of experience working with and managing people and likely has discovered a more in-depth and

informed sense of personal power by giving away power to others and allowing himself to be vulnerable in his relationships with others. Barry is a recent college graduate and is beginning his professional career. Barry's responses indicate that he is likely a Stage Three personal power based upon his comments about controlling and needing to run or control things. During the baseline interviews, most of the responses to the questions indicate that at the baseline of this study, most participants would fall into Stage Three power (Power by Achievement) using Hagberg's model of personal power.

### Focused Codes

The coding process began with a line-by-line (*in vivo*) textual analysis for each of the six interviews. The process of beginning with a basic textual analysis is helpful for this project as described by Kathy Charmaz, because "line-by-line coding frees you from becoming so immersed in your respondents' worldviews that you accept them without question."<sup>5</sup> Due to the researcher's familiarity with the participants, this critical review helped distance the researcher from the data to notice any implicit and explicit statements or themes. The researcher subsequently created *in vivo* codes using the interview participants' words and then clustered similar words, themes, and ideas into focused codes.

An analysis of the six baseline interview transcripts led to the development of forty-two focused codes. Focused codes are "more directed, selective, and conceptual than word-by-word, line-by-line, and incident-by-incident coding."<sup>6</sup> The focused codes

---

<sup>5</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 51.

<sup>6</sup> Charmaz, 57.



help turn large amounts of data collected by the *in vivo* codes by clustering them into thematic groups based upon phrases, statements and ideas. Table 4 includes the focused codes from the baseline qualitative interviews.

**Table 4. Baseline focused codes**

Focused Codes (42)
Mothers
Families
Faith Family
Faith leaders (pastors)
Church
Spiritual Practices (personal reflection)
Work/Volunteering
Serving others
Sense of belong
Awareness of God's presences
Making an impact
Anxieties of life (worry)
Taking advantage of opportunities (following your heart)
Relationships
Awareness of anxieties of life
Enjoying life
Developing faith life/discipleship
Provider for family (family involvement)
In-touch with emotions
Communication
Confidence
Intelligence
Finances
Influence
Control
Leadership
Understanding emotions of others
Self-differentiation
Uncertain future
Uncomfortableness
Being a role model
Personal knowledge
Credibility
Empowering others
Teamwork
Personal power from a position or role
Genuineness

Table 4. Baseline focus codes (cont.)

---

Listening/Communication
Earning the trust of others
Sense of recognition
Behavior of others
Sharing of spiritual experience(s)

---

#### Axial Codes

Five axial codes were generated from the data collected in the baseline interviews. The axial coding was used to further develop the data into subcategories which focuses on the process of the data rather than to the themes. From the process of axial coding of the baseline interviews the following five axial codes were created: who are the people who shape(d) me, how do I serve God by helping others, how do I serve God by growing my inner life, what is like to be human, and how do I function in society? Table 5 shows the axial codes as well as the corresponding focused codes.

**Table 5. Axial coding**


---

Axial Code	Corresponding Focused Code
<b>AC1: Being shaped by others</b>	mothers families relationships faith family (congregation) faith leaders (pastors)
<b>AC2: Serving God by helping others</b>	work/volunteering serving others making an impact empowering others
<b>AC3: Growing my inner life</b>	spiritual practices/ personal reflection awareness of God's presence developing a faith life in touch with emotions understanding the emotions of others personal knowledge following heart

Table 5. Axial Coding (cont.)

---

<b>AC4: Being human</b>	sense of belonging anxieties of life/worry awareness of anxieties enjoying life confidence intelligence self-differentiation uncertain future  uncomfortableness genuineness sense of recognition
<b>AC5: Functioning in society</b>	personal power from a position or role work discipleship provider for family/family involvement teamwork credibility/behavior of self and others communication finances influence control leadership/ being a role model earning the trust of others

---

The first axial theme “*being shaped by others*,” included people that helped shape personal power and was mentioned in all six of the baseline interviews. Of particular note, when all six male interviewees were asked to name the person who influenced their spiritual development the most—without exception—all six answered either their mother or grandmother, or another older female adult that influenced their spiritual and faith development. Conversely, not one interviewee mentioned a specific male figure (although it can be presumed that a pastor could have been male).

The second axial code, “*serving God by helping others*,” was created based upon the external sense of serving neighbors as a form of personal power. The theme of outreach was present throughout all six baseline interviews and included a sense of

service to others to the variety of vocations and careers of the interview participants in addition to volunteer work and serving others. All six interviewees had mentioned empowering others as an indication of their own personal power. They felt a greater sense of personal power when they gave their power away by empowering others through their own influence and abilities.

The third axial code, “*growing my inner life*,” was a theme that was present throughout the baseline interviews and continued throughout the study. All the interviewees expressed that the knowledge of God’s power in Christ is the ultimate source of power. However, only one interviewee connected his spiritual practices and how they shaped his understanding of personal power. The interviewee who connected his spiritual practices and his sense of power is a committed member of an Alcoholic Anonymous group. In his interview, he connected his spiritual practice of participating in a recovery group and the heightened sense of personal power that came out of his participation with other recovery group members.

An important concept in personal power is understanding how personal power impacts others by increasing self-understanding and emotional awareness.<sup>7</sup> This axial code included the focused codes that included statements participants made about their spiritual life and personal reflection, understanding others' emotions, the degree to which participants were in touch with their emotions, understanding their discipleship, and following their heart (intuition).

---

<sup>7</sup> In Hagberg’s model of personal power, understanding inner power begins at Stage Four and continues through the sixth and final stage. See Hagberg, 124ff.

The fourth axial code, “*being human*,” included the interviewees' responses about the range of human experience and how individual experiences impact personal power. Throughout the baseline interviews, participants reflected on the stories and events that helped them understand their sense of belonging and the times of enjoyment in their life. Interviewees expressed specific characteristics that developed out of their own life experiences. These characteristics include confidence, intelligence, understanding self-differentiation, time of recognition, anxiety, and uncomfortable situations.

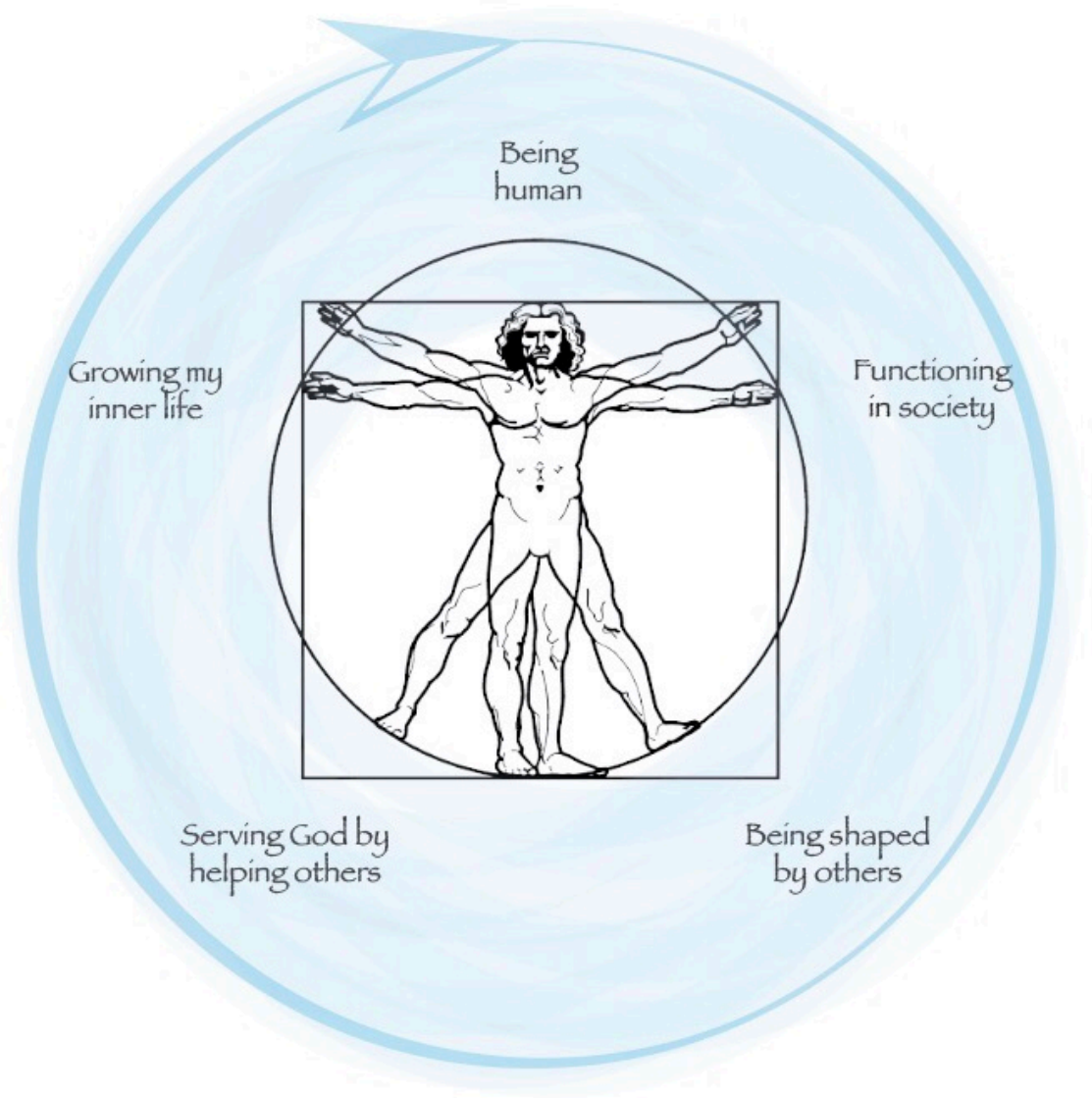
Another characteristic of personal power as it relates to leadership is having the ability to express vulnerability. Vulnerability is not to be understood as a form of weakness. Instead, vulnerability is a display of great power. Leaders who employ personal power understand they must be able to wield incredible power while yielding to others. This form of personal power is learned and comes with life experience and being open.

The fifth axial code that emerged was “*functioning in society*.” This axial code was based on how the interviewees related their sense of power to their vocations and careers. Furthermore, comments about how interviewees understand their finances as a form of personal power and their sense of leadership style and influence upon others fall into this category. This usage of personal power is perhaps the most visible and what many would consider power (as in the ability to make something happen or create change) in either their personal life or the life of an organization. Using Janet Hagberg’s model of personal power, function in society would be considered Stage Three (power by achievement)<sup>8</sup>. This is an external source of personal power mainly created through titles,

---

<sup>8</sup> See: Hagberg, *Real Power*, xxxii.

positions, possessions, and other social status symbols. According to the qualitative data collected in this project, these five axial codes that inform personal power are displayed in figure 6.



**Figure 6. Factors that inform personal power**

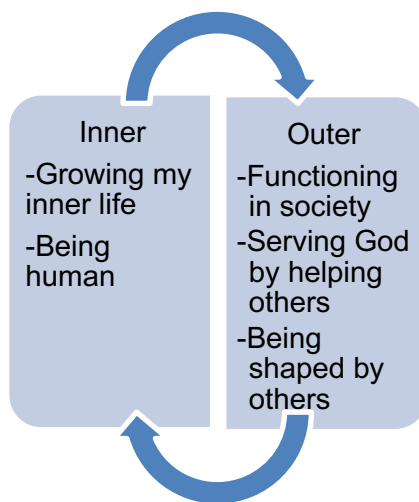
### Theoretical Coding

The above figure shows the relationships of the five axial codes that inform personal power, as revealed in this research project. Being human, this shared experience of life that includes pain and loss sits at the head. Everyone has their own unique, lived experience. The question is not what happens in life but instead what how we respond to what has come our way. As the figure suggests, there is a continuous movement among the factors. Placed at each limb is a different factor that contributes to one's movement and spiritual growth. As each limb is exercised, one's agency as a human being strengthens and increasing personal power is realized.

The figure is intended to show each factor influencing the others. To continue with the above example, participants all reflected on how they had been shaped by others by influential women in all cases. The example of these women's faith lives left a mark on the participants which impacted them to express their faith in varied ways. That expression of faith, in turn, shows itself in the other factors. All factors impact one another. Personal power is discovered and allowed to move and grow.

Further analysis of the axial codes revealed a second explanation of the relationships of the axial codes. This theoretical explanation of how the axial codes are related suggests two directions of influence as shown in figure 7. The first group of axial codes revolved around one's inner sense of self: growing my inner life and being human. The second group of axial codes (functioning in society being shaped by others, serving God by helping others) can be grouped as outer, meaning how one relates with the rest of the world. The inner and the outer lives are constantly evolving and build up each other which leads to a heightening understanding of one's personal power. Figure 7 provides a

helpful illustration of this process of personal power according to the responses provided from the baseline interviews.



**Figure 7. Inner and outer factors determining personal power**

The outer life factors inform the specific details of the second axial code regarding the agency that is gained from helping others; respondents found different types of service activities to be most rewarding depending on how they interacted with others during those activities and whether they felt that they empowered themselves by empowering others. Social function, the fifth axial code, similarly, related to the outer life theoretical code through the themes of self-reliance as well as mutual empowerment.

Interestingly, the first axial code relates to both the inner and outer lives and highlights the fact that the inner and outer directions sources of personal power are not mutually exclusive in relating the focused and axial codes. To shape an individual is to help him or her to develop the methods of self-reflection and self-connection to shape his or her inner life. In addition, shaping an individual is to generate a blueprint for the interactions with others that shape how they serve God in society and function within



society. To shape an individual is to help him determine what power means to him, both internally and externally.

### **End Line Qualitative Results**

The end line focus group was held on May 11, 2020. Four interviewees attended the end line focus group. The focus group conversation lasted about fifty minutes. All four interviewees participated in the interventions and were all interviewed at the baseline. The baseline protocol was used for the end line focus group. The end line focus group's goal was debriefing the experience of the interventions, learning from one another, and giving voice to how the interventions helped deepen one's understanding of personal power through the variety of spiritual practices introduced. The focus group met virtually using Zoom.<sup>9</sup> The end line focus group was recorded and transcribed.

The effects of the intervention and ensuing conversation, according to the focus group, were quite profound. The focus on the interview protocol questions went more in-depth and got more personal than the baseline interviews. This response could be that the focus group participants shared a similar experience by their participation in the study and thus felt comfortable sharing deeper feelings about their experiences, allowing themselves to be vulnerable. While the participants know one another from their participation in the ministry of ILC, they are all in different phases of their lives and before this project only had limited knowledge about one another. Table 6 provides further detail about the four focus group participants. There were fewer participants in the end line focus group than the baseline interviews. I attribute this decrease in numbers due

---

<sup>9</sup> Zoom is an online virtual meeting platform created by Zoom Video Communications, Inc. For details visit: <https://us04web.zoom.us>.

to the COVID-19 pandemic because of the difficulty of communicating while remaining in quarantine.

**Table 6. End line focus group participants**

Name	Age	Marital Status	Background Information
Adam	20-30	Married	Father of young children
David	70-80	Remarried	Retired factor worker adopted grandchildren
Frank	50-60	Married	Company executive entering retirement
Barry	20-30	Single	Recent college graduate

David is retired and is raising his two teenage granddaughters along with his wife. David is not a member of ILC but he participates in the men's ministry and Bible study. David shared how his involvement with this project and his participation with the men's group has impacted him. David shared his faith life was shaped only by women (mother, grandmother, and female adults in his faith community) in his childhood. He indicated he never experienced much if any, positive male support in his formative youth years. He has found strength in meeting with a group of men with which he can share some of his life experiences. David shared the following comment about the value of working with other men in a group setting during the end line focus group:

The easiest thing I can do for myself is just be involved with other men. I belong to an amazing men's group. All are doing good work in the world and some are raising kids; we get together at least once a month and talk about what's up for us and what's between us and how we are affecting one another. We have the opportunity to explore what's going on with each other. We find that more and more we can bring the truth of some of the experiences of our lives to this group. When I tell other men about this they ask: "Where can I find this?" They feel how I have a place to go and process complicated experiences I am going through in my life and am not dependent upon my spouse. There is somewhere else I can go and I don't have to always turn to one person. That's important. I think if men had

that kind of support and were talking about their experiences, that would be huge. Another reason I feel this group is right for all of us is that our sons ask us about the group. They are curious. They sense it is important to all of us—which it is.

Barry identifies with the LGBTQA+ community and is a recent college graduate.

He has been involved with ILC his entire life and has been active in many ministries throughout his life. Barry is discerning how his faith community can support him and encourage him in his faith life as a young adult. During the baseline interview, Barry shared that his understanding of power was centered on being in control and managing one's life. His statement demonstrated that he identified personal power as Stage Two power in Hagberg's model of personal power. Upon the completion of the project, during the focus group interview, Barry indicated a deepening of his understanding of personal power by sharing the following with the group:

I guess for me it would be the ability to know your limits. Know your shortcomings. I believe we think that power is focused on what we hold. But I think more through the sessions that we've had, I think that personal power to me is knowing what you can't hope or what you don't know, your weaknesses. Personal power is more about knowing your weaknesses, knowing what you can't do, what you're unable to do, and knowing that sometimes you're powerless. That's okay. There's power in knowing that you're powerless, you can have influence and be powerless and still have great power. That was a big impact to me. That's not something that I thought of going into this. That's something that I gained coming out of this.

Adam has been a member of ILC for nearly his entire life. He holds a master's degree in social work and is employed in the nonprofit sector. He and his wife have been married for five years and have recently bought their first home to raise their two young children. During the focus group, Adam reflected on his participation in the project joining other men as they considered their personal power and the effects of spiritual practices and noted:

I've been trying to teach my son to walk. Now this kid is crawling all over the house and getting in everything and it's a headache, but I gave him power. And I

feel more powerful because I protected his ability to do a basic function that we all do. I feel like I have more power because I impacted his ability to be successful in some way. It's kind of like teaching a man to fish, right? When you are talking about rearing children or mentoring younger colleagues helping them be successful by giving them just enough information to allow them to learn, not to do that, do it for them, or to lay it out for them. But to give them just enough information where they're going to have to dig a little bit and teach themselves is a positive in my mind. A sense of giving away power you're passing on knowledge and you're passing on the ability to make things happen and influence others.

Frank is a recent grandfather and was looking towards retirement in 2021 following a long and well-established career as an engineer. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Frank has decided to delay his retirement. Frank is a first-generation college graduate who worked hard to establish himself and provide for his family. Frank describes himself as a person who worked his way up through the management levels and achieved a position as a corporate executive where he oversees projects in the millions of dollars. Frank shared how stressful his job can be and how this project gave him some space to keep him going despite the high levels of stress overseeing large projects at work can cause. Frank shared how this project impacted him:

I think prior to this [interventions], I felt like I had control over a lot. I think when we did our initial interview, I gave you [researcher] a slew of things that I had control over. Um, but really, it's just my personal self-control, my ability to manage myself. That's what I have control over. I don't have control over anything else. And as we're sitting here talking tonight, it seems foolish to sweat those small things about providing for the family, and whatnot, because I mean, sure, I can get up and go to work every day. That's my self-control. I have the ability to manage that. But there is so much more that I worry about and I have no control over any of it.

There was a shift in several participants' understanding of personal power from the baseline interviews to the end line focus group. Hagberg's model would say that this is a progression of personal power. For example, Barry's baseline interview indicated that he was at Stage 2 (Power by Association). Personal power is, as Barry understood it in

the first interview, “. . . what control you have on things. . . power is people looking at you to lead things or to run things, to have the ability to make a difference, or really just be in control.” Contrast this with the end line focus group, where Barry had come to a different relationship with personal power. He moved to Hagberg’s Stage 4 (Power by Reflection). His understanding of power had developed into self-knowledge as he reflected, “sometimes you’re powerless. That’s okay.”

### **Quantitative Results**

The quantitative data from this research project were collected via a survey questionnaire made available to all adult male members of ILC and those men who are not members but participate in the men’s ministry of the congregation. The questionnaire was made available beginning on November 1, 2019, and remained open for nearly three weeks until the start of the first intervention held on November 13, 2019.<sup>10</sup>

The questionnaire included three parts—demographic information, a section on current engagement with spiritual practices, and the final section asking participants how they understood their personal power. Both sections two and three used Likert scales for rating participant preference. The baseline questionnaire contained thirty-four questions overall, while the third section on person power was divided into four questions, each containing four to six Likert scales. Both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics are used in this chapter.

An end line questionnaire was available following the final intervention held on May 10, 2020. The questionnaire remained open for study participants to complete using

---

<sup>10</sup> A copy of the baseline questionnaire can be found in appendix F.

SurveyMonkey until May 31, 2020. Paper copies of the end line questionnaire were also made available throughout the collection time. The end line questionnaire contained the same questions as the baseline questionnaire. The addition of a fourth part asked study participants to rate how helpful they found each of the interventions. The end line questionnaire contained thirty-nine questions.<sup>11</sup>

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics consist of collecting and organizing, summarizing, and presenting the data that were collected. Included in descriptive statistics is the total number of responses (N), the frequency (n) of responses for each category, the percentage of each category, and the mean (arithmetic average) where appropriate.

#### Background Information

The baseline and end line questionnaires requested demographic data from the study sample shown below in table 7. The baseline sample included 51 completed questionnaires. Thirty-three questionnaires were collected online using SurveyMonkey. In addition to the online questionnaires, eighteen paper copies were received and combined with the received data online. The end line questionnaire included 20 completed questionnaires. All end line questionnaires were received online.

**Table 7. Frequency and percentage, background information**

	Baseline		End Line	
	N=51		N=20	
	n	%	n	%
Marital Status				
Single, Never Married	10	19.61	2	10.00
Married/Partnered	35	68.63	17	85.00
Divorced	4	7.84	1	5.00

<sup>11</sup> See appendix G for the additional end line questions.

Table 7. Frequency and percentage, background information (cont.)

	Baseline		End Line	
	N=51		N=20	
	n	%	n	%
Separated	0	0.00	0	0.00
Other	2	3.92	0	0.00
Total	51	100.00	20	100.00
Age				
18-25	2	3.92	0	0.00
26-35	7	13.73	4	20.00
36-45	4	7.84	2	10.00
46-55	7	13.73	2	10.00
56-65	12	23.53	4	20.00
66-80	17	33.33	7	35.00
81 and over	2	3.92	1	5.00
Total	51	100.00	20	100.00
Highest level of education achieved				
Less than High School	1	1.96	0	0.00
High school degree	5	9.80	1	5.00
Some college but no degree	8	15.69	1	5.00
Associate degree	4	7.84	2	10.00
Bachelor degree	16	31.37	4	20.00
Graduate degree	17	33.33	12	60.00
Prefer not to answer	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	51	100.00	20	100.00
Length of Membership				
Less than a year	0	0.00	0	0.00
1-3 years	4	7.84	1	5.00
4-6 years	2	3.92	1	5.00
7-9 years	1	1.96	1	5.00
Ten years or longer	33	64.71	12	60.00
I am not a member	11	21.57	5	25.00
Total	51	100.00	20	100.00

The baseline questionnaire indicated that there was a wide range of participants' prior church experience. The members of ILC who completed the baseline survey was 78.43% (40). In comparison, the remaining 21.57% (11) of questionnaires were completed by participants who were not members, but at some point, have participated in the ministry of ILC. Similarly, the end line questionnaire indicated that 75.00% (15) of

participants were members while 25.00% (5) were not members of ILC. The baseline response rate was 25.50% of the 200 adult males in the congregation over age eighteen. The end line response rate was 10.00%. An overwhelming number of participants indicated they are married in both the baseline and end line questionnaires (68.63% / 85.00%). A majority of participants in both the baseline and the end line questionnaires had a college degree including Associate degrees (72.54% / 90.00%). The largest length of membership was ten years or longer with thirty-three respondents (64.71%) in the baseline indicating they have been a member of ILC for at least ten years.

Both the baseline and the end line questionnaire asked the respondents to identify their age. Most respondents in the baseline questionnaire were in the age group from sixty-six to eighty years of age with seventeen responses (33.33%) as reported in table 7 above. The next most frequent age group was respondents age fifty-five to sixty-five with twelve respondents (23.53%). Those age groups with the least number of respondents included both the eighteen to twenty-five age group and the age group of eighty-one and over with two respondents in each group (3.92%).

It is important to describe the prior church experience when describing this sample of respondents. Overwhelmingly, most respondents have a connection with a Christian church and have substantial experience within faith communities. Only six respondents (11.76%) in the baseline questionnaire and zero (0.00%) in the end line questionnaire indicated they have no prior church before Immanuel (see table 8). Prior church experience is an intervening variable that can influence a participants' spiritual practices and participation in this project's intervention. While this study project was open to the entire male population at Immanuel Church (two hundred people in the



population) far fewer participated in the monthly interventions. The monthly interventions are described in a later section in this chapter.

**Table 8. Prior church experience**

	Baseline N=51			End line N=20		
	n	%	Cumulative	n	%	Cumulative
Q. 10/11 I have always been a member of Immanuel Church.	10	19.61	19.61	2	10.00	10.00
I was a member of another Lutheran congregation.	17	33.33	52.94	8	40.00	50.00
I was a member of a church in another Christian denomination.	10	19.61	72.55	5	25.00	75.00
I was not a member of any church prior to joining this one.	6	11.76	84.31	0	0.00	75.00
I am not a member of Immanuel Church.	8	15.69	100.00	5	25.00	100.00

The respondents' spiritual practices in the baseline survey reveal that the spiritual practices vary greatly (see table 9). Reading the Bible's spiritual practice revealed that most respondents fall into two broad categories—those who engage scripture daily and those who study only a few times a year. Of the fifty-one questionnaires received, eighteen respondents (35.29%) indicated that they read the Bible “daily/weekly.”

When this category is combined with the category “A few times a month,” eight respondents (15.69%) reported, the result is a combined percentage of 50.88%. These data suggest that half of the respondents engage scripture routinely. The other category included those respondents who read scripture as a spiritual practice a “few times a year,” including ten respondents (19.61%), and those who responded “not at all” with ten

respondents (19.61%) for a total of 39.22%. The remaining five respondents (9.80%) indicated that they study scripture as a spiritual practice “once a month.”

**Table 9. Frequency in spiritual practices**

Spiritual practice	Baseline Frequency(n) (N=51)	Baseline Percent	End line Frequency(n) (N=20)	End line Percent
<b>Reading the Bible</b>				
Daily/weekly	18	35.29	8	40.00
Few times a month	8	15.69	5	25.00
Once a month	5	9.80	1	5.00
Few times a year	10	19.61	6	30.00
Not at all	10	19.61	0	0.00
Total	51	100.00	20	100.00
<b>Attending Worship</b>				
Daily/weekly	28	54.90	15	75.00
Few times a month	14	27.45	5	25.00
Once a month	3	5.88	0	0.00
Few times a year	4	7.84	0	0.00
Not at all	2	3.92	0	0.00
Total	51	100.00	20	100.00
<b>Taking part in small group ministry</b>				
Daily/weekly	11	22.00	4	20.00
Few times a month	6	12.00	3	15.00
Once a month	3	6.00	2	10.00
Few times a year	8	16.00	4	20.00
Not at all	22	44.00	7	35.00
Total	50	100.00	20	100.00
<b>Joining a service group, mission or outreach</b>				
Daily/weekly	4	8.00	1	5.26
Few times a month	2	4.00	3	15.79
Once a month	4	8.00	4	21.05
Few times a year	15	33.00	6	31.58
Not at all	25	50.00	5	26.32
Total	50	100.00	19	100.00

Table 9. Frequency in spiritual practices (cont.)

Spiritual practice	Baseline Frequency(n) (N=51)	Baseline Percent	End line Frequency(n) (N=20)	End line Percent
<b>Praying or meditating by myself</b>				
Daily/weekly	25	49.02	12	60.00
Few times a month	13	25.49	4	20.00
Once a month	3	5.88	1	5.00
Few times a year	6	11.76	3	15.00
Not at all	4	7.84	0	0.00
Total	51	100.00	20	100.00

Regarding the spiritual practice of corporate worship, the majority (82.35%) of respondents indicated that they worship either “daily/weekly” (54.90%, twenty-eight respondents) or a few times a month (27.45%, fourteen respondents). Thirty-eight respondents (74.51%) reported that they prefer praying or meditating alone, with twenty-five (49.02%) indicating they pray alone daily and thirteen (25.49%) pray alone a few times a month.

The respondents indicated they are less likely to participate in small ministry groups or join service, mission, or outreach groups. Thirty (60.00%) of the respondents recorded that they were either engaging in small group ministries a few times a year with eight (16.00%) of the respondents and twenty-two (44.00%) who do not take part in any small group ministries of the congregation. Forty (83.00%) indicated low or no participation in joining a service, mission, or outreach group, with fifteen (33.00%) participating a few times a year, and twenty-five (50.00%) not participating in service, mission, or outreach groups at all.

Thus, many of the respondents could be described as preferring practicing their faith alone without the need to participate in a group. While some find value in sharing

beliefs within a group, most respondents do not actively participate in groups. Furthermore, most respondents indicated that they prefer to engage in many spiritual practices alone.

#### Open-ended Comments from Quantitative Surveys

There were several write-in comments received in the baseline questionnaire that factor into the results. In particular, question fifteen: “Which of the following would you say is your primary source of values and beliefs?” The responses were nearly equally divided between the categories “what you learned as a child in your family,” in which twenty-seven (52.94%) respondents selected as opposed to “your own personal experience,” which twenty-four (47.16%) answered as their primary source of belief. Other open-ended comments included: college, both what I learned from my family and my own experiences, The Holy Bible, and studying the Bible.

#### End Line Questionnaire

An end line questionnaire was distributed in May 2020 following the final intervention. The end line questionnaire included an additional section that can be found in appendix G. The purpose of the additional questions was to obtain feedback on the Action Research interventions offered from November 2019-April 2020. Twenty questionnaires were completed in May 2020. The response to the end line questionnaire was subject to the intervening variable of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the number of questionnaires completed was half of the baseline.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> See table 7 for descriptive statistics.

The end line questionnaire's final section asked about the respondents' participation and experience in each of the interventions. A Likert scale was used to measure how helpful the participants found each of the interventions in cultivating a connection between spiritual practices and personal power. There was a wide range of responses to the question. Details on respondent feedback are found in table 10.

**Table 10. Participants' feedback on interventions**

---

*How helpful was the intervention in cultivating a connection between spiritual practices and personal power?*

---

Q. 36 Intervention One: "Life is Hard" November 2019

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Extremely helpful	1	5.00
Very helpful	3	15.00
Somewhat helpful	3	15.00
Not so helpful	4	20.00
Not at all helpful	0	0.00
Did not participate	9	45.00

Q. 37 Intervention Two: "You are Not that Important" December 2019

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Extremely helpful	2	10.00
Very helpful	2	10.00
Somewhat helpful	4	20.00
Not so helpful	1	5.00
Not at all helpful	1	5.00
Did not participate	10	50.00

Q. 38 Intervention Three: "Your Life is not about You" January 2020

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Extremely helpful	2	10.00
Very helpful	2	10.00
Somewhat helpful	6	30.00
Not so helpful	0	0.00
Not at all helpful	1	5.00
Did not participate	9	45.00

Table 10. Participants' feedback on interventions (cont.)

## Q. 39: Intervention Four: "You are Not in Control" February 2020

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Extremely helpful	0	0.00
Very helpful	4	20.00
Somewhat helpful	2	10.00
Not so helpful	1	5.00
Not at all helpful	0	0.00
Did not participate	13	65.00

## Q. 40: Intervention Five: "You are Going to Die" May 2020

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Extremely helpful	1	5.00
Very helpful	3	15.00
Somewhat helpful	2	10.00
Not so helpful	2	10.00
Not at all helpful	0	0.00
Did not participate	12	60.00

The end line questionnaire's final question asked respondents to reflect on the connection between spiritual practices and their personal power. By engaging in spiritual practices, many participants indicated they recognized they were powerless over the situation caused by the pandemic. Yet, through the engagement in spiritual practices, they discovered a personal power to persevere despite the hardships experienced throughout the pandemic. Responses to the question are included in table 11.

**Table 11. Open-ended responses to last end line question**

Q 41. *What else have you experienced in your spiritual life in the past six months that has helped you make any connection between spiritual practices and how the practice helped you think about your personal power?*

- A time of change and adaptation during a global pandemic after starting a new career.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the economy has caused me to postpone my retirement from work until things return to more normal. The only power I have is to postpone. I cannot control the economy and its effect on retirement savings performance.

Table 11. Open-ended responses to last end line question (cont.)

---

- My greatest take away is that God is a lot older than I am. A LOT older! And that realization gets me through a lot of fears and is a beacon of hope.
  - The current COVID-19 virus has certainly given me more opportunities to think about how I am not in control. It has given me more time to contemplate what is important and what is not in my life. Life's distractions have been minimalized with social distancing and stay-in-place recommendations, providing more introspection. Given that introspection, I have been able to assess my spiritual relationship with God.
  - Certainly, finding times for meditation, personal reflection, and prayer are most important to me now. I have a lot of responsibility in my job—these practices help in times of great stress.
  - God has a way of showing you who is in charge. You can't change what he has in place for you. Ask him for help and he will answer.
  - I feel like “knowing” that I cannot control everything is actually more powerful than me “thinking” I can. I feel that there is great strength and power in knowing your weaknesses, and knowing when you are not able to do certain things or have control over certain things. In general, I feel like I have more power when I know what I am not in control of.
  - The death of a child.
  - In the past couple of months there has been a quarantine for the country. It is hard to lose a friend or relative during this time of no visitation or funeral. That is my way of saying good-bye and I could not do that. This was very disturbing to me and that made me think about my spiritual health.
  - Retirement in the midst of a global pandemic.
  - Letting go of outside agendas and not letting others have unhealthy power over me.
  - Doing a better job of daily personal prayer.
  - That only through my spiritual practices do I have any personal power.
  - Unlawful termination, legal matters and health issues have led to extreme stress, depression, etc. I have typically gone to church on a regular basis, but these issues have made it more difficult for me to get up and go. However, my mother's strong faith (and surviving cancer) and having a strong and supportive family have helped me. My mother encourages me to trust in Christ and try to get back in the habit of going to church. Meditation, prayers (when used) make me feel better, lower stress and make me feel confident in providing for my family in the future.
  - The disruption of my daily routine due to the Coronavirus outbreak has helped me to think about my values and what is meaningful for me. I am not in control and this study has helped me understand that fact.
-

Several themes emerge from the open-ended response question. Many respondents described their personal power considering a life struggle or situation that required them to cease trying to control a particular outcome. This sense of personal power is more reflective, and the responses indicate an attempt at inner work and self-reflection.

According to Hagberg's model of personal power, the responses tend to indicate a high stage of personal power in that the respondents are reflecting on their personal power and how their understanding of personal power affects their behavior and attitudes. There is an indication in the responses that participants learned how to make connections between their own spiritual practices and their understanding of personal power. The COVID-19 pandemic was an intervening variable that impacted the participants and their participation in this project.

### **Intervention Report Forms**

The Action Research project interventions began in November 2019 and involved the men of the congregation who were at least eighteen years old. Interventions were held monthly except for March and April due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In early May 2020, the fifth and sixth interventions were presented together—the spiritual practice of transformation and the spiritual practice of empowerment—were combined due to the suspension of in-person gatherings during the pandemic. During all but the final intervention, study report forms were given to participants to complete as they engaged in



the month's spiritual practice.<sup>13</sup> In this section, a synopsis of the data will be reported from the four interventions.

#### Intervention One—Life Is Hard

The first intervention was attended by twenty-three participants and was held on November 13, 2019. The intervention report sheets were gathered at the next month's intervention on December 18, 2019.<sup>14</sup> A total of ten report sheets were returned. This intervention's spiritual practice asked participants to create, name (describe), and engage in their ritual through the month.

Initial data were collected during the intervention from the grief ritual. Participants recorded their fears and hopes at one of the four grief stations. The responses from this practice are recorded in table 12.

---

<sup>13</sup> Intervention report forms can be found in appendix I

<sup>14</sup> A copy of the November report sheet on grief ritual can be found in appendix H.

**Table 12. List of fears and hopes from intervention one**

Fears	Hopes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fear of dying alone with no one else around.</li> <li>• I fear being trapped in the past and not being able to recover from squandered opportunities.</li> <li>• I will let my human desires get between me and God.</li> <li>• Loss of control, fear of the unknown, discomfort, judgment.</li> <li>• Weakness in dealing with challenges. Loss of focus. Loss of companionship. Loss of means to care for my family.</li> <li>• That further rejection will occur. That our relationship is not important to her. That I cannot be the father she wants me to be.</li> <li>• The certainty of death.</li> <li>• It is forever gone.</li> <li>• I fear that I have messed up my life by my career choice and it will impact my family.</li> <li>• Being taken for granted as a father and a husband.</li> <li>• To find out I have not done everything in my power to help my family in health and luxuries.</li> <li>• I fear that the lack of outward expression of faith has led my children to not have a faith. I fear there is no God and my attempt to believe in him is in vain.</li> <li>• Not being good enough.</li> <li>• Leading someone astray.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I hope for everlasting life.</li> <li>• That I have done all that I can for my family. They feel all the love I have even when I don't show it all the time.</li> <li>• Love, health, happiness in retirement.</li> <li>• Connect with God daily. Connect with love.</li> <li>• I hope to find joy in my work. That God will lead me in the right direction.</li> <li>• That the relationship will be healed. That I will be willing to understand and accept.</li> <li>• I hope I can navigate through the next ten years in a way that won't leave me grieving what I have squandered and lost.</li> <li>• Strength to quell my doubts and fears, trust (faith), God's attention to my weakness (needs), belief in God's redemption.</li> <li>• Strength, enlightenment, happiness, joy, greater sense of being.</li> <li>• I hope to become more closer to you, my Lord and Savior, by praying and think more about you every day.</li> <li>• To stay faithful, live a life pleasing to God, and be a true believer.</li> <li>• My hopes are that I will continue to hear God's calling me to service.</li> </ul>

There was a wide range in the names and descriptions of the grief rituals recorded in the monthly spiritual practice journal. Some of the names of the rituals include:

- A Ritual for Grieving the Loss of Youth
- An Early Morning Mirror Gazing Thanking God for Another Day
- A Prayer for my Girls

Other participants described their ritual. One participant described his ritual in this way:

First, I read a prayer for mourners out of the *Lutheran Book of Prayer* that I received for my confirmation in 1968. Then I whispered the names of my parents three times. I then reviewed pictures that I had of my parents and other family members. After doing that, I read a prayer for someone who died from the same prayer book. At the end of this, I quietly again whispered the names of my parents three times.

Other descriptions of grief rituals included: remembering their father by wearing his [father's] sweatshirt to work on Fridays, engaging in prayer at least daily, and sitting still and thoughtfully processing thoughts. Another contributor described his experience with a grief ritual in this way:

I have no name for my ritual. The grief is continually reinforced. It is not an event—it is a fact of life that will not change. Reminder of it is refreshed daily so it is a daily thing to face. My ritual is to pretend I am not devastated. Grief may not be over an event—it can be a life situation. That requires a careful daily walk with God.

Participants were asked how frequently they engaged in their ritual. The range included: twice a day (2 respondents), daily (2 respondents), a few times a week (5 respondents), only once (1 respondent). Eight contributors indicated they were able to feel a connection with God during and after their ritual. Some of the elements that were used in the rituals included: running gear, a father's sweatshirt, a prayer book, devotional book and Bible, quiet space, and holy time.

Contributors were asked to describe their sense of power with regard to their grief ritual. One contributor wrote: "I can prevail by accepting where I am at now instead of

thinking about what I used to do [referencing his grief for the loss of his youth]. That is my power.” Another contributor asked if his power was found in his lack of feeling grief following his ritual by wearing his father’s sweatshirt. One participant who experienced grief from the loss of his mother described his power, “I think a sense of peace came over me as I did this ritual. It was the same kind of peace I experienced the day my brother and I witnessed my mother’s death years ago in her hospital room.” Another described his power as, “There is no grief. Instead, it is a glow that starts down deep inside of me.” Only one participant indicated he feels no grief in his life. He states: “I do not feel a sense of grief. What happens ‘is what **it** is’! Expect **it** and move on.”

#### Intervention Two—You are Not That Important

This intervention was attended by twenty-two people and occurred on December 18, 2019. One participant joined the group online via the Zoom meeting platform. Ten reports were received on January 8, 2020 from the second intervention.<sup>15</sup> Participants were asked to report on one mindfulness session from each of the four weeks.

The amount of time participants engaged in the practice of mindfulness varied between four minutes to fifteen minutes. One participant shared the story of how this practice assisted him to calm down before a blood donation. The participant stated:

I practiced the mindfulness technique before donating blood. The screener questioned my low pulse, asking if I was a runner—I am not. My pulse was the lowest reading I have had in more than forty years of donating.

One participant noticeably saw growth in his practice of mindfulness. After the first week, he indicated in his report sheet, “This [mindfulness] was my third attempt. I

---

<sup>15</sup> A copy of the second report sheet on the spiritual practice of mindfulness can be found in appendix J.

tried, but I have not experienced what I feel is real mindfulness.” However, on the fourth week of engaging in the practice, the participant concluded, “I have tried to reach more than just a restful state. I plan on continuing with this practice because of how I feel when I am done.”

Another participant indicated he followed the mindfulness practice the way in which it was outlined for the month. He designated prayer and meditation moments before starting his daily work and while on the treadmill after work. He wrote about his experience in this spiritual practice:

I think of my woodworking as my spiritual practice. I like to turn wood. The process of turning a shape on the lathe can let you get into a calm, contemplative mental state. Sanding on the lathe also can provide the “environment” to be mindful of myself.

Table 13 on the following page shows the spiritual practice report sheet of the participants' week-to-week feelings before engaging in the practice of mindfulness and following the practice. Also asked was how the participant understood his personal power due to engaging in the practice and if the participant felt the practice exerted power over whatever was on his mind.

**Table 13. Second intervention report on mindfulness**

	<i>Before mindfulness I felt...</i>	<i>After mindfulness I felt...</i>
Week one	relaxed <sub>3</sub> hopeful uncertain <sub>4</sub> futile anxious <sub>2</sub> incapable irritated	relaxed <sub>5</sub> worthwhile uncertain <sub>3</sub> nervous able to sleep
Week two	<i>Before mindfulness I felt...</i>	<i>After mindfulness I felt...</i>
	relaxed <sub>4</sub> uncertain <sub>4</sub> futile nervous hopeful more confident anxious	relaxed <sub>7</sub> uncertain <sub>2</sub> worthwhile
Week three	<i>Before mindfulness I felt...</i>	<i>After mindfulness I felt...</i>
	anxious uncertain <sub>3</sub> futile hopeful <sub>2</sub> relaxed <sub>2</sub> tired but awake	relaxed <sub>5</sub> able to sleep worthwhile uncertain <sub>3</sub>
Week four	<i>Before mindfulness I felt...</i>	<i>After mindfulness I felt....</i>
	nervous incapable relaxed hopeful tired relaxed <sub>3</sub> uncertain	relaxed <sub>2</sub> futile uncertain <sub>2</sub>

### Intervention Three—Life Is Not about You

This intervention was attended by twenty-one participants and took place on January 8, 2020. Participants in this intervention identified other forms of listening besides listening to the spoken word of humans. Some identified a form of listening through the visual arts as a form of nonverbal communication that profoundly spoke to them.<sup>16</sup> Another participant shared his participation in listening to creation while walking in a park and could hear up to seven different sound sources mixed. Most respondents indicated they listened to God in some form of communication from this spiritual practice on their spiritual practice report sheet.

When asked about listening to God, the men described patterns that included both spoken and nonverbal communication. They could identify God at work through the spoken word of a sermon and in biblical studies. They included in their identity the spoken words and through the suggestions of friends, the natural world's power, and the discernment of inner thoughts. Some men described hearing God's voice as they journaled or reflected on their life patterns through their participation in the study of spiritual practices. Listening is a skill that takes practice. Hearing is not necessarily listening.

Listening involves reflecting on the message and may not include an oral response. One of the participants wrote about listening, "It is easier for me to talk than to listen." For this reason, practicing listening as a spiritual practice is very valuable in a noisy world. Another participant wrote how good he felt after he was heard. He stated, "It felt fulfilling to be heard." When he wrote about his experience of listening to another

---

<sup>16</sup> See appendix K.

person, he indicated how challenging it is to listen. He stated, “it is hard to receive a challenging message.”

The journals from this spiritual practice were collected the following month on February 19, 2020. Eleven reports forms were received for the third intervention. The intervention questions varied each of the four weeks. During the first week, participants were asked to reflect on a conversation they had during the week in which they felt they were listened to by another person. The second question was a follow-up question and asked to identify three ways they knew they were being listened to, and the third question was to reflect on the one thing the person listening did or said to communicate they were listening. Five of the eleven respondents wrote a response regarding an event that occurred at work and all eleven respondents choose to record a conversation that occurred outside their immediate family. When asked, “How do you know you were being listened to?” nine of the eleven respondents recorded similar responses about establishing eye contact.

In the final week of the month, participants were asked to reflect on their personal power when they practiced active listening. The most profound question related to personal power was “What did you gain from listening to someone else?” One participant answered:

By my not interjecting questions or comments I was able to hear information by allowing the speaker to speak. I gained a sense of what the speaker was feeling in reference to the topic. What did I lose? I did not get all of my questions answered that I had hoped to get answered.

Another participant feels his understanding of personal power is strengthened when he “listens” to the silence. He stated, “I like my times of quiet. I get a lot of time to myself



and I can choose if I want noise—music, television, podcast. Often, I choose silence over anything else. I can reflect on my life and who I am.”

#### Intervention Four—You Are Not in Control

There were sixteen participants for this intervention, which took place on February 19, 2020. The topic of this intervention generated a lot of conversation for study participants. A total of four session follow-up report sheets were collected on March 15, 2020. The report sheets asked participants to consider how they understand their control in three spheres of relationship—family, the wider community, and immediate social area (work, church, volunteer). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of reports received was down from the previous interventions.

In the first week of this spiritual practice, participants were asked to reflect on the two things they can control—their attitude and their effort. They were asked to describe an irritating event that happened in their home during the week. A follow-up question was asked about their control of the situation and if they could change the irritation. Two of the four report sheets (50.00%) described an irritating event with a spouse. One report sheet (25.00%) recorded an irritating event with a daughter, and one report (25.00%) did not record any information. One participant recorded the following event:

My wife has been “retired” going on six years. I am still working. I am up at 5:30 each morning, at work by 7:00 AM, and usually don’t get home until nearly 6:00 or later each evening. I frequently work on work at the home or go in for a few hours on the weekend. I have a very high stress job, with a great deal of responsibility. It gets irritating to have to wake my wife up each morning to say goodbye. She will give me grief if she is asleep and I “don’t go to the trouble of waking her up” before I leave. Reflecting on this event several thoughts come to mind:

1. I love my wife and would not want to be without her
2. She simply has never had to deal with the things I have to deal with every day. She doesn’t understand.
3. I only have to work a little longer (I hope!)

4. I need to always to give up some of this to God and do the best I can and realize I can only do so much.

During the second week, the participants were asked to reflect on their level of control in the face of the news and world events. The reflection was timely given the fear of the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fear of contracting the virus. All report sheets (100.00%) reflected on the news of the COVID-19 pandemic as an irritation beyond their control. The responses included:

- The person on the TV was telling everyone how they needed to stay at home and avoid contact with anyone to prevent the COVID-19 virus.
- I was irritated by the fact that the only news today concerned the coronavirus no matter where you listened on radio or television news.
- President Trump discounting any scientific evidence that the COVID-19 virus was serious. Then, not taking any responsibility for his lack of acting on the virus threat.
- I was supposed to have double hernia surgery this month. Right before the surgery, I contracted a serious sinus infection which led to bronchitis. Needless to say, I had to cancel the surgery. Surgery can't be rescheduled for quite some time now due to the Coronavirus pandemic we are in the midst of.

During the third week, respondents were asked to consider their control at work, church, or other volunteer experiences. Three out of four (75.00%) responded to the questions for week three. Of the three respondents who completed the practice in week three, two of the three (66.67%) wrote about work irritation. The third respondent wrote about an experience that created irritation for him at church. The results from this spiritual practice included the following:

- I was a substitute teacher in a first-grade class. After noon recess, I reminded the students of the expectations for "line basics" (face forward, voices quiet, etc.). At this point in the school year students are well aware of expectations. When I reminded two boys to demonstrate line basics, one of the boys said he was and gave me the "look" and stated he was showing line basics.
- I work with a number of "millennial" engineers. One younger engineer, I work with is sometimes quite confident and even infatuated with his own

abilities and comes across as a bit arrogant. He does not realize that he is this way. This does not always sit well with me, as I believe that you should always present yourself to others with a reasonable measure of humility. I have bitten my tongue more than once. I usually take a breath and realize that he wants to be helpful and do a good job.

- I get upset when I see members of ILC congregation bring coffee into the sanctuary during worship services.

### **Inferential Statistics**

In these tests, a difference between means is statistically significant if the p-value is less than or equal to .050 (bold type in the tables). Discovering a significant difference does not allow us to conclude a causal relationship from one intervening variable to a specific question, but it does enable us to reject the null hypothesis, which states there is no relationship between the variables.

#### Independent t-tests

An independent t-test was used to analyze whether there were statistically significant differences between the baseline and end line means. The independent t-tests were used to compare means in the baseline data to those in the end line data. The independent t-test indicated two areas in which statistically significant change occurred based on the significance ( $p$ ) of the difference in the means being equal to or less than .05, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis indicating a statistically significant difference between the variables.

Two independent t-tests indicated statistical significance (see table 14). The questions, “*I find that symbols of success do not motivate me the way they used to,*” and “*I feel a deep peace of mind during times of suffering,*” both had a p-value less than .05. The symbols of success question had a baseline mean of 3.43 and an end line mean of

4.15,  $t_{(69)}=-3.230$ ,  $p=.002$ . The change in the means' value indicates that respondents moved from agreeing with the question to a firm agreement in the end line questionnaire.

The question about peace in the times of suffering had a baseline mean of 2.61 and an end line mean of 3.05,  $t_{(69)}=-2.171$ ,  $p=.033$ . The movement of the means between the baseline and end line questionnaire indicated that respondents move from disagreement in the baseline to neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. This movement was likely the result of participating in the interventions and engaging with the project's spiritual practices. Table 14 lists the responses that moved in the same direction even if they were not statistically significant.

**Table 14. Independent t-test results: personal power**

	Baseline Mean	n	End Line Mean	n	t	df	p
Q32/33. I find that symbols of success do not motivate me the way they used to.	3.43	51	4.15	20	-3.230	69	<b>.002</b>
Q 34/35. I feel a deep peace of mind during times of suffering.	2.61	51	3.05	20	-2.171	69	<b>.033</b>
Q33/34. I have a deep inner core of spirituality.	3.88	51	4.25	20	-1.764	69	.082
Q29/30. I feel other's emotions and often think of myself as an empathetic person.	3.88	51	4.05	20	-0.717	69	.476

#### Paired t-tests

Thirteen sets of paired t-tests were conducted SPSS software to determine whether the difference between the means of the baseline and end line questionnaires were significantly different. The data showed three questions about personal power that

were statistically significant. The three questions that indicated statistical significance are included in table 15 (page 169).

Of the three significant questions, “*I find that symbols of success do not motivate me the way they used to.*” had the most significant p-value of .001. The baseline mean (3.00) and the end line mean (4.0667),  $t_{(14)}=-4.000$ ,  $p=.001$ , indicated a positive movement from a neither agree nor disagree to an agree response in the end line questionnaire. This statistically significant difference is likely the result of the interventions. It indicates that the participants gained a deeper understanding of their personal power and likely are beginning to think more about the inner aspects of their personal power (Stages Four through Six).

Also important was the question, “*I believe how successful I am makes me a better person.*” The baseline mean was 2.87 and the end line mean was 2.00,  $t_{(14)}=-3.166$ ,  $p=.007$ . This movement indicated that respondents moved from a neutral response to disagreeing with this response. This is an indication that following the interventions in this study, participants are beginning to think more deeply about their personal power and understanding that personal power is both external as well as internally focused.

Additionally, a third question on personal power showed statistical significance. The question, “*I feel secure when someone else is making decisions for me,*” had a baseline mean of 2.41 and the end line mean was 3.0667,  $t_{(14)}=-2.553$ ,  $p=.023$ . This movement indicated a neutral response in the baseline to one of agreement in the end line questionnaire. This movement in values is likely the result of the interventions and the participants’ engagement with the spiritual practices.

**Table 15. Paired t-test results: personal power**

	Baseline		End Line		t	df	p
	Mean	N	Mean	N			
Q. 30 I feel secure when someone else is making decisions for me.	2.41	15	3.0667	15	-2.553	14	<b>.023</b>
Q. 31 I believe how successful I am makes me a better person.	2.87	15	2.0000	15	-3.166	14	<b>.007</b>
Q. 33 I find that symbols of success do not motivate me the way they used to.	3.00	15	4.0667	15	-4.000	14	<b>.001</b>

### Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

This study produced a large amount of data that have been considered in this analysis. A benefit of a mixed method study is that a combination of qualitative and quantitative research includes both in-depth and broad prospective research. John Creswell writes, “If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding validity to the study.”<sup>17</sup>

Shifting through the large quantity of data that this study produced, specific themes can be found in qualitative and quantitative data. The data as reported in this chapter indicate a deeper understanding of personal power in men's lives with the introduction of the monthly spiritual practices that we introduced following each of the interventions. Both the qualitative and quantitative data suggest that the interventions have a lasting impact on the study participants as they think more about power as a form

<sup>17</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 201.

of weakness and vulnerability than a position of strength and might. These data suggest that participants were invited to think about their personal power through the lens of spiritual practices through the study interventions.

### **Chapter Summary**

The results from this research project are shown in chapter five. Both the qualitative and quantitative data in this mixed method study show a relationship between personal power and spiritual practices in men's lives. The qualitative data collected in the baseline interviews and end line interviews provided a clear connection in thinking about what personal power means at the beginning and end of the research project. The data showed that the men had a comprehensive and more in-depth understanding of personal power. The quantitative data showed some change in the inferential statistical analysis conducted in both the independent and paired t-tests.

Collecting and coding the data from the project report sheets following each intervention gave further insight into how participants connected their personal power and the monthly spiritual practice. The qualitative data collected at the baseline were analyzed and sorted into focused, axial, and theoretical codes.

In chapter six, I will offer conclusions and reflections to the research data collected, offer an emerging hypothesis, and integrate the results of the research project with the theoretical, biblical, and theological lenses I presented in chapters two and three. Additionally, I will offer some implications and limitations to this study and offer questions for future research.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

This chapter includes the conclusions and reflections from this research project. The chapter will include reflections on the theoretical, biblical, and theological lenses presented in chapters two and three, the implications and limitations of this research, questions for future research projects, and a summary. The research question for this project is:

*How might Action Research interventions involving spiritual practices of men affect the personal power in their lives?*

This project's primary social science research methodology was Action Research (AR) using a mixed methods design. The mixed-methods approach included a concurrent equal emphasis of quantitative and qualitative data from the adult male members of Immanuel Lutheran Church (ILC) in Manville, Iowa.<sup>1</sup>

Both the qualitative and quantitative data in this mixed method study show a growing understanding of the relationship between personal power and spiritual practices in men's lives. This shift indicates an increasing understanding of an inner stage (Stages Four through Six) personal power. The quantitative data showed some change in the inferential statistical analysis conducted in both the independent t-tests and the thirteen sets of paired t-tests.

---

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Lutheran Church, Manville, Iowa, and all proper names are pseudonyms used in order to protect the identity of the people and congregation who participated in this research.



### **Mixed Methods Discussion**

The mixed methods used in this research project yielded a rich and varied amount of data from both qualitative and quantitative methods. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected at the baseline and end line of this research project. Additional qualitative data were collected following each of the interventions by collecting the participants' spiritual practice reports in their journals. Both sets of data were analyzed and presented in chapter five.

The data received from the baseline interviews, the intervention report forms, and the end line focus group indicated a more robust understanding of personal power based as evident when comparing the baseline data with the end line interviews. The data indicated an expanding of understanding of personal power from a Stage Three (outer) nature of personal power to a State Four (inner) nature of personal power using Janet Hagberg's model of personal power.

The change in responses between the baseline interviews and the end line focus group can be attributed to the change in perspective following the project's planned interventions. While the qualitative data provide rich narrative data that indicated a change in baseline and end line response, the quantitative data from the baseline and end line questionnaires indicated changes in responses because of the interventions and participation in the spiritual practices introduced at each intervention. The inferential statistical data, including both independent and paired t-tests presented in chapter five, indicated some statistically significant differences between the baseline and end line questionnaire sections on personal power.

### **Emerging Hypothesis**

The results of the data presented in chapter five along with the conclusion in this chapter indicate that engagement in spiritual practices results in deeper understanding of one's personal power. Supporting the spiritual practices of grief ritual, mindfulness, active listening, and awareness of attitude and effort appear to drive men's understanding and practice of their own personal power.

For example, the participant Adam entered the research project with a Stage Three understanding of personal power (power by achievement.) At the end line focus group interview, he reflects:

Initially, [I] felt like I gave power away. [Now], I'm sharing it...It's the sharing of power and empowering others...that gives you more power. Because you have the ability to influence [others] regardless of how much or how little they're able to influence you. I almost gain more from empowering others... .

This participant, after engaging in the above specified spiritual practices, moved beyond Stage Three and well into Hagberg's Stage Four, which is power by reflection. The emerging hypothesis is that spiritual practices can enhance personal power in men. Such practices do seem to positively impact men's ability to reflect upon and make use of their own personal power.

### **Reflections on Findings**

The findings in the project indicate that many men are not aware of their personal power. This lack of awareness leads to behaviors, actions, and attitudes that limit their potential for living a meaningful life and maximizing personal connections with others. While the scope of the findings from this project includes a small population of men, they are representative of a broader section of our population.

Some of this study's implications will be examined through the major lenses presented in chapters two and three. One section includes key theoretical lenses and a discussion of how this study informed the lenses. The other sections include a discussion of how the project informed both the biblical and theological lenses.

The final question in the end line questionnaire asked participants to rank how helpful each of the interventions was for this project. This section had a wide range of responses. I believe there are several reasons for the range of responses:

- This subject of personal power and even spiritual practices was a new experience for many study participants.
- The effects of the intervening variable of COVID-19 created a distraction for some of the study participants. One participant offered feedback that combining the last two interventions was too much for him to process.
- According to the feedback data from the monthly spiritual practices, some spiritual practices work better for some participants, while others did not find much value.
- Culturally, men have not been invited to think about their personal power and how spiritual practices give meaning to life.

#### Theoretical Lenses

##### **Personal Power**

During the end line focus group conversation, the participants identified some of the problems resulting when leaders do not have a healthy understanding of their personal power. There are dangerous mistakes that leaders can make when they do not properly understand and handle their personal power. When personal power is not fully understood as a function of leadership, the problems resulting are the harm caused to people who follow and to the task of the leadership function. There are times when people step into leadership for the wrong reasons. Study participant, Adam, offered a

perspective of how his leadership is strengthened because of his deeper understanding of his personal power. States Adam:

I think when we talked about this, initially I listed several things where it felt like I gave power away. I don't know that I'm giving power away. I'm sharing it. You know, it is like . . . I guess if you split it in half, sure. But it's the sharing of power and empowering others. It almost gives you more power because you can influence regardless of how much or how little you're able to influence you. Almost gain more from empowering others. I guess that's where I'm at.

Leadership and power are inextricably connected. There is no such thing as leadership without personal power. Successful leaders understand how their personal power informs their positional power. A leader must understand (and be able) to yield power and personal power to lead effectively. While this might feel as though the leader is giving up power, this giving away of power strengthens one's personal power.

A few participants in the baseline interviews associated personal power with external success and were willing to do everything they could to climb the “ladder” of success to gain more external power. This “ladder” of success can include the ladder of politics, wealth, or information and expertise. Other interviewees understood personal power cynically—as self-serving, manipulative, and even inherently corrupt.

Personal power has come to be defined as the ability or potential to move reality and make something happen, which is a crucial leadership trait. Based upon this study of personal power and the effects of spiritual practices, it could be concluded that the more significant one's self-understanding of personal power (Stages Four through Six in Hagberg's Stages of Personal Power) equates to more fruitful leadership. All leaders must have the ability to manage power. Those leaders with a great sense of their personal power have a better chance of successfully leading others through their own personal

power awareness. At times, leaders may mismanage their power, resulting from straying to a lower stage of personal power.

Paradoxically, personal power involves the ability to admit powerlessness.

Feeling powerless is, at first, the opposite of feeling in control. Culturally, men are taught (even if they did not realize it) that you should be the master of the world as best you can.

The study participant, Barry, recognized this paradox because of this project. States

Barry:

Powerless at first seems to be unmanly. In fact, I don't know if I see powerless ever to be manly, but it doesn't bother me now to lack that manly quality. The first three spiritual practices have challenged my desire for manliness in general. It's about coming to terms with myself and being okay with have who I am clash with the stereotypes of being a man.

The word "powerlessness" often has a negative undertone. Feeling powerless and not able to control a situation is never a comfortable feeling. Moreover, in times of feeling powerless, this project helped the participants understand that their power is to be found in one's attitude and actions outside of these two, there is little to control. The refusal to give up and the commitment to persevere through trying times is an indication of strong personal power. Sometimes expressing a defeat is a great expression of personal power.

### **Narrative Theory**

There is great power in the narratives we shape to make sense of the world around us. The data in this study indicated that personal power is shaped through various experiences and relationships that include both an external and inner sense of power as discussed in the theoretical code section in chapter five. This project consisted of men of a variety of ages and life experiences. Everyone has a life narrative, and regardless of

one's age, each has a story that frames his life. This project highlighted that the narratives of each life are interconnected and woven together into a collective story.

Undergirding our cultural understanding of power are the narratives we construct to define "success" as an outward symbol of our personal power to achieve. In Janet Hagberg's model of personal power this definition of success is considered Stage Three (power by achievement) success by measuring success with material possessions and symbols. This project invited participants to deepen their narrative of success and what we might learn from a narrative that tells us to be successful. Sometimes we will fall, let someone down, or make mistakes. These narratives lead to shame, humiliation, and self-accusation. This study project asked the participants to be vulnerable and understand weakness as power. One study participant understood this weakness through the following statement he recorded in his study journal:

just because a thought comes into my head doesn't mean I have to grab it. Most of the negative thoughts I construct are just noise and I try my best to leave them alone. They will fall on their own if I don't fuel them. I try my best to let them fly by and dissolve as I move onto another thought.

This study assisted participants in understanding that not every narrative we create is entirely accurate. We have power to choose and decide for ourselves to what narrative we will listen. Not all the stories we fashion to make sense of the world around us are accurate. Spiritual practices help us discern what stories give us life and energy and what stories produce anxiety and frustration.

Author and pastor Brian McLaren uses the language of "framing story" to describe the set of beliefs, images, constructs, and structures that inform our meaning-making of the world. McLaren states framing stories "give people direction, values, vision, and inspiration by providing a framework for their lives. It tells them who they

are, where they come from, where they are, what's going on, where things are going, and what they should do."<sup>2</sup> The New Testament narratives contain few, if any, examples framing discipleship as the disciples' getting Jesus' message right. Success in this project, like the New Testament narrative, is not measured by the ability to achieve or perform a task but a willingness to risk opening oneself up to vulnerability to discover a more profound sense of personal power.

### **Masculinity**

Many men in this study indicated they do not think much about their spiritual grounding and what I call "inner work" until they are externally forced to think about who they are, what they want out of life, how others perceive them, and especially understanding their emotions and the emotions of others. In many respects, culturally speaking, men are not encouraged to consider their personal power source and engage in their inner work. Overall, we pay a high price for this cultural tendency. A man who is engaged in spiritual practice and thinking about his own personal power is more likely to trust others, be trusted, be open to vulnerability and liminality. He is also less likely to be competitive with other men in an unhealthy manner.

This study's good news is that many men are open to discovering a deeper understanding of their personal power, learning new ways to relate to other people, and drawing from a deeper understanding of themselves. The research from this study suggests that the spiritual journey and associated practices do not provide any quick fixes—spiritual practices require both time and effort to be useful. Nor are spiritual

---

<sup>2</sup> Brian McLaren, *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crisis, and a Revolution of Hope* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 5-6.

practices necessarily mainstream in North American culture (neither is the Gospel). To develop a deeper understanding of personal power, a man must shift his focus away from the external world (Stage Three power in Janet Hagberg's model) and learn to sit with himself.

An inner sense of personal power, for many men, is not realized until midlife. The qualitative responses indicated that somewhere during midlife, many of the respondents indicated an inner sense of personal power (Stages Four through Six) in Hagberg's model of personal power. These personal power responses included recognizing how life has wounded them and that personal power has been developed based upon learning to overcome challenges and wounds.

Issues such as unresolved grief, internalized shame and guilt, loneliness, personal or family trauma, intergenerational issues, societal changes, and external (and internal) personal pressure to achieve one's mark on the world greatly inform one's inner sense of personal power. If these issues are not resolved in one's life, then the experienced and internal wounds lead to more extensive wounds in society in which there is a lashing out of anger and rage at the world, and inner peace is mainly absent. This anger and rage are acted out in deviant methods and manners and has significant implications on relationships and in society.

## Biblical Lenses

### **Genesis 1- The Gift of Power**

The gift of personal power became clearer as the research progressed. The intersection between personal power and spiritual practices revealed God's gift of power



that has been given to each participant. In the end line focus group, David reflected on the power he draws from God. Personal power is described as a gift from God. States David:

My power comes from God. It's only through God that I can accomplish anything. And it's only with God's help that I can do anything that I do. I've found over the years, if I tried to do it on my own, I always fail. It's only through God that I get it done. And so whatever power I have is, what power God has given me.

The qualitative data suggest that the interventions assisted David with processing his gift of personal power. At the beginning of the study, in the baseline interview, David shared:

I would say that my power is my ability to influence and change and accomplish tasks, getting things done. The ability to do that I'd say is where my power resides, when I'm looking at it in a professional light. Even with my kids, being able to influence my three-year old's behavior and getting her to clean up her toys. I think there's some power or influence that I have there. Maybe it's part of status too, that. . . . I don't want to say the title you have, but yeah. The title that I have in my house. With my daughter, I'm Dad, that's an automatic default, "Okay. Well, he's an individual with power." When I'm at work, I'm a manager. That's an individual of power. And so yeah, I think a title says something too. I mean yeah, not only says what you've put yourself through to get there, but I don't know, I just think there's some respect with that comes with a label.

David's progression of understanding of his personal power reflected an inner sense which is indicative of Stage Four. At the beginning of this study, David understood personal power as an external occurrence. Still, at the end of the study, David understood his personal power was internal—a gift from God that has been fashioned according to David's attitude and actions.

### **John 2-A Story of Divine Power**

The beginning of John 2, known as the "Wedding at Cana," could be described as "Jesus teaches about power." Jesus' act of turning the water into wine shows how he uses power to create abundance. This act does not put Jesus at the center of attention but instead reveals God's glory.

This understanding of using power not for self-promoting reasons but rather for others was expressed by "Charlie" during his baseline survey. His thought pattern is revealed: "I am not alone. I can talk to people." Charlie uses self-reflection to understand that his actions have the power to make a difference in others' lives *or* harm others. This internal process leads him to understand that he is serving God by serving others.

Charlie, with this understanding of personal power, explains what it like for him to serve others. He references helping with the Special Olympics and serving meals at a food kitchen. Understanding how to harness his personal power enables him to give of himself to benefit others more fully. This positive feedback loop continues. Jesus involves others in his plan—the servants, the stewards, the bridegroom, and ultimately the guests all participate in turning water to wine. Charlie's understanding and use of power include others, also aiding in God's glory coming closer to revelation.

Jesus uses what is available to him as he turns water into wine. Yet, we are struck by how his power is not *of* this world. Power *is* otherness. "Frank" comes to this self-discovery at the end line focus group. He describes a fruitful career solving complicated problems as an engineer and the satisfaction of that work. However, it is the realization that career success is not equal to the power that comes to him during the spiritual practice of quiet.

While Frank is grateful for what has come his way, one can observe an emerging sense of vocation. He expresses and emphasizes the value of his relationships with his wife, children, and grandchildren. "I give myself to others," Frank repeats. In his case, it is not what he has created (career) but rather what he has given away (self) that has become his power. Jesus' power shows forth the Holy Trinity, not just a reflection of his

humanity. Frank's reflection shows that he is moving toward this type of understanding of power.

### **John 13: 1-5-Jesus' Display of Power and "Privilege"**

Meekness could easily be defined as weakness, and Jesus' ministry could have easily been defined as one of humility. Meekness is not the same as weakness. A weak person has little power; a meek person has power but decides not to exercise power for personal gain. How a leader should manage personal power is answered by Jesus' example of foot washing as a form of servant leadership in John 13:1-5.

Jesus knows that all things are under his power—he has come from God and is returning to God. In Jesus' self-awareness, he immediately takes the position of a powerless and vulnerable servant. In this biblical example, Jesus teaches that a leader must yield personal power to lead effectively. The project has yielded results that indicate that a more profound sense of personal power is genuinely vulnerable, meek, and seemingly powerless. Paradoxically, real personal power involves real vulnerability.

One participant understood vulnerability in a statement he made about weakness as a form of power during the end line focus group:

I guess for me it [personal power] would be the ability to know your limits, know your shortcomings. So, we think that that power is focused on what we hold. But I, I think more through the sessions that we've had, I think that personal power to me is knowing what you can't hope or what you don't know, your weaknesses. I guess in summation, knowing your weaknesses, knowing what you can't do, what you're unable to do knowing that sometimes you're powerless. That's okay. There's power in knowing that you're powerless, you can still have influence. And be powerless and still have great power. That was a big impact to me. That's not something that I thought of going into this. That's something that I gained coming out of this.

The act of Jesus washing the disciple's feet in John 13 is an example of someone with tremendous power to influence. Yet, through an act of service and display of powerlessness, he displayed great power through his example of serving others.

### Theological Lenses

#### **The Theology of the Cross**

The cross of Christ proclaims that the crucified Christ was an agent of transformation through God the Father. St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians speaks to the results of this research project. St. Paul writes, "my grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."<sup>3</sup> Much like the power of the cross in which God has redeemed the world through the death and suffering of Christ, the discovery that personal power is created and heightened because of weakness seems most counterintuitive. Paul's writing serves as our reminder that Christ's power is most potent when we are at our weakest, leading us to a deeper understanding of our personal power.

Additionally, Paul was determined to preach Christ crucified. He writes:

For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the **power** of God and the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:22-24).

In this example of power, Paul suggests that the foolishness of the cross demonstrates God's power. Paul portrays the power of God through the cross of Christ with multiple imagines of divine power. He preaches that "God has reconciled us to himself through

---

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. 12:9.

Christ” (2 Cor. 5:18). Further, in his letter to the Romans, Paul writes about the power of the cross in chapter six. States Paul:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized in into Christ Jesus were baptized with him into death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

Lesslie Newbigin writes in his seminal work on missiology, “a person who wields power cannot see truth; that is the privilege of the powerless.”<sup>4</sup> This project was an attempt to understand the theology of the cross. Divine power is revealed in the weakness of the cross. This theological understanding is the opposite of God's power, which is expected to defeat the evil powers and corrupt earthly authorities. Jesus lived a powerful life of powerlessness in the face of corrupt human power, which led him to the cross. This powerlessness was Jesus' sedition. In the face of Roman imperial power and violence, Jesus' powerlessness, leading to his crucifixion, was the most rebellious thing he could do.

### **Spiritual Practices**

Anglican theologian and author N.T. Wright believes that the religious yearnings of Western culture today revolve around four issues: the longing for justice, the quest for spirituality, the hunger for relationships, and the delight in beauty.<sup>5</sup> In many ways, this project revolved around these four issues—longing for justice, a quest for spirituality and

---

<sup>4</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 7.

<sup>5</sup> N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 3-51.

the deepening of relationships between oneself and other men, and finally, to taking note of and appreciating the beauty of creation.

The simplest form of spiritual practices involves some degree of solitude and silence. This research has shown through men's engagement with the spiritual practices presented in this project that solitude and silence are hard to do because many men are not comfortable sitting with their thoughts and feelings. It is difficult for men to let go of any preconceived understanding of personal power and step back and discover what truly motivates them.

During our intervention in January 2020, while the study participants were debriefing the spiritual practice of mindfulness/centering prayer for the month, a study participant commented that he did not have time for centering prayer and slowing down to become aware of the present moment. The data collected from this study project point to another conclusion—we cannot afford not to take time for this spiritual practice.

Spiritual practices are meant to give back time—a way to address anxiety and find the inner personal power to persist in life demands. Done correctly, spiritual practices slow you down to refresh and reset your mind. Our spiritual practices teach us patience to know when to act and when to take no action. Much clarity in discernment is gained by participating in spiritual practices and focusing on the current moment while removing the anxiety of any future event by letting go of what the future holds to focus on the present moment. This research project has served as a tool to deepen one's personal power by taking note of God's presence and actions within and around by letting the silence of the spiritual practice show the way forward.

## Trinitarian Theology

We profess a faith in a triune God that has limitless power and gospel of unlimited grace. God speaks the real word of power, but we do not always believe the word as we turn away from God by trusting in our human power, which we believe will change the world. Those who follow Jesus trust in the power of God that has been revealed to us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The divine relationship found within the Holy Trinity offers a unique connection between God, ourselves, and others. The Trinity is a holy relationship model—God is relational in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is a model in the way of Jesus in the world in which the Trinity invites us into living, loving, and relating to the world.

This project revealed that, like the Holy Trinity, we live life in relation to others. Richard Rohr reminds that even “God the Father’s life is not about him, but it is about the Son and the Spirit.”<sup>6</sup> As this project’s axial codes indicate, our relationship to one another and to God enhances one’s understanding of personal power. Our identity, and spring of personal power, are from both from within and outside ourselves. One way we build our identity, and thus personal power, is being in relationship with one another. As God’s beloved, created beings, we share our humanity. LaCugna states, “If God were not personal, God would not exist at all.”<sup>7</sup> The essence of God is the relationship between the three. St. Augustine largely influenced this relational theology in western Christianity.

---

<sup>6</sup> Richard Rohr, *Adam’s Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company 2004), 160.

<sup>7</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, Harper Collins paperback ed. (New York: Harper San Francisco, 2006), 241.

Augustine correctly posits a “person is only a person about others.”<sup>8</sup> In this sense of personhood, the Holy Spirit's role is expressed as the “power. . . who brings about communion between God and creature.”<sup>9</sup>

Building trusting relationships within a community of men leads to greater vulnerability and liminal space so that reflection and personal transformation can occur. This project has shown that when vulnerability and a liminal (read: sacred) space is created for men, the process of this study indicates that this translates into a more profound sense of personal power. The Holy Trinity provides a missional foundational model of this process, particularly considering the Trinity's perichoretic nature of the Three-in-One.

### **Implications of Research**

Author Peter Block writes, “. . . to create a new story, we first need to come to terms with the current one. This begins by naming it. The story of the stuck community can be heard both in the dominant public debate and in what we talk to each other about each day.”<sup>10</sup> As a researcher, I helped the study participants explain the current narrative that defines their everyday life. To do this, I encouraged the participants to take the view from the balcony and think critically about the stories that shape our ordinary lives. These narratives create norms, or patterns of behavior, that are often unspoken until a disruption

---

<sup>8</sup> LaCugna, 247.

<sup>9</sup> LaCugna, 250.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009), 37.



occurs and the standard of behavior is known. These agitation moments invite us to dialogue and reflect on what the Holy Spirit is conveying to us.

Many men have grown up with the idea that Stage Three power (power by achievement) is the only type of power. This research project has sought to help men deepen their understanding of personal power by engaging in spiritual practices designed to create self-examination into how they fashion their sense of personal power. This project's implication is to inform and instruct men to comprehend that personal power is more than just the ability to achieve or gain status. Personal power is much more effective when understood internally, which clarifies that the only personal power one truly has is controlling one's actions and attitudes.

One place this point was crystalized was during the first ritual on grief. Participants were invited to identify an area of grief in their personal lives and then relate these feelings to their own personal power. Many men have grown up never knowing other men who model healthy grieving. The spiritual practice of creating a grief ritual provided an opportunity for men to learn from their grief before it transforms into anger, which is expressed outwardly due to inward grief. Men today have been given a cultural model of grief that is one of suppression, a legacy of denying grief, suffering in silence, and hiding any pain. The invitation to connect grief with personal power presents a life-giving alternative to the universal experience of pain and loss.

### **Limitations of the Study**

It is tempting to imagine that this research project's results could engage all the differences as a "one-size-fits-all" study. A limitation of this study was the narrow scope of the male participants of Immanuel Lutheran Church. The population of the

congregation is relatively homogeneous, as the quantitative data describe. The project focused exclusively on men for reasons that were mentioned in chapter one.

Another limitation of this study is the theological lens through which this study was observed. The primary theological lens used was the theology of the cross, specifically through a Lutheran hermeneutic. The theology of the cross presents issues in itself especially when contrasted to an understanding of a theology of glory. If the faith community has a theological understanding that through God health, wealth, and personal power are found through religious observance and keeping to God's commands, then that group that is more likely to center itself around the church. The challenge of the theology of the cross is discovering the power of God through an instrument of death. Theologians of the cross point to the cross as a source of divine power and the work of the triune God through the Son's redemption.

### **Questions for Future Research**

This research project yielded data from study participants in a mainline Christian congregation in the Midwest. The participants had core experiences in common—mainly their theological understandings, relationship with the institutional church, and geography. There was some diversity of age, race, and socio-economic background. While a larger and more diverse sample size would yield rich data, it may be fruitful to work in the opposite direction. What would it look like to make use of participants with more in common? What about grouping men by age and shared experience? This study could be replicated in a different setting where men shared even more in common, providing perhaps, a further along starting point.

Another question to explore surrounds the type of setting in which men would gather and enter into conversations. What type of framework may be provided so that a group of men may feel free to be vulnerable and find validation by other men? Could such interventions be offered in existing Bible studies or men's fellowship groups? How might safe space be developed and maintained so that participants could make better use not only of interventions offered but from mutual support from fellow participants? Would a study done among an already established group of men yield more significant results? In short, would a change of venue impact the significance of such a study?

The use of ritual is undoubtedly not a new or even modern concept. Another research study could explore or even replicate past or ancient rituals. Might they be adapted in ways that today's man may find impactful? Have men's relationships with personal power remained similar over time? What wisdom of the past may guide us today, especially related to personal power, influence, and how one responds to pain and loss?

### **Chapter Summary**

While the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this project, the disruption served as a reminder of our longing for us to collectively embrace a better story—a story that has the power to change our hearts and our minds. This chapter brought both the theoretical and biblical/theological lenses outlined in chapters two and three into conversation with the results of this study found in chapter five. A discussion of both the implication and limitations of the research were also discussed. The chapter concluded with questions for future study.

Throughout the chapter, the link between leadership and power was explored. Applying Hagberg's research to this project can be summarized—the more one understands his personal power, the better a leader he can become. This principle was explored throughout each of our interventions as the participants, each invited into liminal space, could make these connections for themselves.

In such space, participants explored for themselves the question, “what gives me life?” as spiritual practices were introduced to aid in this focus. The data showed that as men increased in awareness of their understandings of self-power, they were able to identify how this impacted the fullness of their relationships with others. Borrowing from narrative theory, participants in this study were able to discern which stories revealed truth and therefore helped nudge them to more fulfilled relationships.

Biblical lenses regarding power, specifically power as gift (Genesis), power as abundance (Wedding at Cana), and power as meekness (foot washing), were discussed. Power *for* rather than power *over* was a recurring theme in biblical readings and the participants' reflections. These reflections led to the final section of the chapter, which discussed the theology of the cross. This section produced the ultimate act of powerlessness in the fullness of redemption.

## EPILOGUE

I am deeply thankful I was able to complete this research project. I am incredibly thankful to those who volunteered their time to assist me with participating in the interventions. There were times of great joy during this entire process and there were times when the project presented significant challenges. On at least two occasions, as mentioned in previous chapters, the research project had to pivot due to the intervening variable of COVID-19. Towards the end of the project, I received a change in my call status as I left one congregation to begin at another.

I appreciate the energy and passion for ministry that resulted from the entirety of this project for an area of ministry that I believe has a significant benefit to the church's life. I see far too many men struggling with life, marriages falling apart, and men who are wrestling with their own sense of personal power and life direction. I hoped that, and as the research indicates, some of the study participants created space for introspection and considered their own sense of power and what the source of their personal power truly is.

I have learned more about myself because of this work. I have deepened my awareness of my sense of personal power. I have developed new spiritual practices that have impacted my life for the better due to this project. I am more committed to my practice of mindfulness and contemplative prayer that grounds me in the present moment. I can point to the practice of mindfulness as one way I manage the stressors of daily life and respond to anxiety that has far too often controlled my thoughts and behaviors. In a

real sense, I have discovered a deepening of personal power and realize that strength is often displayed as a weakness.

I began ministry in a new congregation towards the end of this project. As the congregation got to know me and learned that I was working on a Doctor of Ministry degree, I found the congregation was curious about my project. They were inquisitive about what I did for my project and wanted to learn more about it. Interestingly, many men began to approach me and wanted me to share my ideas and thoughts with them about my research and asked if I might be willing to share more details with some of the men who gather weekly.

I received a phone call one day from a public leader in town who heard about my project and wanted to know more. He thought that some of the men who were in his sphere of influence could benefit from some of my work. While I never planned on promoting my project, it seems that my project found a way into the conversation of groups, mainly men, who are interested in this subject. This enthusiasm is encouraging to me. Hearing that other men are beginning to think about their personal power and how they might gain a more profound understanding of their manliness is why I became curious about this subject in the first place. My prayer is that this work might open the doors of dialogue to men as we live into the reality of what God has in store for all of creation.

## APPENDIX A: PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT LETTER

Dear saints in Christ Jesus,

Grace and peace to you.

I am writing to let you know I am engaging in a research project regarding men's understanding of personal power and how spiritual practices might inform the personal power in the life of men. This project is part of my Doctor of Ministry program at Luther Seminary.

I would like to invite the men of the congregation to participate in the study as they are able. Look for an online survey questionnaire in early to mid-November 2019. I will also have paper copies for men who do not have access to the internet. The survey is concerning your current spiritual practices and how you understand your own sense of personal power. The survey will take about 10-15 minutes.

In addition to the survey, I will be holding a series of workshops on spiritual practices once a month for six months. Dates for these monthly workshops are listed on the separate sheet. These workshops will last about an hour to an hour-and-a-half. At the monthly workshops the group will engage and try out a spiritual practice and/or a community ritual. Note: this is not a worship service, but will be a learning event in which we will discuss new spiritual practices.

The topics of discussion for this project will include grief, mindfulness, service, listening for understanding, and our own mortality during the Lenten season in March 2020. We will conclude our last group in April 2020 with a wrap up discussion on renewal, restoration, and resurrection.

At the conclusion of the workshops, in May 2020, I will conduct another survey to compare the baseline questionnaire with the end line questionnaire. I have also asked six men to be interviewed in order to learn more about how they understand their spiritual practices and how might spiritual practices inform their sense of power.

If you would like to participate in the study, following signing an informed consent, you will be invited to try out the spiritual practice throughout the month and record your reflections in a journal that I will collect as data. This is a voluntary study and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

There is little or no physical ability with this project. The benefits to you for this study are a greater self-awareness and understanding of spiritual practices and how engaging in spiritual practices might inform your own sense of power.

I will hold a few informational sessions in late October and early November on Sunday mornings following worship about this project. Due to the nature of the study, I will only be studying men over the age of 18. Look for more information in the weeks to come. Thanks for your consideration, and in the meantime, should you have any questions about the study you can come to the informational sessions on Sunday morning, or by sending me an email at: xxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx

Peace be with you,

Pastor Steven Cauley



## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS

### *The Effects of Spiritual Practice on the Personal Power in the Life of Men*

You are invited to be in a research study of how spiritual practice inform personal power in the life of men. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a male member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, or, you have been a participant in a men's ministry associated with the church. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Steven Cauley as part of his Doctor of Ministry thesis project in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

His advisors are Dr. Dan Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to examine how participating in spiritual practices inform your own sense of power.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Agree to be interviewed by myself.
- Agree to allowing your interview responses to be transcribed (with identifying information removed) to be compiled with other interviews and shared in the collected data.
- Agree to allowing quotes from your interview to be anonymously included in my doctoral thesis.
- Participate in the six spiritual practices workshops beginning in November 2019 through May 2020.
- Record your thoughts and feelings about the spiritual practices in a notebook to be submitted as data.
- Agree to take part in a focus group panel with other men at the conclusion of this study.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

There is a very low risk involved by being a part of this study, aside from normal life risks. Sensitive topics we will discuss is our own mortality and our relationships with others. In the unlikely event that you experience psychological distress as a result of this research activity, your participation in this study may be discontinued and you will be referred to an appropriate mental health professional. However, payment for any such treatment must be provided by you or your third-party payer, if any, (such as health insurance, Medicare, etc.)

There are no direct benefits of participating in this research. Indirect benefits to yourself, or the general public of participation, are a deeper understanding of how spiritual practices can help inform your sense of life empowerment.

#### **Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of report, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file on my personal computer and on a locked external hard drive for backup. Only my advisors, Dr. Dan Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke, and I will have access to the data and, if applicable, any recording. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

If tape recordings or videotapes are made, only myself, a professional transcription company who have signed strict confidentiality agreements, and my academic advisors, will be used for educational purposes, and then they will be erased.

Raw data from this project will be destroyed on June 4, 2024. Federal guidelines specify a minimum of 3 years for retention of data.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Luther Seminary and/or with other cooperating institutions, Immanuel Church Manville, Iowa. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Steven Cauley. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Steven Cauley at Immanuel Church or via email.

You may also contact my advisors, Dr. Daniel Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to be audiotaped:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C: GUIDELINES FOR GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- We are not here to fix each other, judge what the other man says, or compare with each other but rather to listen to each other and reflect upon what we have just heard. Set your ego aside and get outside of yourself and your own experiences.
- 
- It is best to talk from ‘I’ statement: “I am” or “I feel” or “I have experienced.”
- There is no “cross-talk”—by that I mean you do not need to agree with, disagree with, comment on, judge, or critique what another says. You just receive it as it is said. I call it “redemptive listening.”
- All that is said in these workshops is presumed to be confidential. Just to clarify, again, what is said in the study group stays in the group.
- Try to accept each man in the here and now, and let go of past information to put him in a box or pre-judge him. We all start from “zero” together. Think of these workshops as a lab—we are learning from the other man, and in return, we will discover more about ourselves.

### **A Beginner’s Mind**

- There is a lesson in everything that happens to you. Let go of your need to control, fix, or even understand everything.
- Until you have lived through it, it is not yet true.
- Every victory is born from an equally decisive defeat. Learn from our defeat. Success has very little to teach you after age 30.
- Great wisdom is always “both/and”—“win/win”. Little mind is always “either/or”—“win/lose”.
- It always starts with forgiveness. Let go of your need to punish anybody, including yourself, including the world.
- You can do none of this on your own. You need a Companion and Friend. We are all here to find the Companion and Friend. Each of our journeys will be unique.

## APPENDIX D: BASELINE INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Introduction: The purpose of this protocol is to learn more about the spiritual practices that are life giving in men, and about how the spiritual practices men are engaging in help shape their own sense of personal power in life. By “power” I am referring to Hagberg’s definition of personal power which results from the combination of external power (the capacity for action) with the intern power (the capacity for reflection).<sup>1</sup>

- I. What people have been a big influence in your faith and spiritual development in life?
  - i. Why?
- II. Where do you receive the most spiritual nourishment?
  - i. What activities give your life the most meaning?
  - ii. What gets you up in the morning and what keeps you up at night?
    1. What advice would you offer to your younger self?
- III. What characteristics do you admire most in other men?
  - i. Why do you admire those characteristics?
    1. What give you a sense of security in your life?
    2. What is your definition of a successful life?
- IV. What does the term personal power mean to you?
  - i. How do you understand your own sense of power?
- V. What relationships, actions, or experiences make you feel powerful?
  - i. What other feelings do you associate with feeling powerful?
- VI. Where in your life and career do you give your power away?
- VII. Who do you view as a powerful person?
  - i. Why do you view this person as being powerful?
    1. Which of the same traits of power do you have?
    2. Which of those traits would you like to strengthen?
- VIII. What are the things in life that make you feel important?
- IX. What are some areas of life that you feel you can control?
  - i. What are the areas in life that you feel you cannot control?
- X. What have we not talked about that you think is important for me to know?

---

<sup>1</sup> Janet Hagberg, *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2003), xxi.

## APPENDIX E: IMPLIED CONSENT LETTER FOR SURVEYS

November 2019

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a study of spiritual practices and their effect on personal power. I hope to learn more about how spiritual practices assist men in creating a deeper capacity of personal power. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a male member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, or, you have participated in a men's ministry group affiliated with the church.

If you decide to participate, please complete the enclosed questionnaire. Your return of this questionnaire is implied consent. The survey is designed to help understand the effects of spiritual practices on personal power. It will take about fifteen minutes to complete. No benefits accrue to you for answering the questionnaire. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the questionnaire.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with Luther Seminary or Immanuel Lutheran Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have additional questions later, contact Steven Cauley at xxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx, or my faculty advisors Dr. Dan Anderson or Dr. Alvin Luedke.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Pastor Steven Cauley

## APPENDIX F: BASELINE QUESTIONNAIRE

### The Effects of Spiritual Practices on the Personal Power of Men

You are invited to participate in a study of spiritual practices and their effect on personal power. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a male member of Immanuel Church, or, you have participated in a men's ministry group affiliated with the congregation. If you decide to participate, please complete the questionnaire. Your completion of this questionnaire is implied consent. It will take about fifteen minutes to complete. No benefits accrue to you for answering the questionnaire, but your responses will be used to assist research regarding the spiritual practices and their effect on the personal power of men. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the questionnaire.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with Luther Seminary or Immanuel Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have additional questions later, contact Steven Cauley at [scauley001@luthersem.edu](mailto:scauley001@luthersem.edu) or 563-263-5074.

Thank you for your time.

**Part One: Background Information**  
Please fill out the information below.

1. What are your initials? *(Your initials and birth information are for computer analysis only and not for identification. All information will be confidential.)*

\* 2. What is the month and date of your birth? (Enter four digits (00/00))

\* 3. Are you:

- Male  
 Female  
 Prefer not to say

\* 4. What is your current relationship status?

- Single, Never Married
- Married/Partnered
- Divorced
- Separated
- Other

\* 5. What is your race?

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Asian American
- Another race
- Prefer not to answer

\* 6. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate degree
- Prefer not to answer

\* 7. What was your age at your last birthday?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66-80
- 81 and over

\* 8. Do you have any children under 18 living in your household?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

\* 9. How long have you been a member of Immanuel Church?

- Less than a year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- Ten years or longer
- I am not a member

\* 10. Which one of the following best describes your church experience before becoming a member of Immanuel Church?

- I have always been a member of Immanuel Church
- I was a member of another Lutheran Congregation (ELCA, LCMS, or other Lutheran denomination)
- I was a member of a church in another Christian denomination
- I was not a member of any church prior to joining this one
- I am not a member of Immanuel Church
- Not applicable/I am not a member of a Christian church
- Other (please specify)

\* 11. How involved would you say you are at Immanuel Church?

- A great deal
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all
- Not applicable

\* 12. How often do you participate in worship at Immanuel Church?

- Once a week
- Two or three times a month
- Once a month
- Other (please specify)
- A few times a year
- I do not participate in worship



\* 13. Have you, or, do you currently participate in the Men's Bible study at Immanuel Church?

- Yes  
 No

**Part Two: Spiritual Practices**

*In this section, you will be asked about any spiritual practices in which you have/or currently participate.*

\* 14. Do you have a basic set of beliefs or values that guide your activities and daily life?

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

\* 15. Which of the following, would you say, is your primary source of values and beliefs?

- What you learned as a child in your family  
 Your own personal experience  
 The influence of your friends and coworkers/associates  
 Don't know  
 Other (please specify)

\* 16. Would you say that your basic understanding of what life is all about has

- Changed a lot in the past five years.  
 Changed a little in the last five years.  
 Stayed about the same in the past five years.  
 Don't know

\* 17. How important is religion in your life?

(Check One)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Extremely important | <input type="radio"/> Not so important     |
| <input type="radio"/> Very important      | <input type="radio"/> Not at all important |
| <input type="radio"/> Somewhat important  | <input type="radio"/> Don't know           |

\* 18. In general, how satisfied would you say you are with your life at this time—would you say you are...  
(Check One)

- Very satisfied
  Dissatisfied  
 Satisfied
  Very dissatisfied  
 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
  Don't know

\* 19. Please indicate which statement best describes your opinion.

- A person's faith **should not** change throughout life, because it is the foundation for living.  
 A person's faith **should change** throughout life, just as one's body and mind change.

20. What of the following, if any, do you do to nourish or strengthen your faith or sense of meaning in life?  
(Please check all that apply.)

- Pray or meditate alone  
 Attend religious worship services  
 Study the Bible or religious topics in church  
 Participate in a support group  
 Discuss personal problems with a pastor or other minister  
 Read the Bible or other religious books  
 Participate in small groups (ie - Bible Studies)  
 None  
 Other (please specify)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

21. Attending a spiritual practice (Bible Study, prayer, service project, etc.) with others is important? Please check one.

- Extremely important
  Not so important  
 Very important
  Not at all important  
 Somewhat important
  Don't know

22. Participating in a group spiritual practice with other men is very important to me. Please check one.

- Extremely important
  Not so important  
 Very important
  Not at all important  
 Somewhat important
  Don't know

23. I often nurture my faith life through spiritual practices on my own, apart from other people. Please check one.

- Strongly agree
  Disagree  
 Agree
  Strongly disagree  
 Neither agree nor disagree
  Don't know

24. Which of the following most assists you in experiencing God's presence in your life? (Please check only one answer.)

- Sunday (weekend) worship  
 Meaningful relationships with other Christians  
 Hearing stories of God's work in the world  
 Personal times of reflection  
 Reading the Bible  
 Sharing in a small group  
 Witnessing to others  
 Other (please specify)

25. How frequently do you complete each of the following activities— at least once a day/weekly, a few times a month, once a month, a few times a year, or not at all? Please select the answer that most agrees with your practice.

	Once a day/ or weekly	A few times a month	Once a month	A few times a year	Not at all
Reading the Bible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attending worship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking part in a small group ministry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Joining a service, mission, or outreach group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Praying or meditating by myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. I feel my life's purpose becomes more transparent when I engage in spiritual practices (i.e., Bible Study, worship, prayer, serving, giving, studying, *et cetera*.)

- Strongly agree
  Disagree  
 Agree
  Strongly disagree  
 Neither agree nor disagree
  Don't know







34. For each of the following items, please select the response that best describes your strength of agreement to the statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My weakness are more meaningful to me than my strengths.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am afraid to die.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel a deep peace of mind during times of suffering.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel my life is complete.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel powerless.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for completing this survey.

## APPENDIX G: END LINE QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

The following questions will be added to the end line questionnaire. The purpose of the additional questions will be to obtain feedback on the Action Research interventions offered from November 2019-April 2020.

### **Part IV. Practices for Cultivating Connections between Spiritual Practices and Personal Power**

*Please answer the following to indicate which of the following workshops on spiritual practices you experienced, and your opinion about them.*

Q35. Did you complete a survey on spiritual practices and personal power in early November 2019?

\*Yes \*No

Q36. How helpful was the workshop “Life is Hard” in cultivating a connection between spiritual practices and your personal power?

\*Not at all helpful \*Somewhat unhelpful \*Somewhat helpful  
\*Helpful \*Very helpful \*Did not experience this workshop

Q37. How helpful was the workshop “You Are Not that Important” in cultivating a connection between spiritual practices and your personal power?

\*Not at all helpful \*Somewhat unhelpful \*Somewhat helpful  
\*Helpful \*Very helpful \*Did not experience this workshop

Q38. How helpful was the workshop “Your Life is Not About You” in cultivating a connection between spiritual practices and your personal power?

\*Not at all helpful \*Somewhat unhelpful \*Somewhat helpful  
\*Helpful \*Very helpful \*Did not experience this workshop

Q39. How helpful was the workshop “You Are Not in Control” in cultivating a connection between spiritual practices and your personal power?

\*Not at all helpful \*Somewhat unhelpful \*Somewhat helpful  
\*Helpful \*Very helpful \*Did not experience this workshop



Q40. How helpful was the workshop “You are Going to Die” in cultivating a connection between spiritual practices and your personal power?

\*Not at all helpful    \*Somewhat unhelpful    \*Somewhat helpful  
\*Helpful    \*Very helpful    \*Did not experience this workshop

Q41. How helpful was the workshop “The Common Wonderful” in cultivating a connection between spiritual practices and your personal power?

\*Not at all helpful    \*Somewhat unhelpful    \*Somewhat helpful  
\*Helpful    \*Very helpful    \*Did not experience this workshop

Q42. What else have you experienced in your spiritual life in this past year that has helped you make any connection between a spiritual practice and how the practice might inform your personal power?

## APPENDIX H: FIRST INTERVENTION MATERIALS

This Ritual is meant to be a starting point, a first step in this journey together. You will blend words, music, and movement together while embracing the elements from the natural world. You won't want to rush through this ritual. Allow the music and the setting to set into your sense before you decide how to proceed.

This ritual strives to create an opportunity for us to 1. **Lament** – (deep feeling of grieve), 2. **Petition** for a way forward 3. Look inward and **confess** your hopes and fears, and then set **intentions**.

There are four stations around the sanctuary. The actions at each station are deceptively simple—dropping salt into a bowl of water, writing on a 3x5 card, mixing colors of sand—but on a spiritual level these movements are powerful.

The four stations are:

### **1. Lament    2. Petition    3. Confess    4. Set Our Intentions**

The ritual will work best if you proceed in this order, however, don't fret if you choose not follow the order. Beginning at another station may be exactly what you need. Petition (asking for help) maybe where you're at. Ending with the lament station (laying down grief over what has been lost) could be precisely where your heart needs to be. Trust what your heart tells you need.

- Table for Lamentation (black table cloth): this table will allow you to create tears of healing by mixing a dash of salt into a bowl of water, while softly speaking aloud (or to yourself) your sorrows for all that has been squandered or lost.
- Table for Petition (light blue table cloth): at this table you will petition the Comforter and Friend to be your guide. To ask for help as you and God move forward together, by blowing air gently into the pinwheel.
- Table for Confession (white table cloth in the rear of the sanctuary). This is a place for you to write down your fears and hopes. The power of the written word cannot be denied. Use the space provide to the side (with chars) or find a seat in the sanctuary and ponder your hopes and fears as you move forward.
- Table for intention (dark blue table cloth near the rear doors to the sanctuary): This is a table to voice your intention. Say aloud (or in the silence of your heart) something you will do to move your faith forward, then blend some black sand into the white, and mark your intention.

Lament music will accompany you on this ritual. As you are moved, and in any order, visit each table.

When you have finished, please exit the sanctuary and return to the meeting space.

### Creating your own ritual

Ritual work joins word, symbol, and action together in one fluent expression of interior desire.<sup>1</sup>

Questions for Personal Reflection on creating your ritual:

1. What negative events, painful feelings, or disruptive experiences are lingering in the shadow of your heart and mind and need release?
2. Are there particular symbols that encapsulate or summarize my feeling about these events at this time? Perhaps symbols for previous stages in your life?
3. What words need to be spoken aloud about these events?
4. Life will initiate us one way or another. What events, positive or negative, initiated me into adulthood?
5. What nagging questions, doubts, yearnings need to be ritually acknowledged in my life?
6. What relationships (past or present) are out of order and need to be reconciled?
7. What do I need to let go of in order to move forward in my life? How might I ritualize that letting go?

*You can use some of these questions as you think about your ritual. They are for you to be used as a guide. You need not answer these when you return your folder. There is a separate sheet that I will ask you complete at the conclusion of your grief ritual.*

Authentic rituals are transformational. Ceremonies, on the other hand, mark a time of accomplishment or completion.

Rituals	Ceremonies
Focused attention	Diffused attention
Liminal space/time	Literal space/time
Few symbols	Many symbols
Few words	Many words
Embodied action (involvement)	Dramatic action (for show)

#### What if it doesn't work for me?

A few things to keep in mind. . . Start simple. Don't make a ritual too large or overladen with emotion. Start your ritual by breaking down into smaller groups. Think small... Quality of your ritual, not the quantity of actions or words is important here. Rituals are unique as every person. Therefore, what works for one guy, may not work for anyone else.

Your attitude when you enter a ritual action is key to opening your transformation from an experience of grief. Focus attention is essential. There is no magic with your ritual –the ritual provides you with place and opportunity to discover transformation.

Use words sparingly and only necessary in your ritual. Too many words can be an escape from the real purpose of what you are setting out to accomplish. A simple mantra

<sup>1</sup> Jim Clarke. *Creating Rituals: A New Way of Healing for Everyday Life*. (New York, NY: Paulist Press). 86.

like, “*I am always enough... I am always enough...*” or “*I follow the way of love... I follow the way of love...*” or “*God is with me... God is with me.*” These are only examples. You don’t have to use mantras. Perhaps a simple prayer works better for you.

In the gospel of Mark (8:22-26) Jesus repeats a ritual to heal a blind man. The first time Jesus put spittle on the man’s eyes, laid hands on him, and asked if you could see anything. The man replied, “I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.” What went wrong? The Bible isn’t clear; however, we know that Jesus then laid hands on the blind man’s eyes a second time and prayed.

A failed ritual is not the end of the story. Rituals do not guarantee transformation, but it does offer the possibility of a new path, or changed life.

Here are a few grief ritual ideas:

- Release ceremony: butterflies, balloons, flowers
- Create a memory book of pictures, photos and stories
- Plant a tree or memorial garden
- Eat at your loved one’s favorite restaurant
- Design a shrine
- Wear something that belonged to your loved one
- Create a memory quilt or teddy bear
- Keep a journal
- Visit the cemetery or other special place
- Light a candle
- Write a letter
- Help Others

This is, by no means, a complete list. What I am asking from you for this study is create your own ritual to help you process a loss in your life. Find a symbol that has meaning, find words to help process, and then find an action to create your ritual. Keeping in mind where your power lies with regard to your grief. Are you powerless in the face of your grief? This isn’t necessarily a bad thing. Our wounds will teach us. Don’t be afraid to be vulnerable with yourself. Continue to “practice” whatever ritual you create for yourself throughout the month. Don’t worry about getting the ritual “right”. There isn’t a right way. Do what you feel like you need to do to grief.

### **Session One: Ritual Follow-Up**

I would like to have this form back for my data for this study. This is an important form for my research. Please complete this form approximately three-four weeks and turning this sheet back to me prior to the December session on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

Do you have a name for your ritual? If so, please list the name, if not describe your ritual.

How many times did you perform your ritual? Would you say.... Daily? A few times a week? Once? A times a day? Weekly?

What elements did you use for your ritual?

Did your ritual turn out as you expected? If not, why do you think the ritual didn't work for you?

What was one thing that surprised you?

How would you describe your sense of power with regard to your grief? What is your sense of inner power with regard to your grief?

Would you do this ritual again?

Where you able to feel a connection with God during and after the ritual?

What else is important to know about your experience?

## APPENDIX I: FIRST INTERVENTION FEEDBACK FORM

### **Ritual Follow-Up**

I would like to have this form back for my data for this study. This is an important form for my research. Please complete this form approximately three-four weeks and turning this sheet back to me prior to the December session on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Do you have a name for your ritual? If so, please list the name, if not describe your ritual.

How many times did you perform your ritual? Would you say.... Daily? A few times a week? Once? A times a day? Weekly?

What elements did you use for your ritual?

Did your ritual turn out as you expected? If not, why do you think the ritual didn't work for you?

What was one thing that surprised you?

How would you describe your sense of power with regard to your grief? What is your sense of inner power with regard to your grief?

Would you do this ritual again?

Where you able to feel a connection with God during and after the ritual?

What else is important to know about your experience?

APPENDIX J: SECOND INTERVENTION FEEDBACK FORM

**Mindfulness Follow Up ‘Snapshots’**

*Please return this completed form as it is essential for the research study. It is due back at our next session on Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup>. We will meet at 6:30pm at church.*

*I am inviting you to practice mindfulness each day. However, for this follow-up, I am requesting that you only report on **one** mindfulness session each week.*

**Week One Snapshot** (report on only **one** mindfulness session this week of Dec 16-23rd):

*Before* I engaged in mindfulness I felt (circle all that apply):

**Relaxed, anxious, nervous, uncertain, futile, incapable,  
hopeful, decisive, worthwhile,**

*or* add your own:

---

*After* I engaged in mindfulness I felt (circle all that apply):

**Relaxed, anxious, nervous, uncertain, futile, incapable, hopeful,  
decisive, worthwhile**

*or* add your own:

---

How long (in minutes) would you estimate you spent practicing mindfulness this day?

---

By engaging in a practice of mindfulness did you feel power over whatever was on your mind?

Circle one: **Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree**

Please share a story about this experience if you would like.

---

---

---

---

**Week Two Snapshot** (report on only *one* mindfulness session this week of Dec 24-31st):

*Before* I engaged in mindfulness I felt (circle all that apply):

**Relaxed, anxious, nervous, uncertain, futile, incapable,  
hopeful, decisive, worthwhile,**

*or* add your own:

---

*After* I engaged in mindfulness I felt (circle all that apply):

**Relaxed, anxious, nervous, uncertain, futile, incapable,  
hopeful, decisive, worthwhile**

*or* add your own:

---

How long (in minutes) would you estimate you spent in practicing mindfulness this day?

---

By engaging in a practice of mindfulness did you feel power over whatever was on your mind?

Circle one: **Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree**

Please share a story about this experience if you would like:

---



---



---

**Week Three Snapshot** (report on only *one* mindfulness session this week of January 1-8th):

*Before* I engaged in mindfulness I felt (circle all that apply):

**Relaxed, anxious, nervous, uncertain, futile, incapable,  
hopeful, decisive, worthwhile,**

*or* add your own:

---

*After* I engaged in mindfulness I felt (circle all that apply):

**Relaxed, anxious, nervous, uncertain, futile, incapable,  
hopeful, decisive, worthwhile**

*or* add your own:

---



How long (in minutes) would you estimate you spent practicing mindfulness this day?

---

By engaging in a practice of mindfulness did you feel power over whatever was on your mind?

Circle one: **Strongly Agree** **Agree** **Neutral** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

Please share an experience about this experience if you would like:

---



---



---

**Week Four Snapshot** (report on only *one* mindfulness session this week of Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>):

*Before* I engaged in mindfulness I felt (circle all that apply):

**Relaxed, anxious, nervous, uncertain, futile, incapable,**  
**hopeful, decisive, worthwhile,**

*or* add your own:

---

*After* I engaged in mindfulness I felt (circle all that apply):

**Relaxed, anxious, nervous, uncertain, futile, incapable,**  
**hopeful, decisive, worthwhile**

*or* add your own:

---

How long (in minutes) would you estimate you spent in meditation this day?

---

By engaging in a practice of mindfulness did you feel power over whatever was on your mind?

Circle one: **Strongly Agree** **Agree** **Neutral** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

Please share an experience of this week for you this week if you would like.

---



---



---

APPENDIX K: THIRD INTERVENTION FEEDBACK FORM

ACTIVE LISTENING AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

LIFE IS NOT ABOUT ME. I AM ABOUT LIFE.

Please return this completed form as it is essential for the research study. I would like to have it returned to me by Monday, February 19<sup>th</sup> at which time we will meet for our fourth workshop.

I am inviting you to practice active listening as a spiritual practice on a regular basis. Refer to the sheets included in the folder for further reflection. Please follow the instruction for each week.

**Week 1: January 20-26**

Describe a time when someone listened to you this week. (1-2 sentences).

How did you know you were being listened to? Please list 3 ways (e.g., specific words/phrases, non-verbal cues, tone of voice)

What is one thing this person did or said to communicate he or she was understanding you?

Spiritual practice: *practice 3 minutes of silence two times this week.*  
Comment on your times of silence (optional):

**Week 2: January 27- February 2**

**Definitions:** **Silence= sit in silence for three minutes.**

**Mixer= take two minutes to identify as many sounds as you can hear (e.g.- birds chirping outside, snow plow, kids playing, coffee maker brewing, tv).**

**Savoring=take one minute to notice a mundane sound.**

*Spiritual practices: 3-minute silence three times this week, Mixer (how many distinct sounds can I hear) two times this week, Savoring (enjoying mundane background sounds) two times this week.*

**Silence 1:** one word to describe how you felt afterwards.

**Mixer 1:** how many sounds did you hear?

**Savoring 1:** what sound did you pick?

**Silence 2:** one word to describe how you felt afterwards.

**Mixer 2:** how many sounds did you hear?

**Savoring 2:** what sound did you pick?

**Silence 3:** two words to describe how you felt afterwards

Did you find yourself looking forward to practicing silence?

Did you find yourself unintentionally hearing either of your savoring sounds?

Comment on your times of Silence, Mixer, and Savoring (optional):

**Week 3: February 10-16**

Spiritual practice: continue from week two to do your times of Silence as well as Mixer and Savoring. Which one of these practices comes easiest to you?

Which one is most challenging?

Why might this be? (optional):

Have a conversation where you listen for understanding.

While you listen, practice **RASA**:

Name one thing you did to **Receive**:

One thing you did to **Appreciate**:

Do your best to write verbatim what you said to **Summarize** (1-2 sentences).

One question you **Asked** (try for verbatim):

**Personal Power**

Reflect on these questions as you think about your two conversations (where **you** felt listened to in Week 1 and when you listened to **another** in Week 3):

What did you gain from listening to someone else?

What did you lose?

APPENDIX L: FOURTH INTERVENTION FEEDBACK FORM

SESSION FOUR FOLLOW UP

*"You are Not in Control"*

**Next Session will be on Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup>.**

For the next four weeks think about the two things you can control—your attitude and your effort.

Please take a snapshot of an example for each of the following:

**February 17-March 16<sup>th</sup>**

**--At Home**

What was one thing that happened that irritated you? In a few words, briefly describe the situation.

Thinking about this irritation, how did you respond?

What was your attitude towards what happened?

Could you have changed the "irritating thing" that happened?

**Yes**

**No**

Could you have changed your attitude about what happened? Circle one:

**Yes**

**No**

Personal power is *the capacity for action and the capacity for reflection*. In this situation please reflection on your personal power and briefly explain your sense of power. What was your action in response to this irritation?

Explain your reflection

*The action I took was....*

*As I reflection on my action after this irritation I thought/felt. . .*

*You can control—your attitude and your effort.*

February 17-March 16<sup>th</sup>

**--In the News or world events**

What was one thing that happened that irritated you? Briefly describe the situation.

Thinking about this irritation, how did you respond?

What was your attitude towards what happened?

Could you have changed the “irritating thing” that happened?

**Yes**

**No**

Could you have changed your attitude about what happened? Circle one:

**Yes**

**No**

Personal power is *the capacity for action and the capacity for reflection*. In this situation please reflection on your personal power and briefly explain your sense of power. What was your action in response to this irritation?

Explain your reflection

*The action I took was. . .*

*As I reflection on my action after this irritation I thought/felt. . .*

*You can control—your attitude and your effort.*

**February 17-March 16<sup>th</sup>**

**--At work, volunteering, or at your house of worship:**

What was one thing that happened that irritated you? In a few words, briefly describe the situation.

Thinking about this irritation, how did you respond?

What was your attitude towards what happened?

Could you have changed the “irritating thing” that happened?

**Yes**

**No**

Could you have changed your attitude about what happened? Circle one:

**Yes**

**No**

Personal power is *the capacity for action and the capacity for reflection*. In this situation please reflection on your personal power and briefly explain your sense of power. What was your action in response to this irritation? Explain your reflection

*The action I took was....*

*As I reflection on my action after this irritation I thought/felt. . .*

APPENDIX M: *IN VIVIO* CODES FROM BASELINE INTERVIEWS

**Q1. What people have been a big influence in your faith and spiritual development?**

grandmother (A)	Immanuel Lutheran Church- B
devoted Lutheran (A)	family-B
lived at church (A)	Sunday School--B
raised in family (A)	parents --B
Sunday (A)	rostered leaders--B
grandma (A)	my inner want/want to be part of something greater than myself -B
biggest influencer (A)	working with youth-B
mother/ guidelines—C	mother--D
father/discipline—C	raised Lutheran--D
going to church—C	mother's twin sister--D
support group—C	my dad wasn't spiritual--d
my brother—C	her grandparents—C
grew up with her three boys-D	dad helped me develop more spiritual life-D
Lutheran her whole life—C	pastor (good pastor) -D
founders of the church—C	talking with pastor who help through tough times. -D
family connection—C	pastor--F
mother, grandmother, sisters—E	female Sunday school teacher--F
all women—E	older brother--F
not one man has influenced me—E	
mother/grandmother's faith—E	
pastor, church, other men in church—E	



**Q2. Where do you receive the most spiritual nourishment?**

when I am at church I am at peace—A	servicing others
my family... when I saw my kids born—A	influence other's life/helping
seeing family daily—A	volunteering my time/talents
having conversation about God with daughter—A	
watching family grow--A	
what daughter learned in Sunday school—A	
self-reflection—B	guided meditation—B
hearing about spiritual experience of others—C	hearing others stories--C
Bible study—C	men's support group
talking and sharing about experiences and spiritual growth—C	
overcoming hardships—C	
do a lot of praying—D	others at church—D
a lot of conversation with God—D	
faith being tested—E	church—E
my family—E	large family—E
sister/mom (sister is a deacon)—E	mother's faith and
thank God for what we have—E	example-E

**Q2a. What activities give your life the most meaning?**

serving other—A

my job —A

my vocation—A

influence others life in positive

manner-A

people I work with—B

working with youth and families (lower income)—B

trying to spend time with my family—B

being aware of myself and my surroundings -C

sharing/giving to other people—C

seeing the beauty of things that I didn't previously see—C

awareness of positive messages—C

helping the church—D

helping neighbors—D

helping my kids with problems—D

coaching—E

sense of belonging to a group—E

positive role model for youth—E

fulfilling my own wishes without the cares of others—E

my job—E

quality time with family—F

helping others—F

children/grandchildren happiness-F

volunteer work—F

**Q2b1. What gets you up in the morning?**

kids are going to wake up/seeing them —A

spending time with family—A

not knowing whose life I am going to impact that day—A

doing everything I can do to make a positive impact in somebody's life—A

going to work—B

getting paid—B

I like the people I work with—B

sharing same passions as other—B

working with others on a common mission—B

options for new experiences—C

opportunity to make a difference today—C

God kept me through the night—D

thankfulness to God—D

just being alive—D

just wanting to do something—D

running the rat race—E

living for my family—E

wanting family to have better than I had—E

freedom to be able to do what I want—E

extremely duty and responsibility driven—F

work hard for a high level of success—F

solving problems/" fixing" deficiencies—F

**Q2b2. What keeps you up at night?**

not knowing how my family would make it if I weren't around—A

the weight put on me as the provider for the family—A

not knowing the struggles that family might face—A

not being able to experience life with family—A

wondering if I did everything I could today—B

basic anxiety of life. --B

wondering if I should have paid attention to someone but I didn't—B

rethinking everything that I did and how I could have done it differently—B

I didn't take advantage of an opportunity to make a difference—C

I did something to harm someone—C

someone wasn't happy with how I handle a situation—C

I don't have any anxiety that keeps me up—D

knowing I have to bow down to the rat race—E  
 not having ability to help others--E  
 Doing something else with my time besides working—E

Pretty much that same things that get me up in the morning—F

**Q3. What advice would you give your younger self?**

do not let others influence you as much. -A  
 develop your own path--A  
 my grandmother—she could move mountains for me, she is the reason I went to college. -A

follow your heart. -B.  
 do what you want to do, what you think is best for you. -B  
 don't try to live up to what everyone else thinks you should do or what they want to see you do. -B

people are important. -C  
 relationships are important. —C  
 care about people—C

don't worry about things you cannot change. -D

stop worrying about everybody else. -E  
 stay involved in those multiple things to broaden your mind and perspective.  
 having a grand vision to change the way you think about things. -E

work less and play more! —F  
 take time to enjoy life! --F  
 learn how to take time to play—F

**Q4. What are some of the characteristics that you admire most in other men?**

associate a man with his family and kids—A

an admirable man is an amazing father. -A

a man that provides for his family. -A

strong willed and determined. -B

sticking to your gut, doing your thing, and don't form what society wants you to and just that determinedness. -B

communication skills, humor, honesty. -C

ability to deal with issues, gives the appearance of dealing with issues in the appropriate way. -C

the way some men read the Bible and remember and quote it. -D

men that are self-confident. -D

men that are humorous. -D

involved with their kids. -E

being confident with their emotional side. -E

ability to communicate—E

patience—E

strong faith—E

confidence and a sense of being comfortable in all social situations. -F

intelligence and common sense. -F

**Q4a. What gives your life a sense of security?**

my greatest sense of security is my faith. -A

connected with God, God is with me. -A

money /financial security. -B

knowing that I am not alone. -C

God and I are in this together. -C

God is with me. I know God is there. -D

my faith in God. -E

being moderately successful financially. —F

having a good marriage and a healthy family. -F

**Q4b. What is your definition of a successful life?**

a life without worry, without stress —A

a life with few restrictions because of achievement. —A

doing ‘me.’ doing my thing. —B

what keeps me going and what feels my bucket and living life. —B

“He made a difference,” written on my tombstone. —C

help someone out. —D.

able to keep my bills paid and raise my family in a way that taught them something about life. Send my kids out where they were able to live and to take care of themselves. —D

by how successful my family is. The type of persons they become. —E

being loved by my family and not taken for granted. —F Being respected by coworkers—F

making a positive impact on others while giving and leaving more to the world than I take from it. —F

having my work and talents recognized. —F

**Q5. What does the term personal power mean to you?**

ability to influence, change, accomplish tasks, getting things done. –A

the title I have in my work and in my home. –A

what control you have on things. –B

people looking at you to lead things or to run things. – B

the ability to make a difference or really just be in control. –B

having the ability to give up my notion of being in control, having to be in charge.

—C

Having the ability and willingness to look to other resources to help out. –C

knowing how to address things that have an emotional attachment and how do you deal with them and react to them. –C

understanding another person and trying not to hurt the person. –C

I take the approach that everybody feels like they came out satisfied rather than frustrated. -C

ability to do my job without hurting anybody. —D

confidence in who you are. --E

not trying to fit in with everybody else. —E

ability to influence what happens to me personally and the ability to influence what happens to others. –F

**Q5a. How do you understand your own sense of power?**

being the lead on something. Understanding all the different pieces that go into something because I don't like the unknown. –B

I want to know every option of what could happen and how to best prepare for that. –B

The unknown terrifies me. —B

in situations that I don't know how to deal with, turning it over to God. —C

recognizing feelings of uncomfortableness about what I want to do about something. –C

knowing what to worry about and what to let go. —C

I am trying to understand my own sense of power. It doesn't stand out to me. —E

I don't have a strong sense of personal power. –F

I know I have a lot of influence at work and more power than I realize, but I don't have a goal to be powerful. -F

rather make a positive impact through reasoning and example. --F

help others to realize the best path forward not by intimidation or dictation. -F

**Q6.-What relationships, actions, or experiences make you feel powerful?**

the amount of knowledge I have about a particular subject. —A

the more knowledge, the more power. -A

sense of knowing and having answers. -B

when I am leading a group and I am the top person. -B

having the ability to learn and ask questions to learn more about my role and how

I can be better in the position I currently have. -B

when people ask my opinion or when they want to involve me. —C

power when I am able to make someone else feel good. -C

coaching—E.

my relationship with my wife. She helped me mold my power. —E

I set the image of how people are going to look at me. -E

I got power when I was learning who I was as a person in college. -E

seeing large projects are work that are primarily my design. -F

seeing successes in my children, and downfalls that turn into successes in my children. -F

working hard and having the ability to retire. —F

**Q.6a.-What other feelings do you associate with power?**

anxiety —A

when recognized for your status or power a sense of warmth. —A

I appreciate a lot of praise. -A

giving up power makes me feel good. —C

reducing the urge to need to have power. -C

the ultimate of powerful is being able to say, "I am not sure you're the one. You need to give that up to someone else." Relinquishing power, whatever power you might have. -C

sense of accomplishment. -F

satisfaction of a job well done. —F

knowledge that a job or accomplishment was done correctly. -F



**Q7. Where in your life and career do you give your power away?**

working with clients to get them towards self-sufficiency (social work). –A

sharing decision making on parenting with my spouse. –A

losing credibility with my daughter. This feels more like power being taken away.

empowering is rewarding. Getting it taken away is challenging. –A

empowering other people to take and do their own thing. –B

accepting the fact that my family is different than me and we won't agree. –B

understanding I can't change people's minds. —B

I think the power lies with me letting it go and not, I'd like to say not letting it bother me even though it does, but muting that and not letting that interfere with that relationship. I think that's where my power really lies, it's like, yeah, it could definitely piss me off or I don't understand, but that's just how it is and I got to deal with that. —B

if you are a leader, you let people come to consensus and make their decision, even if you would have done it another way. –C

having people develop their own solutions rather than sharing opinion. If they come up with things there's a 99% chance, I am going ask how I can work with the and help. –C

I don't have any knowledge that I wasn't willing to transmit to my guys. –D

I wanted my workers to know as much as I did, so that at time they could do my job. -D

sometimes when the clientele I am dealing with (people on probation), look at you and they thing you are the power. –E

sometimes I give that power away and try to neutralize them; connecting us by putting me on their level. --E

I give power away to my kids when I try to help them understand something about. When my kid cries, or having anxiety, who is she going to call? She calls me because I am going to be the voice of reason. –E

my daughter has so much power, but she doesn't realize it yet. –E

seeing my kids develop their own power and debating with me. —E

as a parent. Giving power away as children turn into young adults. —F

giving power to a supervisor who you don't agree with. —F

working as part of team giving up power in order to maintain a spirit of cooperation and group cohesion. –F

**Q 8. Who do you view as a powerful person?**

any leader. -A

someone that is able to influence and get things done. —A

someone who can move mountains. -A

past presidents. -A

it's all in how you carry yourself to the people you are trying to influence. -A

law enforcement or government officials. —B

pastors and church council. —B

change starts with the people's voice. Who are the most powerful and also powerless? -B

the one who is in control of their emotions. -C

someone who is consistent and level-headed. -C

pastors. -D

Billy Graham—D

president, members of congress—F

company's owners and administrators. —F

the press—F

people in Hollywood. —F

educators—F

**Q8a. Why do you view this person as powerful?**

it's all in how you carry yourself. -A

using emotion, any change in emotion for a purpose. -C

he (Billy graham) knew how to give his power away. He didn't keep it for himself. —D

POTUS is powerful because of ability to make changes that affect lives. -F

congress because of legislative oversight. --F

companies' leaders can make decisions that impact many people. --F

celebrities and media can influence the masses and general opinion. --F

teachers and profs. mold thoughts, and opinions. -F

**Q8a1. Which of the same traits of power do you have?**

genuineness -A  
 integrity -A  
 standing by your word -A  
 listening—C  
 power in the message of God’s Word -D  
 respect of my peers—F  
 people trust me and my ability to make good decisions--F

determination--B  
 follow-through and finish what I started--B  
 communication skills—C  
 I am a child of God—D  
 making business decisions—F  
 providing good direction and advice. --F

**Q8.b. Which of those traits would you like to strengthen?**

sharing power -B  
 releasing some control and collaborating with other. -B  
 stepping back and realizing it is not all about me. -B  
 realizing my way is not the only way. -B

you can never be too levelheaded—F  
 never have too much good judgement or integrity—F

**Q9. What are the things in life that make you feel important?**

knowing others depend on me—A

sense of recognition—B  
 someone noticing when you are not around or reaching out to you. -B  
 knowing someone else truly cares about me. -B  
 someone taking the time to notice me out of everybody else. -B

I’m not sure anymore that I have anything that makes me feel important. --C  
 I do not think of myself as being important. -C  
 I just feel good about helping other people—C  
 I don’t consider, “oh wow, look at me. Look at what I did”. —C  
 my sense of what makes me feel important has changed over the years. —C  
 I attached more self-Importance to feeling important in my younger years. -C

when my girls come and tell me that they love me. -D  
 when my wife thanks me for washing the dishes. —D  
 when I help a neighbor that’s got a problem and I’m able to come up with a solution. —D

coaching -E  
 helping gang bangers. Help everybody around here. -E  
 when my clients show me respect. -E

volunteering—E. In the job I do. It isn’t about me. -E

seeing life go well for my children and grandchildren. -F  
 seeing my children care for others and giving more than they take. -F  
 seeing my efforts be successful in my career and rewards of hard work. -F

**Q.10 What are some areas of life that you feel you can control?**

my household finances, how much food is in the house, basic necessities. —A  
 when I think about it, I am not sure that I can always control finances. —A  
 you have to provide for your family. -A

I like to think that I have a lot of control. -B  
 time in a sense would be one thing can control where I am at, what I am doing. -B  
 who I am around, where I place myself. -B  
 what I will tolerate and what I won't. —B

the only thing I can control is how I react to things. -C

it's hard to say you have control over anything when you ask God for guidance.  
 when I am driving my vehicle—D.  
 money I have invested. What I do with my money. —D

my health—E                      in the end God is going to take everything. —E  
 the plan has been set. -E                      how I respond, that is how you learn. -E

how hard I work. —F  
 how much I let the pressures of life and work impact my state of mind. —F  
 my ability to leave my troubles with God to deal with things I can't control. -F  
 it is within my ability to decide when and how much I turn over to God to deal  
 with. -F

**Q10a. What are the areas that in life that you feel you cannot control?**

I can't control how others feel about me fulfilling their needs. -A  
 other people's behaviors. -A                      my kid's behaviors. -A  
 I set rules and regulations in my house, but I can't control. -A  
 my wife. —A  
 I can't control whether we're going to get all the bills paid so we can keep the  
 doors open to serve people the next day. -A  
  
 what others think of me. -B

I go through a process of looking at a situation saying “why is this a big deal to me? Why do I need to control this? What effect does it have on me?”—C

I go through a thought process of trying to handle things because I have opinions. —C

people may not agree with me, and that is fine, I don’t care. —C

I am not doing the right thing if I have something to say and I don’t say it, and maybe make a difference. —C

I can’t control my health. —D

can’t control what other people think of my interracial marriage. —E

I am not charismatic, charming, or good looking. —F

results in feeling having to work harder than others to be likeable, smart, or influential. —F

**Q 11. What have we not talked about that you think is important for me to know?**

I think you are doing the right study. —A

I don’t think individuals fully realize how much power and influence they have. —A

I think understanding how much power we have or how much we don’t have, but we think we do. —A

the turning points in my life like when I lost my father. —B

life is too short to worry about, especially when I worry about what people think. —B

live for yourself. I learned this when I was 17. —B

the trauma and experience of loss and grief. —B

one of the most important things we can do is share our spiritual experiences. —C

I do not think the church is allow the opportunity to share our experiences. —C

I just wish there were more happy people in the world instead of miserable people. —D

I wish our president would pray a little bit instead of just dictating. —D

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, David, Paul Hill, and Roland Martinson. *Coming of Age: Exploring the Identity and Spirituality of Younger Men*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2006.
- Anderson, Herbert. "Leaving the Door to the Soul Ajar: Rethinking Masculinity." *Word & World* 36, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 36-44.
- , and Edward Foley. *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Wiley Publishing, 2001.
- Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. New York, NY: Penguin Classics, 2006.
- Bargal, David. "Action Research." *Small Group Research* 39, no. 1 (2008): 17-27.
- Bass, Dorothy. *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Berg-Moberg, Glenn. "Men and Church." *Word & World* 36, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 45-52.
- Block, Peter. *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian in Community*. San Francisco, CA: Harper One Publishers, 2009.
- Bosch, David. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017.
- Branson, Mark Lau. *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004.
- Carrigan, Tim, Bob Connell, and John Lee. "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity." *Theory and Society* 14, no. 5 (September 1985): 551-604. Accessed February 2, 2020. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00160017>.
- Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. London: SAGE Publications, 2006.
- Clarke, Jim. *Creating Rituals: A New Way of Healing for Everyday Life*. New York: Paulist Press, 2011.

- Coghlan, David and Teresa Brannick. *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication, 2014.
- Connor, Benjamin. *Practicing Witness: A Missional Vision of Christian Practices*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmann Publishing, 2011.
- Conway, Colleen M. "Masculinity Studies." *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality*. Ed. Benjamin Dunning. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. 2013.
- Dalberg-Action, John. Letter written to Bishop Mandell Creighton on April 5, 1887. Transcript published in *Historical Essays and Studies*, ed. J.N. Figgis and R.V. Laurence. London: Macmillian, 1907.
- Davis, Daphne M. and Jeffrey A. Hayes, "What Are the Benefits to Mindfulness," American Psychological Association, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner> (accessed June 9, 2020).
- Ellison, Pat Taylor, and Patrick R. Keifert. *Dwelling in the Word: A Pocket Handbook*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. St. Paul, MN: Church Innovations, 2011.
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. "Gender Based Violence" (2015). <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Gender-Based-Violence> (accessed July 3, 2020).
- Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Pew ed. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006.
- Faludi, Susan. *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Male*. New York: William Morrow, 1999.
- Ferrante, Joan. *Sociology: A Global Perspective*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth Press, 2013.
- . "Gender and Sexualities: With Emphasis on Gender Ideals" *Sociology: A Global Perspective*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth, 2013.
- Firestone, Robert. "Personal Power: There is a Clear Distinction Between Personal and Negative Power," *Psychology Today* (blog), April 12, 2009. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-human-experience/200904/personal-power> (accessed June 10, 2020).

- Foucault, Michel. *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault—1954-1984*. eds. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S. Rose. New York: The New Press, 2003.
- Goldstein, Joseph. *A Heart Full of Peace*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2007.
- Greenwood, Davydd J. and Morten Levin. *Introduction to Action Research* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007.
- Griffin, Dan. *A Man's Way Through the Twelve Steps*. Center City, MN: Hazelden Publishing, 2009.
- Haddox, Susan E. "Masculinity Studies of the Hebrew Bible: The First Two Decades." *Currents in Biblical Research* 14, no. 2 (2016): 176-206. Accessed February 19, 2020. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1476993X15575496>.
- Hagberg, Janet. *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2003.
- Hardenbrook, Weldon. *Missing in Action: A Powerful Historical Response to the Crisis Among American Men*. Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1996.
- Harvey Kwiyani. "Umunthu and the Spirituality of Leadership: Leadership Lessons from Malawi," *Journal of Religious Leadership* v. 12, No. 2 (Fall 2013): 55.
- Howard, Cameron. "Preaching Texts of Multiple Masculinities to a World of Multiple Masculinities." *Word & World*, 36, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 74-81.
- Hues.xyz. "Genderbread Person v4.0." <https://www.genderbread.org> Accessed June 26, 2020.
- Hughes, Christina. *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2002.
- IBM SPSS Statistics. <https://www.ibm.com/products/spss-statistics>. Accessed January 20, 2020.
- Jewkes, Rachel, Robert Morrell, Jeff Heran, et. al., "Hegemonic masculinity: Combining Theory and Practice in Gender Interventions," *Culture, Health, and Sexuality* 17, no. 2, (Spring 2015): S112-S127, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2015.1085094>.
- Keen, Sam. *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man*. New York: Bantam Books, 1991.
- Keating, Thomas. *Divine Therapy and Addiction: Centering Prayer and the Twelve Steps*. Cincinnati, OH: Lantern Books, 2009.



- Keifert, Patrick, and Nigel Rooms. *Forming the Missional Church: Creating Deep Cultural Change in Congregations*. Minneapolis, MN: Church Innovations Institute, 2006.
- Kimmel, Michael. *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. New York: Nation Books, 2013.
- . *The Gendered Society*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- La Cugna, Catherine Mowry. *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006.
- Linsky, Martin, and Ronald A. Heifetz. *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2002.
- Luther, Martin, and Timothy F. Lull editor. *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989.
- . *Luther's Works*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann, and Christopher Boyd Brown. 75 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-1986.
- . *The Small Catechism*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1979.
- Lutheran Book of Worship*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House and Lutheran Church in America Publication Board. 1978.
- Marcus, Jon. "Why Men Are the New College Minority" *The Atlantic*, August 8, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/08/why-men-are-the-new-college-minority/536103/>.
- McLaren, Brian. *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crisis, and a Revolution of Hope*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Crucified God*. Fortieth Anniversary ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015.
- . *The Spirit of Hope: Theology for a World in Peril*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019.
- Nardi, Peter. *Doing Survey Research: A Guide to Quantitative Methods*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Routledge Press, 2018.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. "Fast Facts/Enrollment." Accessed September 23, 2019. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>.

- Nelson, James B. *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality*. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1988.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Cultures*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986.
- Nouwen, Henri. *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Everyday Life*. Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 2013.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Daybreak: Thoughts on Prejudices*. Ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Northouse, Peter Guy. *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition ed. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2019.
- Palmer, Parker J. *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2004.
- Patterson, Kerry, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler. *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes Are High*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: McGraw Hill Publishing, 2012.
- Peters, Ted. *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1993.
- Putnam, Robert, David E. Campbell, and Shaylyn Romney Garrett. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2012.
- Rohr, Richard. *Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004.
- . "Introduction: Liminal Space." *Oneing: A publication of the Center for Action and Contemplation* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 17-20.
- . "Introduction: The Ripe and Unripe Fruit." *Oneing: A publication of the Center for Action and Contemplation* 1, no. 2 (2013): 1-2.
- . *Jesus' Plan for a New World: The Sermon on the Mount*. Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media. 1996.
- . *Radical Grace: Daily Meditations*. Cincinnati OH: Saint Anthony Messenger Press. 1995.
- Rope, Kate. "The Future of Being Present," *Time* magazine. October 2019.

- Roxburgh, Alan J. *Structured for Mission: Renewing the Culture of the Church*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Rubin, Herbert J. and Rubin, Irene S. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Los Angeles: SAGE Publication, 2012.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1993.
- Survey Monkey. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/>. Accessed October 1, 2019.
- The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000.
- Trappen, Sandra. "Who is a Feminist?" *Dr. Sandra Trappen blog post*, March 6, 2015, accessed April 9, 2021, <https://sandratrappen.com/2015/03/06/who-is-t-is-a-feminist>.
- Watkins, Jane Magruder, Bernard Mohr, and Ralph Kelly. *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco, CA: Wiley Press, 2011.
- "What's the Difference Between Hearing and Listening?" *Healthline News*. <https://www.healthline.com/health/hearing-vs-listening>. Accessed February 10, 2020.
- Wheatley, Margaret J. *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006.
- Wink, Walter. *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Winnicott, Donald. "Ego Distortions in Terms of True and False Self," *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*. New York: International UP Inc., 1965.
- Wilson, Brittany E. *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Wilson, Stephen M. *Making Men: The Male Coming-of-Age Theme in the Hebrew Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Wright, N.T. *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*. New York: Harper Collins, 2006.

Yochim, Emily C. *Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. 2010. doi:10.1353/book.7240 (accessed January 31, 2019).

Zoom Video Communication, Inc. <https://us04web.zoom.us>. Accessed July 16, 2020.