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A Workshop on the Spiritual Disciplines: Teaching Church Members How to Listen to God Through Prayer, Meditation, Solitude and Journaling Developed For the Members of Eau Claire Baptist Church Columbia, South Carolina

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A WORKSHOP ON THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES:
TEACHING CHURCH MEMBERS HOW TO LISTEN TO GOD
THROUGH PRAYER, MEDITATION, SOLITUDE AND JOURNALING
DEVELOPED FOR THE MEMBERS OF EAU CLAIRE BAPTIST CHURCH
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

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OF THE M. CHRISTOPHER WHITE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
STEVEN BLAIR BOUKNIGHT

DECEMBER 2022

APPROVAL FORM

A WORKSHOP ON THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES:
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This project evolved a long way from its original conception two years ago. At its core, however, is the important foundation of listening to God. Personally, my greatest desire in my role as a husband and father is to always listen to God and to lead my wife and children to do the same. I pray I have had some measure of success in this area and for this reason, my family is at the top of my list in these acknowledgements.

To my beautiful wife Rhonda, you taught me how to listen to God even before we met as I faithfully prayed for the woman who would one day be my wife: I am so glad that is you! Thank you for an amazing twenty-five years of marriage and thank you for walking this journey with me as we both try to do our best to listen to God every step of the way. I love you.

To my oldest son Micaiah, you taught me how to listen to God long before you were born as your mom and I faithfully prayed for God's leading in starting our family. We prayed...He spoke...we listened. I am glad we did because I could not ask for a greater blessing of having you as my oldest son. Now that you are in college, it is your turn to listen to Him and I pray you listen well. I am so proud of you and love you a ton.

To my daughter Rubi, you also taught me how to listen to God long before you became my daughter. As your mom and I faithfully prayed through a second adoption, God spoke and we again listened. I spent many walks up and down Old Woodlands praying for you and for God to bring your adoption to fruition. I am so glad He did! I could not ask for a better daughter. I am so proud of you for starting high school and I am so proud of the amazing artist you are. You are amazingly talented and I am super proud to be your dad. Always remember you are the Lord's child first; please always listen to Him. I love you.

To my youngest son Luke, you remind me every day to listen to God because I hear Him speak so often through your sweet five-year old voice, through every Bible verse you say, and through every prayer you pray. You bring great joy to life and I am so grateful God blessed our family with you as our baby boy. I am so proud to be your dad and I love you so much. Please never stop singing our song.

To my mom: thank you for always listening to God. Your friendship and support mean more than you will ever know. Thank you for leading me to love and trust Jesus. To my older brother: I pray you too will listen to Him, as I know He is speaking to you.

To my dad, you have been gone eleven years. I still miss you and I can still hear you say, "I am proud of you son." Thank you for driving me hours to seminary a time or two! Thank you for driving me across the country for my senior trip almost thirty years ago. I will always remember that. As you always said, "Nothing beats a failure but a try!"

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To the faithful at Eau Claire Baptist Church, thank you for allowing me to be your Pastor. May we always learn together how to better listen to God in our daily lives. To Pastor Don Brock of Gateway, thank you for your faithful ministry. I pray Gateway and Eau Claire can reconnect again in some way one day soon.

ABSTRACT

Listening to God is so vitally important. This project includes five 75-minute teaching sessions where participants learn how to listen to God through use of the spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, solitude, and journaling. Participants take part in various home assignments to practice these spiritual disciplines in their personal lives throughout the week. Participants respond to surveys rating their progress weekly in practicing each of the disciplines mentioned above. Results indicated increased awareness of hearing God speak following the intentional use of the spiritual disciplines and the increased practice of these disciplines by participants.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal Rationale for the Project

March 2020 brought the unexpected for all of us. Families, schools, churches, and businesses were all impacted by the lockdowns of 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The busy lives of those who were used to leaving home in the morning to rush into their day suddenly turned into doing school at home, church at home, and eating with their families at home. The everyday normal routine suddenly became the abnormal until we all came to realize we were now simply living a new normal.

Discipleship and small group programs at church that were once thriving suddenly dwindled to online meetings only, if even meeting at all. During this time, I realized how busy the lives of so many (including my own) had become, and I started to wonder in the silence of the pandemic, “When do we really take time to listen to God?” This question was one I was asking in my own Christian life, in my role as husband and father, and in my ministry as a pastor.

The pandemic brought to me the realization that God may be using the sudden silence of a shutdown to speak more clearly to His people, if only we would stop and listen. As church attendance dwindled upon multiple attempts to restart services again, discouragement lingered. It was out of my search to hear more clearly the voice of God in my own life and in that of my family, that I began applying this search in the context of the church where I serve as pastor. Out of my own search, I created this project idea to help our church listen to God more closely through use of the spiritual disciplines.

Statement of Ministry Problem

The question this project attempted to address is how church members can develop their listening skills to hear more clearly what God might be saying to them both individually and corporately. Using the spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, solitude, and journaling, this project sought to help church members hear more clearly the voice of God in their lives and within the corporate church body. This project was very applicable to the local church setting of Eau Claire Baptist and this project can easily be adapted in other church settings within varied contexts.

This project sought to address the challenge or lack thereof in the level of effort given by church members to actually hear and listen to God's voice, along with the possible lack of using the spiritual disciplines in the busy lives of church members who may be too busy to discern what God might desire to speak to them. The ultimate question addressed in this project examined whether or not church members are intentional in taking time to hear from God and whether or not they are actively seeking to hear His voice through practice of the spiritual disciplines.

This project sought to build a foundation to help the church be in a better position to move forward in continued ministry because of impacts felt due to the pandemic. While this project did not seek to address a specific visioning process for the church moving forward, participants were given the tools necessary to build a foundation for this as they learned how to better listen to God through the teaching sessions and use of the spiritual disciplines. This project sought to build the right foundation empowering the church to move forward towards understanding better how to listen to God.

Ministry Setting

The setting for this project was Eau Claire Baptist Church, within the Eau Claire Community of Columbia, South Carolina. Interest in this project developed because of the challenges the church faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic that began in March 2020.

Eau Claire Baptist Church turned 100 years old in June 2021. The church has approximately 120 members on roll and averaged active attendance of seventy-five prior to the pandemic. The active membership includes a mix of all ages and is predominately Caucasian with a mix of African American involvement. Ironically, the church is located in a predominantly African American community that has changed over the past thirty years with much of the church membership now living five miles or more outside of the immediate community.

The Eau Claire community is a historically marginalized community located in Columbia's 29203 zip code, which is infamous for its crime and despair. Of the 39,843 individuals living in the 29203 zip code, 33% are below the federal poverty level of \$25,100 for a family of four; this is twice the level compared to the Richland County average. Twenty percent (4,401) of all residents in Richland County's 29203 zip code received supplemental nutrition assistance last year. Even more startling is that one of three (33%) families in the area fell below the federal poverty line at some point during the past twelve months, in comparison with the county average of 12.1%. The area also has a crime rate that is twice the national average.¹

¹ Data provided by Serve & Connect (<https://serveandconnect.net/our-programs/>), a non-profit establishment with specific focus on North Columbia through the North Columbia Youth Empowerment Initiative (<https://columbiapd.net/2018/11/28/north-columbia-youth-empowerment-initiative-kick-off/>).

Prior to the pandemic, the church had a very active ministry in the local community, which included a strong Wednesday night program involving forty to fifty children and youth from neighboring low-income housing. Church members would volunteer each week to drive the bus to pick up neighboring children and youth, teach Bible study classes, prepare meals, all resulting in an effective Wednesday night ministry to our community. This mission and ministry were the heartbeat of our church and seemed to provide the missional purpose and context in which our church sought to do ministry. Sadly, this ministry has yet to restart due to concerns of COVID. However, because of this project, plans were implemented to re-launch the Wednesday night ministry following the conclusion of this workshop.

Eau Claire Baptist Church observed its 100th church anniversary in June 2021, in the middle of the pandemic. Celebratory plans included a big celebration that did not come to fruition due to concerns with COVID. Throughout the pandemic, the church stopped meeting in person on Wednesday evenings and paused meeting in person for Sunday services on three different occasions. Discouragement was present and church members have been seeking clarity on how to best move forward in church life and ministry. The context of this project provided the right setting and timing for hearing God's voice as church members are seeking to discern the next path forward in ministry.

The present ministry setting of Eau Claire Baptist Church presents a need for church members to be intentional in listening to God. There seems to be concern of how the church can best move forward again in ministry and this concern can be addressed by church members participating in a greater and more unified effort of hearing God by discerning what He might be saying to them in this present setting and context.

Additionally, some have fallen away in their faithfulness of in-person church attendance, as there was an initial decline of nearly fifty percent due to the pandemic. Some have not returned to in-person worship and there is uncertainty as to whether or not these are staying engaged through online services, or if they will ever return.

Due to concern expressed among church leaders regarding the current context and setting of our church's ministry, our church council entered into a discussion with a church consultant who emphasized the importance of churches listening to God, specifically as it involves where church members may find themselves in the cycle of congregational development. This particular expert mentioned the need for churches to evaluate their ministry and enter a season of renewal once every seven years, using Lev 25:1-12 as a model for this intentional season of renewal.² While the seven-year period mentioned in this text is not a biblical mandate, this cycle may be viewed as a model for churches based on the biblical practice found in this text. While the church council looks to move forward with a visioning and renewal process (separate from this project), this ministry project sought to lay the right foundation for listening to God prior to moving forward in such a process.

This project was conducted among sixteen members of Eau Claire Baptist Church through five teaching sessions that took place each Sunday evening from September 11 to October 9.

² George Bullard, former Executive Director of the Columbia Metro Baptist Association in a meeting with our church leaders on April 24, 2022.

Resources and Literature Review

Resources Review

As part of this resource review, I created a project summary document that was presented to the church council of Eau Claire Baptist Church on August 8, 2022, where formal approval was given to conduct this project within the life of the church. The project summary includes an overview of the project title, proposal, teaching foundation and abstract, expected outcome, strategy, key measurements, statements, challenges, and project goals (Appendix A).

Additional resources include utilizing the church newsletter to advertise the project (Appendix B), a participant covenant (Appendix C), pre / post workshop questionnaire (Appendix D), pre / post workshop assessments for individual sessions (Appendix E), and lesson plans for each of the five teaching sessions (Appendix F).

I chose to use the additional resource of hosting a virtual informational meeting prior to the first in-person session that was scheduled for September 11. I felt it necessary and a good use of time to host a twenty-minute informational meeting via Zoom on the Thursday evening prior to the start of the workshop with the goal of reviewing all of the necessary “housekeeping” items. I was concerned with how the time of the first session might be impacted if I waited until the start of the workshop to review these housekeeping items. I felt the discussion of these items could easily use up a quarter of the time allotted for the first session and I felt this would be a poor use of time.

Instead of waiting until the first session to discuss these items, I promoted the informational virtual meeting to participants through email and advertised this as a brief

meeting to help participants fully prepare for the start of the workshop. I was pleased with the response as a strong majority of participants attended the virtual zoom informational meeting. One participant let me know ahead of time he would not be able to attend due to another commitment and two participants did not attend this informational meeting; neither did they provide notice of their not attending.

Having the ability to use the resource of a virtual meeting was extremely helpful to the foundation of the project start. I felt this provided a strong foundation for running the project, as I was able to get right into the teaching material at the start of the first session. Worthy to note are the “housekeeping” items reviewed during this virtual meeting through screen sharing, to include the informed consent document required by the Institutional Review Board, the participant covenant agreements, and the important instructions regarding the pre/post assessments which needed to be completed prior to the start of the first session.

For the in-person teaching sessions, I used the resources of a laptop computer that was connected to a large flat screen television used to project PowerPoint slides shown throughout the teaching portion of each session. I found it helpful to display an agenda on the screen prior to the meeting so participants would know what would be covered during the seventy-five minute workshop session. I incorporated the use of YouTube videos to play a song of praise during each session in which participants were invited to stand and sing together at the midway point of each teaching session. This provided the feel of a “stretch break” without having to formally excuse the group for an “official” break. The teaching sessions lasted no longer than seventy-five minutes and for this reason, I chose to use the song as an informal break within the teaching session. Needless to say, the flat

screen television with internet capability was extremely helpful for this purpose. The time was better used not dismissing for a break and the format worked well to provide a good flow to each session.

For the first meeting held on September 11, I chose to provide and use the resource of a Mead Five Star pocket folder for participants to use for storing handouts and to have an easy place for keeping pre/post assessments. As I explained to participants during the first meeting, the right side of the folder would be used for the pre/post assessments provided each week, and the left side of the folder would be used for session handouts. In the center of the folder, I inserted a letter to each participant expressing thanks for their participation, reminding them they would be prayed for by me prior to each session, while also including a brief outline of each topic to be discussed during the session. I observed regular use of this pocket folder by all participants throughout the workshop and this seemed to really contribute to the overall workshop experience in a helpful way.

I chose to include the resource of a name marker that was placed on top of each pocket folder, choosing to assign seats ahead of the first session. While this initially worked well, there was some surprise of those present in the room to find there were assigned seats. I had a last minute request for someone who was hard of hearing to be moved from the third row to the front row. This was easily adaptable, except I forgot to rearrange the folders when making the last minute seat change. In hindsight, the assignment of seats really did not include any extra benefit. However, it did seem to take the guesswork out of participants wondering where they should sit.

The resource of the fellowship hall where these sessions took place was very accommodating, although there was an issue during the first meeting with the room being slightly cooler than expected as the thermostat for the air conditioning was set on 71 degrees, much cooler than was comfortable for most. Thankfully, someone from the building and grounds team was a part of this workshop and he was able to adjust the thermostat to a more comfortable setting. The room temperature was not an issue during subsequent meetings.

I initially intended to set cups and ice water out for participants prior to the start of the first session, but I misjudged my time and was not able to do this prior to the start of the session as planned. One participant offered to prepare cups of water prior to the start of future sessions and I welcomed this offer. Some of the group appreciated having ice water available for the 75 minute sessions. Finally, I was concerned about the exterior door to the church fellowship hall being left unlocked while we were in the session, so I asked a deacon present to be the “doorkeeper” to ensure everyone could get inside, and ensure the door was locked shortly after the start of each meeting. This gave others and me peace of mind.

Finally, the resources of technology (laptop and TV) worked without any problems, thus there were no technological challenges. Having the ability to display visuals and use this for playing music seemed vital to the effectiveness in setting the right tone for each session. I could not envision offering this type of workshop without these additional resources. The additional resource of the church sanctuary was used for a portion of one meeting in which participants gathered for a time of listening prayer. Having the resource of the sanctuary which is located just above the fellowship hall

provided for an easy transition for participants moving in between these two locations for the one session in which both locations were used.

Literature Review

Research for this project included three various categories of literature. Included in these literary resources were those pertaining to listening to God, followed by a second category of literary resources focused on the broader spiritual disciplines, and finally literary resources focused on the specific disciplines of prayer, meditation, and solitude.

Regarding listening to God, I found great insights from the following: *The Joy of Listening to God: Hearing the Many Ways God Speaks to Us* by Joyce Huggett, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* written by M. Robert Mulholland Jr., and finally *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* by Dallas Willard.³ I relied very heavily on these resources for the focus of listening to God as the first two sessions gave strong emphasis to this topic. At the heart of this project was the desire to encourage, inspire, and teach others how to better listen to God and hear His voice. These resources provided the right foundation for this.

Regarding the spiritual disciplines, I found great insights from these resources: *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* by Richard Foster,

³ Joyce Huggett, *The Joy of Listening to God: Hearing the Many Ways God Speaks to Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986); M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016); Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021).

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald Whitney, and finally *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* by Dallas Willard.⁴

Regarding the spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, solitude, and journaling as emphasized in this workshop, the following resources were of great use in reading, preparing, and teaching on these disciplines. For prayer, I used *The Art of Listening Prayer* by Seth Barnes and *An Introductory Guide to Listening Prayer: God's invitation for you to join Him on a quest* by Bob Japenga.⁵ For the emphasis on meditation, I relied upon *Quiet Prayer: the hidden purpose and power of Christian meditation* by Marie Chapien and *Reclaiming the Lost Art of Biblical Meditation: Find True Peace in Jesus* by Robert J. Morgan.⁶ For the final session on solitude, I relied upon *Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experience God's Transforming Presence* by Ruth Haley Barton.⁷

As I prepared for this workshop, I found it important to study the role the spiritual disciplines should play in the lives of participants to help them better listen to God. To help in this endeavor, I found Richard Foster's teaching on the disciplines of the spiritual life very useful. In his work, *Celebration of Discipline*, Foster reminds us that the

⁴ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015); Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1998); Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991); Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

⁵ Seth Barnes, *The Art of Listening Prayer* (Gainesville, GA: Ashland Press, 2005); Bob Japenga, *Listening Prayer: God's invitation for you to join Him on a quest* (Simsbury, CT: Center for Renewal Press, 2019).

⁶ Marie Chapien, *Quiet Prayer: The Hidden Purpose and Power of Christian Meditation* (Nashville, TN: Emanate Books, 2019) and Robert J. Morgan, *Reclaiming the Lost Art of Biblical Meditation* (Nashville, TN: Harper Collins, 2017).

⁷ Ruth Haley Barton, *Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010).

disciplines are not simply for the spiritual giants and those who have the time to devote their full-time focus on the disciplines. Rather, the disciplines are for everyday ordinary people who have a desire to know God better. Foster states, “God intends the Disciplines of the spiritual life to be for ordinary human beings: people who have jobs, who care for children, who wash dishes and mow lawns.”⁸

Additional resources for this project included books by Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Overwhelmed*, and *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*.⁹ These resources helped me prepare the sessions on the key spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, solitude, and journaling as foundational spiritual disciplines used in this workshop to help teach participants how to listen to God through the practice of these disciplines.

It is important to define and clarify the meaning of the term *spiritual disciplines*. In his book *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*, Whitney states, “the spiritual disciplines are the God-ordained means by which we bring ourselves before God, experience Him, and are changed into Christlikeness.”¹⁰ Whitney emphasizes that while God may speak to his people at various times and in various places, it is God who has established the spiritual disciplines as a specific means by which we can expect to hear the Lord’s voice and be transformed by Him. He illustrates by saying “if the Lord

⁸ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1998), 1.

⁹ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991); *Spiritual Disciplines for the Overwhelmed: Simplify Your Spiritual Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: Nav Press, 2003); *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (Colorado Springs, CO: Nav Press, 2001).

¹⁰ Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 92.

might be compared to a pure, life-giving river, the spiritual disciplines would be those ways by which we come to the river to drink from, dive into, swim in, eat from, wash with, and irrigate with.”¹¹

The categorization of spiritual disciplines is worth noting as Whitney classifies the disciplines in two broader ways: personal and corporate (also referred to as congregational). The personal disciplines include those of internalizing Scripture, prayer, fasting, solitude, and journaling. The corporate or congregational disciplines include those practiced with other believers such as worship, corporate prayer, the Lord’s Supper, and fellowship. In his book, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Whitney defines additional disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, worship, evangelism, serving, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning. In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster organizes the spiritual disciplines in three classifications: Inward (meditation, prayer, fasting, study), Outward (simplicity, solitude, submission, service), and Corporate (confession, worship, guidance, celebration). Additionally, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* by Dallas Willard provided a supporting foundation for learning about the practice of the spiritual disciplines, and this resource was used in guiding participants in further understanding of how the spiritual disciplines can help provide application in listening to God.¹²

¹¹ Whitney, 93.

¹² Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 1999).

CHAPTER 2

DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Description

This project involved teaching the members of Eau Claire Baptist Church how to listen to God through use of the spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, solitude, and journaling. Participants attended five teaching sessions over the course of five consecutive weeks, during which they learned about and practiced using the four spiritual disciplines mentioned above in order to help them better listen to God. Modeled after the seven churches of Revelation, participants were challenged to listen closely to God and “hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 1:7), thus helping church members prepare for discerning the church’s next phase of ministry.¹³ Various scriptures were used within the teaching sessions to introduce important concepts in taking time to listen to God through prayer, meditation, solitude, and journaling.

This project sought to help participants be in the best receptive position for listening to God, resulting in the right context for entering a future process of vision planning and renewal of vitality for future ministry (separate from this project). The strategy for this included five teaching sessions where participants worked to effectively develop their listening skills as they learned how to hear more clearly what God might be saying, specifically applied through the practice of the spiritual disciplines in their individual lives. Progress towards the increased practice of the spiritual disciplines in the lives of participants was measured throughout the project.

¹³ All biblical quotations are from NASB unless otherwise indicated.

The application of these teaching sessions was also measured through journaling opportunities in which participants were asked to write journal reflections of what they learned in the teaching sessions and include written thoughts of what they sensed God might be speaking to them personally. This included reflective feedback in which participants answered survey questions (in the form of Likert scales) to help measure the effectiveness of their listening and hearing the voice of God through practice of the spiritual disciplines mentioned above.

Project Goal

The goal of this project was to introduce participants to the importance of the Spiritual Disciplines in their personal lives as related to hearing God's voice. Participants practiced these disciplines as part of the five-week study and were challenged to hear the voice of God more clearly in their own lives through use of these disciplines. The Spiritual Disciplines taught throughout the project included the disciplines of prayer, meditation, solitude, and journaling. Participants were taught key aspects of these Spiritual Disciplines and were challenged to use these Spiritual Disciplines in their lives daily throughout the duration of the project. Likert scales were used in the form of pre and post assessment tools to help gauge the understanding and impact of the spiritual disciplines as evidenced in the increased ability to hear God's voice more clearly as a result of taking part in this project. This workshop had the goal of encouraging participants to know God's voice is not silent in the midst of church life, even during the struggles of a pandemic.

Project Outline

I. PREPARATION

- A. Participants received four documents a week prior to beginning the workshop. These documents included the following:
 - a. Informed Consent
 - b. Participant Covenant (Appendix C)
 - c. Workshop pre-assessment (Appendix D)
 - d. Session 1 pre-assessment comprised of eleven questions where participants will rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 10, and two journal questions (Appendix E).
- B. Participants received instructions requesting them to read and complete each of the four documents listed above, to include returning with their signature where requested.
- C. Participants were given ample time to complete these documents prior to the first session and were instructed to return their completed documents at the beginning of Session 1.

II. WEEK ONE

- A. The goal of this session was to help participants understand the scriptural basis of taking time to listen to God.
- B. The expected outcomes of this session were for participants to:
 - a. Learn the scriptural importance of listening to God
 - b. Answer the question of “why” they should listen to God
 - c. Answer the question of “how” God speaks
 - d. Practice times “when” they will listen to God by participating in at home assignments, consisting of scheduling ten minutes each day used to practice listening.
- C. Teaching outline included the following:
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Biblical basis for listening
 - c. Sounding the ram’s horn (Lev 25)
 - d. Prayer & Hymn (participants sung a hymn together and prayed together midway through teaching session)
 - e. Why do we want to hear from God?
 - i. Motives
 - ii. Desire
 - iii. Need
 - f. How do we hear from God?
 - i. Biblical stories of people who hear from God (to include six examples)
 - ii. The still small voice
 - iii. The voice of an individual human being
 - g. When do we hear from God?

III. WEEK TWO

- A. The goal of this session was to introduce participants to the Spiritual Disciplines.

- B. The expected outcomes of this session was for participants to:
 - a. Learn an overview of the spiritual disciplines
 - b. Learn about the spiritual discipline of journaling
 - c. Explore what God has to say to the church, using the seven churches of Revelation as a model (Rev 2, 3)
 - d. Grow in their practice of the spiritual discipline of journaling.
- C. Teaching outline included the following:
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Commanded to listen
 - c. Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines
 - d. Overview of Journaling
 - e. What does God want to say to the church? Teaching overview of Revelation 2 and 3 (the messages to the seven churches of Revelation). Specific emphasis given to the commendation, concern, and commands found in the letters written to the seven churches of Revelation.
 - f. Activity: what would a letter from God say to Eau Claire Baptist Church? Participants were given a home assignment to journal what they believe God is speaking to ECBC. This will include journaling two commendations, two concerns, and two commands.

IV. WEEK THREE – Prayer

- A. The goal of this session was to raise awareness on the concept of listening prayer and have participants practice this discipline both in the session and throughout the week.
- B. The expected outcomes of this session was for participants to:
 - a. Increase their understanding of the spiritual discipline of prayer.
 - b. Become more familiar with the spiritual discipline of prayer by increasing their use of this spiritual discipline in their own lives.
 - c. Complete daily prayer assignments during the week (modeled after the Lord’s Prayer) in which they will practice the use of this spiritual discipline in their own lives.
 - d. Participants spend 30 minutes in a corporate setting during the session participating in a guided session of listening prayer.
- C. Teaching outline included the following:
 - a. Listening activity – guided listening activity to take place in the sanctuary. Participants used written instructions to silently participate in the guided practice of listening prayer (Appendix I).
 - b. Sharing time – participants were invited to share their experiences as a result of the listening activity.
 - c. Principles for divine communication
 - i. Ask questions

- ii. Expect a response
 - iii. Focus His attention
 - iv. Recognize His voice
 - d. The listening prayer process
 - e. How do you know it is God who is speaking?
 - f. How do you prepare to listen to God?
 - g. Two techniques for hearing.
- V. WEEK FOUR – Meditation
- A. The goal of this session was to raise awareness of the spiritual discipline of meditation while helping learners understand the history and practice of Christian meditation.
 - B. The expected outcomes of this session were for participants to:
 - a. Understand the history of Christian meditation
 - b. Distinguish between the types of meditation
 - c. Participants will work in groups to create their own definition of meditation
 - d. Practice the spiritual discipline of meditation throughout the week.
 - C. Teaching outline included the following:
 - a. Two types of Christian meditation
 - b. The history of Christian meditation
 - c. The “what” of meditation – Psalm 91
 - d. The “how” of meditation
 - e. The results of meditation.
- VI. WEEK FIVE – Solitude
- A. The goal of this session was to raise awareness of the spiritual discipline of solitude while helping learners understand steps to practicing this discipline.
 - B. The expected outcomes of this session were for participants to:
 - a. Feel permission to enter the sacred space of solitude
 - b. Feel invited to enter the sacred space of solitude
 - C. Teaching outline included the following:
 - a. Solitude: permission and invitation
 - b. The tension of solitude
 - c. How to practice solitude.

Project Calendar

Project proposal submission to faculty advisor.....	May 31
Project proposal committee review.....	June 9
Project proposal approval.....	July 18
IRB approval.....	August 10
Research and curriculum development.....	July 19 – Sept 10
Project Implementation.....	Sept 11-Oct 9
Draft Report and Analysis completed and submitted.....	October 11
Final Report and Analysis completed.....	October 24
Oral Defense.....	November 7
Final to printer.....	December 5
Graduation.....	December 10

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

Listening to God as Seen throughout Scripture

Perhaps one of the strongest biblical foundations for listening can be found in the *Shema* (שמע) which states, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut 6:4-9).

This command given to Israel to *hear* reminds us of the nation’s solemn obligation to listen to the Lord through “many interpreters, issues, and commands.”¹⁴ In the words of William S. Kervin, “The sense evoked is that of an authoritative, almost interventionist, imperative.”¹⁵ It must be realized this concept of listening for Israel not only involves simply hearing, but also doing. This concept is emphasized in examples such as that of Exod 24 when the people affirmed their covenant with God in response to hearing the words of the Lord. “Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and

¹⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 26.

¹⁵ William S. Kervin, “Dimensions of Worship in the Shema: Resources for Christian Liturgical Theology,” *Studies in Religion* 48 (2019): 117.

said, ‘All the words which the Lord has spoken *we will do!*’” (Exod 24:3; italics added for emphasis). A further example of this is seen in that same chapter, “Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!’” (Exod 24:7). This supports the rationale that God’s people are called to not only hear but are also called to respond. The rationale for this project will call participants to listen and respond to the Lord by participating and following assignments under the direction of the spiritual disciplines previously mentioned.

In order to be able to listen effectively, it is vitally important for the listener to take time to slow down enough with the intention of listening carefully. The book of Leviticus provides an example of this in the context of the Sabbath, Sabbath year, and the Year of Jubilee as found in Lev 25:1-11. As Eau Claire Baptist Church prepares to enter a church visioning and renewal process, taking time to listen to God could not be more important than it is right now. In the context of Leviticus, God’s people took time to participate in the intentional slowing down each Sabbath, each Sabbath year, and each year of Jubilee, as they would refrain from working the land. Like God’s people in Lev 25, it is necessary for the people of Eau Claire Baptist Church to slow down with this same intentionality by taking the time to listen. In the context of Leviticus, it was during the time of the fiftieth year (following seven Sabbaths of years) the people were instructed by God to “proclaim a release” through the land (Lev 25:10), thus pausing to be still and to allow the land to rest.

The Sabbath principle found here in the form of a “pause” taking place once every seven years finds its context in creation “with ancient Israelites functioning as stewards

of property and wealth, rather than as owners. God the creator holds that role.”¹⁶ Just as ancient Israelites were primarily viewed as stewards of the land rather than owners, so also congregants should view themselves as stewards of the church God has given with a willingness to experience a similar “pause” in the church, as was done in the context of Israel during the Sabbath year and during the year of Jubilee. What would it look like if God’s people in Leviticus simply “kept going” and ignored the Sabbath year? How could they clearly hear God’s voice without taking time to stop and listen? How could they know what He desired for them as a nation if they never slowed down long enough to hear the Lord’s next steps of direction for them? In the same way, it is important for congregants to take the time to stop and listen, enabling them to hear clearly God’s voice both for themselves and for the church in which they find themselves to be stewards.

As we consider the biblical context of the sabbatical year, we find this “extends to seven seven-year cycles, which culminate in the fiftieth year with the celebration of Jubilee.”¹⁷ In this context, those who were forced into debt through the mortgaging of land “were allowed to reclaim their holdings and resume their lives as free persons who may work toward the promise of providing for themselves and their family.”¹⁸ Ultimately, the freedom and release experienced by those who had come under a bondage of sorts is the emphasis of this Sabbath year and year of Jubilee. There was the freedom to “rest” or “pause” in which God’s people could experience a fresh start. While the

¹⁶ W. H. Bellinger, Jr., *Leviticus, Numbers*. New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2001), 148.

¹⁷ Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2002), 195.

¹⁸ Balentine, 195.

bondage of debt was tied here to land, it is worth considering what types of bondage we may find ourselves in, specifically in the context of the local church. If the season of COVID has taught us anything, perhaps it is the realization that either things will never be the same in our churches, or things will gradually return to the same. Are churches necessarily bound to a ministry of the past prior to COVID, or are they free to move forward in the next step of doing ministry?

In Leviticus, we see the example of God's people who were given that opportunity to reset themselves and to be set free. There was a much-needed season of rest, renewal, and a time for listening as provided to God's people in this context. The same is likely very much needed in churches today as pressure is mounting to get back to some sense of normalcy now that we have come through the COVID pandemic. The choice is whether this time will be used to ensure the right things change, or will we simply return to a sense of what feels normal based on ministry in a pre-covid world? I would like to suggest most of us miss the opportunity to reset, renew, and listen as illustrated in the Sabbath year and year of Jubilee. Therefore, a season of slowing down to hear God's voice is desperately needed in the church today just as it was desperately needed in the setting of the nation of Israel.

This text helps us understand the necessity that God's people must "stop" doing something in order to obey the command implied here, "The land shall keep a Sabbath to the Lord" (Lev 25:2, RSV). "The construction of the sentence in Hebrew makes *the land* the subject of the verb, as if the land actually performs some action by itself. In reality, it is the people of Israel that must act (or refrain from acting) in order to fulfill this rule. They must stop their usual practice of cultivating the land and so allow it to rest in order

to honor the Lord.”¹⁹ In the same way, church members today may need to stop their usual practice of church to allow a dedicated season of listening to the Lord.

It is worth noting the word “Jubilee” is “ultimately a transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning ‘ram’s horn’” as this was the means used to proclaim the start of the fiftieth year, which became known as the year of Jubilee.²⁰ The RSV uses the word “trumpet” in Lev 25:9 and in this context the “word does refer to the horn of a ram which was used as a musical instrument to give signals to large groups of people.”²¹ Other texts include this practice and can be found in the verses that follow. “So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets” (Josh 6:20). “It came about when he had arrived, that he blew the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim” (Judg 3:27). “Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land, saying, ‘Let the Hebrews hear’” (1 Sam 13:3).

I am not suggesting the pastor of the church should literally blow the ram’s horn, but perhaps it is necessary for the pastor of the church to sound the alarm and proclaim the need for God’s people to slow down enough to listen to what it is God might be saying to them. It is here that we find the need for the practice of the spiritual disciplines being considered in this project as a means of listening to God.

In the New Testament, the letters written to the seven churches of Revelation underscore the importance of listening, as it is very clear in these letters that God has a message to speak to His church. In Rev 2 and 3, we find a very clear and specific message to each of the seven churches. If God had such a clear message for the church in

¹⁹ Rene Peter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Translator’s Handbook on Leviticus*. Helps for Translators (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1990), 373.

²⁰ Peter-Contesse and Ellington, 375.

²¹ Peter-Contesse and Ellington, 377.

that day and time, then surely God must have an equally clear message for His church today. Repeatedly throughout each letter written to the seven churches of Revelation, we find the important phrase, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). “Though the message is directed to the church as such through its pastor, the individual is urged to respond to the exhortation and warning. So it is ever that God speaks to the ones who will hear.”²²

Not only is Revelation filled with instruction to churches on the importance of listening to God, but many promises await those who choose to listen to Him as well. For example, the church of Ephesus receives this invitation and promise; “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches, to him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God” (Rev 2:7). There is clearly a benefit and a promise provided in Revelation to those who listen to God, and surely, this must be true of the church today. We see this implication in many other verses of scripture throughout Revelation such as to the church of Smyrna that states, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death” (Rev 2:11). Those who listen and are “faithful in their opportunity to receive Christ in this life are promised that they will not be overcome with the second death, the sad lot of those who depart this life without faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.”²³ The emphasis is clear; there is great benefit for those who listen and obey.

²² John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute, 1966), 59.

²³ Walvoord, 64.

To the church at Pergamum, we see a very similar message of promise as stated, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it” (Rev 2:17). There are three specific promises associated with this invitation to listen. These three promises include the ability to receive the hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name. “Just as Israel received manna from heaven as its food in the wilderness, so for the true believer in the Lord Jesus there is the hidden Manna, that bread from heaven which the world does not know or see which is the present spiritual food of the saints as well as a part of their future heritage.”²⁴ Considering this manna was given to God’s people collectively, it is worth considering whether God’s people can receive the full measure of this hidden manna without being part of His people collectively. The rationale here is that perhaps God’s people can hear His voice more clearly, when they are meeting with Him both privately and collectively for times of focused prayer and listening.

As we look at these specific messages to the seven churches and realize more fully the promises given to those who listen, it is worth considering whether a person can clearly hear the voice of God as it is intended apart from active fellowship in the local church. Surely, there are isolated circumstances where this may not apply, but generally speaking and especially for those who are members of a local church, could it be these members are hindered from hearing the voice of God when they are not in active fellowship with His people? Take for example this illustration of manna. The manna was provided to the people as a whole and from there they were to partake of it individually.

²⁴ Walvoord, 70.

Could it be the rewards of the hidden manna spoken of here can only be fully realized to those who are actively connected and involved in the body of Christ because of their genuine faith?

The church at Thyatira is also given an invitation and a promise. “He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:26-29).

Three additional letters remain in which we read of similar promises offered to those who listen. The letters to the churches at Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea also contain the invitation to listen along with the promise to follow. “He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 3:5-6).

The Spiritual Disciplines as Seen throughout Scripture

While these scriptures above provide strong rationale in the area of listening to God, it is equally important to consider additional biblical rationale for the spiritual disciplines. In his book *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*, Whitney provides strong support for the existence of the spiritual disciplines in Scripture. He reminds his readers that spiritual disciplines are biblical and the disciplines found in the

scripture are sufficient for the methods God chooses to use to speak into the lives of His children.²⁵

Two verses from the New Testament speak in particular to the importance of practicing the spiritual disciplines. For example, “Pursue peace with all people, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). How is one expected to pursue this holiness? Paul hints at the answer for this when he states, “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (1 Tim 4:7). This provides the perfect context for how one can use the spiritual disciplines in their life to listen to the Lord’s voice while using the spiritual disciplines for the purpose of godliness. Additionally in the New Testament, Jesus himself demonstrated the practice of such spiritual disciplines as prayer and solitude. “After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone” (Matt 14:23). “And in the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and prayed there for a time” (Mark 1:35).

Luke’s Gospel provides strong rationale for demonstrating the spiritual discipline of prayer as it is in this Gospel we find specific emphasis on the many occasions when Jesus prayed. This includes prior to Jesus’ baptism, “while He was praying, heaven was opened” (Luke 3:21), prior to him choosing the Twelve, after Peter’s confession at the Transfiguration, in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46), and even as the guards approached to take him as a prisoner. More specifically, in Luke 11:1-13, Jesus teaches on prayer at the request of his disciples who demonstrated their desire of learning the discipline of prayer when they asked the Lord, “Teach us to pray just as John also taught

²⁵ Whitney, 93.

his disciples” (Luke 11:1). Not only does Jesus teach his disciples how to pray, he illustrates the discipline of prayer in the parable of the persistent friend as taught in Luke 11:5-8. Additionally, Jesus references the importance of prayer through the parable of the good father in Luke 11:9-13, where the father in the parable answers the request of his son through a willingness to provide what was asked by his son, namely something to eat.

While the structure of this text in Luke 11:1-13 leads the reader to believe all of these things were spoken on one occasion, the reader must remember it is not uncommon in the Gospels for the writers to combine teachings into similar sections. “That these sayings originally had different settings is supported by the fact that Matthew parallels Luke 11:2-4 at Matt 6:9-13 and Luke 11:9-13 at Matt 7:7-11. Luke’s parable of the friend at midnight is found nowhere else.”²⁶ Luke provides for his reader the unique view of “treating prayer as a learned experience, not simply as a release of feelings. Discipline is clearly implied.”²⁷

Luke’s rendering of the Lord’s Prayer might give a sense of this being a short teaching on prayer. However, “the brevity of this episode of teaching on prayer is deceptive, for within this narrative unit are amassed numerous motifs important to the Lukan message: the centrality of prayer to Jesus’ life, the position of the disciple in the Gospel as a learner, and the prospective importance of prayer in the life of the church.”²⁸

²⁶ Fred Craddock, *Luke*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 153.

²⁷ Craddock, 153.

²⁸ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*. The New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 439.

That the disciples are interested in learning to use the spiritual discipline of prayer is seen in their request made to Jesus to “teach us how to pray” (Luke 11:1). “The request for instruction about prayer leads Jesus to teach them a version of what has become known as the Lord’s Prayer. It is called the Lord’s Prayer since it comes from the Lord, but it is really the disciples’ prayer, expressing their common needs and sense of togetherness. Here is a community dependent on God and united in prayer before him for even the most basic needs of life.”²⁹ It is in the Lord’s Prayer we clearly see the need to practice the spiritual discipline of prayer because we are reminded, “the affairs of life are often a matter in which we either walk alone or walk with our hand in his hand. The disciple’s prayer acknowledges that our hand needs to be in his hand.”³⁰ At the conclusion of the teaching on the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus continues illustrating to his followers how they are to pray. The remaining two teaching illustrations used by Jesus in this text are structured in such a way that we find uniformity in the parable aspect (Luke 11:5-8, 11-12) and uniformity among the ramifications (Luke 11:9-10, 13).³¹

The parable of the persistent friend as taught in Luke 11:5-8 should be considered in light of cultural expectations in this particular day and time. First is the issue of food (in this case, bread) as bread was baked daily to meet the needs of that particular day. Second is the issue of hospitality as this was viewed as more of a duty and was highly valued by the culture. “Here, then, we have a dilemma: a late evening guest, but no food. What would the host do? Also behind the story stands the reality that most ancient homes

²⁹ Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 308.

³⁰ Bock, 310.

³¹ Green, 445.

had only one room. To approach a neighbor meant risking waking the family. How bold would the host be?”³² Jesus poses the question in this parable regarding exactly which type of friend would go wake up his friend and possibly his entire family during the middle of the night just to ask for bread?

The answer of course is the friend who has shamelessly approached at midnight asking for three loaves of bread. It seems the request made for bread in this parable is being asked with confidence and boldness, similar to the way the book of Hebrews instructs believers to “approach God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith,” reminding us of the open invitation to approach our Lord with “confidence to enter the holy place” (Heb 10:19-22). As so profoundly stated by Bock, “The promise of an open door lies before the disciple, who need not be too shy to ask.”³³ It is simply out of asking that the friend got out of bed to open the door for his neighbor, even at such an inconvenient time during the late night hour. The spiritual discipline of prayer is personified in the parables found examined here through both a neighbor and father seen in this text from Luke.

The dependence expressed in this disciples’ prayer should also lead them to trust God fully, including the right to approach him boldly for spiritual insight. Even basic relationships such as those we have with neighbors and children illustrate the point. We can seek a neighbor’s aid in moments of need, or a child might seek help from a parent. Surely the most intimate of relationships, our need for God, works in the context of similar care, where we can rest in the knowledge that he cares for us and hears us.³⁴

³² Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 311.

³³ Bock, 311.

³⁴ Bock, 312.

Scripture is not silent on the spiritual discipline of meditation. Foster defines Christian meditation as “the ability to hear God’s voice and obey his word.”³⁵ In scripture, the Hebrew words for meditation are used over fifty times and have “various meanings: listening to God’s word, reflecting on God’s works, rehearsing God’s deeds, ruminating on God’s law, and more.”³⁶ The Psalmist speaks to this discipline in the very beginning of the Psalms as the blessed man is described as one “whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Ps 1:2, RSV). Additional instruction to meditate is found elsewhere in the Psalms, “Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day...I hold my feet from every evil way, in order to keep thy word. I do not turn aside from thy ordinances, for thou has taught me” (Ps 119:97, 101, 102, RSV). It is worth noting, “It is this continual focus upon obedience and faithfulness that most clearly distinguishes Christian meditation from its Eastern and secular counterparts.”³⁷ The writers of the Psalms provide even further references to meditation: “I think of thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the watches of the night” (Ps 63:6, RSV), “My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate upon thy promise” (Ps 119:148, RSV).

Other examples from the Old Testament seem to tie together the importance of listening to God with the discipline of meditation.

The old priest Eli knew how to listen to God and helped the young boy Samuel know the word of the Lord (1 Sam 3:1-18). Elijah spent many a day and night in the wilderness learning to discern the ‘still small voice of Yahweh’ (1 Kgs 19:9-18). Isaiah saw the Lord ‘high and lifted up’ and heard his voice saying, ‘Whom

³⁵ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 17.

³⁶ Foster, 15.

³⁷ Foster, 16.

shall I send, and who will go for us?’ (Is 6:1-8). Jeremiah discovered the word of God to be ‘a burning fire shut up in my bones’ (Jer 20:9). These were people who were close to the heart of God. God spoke to them not because they had special abilities, but because they were willing to listen.³⁸

As we think about the spiritual discipline of solitude as found in scripture, perhaps it is in this discipline where we can position ourselves in the best posture to listen. Allow us the opportunity to consider a description of solitude before considering where we find this practice in scripture.

Solitude is more a state of mind and heart than it is a place. There is a solitude of the heart that can be maintained at all times. Crowds, or the lack of them, have little to do with this inward attentiveness. It is quite possible to be a desert hermit and never experience solitude. But if we profess inward solitude we do not fear being alone, for we know that we are not alone. Neither do we fear being with others, for they do not control us. In the midst of noise and confusion we are settled into a deep inner silence. Whether alone or among people, we always carry with us a portable sanctuary of the heart.³⁹

It is this “sanctuary of the heart” found in the spiritual discipline of solitude that is seen in the life of Jesus throughout the New Testament. “The seeking out of solitary places was a regular practice for Jesus. So it should be for us.”⁴⁰ As found in Foster’s chapter on the discipline of Solitude, many of these solitary places and practice of solitude as seen in the life of Jesus are worth mentioning here. Consider the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry where he retreated to solitude immediately after his baptism in the Jordan. “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness” (Matt 4:1) and it was here in solitude where Jesus spent forty days and forty nights as he was tempted. As the ministry of Jesus transitioned from this wilderness experience into Galilee where He

³⁸ Foster, 16.

³⁹ Foster, 96-97.

⁴⁰ Foster, 97.

would choose his twelve disciples, we are told Jesus retreated in solitude while devoting himself to prayer. “It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12). After learning of the horrific news regarding the beheading of John the Baptist, we are told Jesus “withdrew from there in a boat to a lonely place by Himself” (Matt 14:13).

A few other instances in scripture provide further use of solitude as demonstrated by Jesus. Following the feeding of the five thousand, we see Jesus go “by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone” (Matt 14:23). Often in the early mornings, we find Jesus retreating to “a lonely place” (Mark 1:35) while also inviting his disciples to “come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). Following the healing of a leper Jesus “withdrew to the wilderness” (Luke 5:16). With three disciples, he sought out the silence of a lonely mountain at the stage for the transfiguration (Matt 17:1-9). As he prepared for his highest and most holy work, Jesus sought the solitude of the garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-46).⁴¹

Finally, the spiritual discipline of journaling is one that is worth mentioning here even though there is little direct mention of this as a discipline used in scripture. It is worth noting here the greater rationale for journaling is found in models and uses provided throughout church history and a deeper rationale of this can be found within the next section. Suffice it to say here that scripture does provide many analogous references to the use of writing things down for later reference, thus giving us some biblical basis for the importance how journaling can be used to write down references in one’s own journey of listening to God. This is the spirit in which this project sought to use

⁴¹ Foster, 97.

journaling, asking participants to write down those things important to them in this listening journey.

In the words of Donald Whitney, “The Bible itself contains many examples of God-inspired journals. Many psalms are records of David’s personal spiritual journey with the Lord,” at least as traditionally understood.⁴² Psalm 102:18 reminds us, “Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord.” These examples suggests that “journaling is an effective way of teaching the things of God to our children and transmitting our faith into the future.”⁴³ The use of journaling in this project was not a separate focus in the teaching sessions, but served the purpose of allowing participants to journal their findings throughout the workshop as a means of personal reflection.

The Spiritual Disciplines and Listening to God throughout Church History

There is much we can glean throughout the history of the church surrounding the focus of listening to God through practice of the spiritual disciplines. Regarding the spiritual discipline of prayer, we find a good description of its prominence throughout Christian history through the synopsis provided by Carl Lundquist, former president of Bethel College and Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Lundquist reminds us of the New Testament Church that built the disciplines of the Lord’s Supper and small cell groups (in addition to the founding disciplines of prayer and Bible study). John Wesley later adds fasting and the “medieval mystics” as added disciplines surrounding

⁴² Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 206.

⁴³ Whitney, 212.

“purgation of sin, enlightenment of the spirit and union with God.” Lundquist emphasizes whatever spiritual disciplines have been practiced throughout history, they are “empty and powerless” without the two basic disciplines of prayer and Bible reading.⁴⁴

The spiritual discipline of prayer as it relates to this project ties in beautifully with the relationship of a father and child, as referenced in the parable of the good father in Luke 11:9-13. We find this concept throughout church history as well as C. H. Spurgeon beautifully illustrates,

I cannot imagine any one of you tantalizing your child by exciting in him a desire that you did not intend to gratify. It were a very ungenerous thing to offer alms to the poor, and then when they hold out their hand for it, to mock their poverty with a denial. It were a cruel addition to the miseries of the sick if they were taken to the hospital and there left to die untended and uncared for. Where God leads you to pray, He means you to receive.⁴⁵

One must believe Spurgeon had the words of Jesus in mind here when he asked, “Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:11-13). Knowing Jesus illustrated prayer in this way reminds us how much more eager God must be to hear from His children through prayer, even more so than an earthly father longs for his children to ask anything of him through simple request.

⁴⁴ Carl Lundquist, *The Burning Heart* newsletter (St. Paul, MN: Evangelical Order of the Burning Heart, November, 1984), 2.

⁴⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, “Thought-Reading Extraordinary,” in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* 30, (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1885; reprint, Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1973), 539-40.

The spiritual discipline of meditation is not absent throughout the pages of church history.

From Catholic to Protestant, from Eastern Orthodox to Western Free Church we are urged to live in his presence in uninterrupted fellowship. The Russian mystic Theophan the Recluse says, “to pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all seeing, within you.” The Anglican divine Jeremy Taylor declares, “Meditation is the duty of all.” And in our day Lutheran martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer, when asked why he meditated, replied, “Because I am a Christian.” The witness of Scripture and the witness of the devotional masters are so rich, so alive with the presence of God that we would be foolish to neglect such a gracious invitation to experience, in the words of Madame Guyon, “the depths of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁶

As to the voices throughout the history of the church attributing the worth of silence and solitude to the value of the importance of these spiritual disciplines in listening to God, we must consider what David Brainerd, early American missionary to the Indians wrote in his journal on Wednesday, April 28, 1742:

I withdrew to my usual place of retirement in great peace and tranquility; spent about two hours in secret duties and felt much as I did yesterday morning, only weaker and more overcome. I seemed to depend wholly upon my dear Lord, wholly weaned from all other dependences. I knew not what to say to my God, but only lean on His bosom, as it were, and breathe out my desires after a perfect conformity to Him in all things. Thirsting desires and insatiable longings possessed my soul after perfect holiness. God was so precious to my soul that the world with all its enjoyments was infinitely vile. I had no more value for all the favor of men than pebbles. The Lord was my ALL; and that He overruled all greatly delighted me. I think my faith and dependence upon God scarce ever rose so high. I saw Him such a fountain of goodness that it seemed impossible I should distrust Him again, or be any way anxious about anything that should happen to me.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Foster, 19.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Edwards, ed., *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*. Revised Edition. Edited by Philip E. Howard, Jr. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1949), 83-84.

What is it that God might say to congregants who are willing to take time for silence and listen to God in this same manner through the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude? In addition to this discipline, what is it that God might say to us through the spiritual discipline of journaling as well? One minister captured the value of journaling because of a meeting of the “Eclectic Society” in 1803. Josiah Pratt stated, “They read the Bible and pray daily in secret. But here it ends. They know little of the progress of decline of the inner man. Now, a diary would have a tendency to raise the standard to such persons by exciting vigilance.”⁴⁸

Just as the spiritual discipline of journaling has been used in the life of God’s people throughout church history, so too the practice of this spiritual discipline has relevance and impact in the lives of believers today as a means for helping them clearly hear the voice of the Lord in their lives. Journaling has a unique place in the spiritual disciplines and use of this discipline will be found throughout this project as participants seek to write and journal what it is they feel God may be speaking to them through the practice of the other disciplines. In its simplest form, “a journal is a book in which a person writes down various things. As a Christian, your journal is a place to record the works and ways of God in your life.”⁴⁹

More than almost any other Discipline, journaling has a fascinating appeal with nearly all who hear about it. One reason is the way journaling blends biblical doctrine and daily living, like the confluence of two great rivers, into one. And since each believer’s journey down life’s river involves bends and hazards previously unexplored by them on the way to the Celestial city, something about journaling this journey appeals to the adventuresome spirit of Christian growth.

⁴⁸ Josiah H. Pratt, ed., *The Thought of the Evangelical Leaders* (James Nisbet, 1856; reprint, Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1978), 305.

⁴⁹ Whitney, 205.

Although the practice of journaling is not commanded in Scripture, it is modeled. And God has blessed the use of journals since Bible times.⁵⁰

Thinking back to the earlier biblical rationale taken from Lev 25, we are not the first to consider the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee as a foundation for listening to God. “Christians also took up this historically schematizing application of the Jubilee as a means of uncovering God’s purposes.”⁵¹ It is clear the reference to the Sabbath year and to the year of Jubilee finds its place throughout the history of the church as a basis for slowing down enough to hear clearly God’s voice with the focused attention to listen what He is saying to His people, both spoken throughout history, and spoken to His people today.

By the fourteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church had initiated an ecclesiastical version of the Jubilee year, proclaiming the first “plenary indulgence” for the year 1300 and formalizing the figural meaning of the penitential implications with the second Jubilee of 1350. These were taken up in chiliastic projections of an imminent future age of forgiveness, delivered by the Spirit and identified in advance through the calculation of Sabbath years according to Daniel’s instructions. Even though the Reformers rejected the contemporary practices associated with this new revival of Jubilee thinking, they maintained the measure as the mark of God’s forgiveness in history. Both Jewish and Christian interpreters took hold of the Jubilee measurement as a means of structuring an array of dispensationalist speculation, which flourished not only in medieval and Reformation periods, but also evolved fully into modern Christian Zionism.⁵²

Throughout church history, the view of listening to God’s voice through both the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee finds its place in light of both the meaning of Psalm

⁵⁰ Whitney, 205.

⁵¹ Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 268.

⁵² Radner, 268.

50 and into the life of the New Testament church through Pentecost. Cassiodorus, a Roman statesman of the fourth century stated, “The number of this psalm (Ps 50) is not without reason. It has reference to the year of Jubilee, which among the Jews dissolved old contracts and obligations and which in Leviticus the Lord ordered the dwellers on the earth to call the year of remission. The number also refers to Pentecost, when after the Lord’s ascension the Holy Spirit came on the apostles, working miracles and imparting the gift of charisms.”⁵³

We read in the law that the fiftieth year was ordered to be designated as Jubilee (that is, a year for releasing or exchanging, in which the whole people should rest from all cultivation of the land and everyone’s debts should be canceled. And we know that in the New Testament the grace of the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost (that is, the fiftieth day of the Lord’s resurrection) and hallowed the beginnings of the church that was being brought into existence by its coming. It is agreed then that by this number can rightly be figured either the grace of the Holy Spirit or the joy of future blessedness, to which one is brought through the gift of the same Spirit and in perception of which alone is true rest and joy.⁵⁴

⁵³ Joseph T. Lienhard, *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 198.

⁵⁴ Lienhard, 198-99.

CHAPTER 4
CRITICAL EVALULATION

Means of Evaluation

This project ran for five weeks, officially from September 11, 2022 to October 9, 2022. The study began with seventeen participants with one participant dropping out after the second session. I intentionally allowed the extra person to sign up for the workshop anticipating there would likely be someone who would drop. In the end, I am glad I made this initial decision as it helped me complete the project strong with sixteen participants completing the study, or so I thought! One additional participant who had planned to miss the first two sessions ended up only attending one out of five sessions. This particular person did not turn in any of the surveys, so for all practical purposes, the project actually had fifteen people actively participating. I did, however, leave this one person on the roster as she never informed me she was dropping the workshop. I will share more on this later. The sixteen participants formed the test group and six additional volunteers initially formed the control group.

Attendance during the workshop ranged from satisfactory to below satisfactory with 93.8% of the group being present for the first session, 75% present for the second, 81.3% present for the third, 75% present for the fourth, and 68% of the group present for the last session. Overall, I would have liked a more consistent attendance throughout the workshop, or at least 80% or greater attendance for each session. For the most part, those who missed sessions let me know ahead of time and almost all who missed were responsive in terms of turning in their pre and post assessments. The one participant

mentioned earlier (who missed the first two sessions pre-planned) did not turn in any surveys at all. This additional participant was permitted to take part in the workshop (causing the total number of participants to initially exceed the maximum number of sixteen that was advertised) as I knew she had initially planned to miss two sessions. Ironically, she attended the third session and then notified me an hour prior to the start of the fourth session that she would not be able to attend. She did not even show up to the fifth session and did not notify me of her change of plans. As mentioned, another participant dropped after week two, so in the end this provided for a total roster of sixteen participants as advertised. The participation and completion of weekly surveys was very strong among fifteen out of sixteen participants.

While it is an unofficial means of evaluation, I began this project by evaluating interest from my congregation. My goal was to have a maximum of sixteen participants, which seemed to be the right number for conducting an effective workshop. To evaluate interest, I presented a summary of my approved project plan to the leaders of my church at the Eau Claire Baptist Church council meeting on August 8 (Appendix A). This helped me evaluate the interest and potential commitment of our church leaders in attending this workshop. Once receiving IRB approval on August 10, I began advertising the workshop in the church newsletter (Appendix B) and announcing the workshop during Sunday morning services on August 14 and 21.

Interest seemed a little slow at first, so I chose to send a personal letter of invitation to twenty of our church leaders. While this letter did result in the increase of sign-ups, I also used the topic of listening to God for my sermon emphasis during the Sunday service on August 28. There was a significant increase in interest following this,

which resulted in a total interest of nearly 25 participants, with some suggesting I add childcare to be provided for the workshop due to the additional interest from those who have children. The additional interest of the extra persons exceeded the advertised cap of sixteen participants as well as falling outside of the perimeters set regarding the initial project proposal for not including childcare. I also received additional interest from a member of another church who receives our church newsletter and watches our services online. The interest shown by this member of another church has me thinking how this workshop is likely needed and easily adaptable to other church settings.

This additional response required me to re-evaluate the project plan based on the amount of interest in this workshop. While it was tempting to expand the number of participants from the originally advertised number of sixteen (along with the possibility of adding childcare), I thoroughly evaluated the effectiveness of the workshop and chose to decline the additional interest, with exception of one additional participant as previously explained. Expanding the number of participants to all interested would not only alter the original project plan, but would also potentially hinder the effectiveness of the project itself due to the larger number of participants and the additional elements of providing childcare, which I was not prepared to offer.

I chose to take the unexpected additional interest as an opportunity for self-evaluation regarding my project plan and topic. I felt it important to take an intentional pause of reflection to ponder why there was so much increased interest of nearly half the active number attending church at this time. This self-evaluation was extremely meaningful for me personally, as it is a reminder that many in my congregation seem to truly desire hearing from God. As I shared with my congregation in the Sunday sermon

where I emphasized the need for our church to listen to God, I simply feel the need to “sound the ram’s horn” regarding our congregation’s need to be more intentional in our listening to God (Lev 25:9).

Additional evaluation prior to beginning the project included the felt need to refine the interest of those signing up for the workshop. To help in this, I created a “Participant Covenant” (see Appendix C) in which I asked participants for their commitment to attend each session (when able) with an expectant heart, attentive mind, and a listening ear. In addition, this covenant encouraged active involvement from participants by being present, being prepared, and being proactive. As part of this covenant, participants acknowledged their commitment to take time to listen to God throughout the week, complete at home assignments, and commit to journaling their thoughts of how they sensed God might be speaking to them.

Within two weeks of advertising the workshop, I had two participants drop because they would need to miss three of the five sessions. While I encouraged participation in the workshop in spite of the need to miss three sessions, I understood the reasoning for the request to withdraw. Even though these individuals chose to withdraw from the workshop, both agreed to be a part of the control group instead, and I was able to move two persons from the waiting list to be a part of the workshop.

I feel having the participants sign a covenant agreement was extremely helpful for active participation. This type of covenant agreement emphasized the need to be present and engaged throughout the duration of the workshop. While some had pre-planned absences that could not be avoided, I felt there was strong dedication and commitment from the strong majority of participants likely due to the covenant agreement. In fact, the

participant who dropped after the second session referred to the covenant agreement and noted her reason for dropping was due to her inability to fulfill her part of the covenant agreement. I encouraged her to continue participating but also graciously affirmed her need to do what she felt best in terms of continuing or dropping. She chose to drop, citing her lack of commitment that was distracted due to circumstances at home. I understood this and graciously affirmed her decision to do what was best for her. She was appreciative of the grace shown.

As I made contacts with participants to confirm their attendance prior to the start of the workshop, 56% of the group (9 out of 16) was able to commit beforehand to attending all five sessions. As it ended up, 6 out of 16 attended all sessions without any absences, representing 37.5% of the group. Evaluating this at the end of the workshop makes me feel this is reflective of church attendance and church involvement as a whole, with under half of our membership being fully active and committed to church attendance and involvement. I would have liked a more consistent attendance from the group, but I am not aware of anything I could have done differently to encourage stronger consistency. I am grateful for all who gave of their time to participate in this workshop and I expressed this consistently throughout the workshop.

A couple of participants who planned to miss sessions asked if I would offer any type make up session or video recording of the sessions as a means of covering material missed. I sincerely contemplated doing this but decided it was in the best interest of the overall project not to offer this option as I felt the data collected by those who missed sessions would also contribute strongly to the research and measurement instruments of the project. Additionally, I had a request from one person on the waiting list to offer a

virtual option for these teaching sessions (via Zoom) for those interested in the workshop, but not able to attend due to my having reached the capacity of sixteen participants.

Again, I strongly considered this, as I wanted to have as many participate as possible.

However, offering a Zoom option would possibly diminish the importance of “in-person presence” for the participants of the workshop as well as presenting other dynamics that would take away from the in-person workshop (such as technology issues, having to give extra attention to virtual participants thus “taking way” from the workshop experience, etc.).

To effectively measure progress in the area of listening to God through the practice of the spiritual disciplines, participants completed pre/post assessments for the overall workshop experience (Appendix D) and pre/post assessments for each individual session (Appendix E). These pre/post assessments (in the form of Likert scales) helped measure the effectiveness regarding the goals, understanding of topic, and use of the spiritual disciplines for each session. As part of the assessment, participants rated on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest score) their understanding of the spiritual disciplines and their ability to hear God more clearly through the practice thereof.

Included in one post assessment were two open-ended questions in which participants were asked to journal about ways they might have heard God speak to them as a result of their involvement in the spiritual disciplines for that particular week. One foundation for this part of the project included the teaching session using the letters written to the seven churches of Revelation as a model (Rev 2 and 3). Participants were asked to journal what they believed God would say to Eau Claire Baptist Church if He

were to write a letter to our church today. While these journal entries were optional, participants were given the opportunity to discuss their writings within each session to help evaluate the understanding of what God might be trying to say to the members of Eau Claire, specifically as they seek to hear more clearly the voice of God in their lives.

Data Analysis

Pre-assessment

Prior to Session 1, participants in both the test group and control group received a packet to include a workshop pre-assessment comprised of two pages (front and back), made up of twenty-four questions. These surveys included a Likert scale format where participants answered questions by circling the most appropriate rating of 1 to 10, with 1 representing “not at all,” 5 representing “somewhat,” and ten representing “very much so” (Appendix D). The purpose of the workshop pre/post assessment was to help measure the current understanding and practices of the spiritual disciplines, as well as to measure understanding and awareness of listening to God within both the test and control groups.

This assessment provided the opportunity for participants to rate themselves in areas such as hearing God, being intentional in their listening, and the practice of the spiritual disciplines of journaling, listening prayer, meditation, and solitude. Many of the questions were asked using the reference “in the last five weeks,” as this helped provide a data set showing the understanding and practice of the spiritual disciplines over the most recent five weeks prior to the beginning of the workshop. The post assessment included the same questions as those given in the pre-assessment, which of course was used to measure the most five recent weeks prior to the end of the workshop, specifically the five

weeks during which the workshop took place. Ideally, the desired results of both pre and post-assessments would show an increased understanding and increased personal practice of the spiritual disciplines, as well as an improvement of listening to God more clearly (specifically for those within the test group).

The overall pre-assessment data showed a consistent response between the test and control groups. As shown below, the trend of responses followed closely to one another for both groups, with combined responses from each group staying within one basis point of each other, generally speaking. There were slight abnormalities observed in this, but nothing specific identified within the slight variance where responses fell outside of the difference of one basis point.

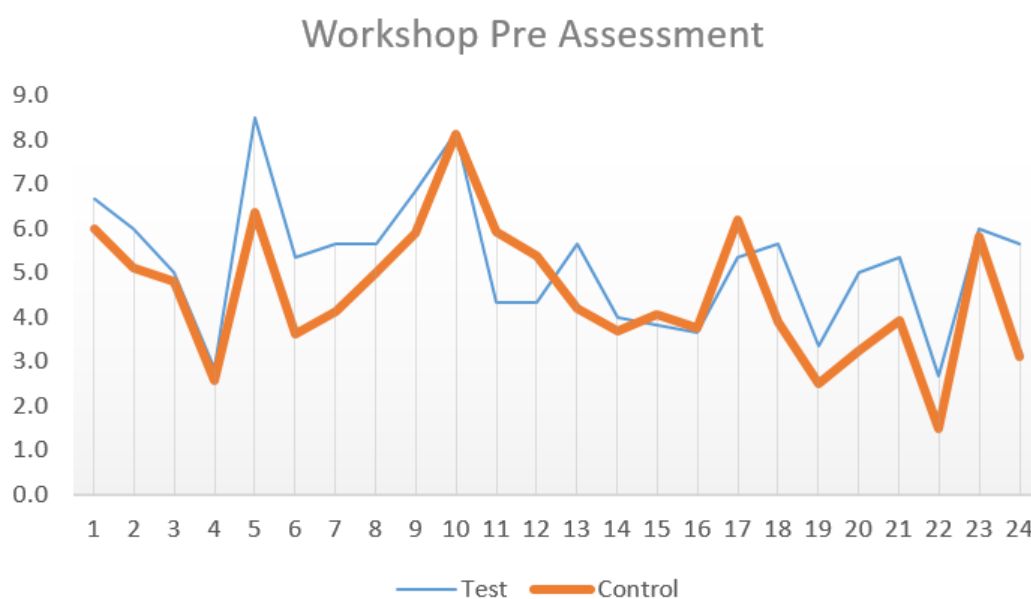


Table 1: Pre-Assessment (Test Group vs. Control Group)

Of particular interest to me were the practices of both the test and control groups regarding the most recent five weeks, in terms of listening to God and the practice of the spiritual disciplines. The questions specifically dealing with the timeline of the most recent five weeks revolved around hearing God speaking, the practice of intentional

listening, and the practice of the spiritual disciplines (to include journaling, prayer, meditation, and solitude).

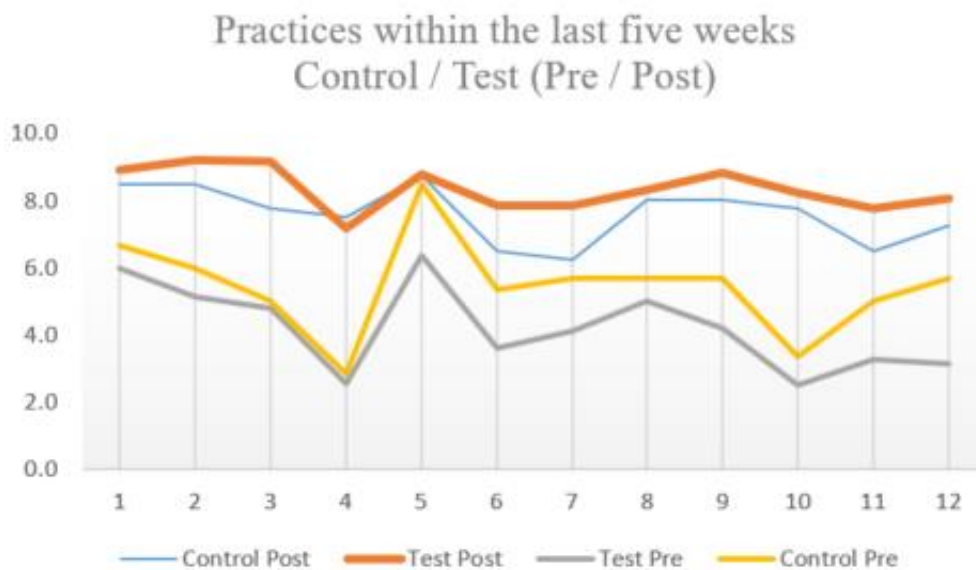


Table 2: Practices within the last five weeks – Control / Test (Pre / Post)

Regarding the practice of the spiritual disciplines, journaling ranked the lowest in terms of use over the most recent five weeks in the pre-assessment (question 4, 2.6 for test group vs. 2.8 for control group). The practice of private prayer ranked the highest among the use of the spiritual disciplines (pre-assessment question 5, 6.4 for test group vs. 8.5 for control group). However, when asked about the practice of listening prayer, the pre-assessment responses showed a significant decrease in the response (question 10, 2.5 for the test group vs. 3.3 for the control group). When surveyed about the uses of meditation and solitude (questions 6 & 7), the responses were consistent among both groups with meditation scoring a 3.6 among the test group, while solitude scored a 4.1 among the same group. Post-assessment responses will be discussed in further detail later.

Regarding hearing or sensing in some way God speaking to them (question 1), participant responses pre-assessment were a 6 for the test group and a 6.7 for the control group, with both groups showing a consistent increase in this area in the post-assessment. Regarding intentionality in listening to God (question 2), the test group responded in the pre-assessment with 5.1 while the control group responded with a 6.0 in this area. Worthy to note is the larger increase in the test group in the post-assessment response of 9.2 compared to 8.5 for the control group. In terms of hearing God speak over the past five weeks (question 8), responses were consistent in this area in the pre-assessment with the test group responding with 5.0 and the control group responding with 5.7, while also showing consistency among both groups in the post-assessment response. When asked about “being on an intentional spiritual journey” (question 9), the test group responded in the pre assessment with a 4.2 while the control responded with a 5.7. The test group again scored highest in these areas (post-assessment).

The overall trend regarding the practices over “the last five weeks” significantly increased with both the test and control group when comparing post-assessment data with pre-assessment data. It is worth noting the test group scored highest in post-measurement compared to the control group in eleven of twelve areas.

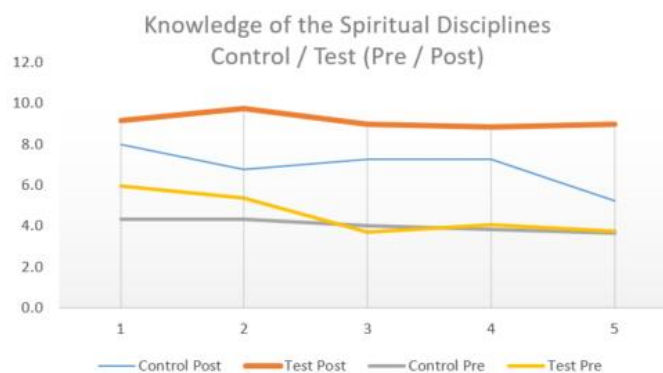


Table 3: Knowledge of the Spiritual Disciplines – Control / Test (Pre / Post)

A series of questions were asked regarding the knowledge of the spiritual disciplines, to include familiarity of the disciplines, the ability to name at least four spiritual disciplines, as well as understanding the categories of the disciplines to include inward, outward, and corporate disciplines. The test group scored consistently higher in the post assessment when comparing responses of the same to the control group. There is a consistent trend showing an increase of knowledge of the spiritual disciplines in both the control and test groups, but as mentioned the post-assessment scores were higher for the test group indicating the workshop contributed to a significant growth in knowledge of the spiritual disciplines for those who attended. When asked about familiarity of the disciplines (question 1), the test group responded with a 9.2 vs. the control group of 8.0 (post-assessment). When asked about being able to name at least four of the spiritual disciplines (question 2), the test group responded with a 9.8 while the control group responded with a 6.8 (post-assessment). When asked about understanding the meaning of the inward, outward, and corporate disciplines (questions 3 through 5), responses for the test group ranged from 8.8 to 9.0, while the control group responses ranged from 5.3 to 7.3 for the post-assessment.

Session 1: Listening

Since each session would focus on a different topic and discipline, I felt it important to provide a pre/post assessment for each individual session. These assessments were fewer questions in length when compared to the overall workshop assessment given. The individual session assessments included eleven questions using Likert scales for the responses, along with two journaling questions.

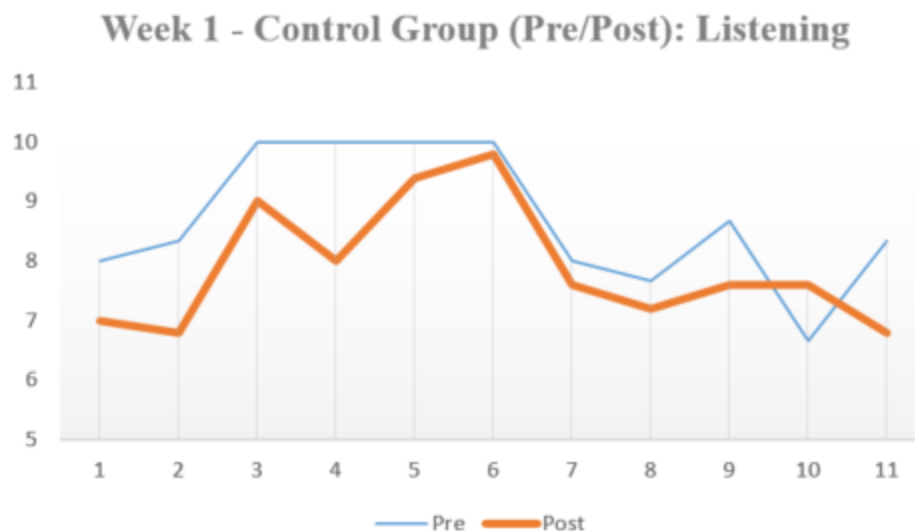


Table 4 - Week 1: Control Group (Pre/Post) - Listening

The control group (six church members not taking part in the workshop) showed an interesting trend between the pre and post-assessment answers provided. There was very little change among the control group as the assessment responses provided had a slight variance between the pre and post-measurements. In fact, ten out of eleven questions showed a decrease in the score with the post responses falling lower than the pre-responses in these ten questions. The only statement to show an increase between the pre and post-survey was, “Within the last week, I have heard God speak to me.” There was a 14% increase in the control group compared to a 37% increase in the test group.

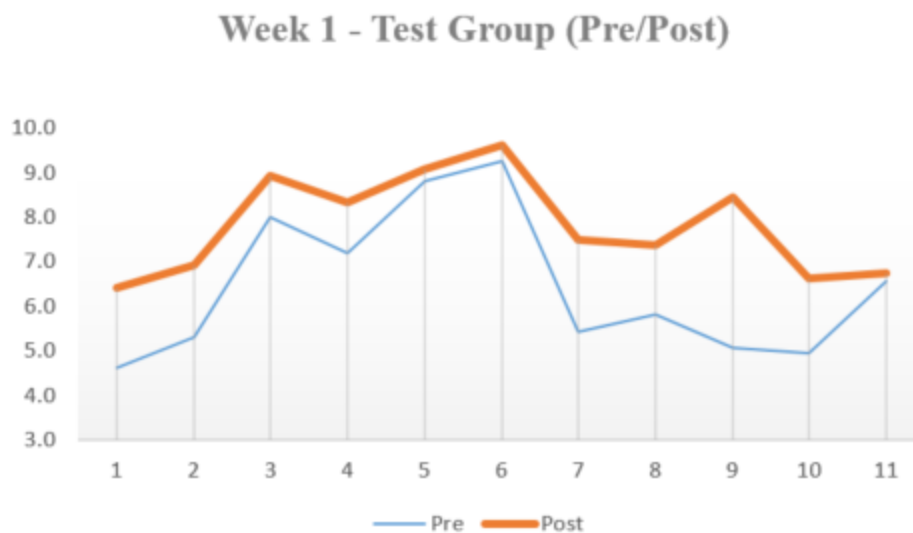


Table 5 - Week 1: Test Group (Pre/Post) - Listening

However, when comparing the same pre and post-questions within the test group, the data showed a consistent measure of increase based on the responses provided from the test group. The questions surrounding the understanding of why we should listen to God as well as the questions on motivation, desire, and necessity of listening to God, had the smallest increase from pre to post-assessment. This seems to indicate a consistent desire and understanding of the need to listen to God. Significantly, larger increases were observed from pre to post-assessment in questions dealing with taking time to listen to God, understanding what the Bible says about listening to God, and clearly understanding ways in which people can hear God's voice. These were all topics taught during the first session. The most telling story from week one is the question asked, "Within the last week I have practiced listening to God." The test group showed an increase of 67% (5.1 pre vs. 8.4 post) while the control group showed a decrease of 12% (8.7 pre vs. 7.6 post).

When asked the question, "I hear God speak to me through His still, small voice," the control group showed a slight decrease pre to post (7.7 vs. 7.2) while the test group

showed a 27% increase in this response (5.8 pre vs. 7.4 post). When asked the question, “Within the last week, I have heard God speak to me,” the test group showed a 34.2% increase (4.9 pre vs. 6.6 post) while the control group showed a significantly smaller increase of 14% (6.7 pre vs. 7.6 post). I feel the control showed a slight increase because the Sunday morning sermon during week one of the workshop included a challenge to the entire congregation to take time during the week to listen to God. The test group was given a more specific assignment to set aside 10 minutes at least three times during the week for intentional listening. The test group likely scored higher in this area as a result of the listening assignments during the week.

From the data collected at the conclusion of Week 1, it seems clear those who were a part of the test group experienced an increase in hearing God’s voice as a result of their intentional listening throughout the week. Participants in the test group were asked to set aside three, ten-minute times during the week for nothing more than intentional listening to God. The control group was not tasked with any assignment but they did hear the same sermon during week one as part of the morning worship service, which focused on listening to God.

Session 2: Journaling

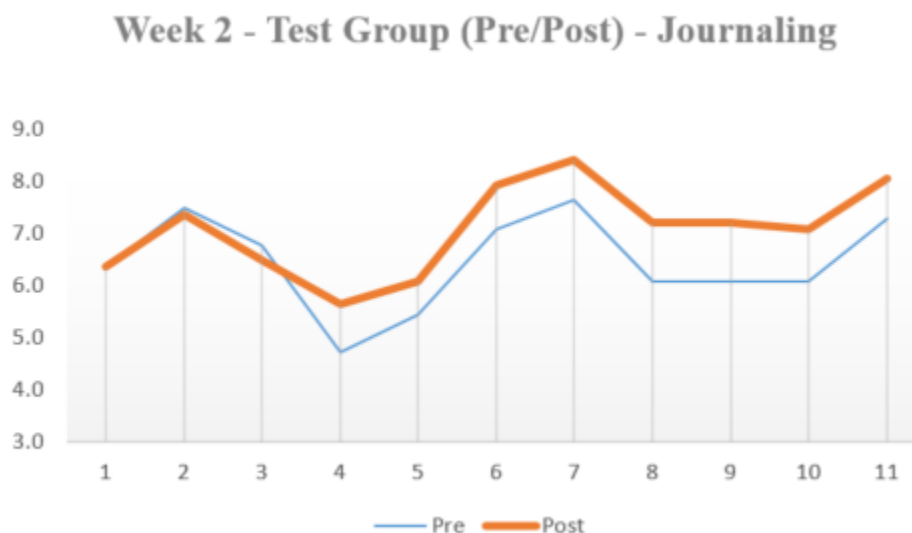


Table 6 - Week 2: Test Group (Pre/Post) – Journaling

Session Two focused on an introduction of the spiritual disciplines as well as an introduction to the discipline of journaling. Post-survey results showed a consistent increase in the test group in all areas regarding the understanding of the spiritual disciplines as well as affirmation of the use of the spiritual disciplines helping participants better listen to God. When asked about their use of journaling within the last week, the post-assessment showed an increase of 19.7% in journaling during the second week (4.7 pre vs. 5.6 post). When asked about familiarity of the spiritual disciplines, participants showed a 12.1% increase during the week (7.1 pre vs. 7.9 post) compared to the control group who showed no change. When asked if they could name at least four spiritual disciplines, participants showed an increase of 10.3% (7.6 pre vs. 8.4 post) compared to the control group who showed a 7% decrease (7.0 pre vs. 6.5 post). When asked about the meaning of the inward, outward, and corporate disciplines, participants showed a consistent increase between 15 to 17%, respectively.

The most telling part of Week 2 data was how participants responded to the statement of the spiritual disciplines helping them better listen to God. The test group responded to this question with an increase of 10.8% (7.3 pre vs. 8.1 post) while the control group showed no change in this area (7.5 pre and post). Additionally, when asked to respond to the statement of clearly hearing God speak, participants in the test group responded with a slight increase of 11.8% (5.4 pre vs. 6.1 post) compared to the control group who showed no change in this area (7.5 pre and post). There is consistency among the test group at the conclusion of Week 2 showing an increase of the use of the spiritual disciplines, which indicated this session helped participants' better listen to God.

Session 3: Prayer

Week 3 - Test Group (Pre/Post) - Prayer

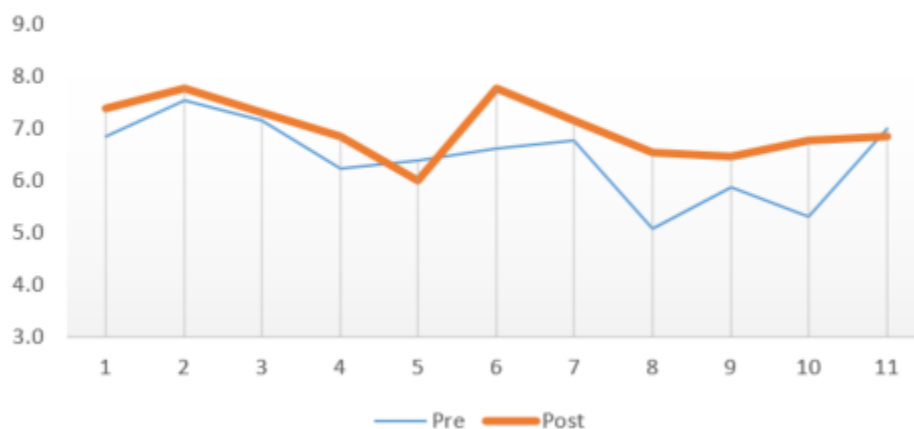


Table 7 - Week 3: Test Group (Pre/Post) – Prayer

Week 3 focused on the spiritual discipline of prayer with specific focus on listening prayer. As has been the trend with prior sessions, the assessment results continue to show an overall improvement between pre and post-assessment questions for

the test group. When asked about the practice of the spiritual disciplines within the last week, there was a 2.1% increase observed within the test group (7.2 pre vs. 7.3 post). When asked if they had heard or sensed God speaking to them in some way within the past week, there was a 7.9% increase (6.8 pre vs. 7.4 post). Specific to the concept of listening prayer, participants from the test group showed an increase in both their use of listening prayer (9.8% increase, 6.2 pre vs. 6.8 post) as well as their familiarity with listening prayer (17.4% increase, 6.6 pre vs. 7.8 post).

The test group was asked to spend time during the week practicing listening prayer and there was a clear increase within this group when asked about their listening practices within the last week. Responses to spending at least five minutes for intentional listening during their personal prayer time increased by 5.7% for members of the test group (6.8 pre vs. 7.2 post) while the control group showed an 18.8% decrease in this area (5.3 pre vs. 4.3 post). When responding to the statement “I spend most of my personal prayer time listening,” members of the test group showed a 28.8% increase in this area (5.1 pre vs. 6.5 post) while members of the control group showed no change in this area. Of surprise to the researcher was the decrease observed within members of the test group when they responded to the statement of listening prayer helping them hear the voice of God more clearly in their lives (2.2% decrease, 7.0 pre vs. 6.8 post). I anticipate this is due to participants sharing the consensus that they did not hear God clearly speak to them during the listening prayer activity. However, affirmation was given that sometimes God may speak simply through an assurance of His presence rather than words, and this is perfectly acceptable.

Session 4: Meditation

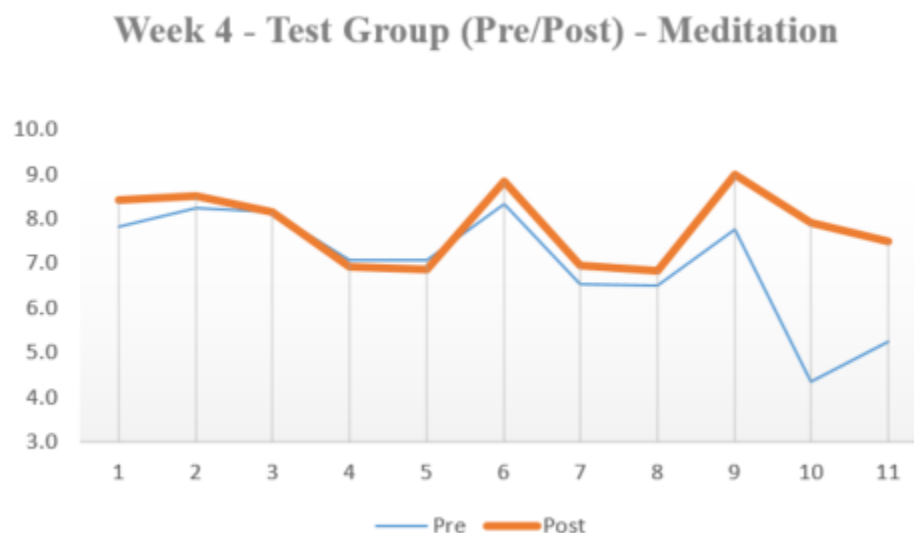


Table 8: Week 4 - Test Group (Pre/Post) - Meditation

While the data showed slight improvements in pre to post-measurement, the more meaningful data for this session came from the group sharing time. Groups were assigned to work together on creating their own definition of meditation to supplement teaching them for this particular session. I was moved by the definitions shared by each group and while this could not necessarily be captured in terms of data trending, the definitions captured are worth mentioning here as this indicated significant growth in the test group regarding their understanding of meditation.

One group shared their definition of meditation as “keeping company with Jesus.” Another group shared their definition as “God calling us and telling us to sit still because there is something He wants to tell us.” Another group defined meditation simply as “time alone with God,” while a different group used the definition of “finding awe in God, whether real or imagined.” These definitions moved me, and as a pastor, I had the realization of this being the first time I felt I “listened” to members of my congregation in a corporate setting. This was a genuine “a-ha” moment for me and provided significant

self-discovery for the importance of intentionally listening to both God and my congregation.

Session 5: Solitude

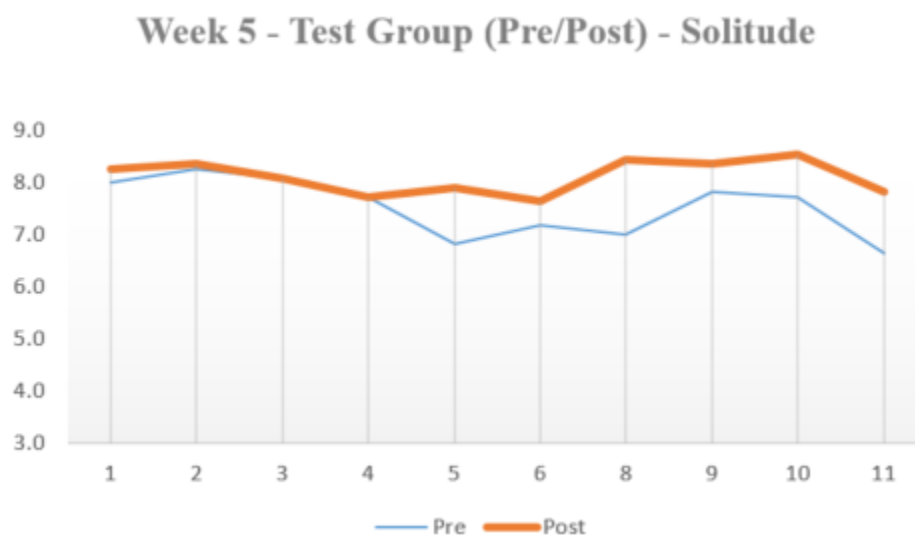


Table 9: Week 5 – Test Group (Pre/Post) - Solitude

There was not as significant a change in the practice of solitude as I would like to have seen, but I attribute this to not being very specific with any home assignments for the practice of solitude. The test group verbalized a good understanding of solitude throughout the teaching session, and I am convinced the group had a solid understanding and practice of this spiritual discipline as seen in the pre vs. post-assessment responses.

Overall Analysis

At the conclusion of the workshop, I was able to compare pre and post assessment data with both the test group and the control group. Generally speaking, both the control group and test group showed improvements between pre and post assessments. Two

significant factors are clear when comparing the overall data between the control and test groups.

First, the test group had higher ratings in the post-assessment data, signifying an overall positive impact for those who were a part of this workshop. Second, there was a greater variance between the pre and post-assessment range within the test group, also confirming a greater and more significant impact experienced by those within the test group when compared to the control group. As shown below, these two factors are best visualized when looking at the data as a whole from each of the groups. Therefore, it is accurate to say that those attending the workshop experienced a more significant increase in hearing God through use of the spiritual disciplines over those who did not attend.

One explanation for the variance observed between the pre and post-responses of the control group is due to the Sunday morning emphasis during which I emphasized similar topics as those being taught during the Sunday evening workshop. This was intentional, as I wanted my entire congregation to be aware of this listening to God journey and to take part in the experience wherever possible. I would imagine there would be a less significant variance between the pre and post-responses for the control group had I not emphasized the same topics during the Sunday morning services.

As a note, I did remove question 22 from the visualization below because both the control group and test group rated this a low number and the visualization is skewed when including this question. This particular question asked involved the practice of solitude and whether or not this practice made the participant feel uncomfortable. All participants responded with a one or two indicating “not at all,” and this is a good and healthy response. However, because this was a low number, this appears visually to

indicate an outlier in the data, thus incorrectly leading to the assumption of a negative response when visualized. Therefore, I chose to remove this question from post assessment visualization seeking to maintain better consistency and greater clarity in visualizing the results.

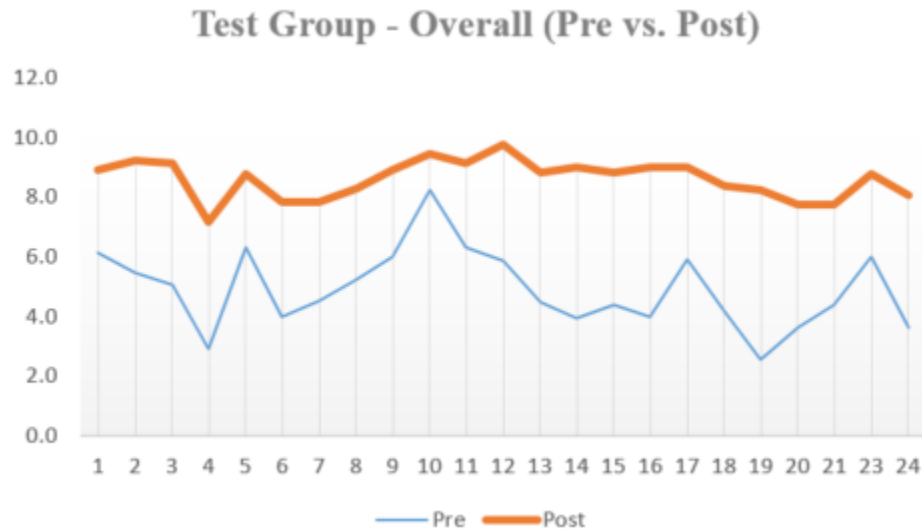


Table 10: Test Group – Overall (Pre vs. Post)

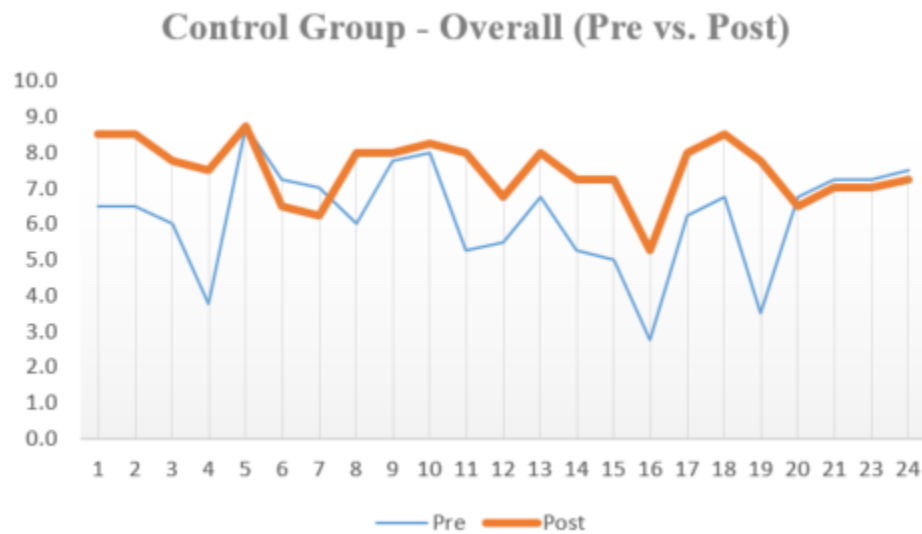


Table 11: Control Group – Overall (Pre vs. Post)

Weekly Trends

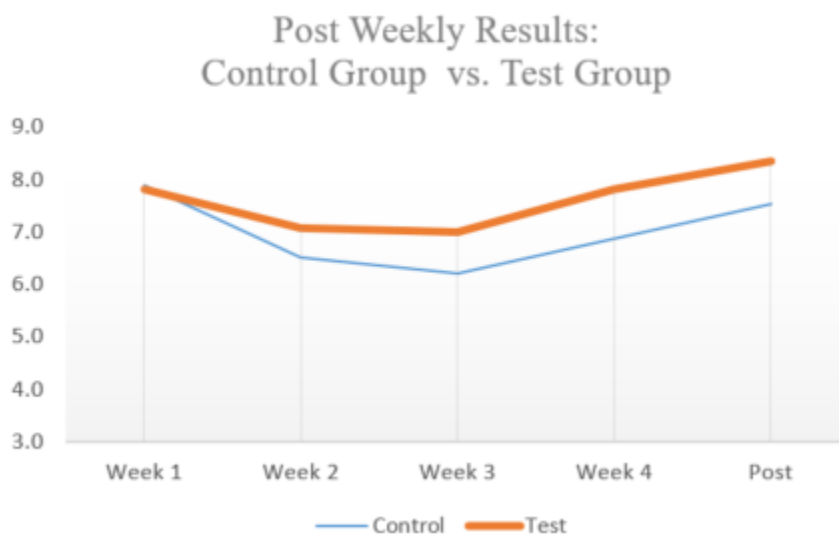


Table 12: Post Weekly Results: Control Group vs. Test Group

Of final interest to me is the consistency shown among weekly post-results for both the control and test groups. I chose to share this visualization as this displays the increased variance between the control and test groups where weekly post assessment results are concerned. For example, Week 1 showed little to no variance, but as the weeks progressed, there was a greater variance between the scores of the control and test groups with the test group consistently having the higher score. Week 2 included the test group scoring 8.6% higher, Week 3 was 12.5% higher, and Week 4 was 13.8% higher. The assumption is Week 5 would follow this trend, but I did not have adequate data from the control group to include for this particular week. The post workshop assessment supported the weekly trend with the test group scoring 10.8% higher overall than the control group on post-assessment responses.

This is another view to show how the test group benefitted from the weekly sessions as well as measurable improvements observed within the test group compared to that of the control group. In all the views shown above, the data is consistent in showing the measureable improvements of the test group in use of the spiritual disciplines as it pertains to listening to God.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Conducting a five-week workshop was much more time consuming than I ever imagined. In addition to preparing the teaching material, outlines, and power point presentations, the tasks of mailing necessary correspondence ahead of time, preparing materials, and communicating to confirm attendance was quite honestly, exhausting. There was so much emotional buildup to Session 1 and then the strong desire to “dig in” to the survey data that by the end of the day, I was flat exhausted. The initial thought entered my mind, “I have four more weeks of this?” However, while it was exhausting, I completely enjoyed every element of the experience in preparing for and leading these teaching sessions.

I was careful to include elements of listening in both the morning worship service and in the sessions taught. For example, on the first day of the session, I preached about listening to God in the morning worship service and incorporated a time of listening prayer within the service, something I had not done before. One deacon responded how much she appreciated the listening opportunity offered during the worship service, thus giving the congregation “time and space” to listen to God during the worship service. The verbal response received from this tells me I need to include more of this going forward.

From the very start, practices such as this one positively affected the ministry setting within our congregation. I sensed a fresh moving within our services and even had two new families join the church throughout this process. One member of the control group thanked me for allowing her to be a part of this process and she wrote, “If only

more pastors would emphasize listening to God as our very foundation, our churches would be healthier places.”

I chose to include an element of listening within the first session of the workshop, taking the opportunity to play a song of worship about half way through, inviting participants to stand and sing, followed by a time of intentional listening. This seemed meaningful and practical to the group attending the workshop and really helped set the tone of the first session. I continued this same practice in the second session and while I do believe this was meaningful, the song was not a familiar one to the group and therefore, no one sang aloud during the second week.

At the conclusion of Week 1, I had the opportunity to assimilate the data and for the first time in my project, realized the emphasis on listening to God combined with the practice of listening, resulted in a significant improvement in participants sensing God speaking to them in some way. As mentioned previously, there was a 29% increase of pre to post-response within the test group when asked, “I hear God speak to me through His still, small voice.” Additionally, there was a 37.4% increase from pre to post within the same group (compared to a 15% increase shown in the control group) when asked, “Within the last week, I have heard God speak to me.”

Of greatest significance is the response to the question, “Within the last week, I have practiced listening to God.” Among the test group, there was a 71% increase in this response from pre to post. To correlate with this, there was a 29% increase in the response to the question of “hearing God speak through His still, small voice” and a 37% increase to the question, “Within the last week, I have heard God speak to me.” It seems

there is a direct correlation with hearing or sensing in some way God speak, as it relates to taking the time to listen.

I attribute this increase to two specific factors within the first week of this ministry project. First, there was a strong emphasis (both during the Sunday morning service and during the first Sunday evening teaching session) to be intentional in our listening to God. Simply calling attention to this topic seemed to raise awareness among the broader congregation. Second, and more specifically, participants in the test group were asked to set aside ten minutes on three different occasions throughout the week, to participate in intentional listening to God. The first fifteen minutes of Session 2 were devoted to discussion surrounding this and several within the group shared specific ways in which they heard God speak to them.

Session 3 was especially meaningful as learners were instructed to take part in a guided listening session where they practiced listening prayer (Appendix I). To help set the right environment for this, participants were asked to gather in the sanctuary promptly between 5:55 and 6:00 p.m. to help them settle in and prepare for the guided listening session. This guided listening activity lasted for approximately 30 minutes and appeared to be very meaningful to participants as they shared about their listening experience during the session following this activity. I personally found this to be the most meaningful part of my research as I participated in this activity along with participants. The guided listening activity helped me put into practice the spiritual discipline of journaling in my own life as this activity prompted participants to write their questions and wait for answers from the Lord during the listening prayer activity. It was noted that God sometimes speaks in a still small voice and other times he may simply choose to

speak through his presence. This was affirmed by many during the follow up discussion within Session 3.

One participant shared about the complete feeling of rest that came over her as she listened and it was her conclusion that God was speaking to her through this feeling of rest as she was assured of God being in control. Another participant shared of his need to repent because of unconfessed sin brought to his mind during his time of listening. Yet another participant shared of her interpretation of God speaking to her through His assurance of comfort as she faced some difficult work situations on her job. Still another participant shared of the realization that she has been too busy to listen to God and confessed the need to slow down for intentional listening. This conversational time of hearing from participants about their own listening experience was the most meaningful part of the workshop for me. As a pastor, this genuinely helped me understand my congregation better in how they listen to God.

I felt the need after the third session to solicit some feedback from participants regarding their perceptions of the workshop thus far. One participant responded she felt like “the workshop is exactly what we need in our church. It is hard to put into words, but it seems to me that it is fostering spiritual community in ways we have been missing in the past. I think the workshop is stretching our adult crowd not only to listen to God, but also to listen to one another process their spiritual lives. It is much needed.”

When asked about the workshop format, one participant responded by saying, “It has been a good pace, and very engaging. The group processing is paramount.” Feedback was provided that “the whole process would be even better in a retreat format. If we had a church listening retreat away from life’s demands, I think it would foster true spiritual

community.” Another participant who missed two sessions of the workshop affirmed his desire to learn more of how to listen to God. This participant, a deacon, acknowledged the need in his own life to be intentional in practicing the spiritual disciplines as well as being intentional in taking time to listen to God.

This feedback was extremely helpful to me in getting a sense of where participants found themselves half way through the five-week listening journey. By Week 4, I really sensed the group was in the right cadence of things in terms of knowing what to expect with each teaching session. Week 5 concluded with a time of group discussion as I asked participants to share what they learned and to describe some of the big takeaways from this learning experience.

About 70% of the group present for the final session spoke up to share in the discussion. One person who had previous theological training in the area of spiritual formation noted how much she appreciated the corporate aspect of this learning journey within the context of the local church. She specifically stated how much more valuable the learning was to her in a church setting over that of a seminary classroom setting. Another participant shared how much she learned from the community aspect of this learning journey as well as how much she learned from the practice of listening prayer, specifically during the exercise of writing questions to God as part of the practice of listening prayer.

The most telling part of the group feedback for me involved the conversations from two church council leaders who would be classified as senior adults, mature Christians, and church leaders, one of whom is our deacon chairperson. Both of these echoed the importance of intentionality in listening to God as well as stating their

awareness as a result of this workshop that sometimes, they simply forget to listen. This falls under the umbrella of intentionality. Both of these participants affirmed the need to grow in their own Christian lives, even as long-time church members. This reinforces to me the important concept of being a lifelong learner and concept that all church members need to be reminded to listen to God and to grow in their practice of the spiritual disciplines to help them do so effectively.

When beginning my studies in the Doctorate of Ministry program of Gardner Webb University – School of Divinity in August of 2018, I was asked to list the goals I sought to accomplish as a student in this program. The three goals I listed at that time were the goals of growing in my own leadership abilities, strengthening my collaboration skills with others, and modeling my own growth & development among my congregation. This ministry project has certainly helped me strengthen in all three of these goals.

This project has challenged me to develop personal leadership skills by researching, writing, and leading a curriculum taught within the context of the local church in which I serve as pastor. I have been challenged to grow as a leader in both initiating and leading the process of teaching others in my congregation how to listen to God through use of the spiritual disciplines. I have found this to be impactful in my own spiritual journey and within my own home as a husband and father.

Additionally, I have grown in my goal of collaborating with others as this project required intense collaboration with those in my congregation with both the test group and the control group. Preparing materials for the teaching sessions and learning together with participants throughout this process strengthened my collaboration skills with not

only the test group, but also perhaps even more with the control group. I found it most challenging to be sure the control group received the pre and post-surveys on time, as well as working to collect these from those who volunteered to be a part of the control group.

One of my biggest challenges and greatest opportunities for improvement involved the data collection of surveys from the control group. I started the process of gathering a control group by sending a packet of information to ten members of my congregation asking them to be a part of the control group for this ministry project. I received no response at all from two of this group and did not send follow-up material to these two invitees as there was no further indication or interest shown in participating. Two additional invitees responded to the initial survey and indicated their interest to participate as members of the control group. However, I did not receive any follow up surveys from these two invitees. I did contact them through email as they had originally requested me to do and did receive one response indicating the desire to continue participating in the process. However, I did not receive any follow up surveys from this one initial response. I chose not to send additional correspondence, as I did not want to put any unnecessary pressure on any invitee who seemed unwilling or unable to participate in survey responses for whatever reason.

In the end, there were five out of ten of the initial control group invitees who were reasonably consistent and whose responses comprised the data from the control group used in this study, although one week I received only two survey responses and another week received only three. This made it difficult to use the data from the control group for

certain surveys but overall, I was able to get a holistic view where needed in terms of measuring the test group against the control group.

I would have liked better participation from the control group, and if I had this to do over again, I would have started communicating with the control group sooner and would have had a separate meeting to explain what was being asked and what would be expected as part of this process. My gut feeling tells me there was a little confusion by some who were asked to be a part of the control group and a specific meeting before the start of the project could have likely helped clear up some of this confusion. On the other hand, those from the control group who seemed committed to the process were very diligent in returning their surveys each week.

Finally, my goal of modeling my own development among my congregation was fully realized as I too was reminded of my own need to listen to God through the practice of the spiritual disciplines. For example, I have not owned or used a journal since high school and for the first time in my adult life, I purchased a journal for my own use in my own personal spiritual journey as a result of this project. On several occasions, I was careful to point out during the teaching sessions ways in which I was challenged or ways in which I am personally growing through this process of listening to God through use of the spiritual disciplines. For the most part, I felt like a learner right alongside the participants as I experienced significant growth throughout this entire process while also attempting to model this along the way. I would often share practical elements of my own learning by providing specific examples in each teaching session by saying, "This week, I learned why journaling is important and I purchased my own journal to begin using in the future." Or, "I have never really studied the concept of listening prayer and have learned

a lot in preparing for this session.” These examples always made feel like I was relating well to the group as a learner alongside them.

This project was especially meaningful to me as all elements of this listening journey enlightened my own experience in listening to God. I remember asking participants on the first evening of the workshop “Are you on an adventure or on a quest to listen to God?” Some have define a quest as a calling, a continual pursuit, a journey, or a feeling of desire that continues. Indeed, learning to listen to God involves all of these aspects and so much more. To quote one of my favorite sources used along this journey:

Listening is hard work: whether it’s listening to your wife, your boss, your friends or family. Listening is not something we come to naturally – we have to practice it! It’s easy to fall out of practice and spend more time talking than listening. We need reminders. We need to create space where we can re-focus on listening, where we can hear what God’s unending voice is speaking, His love and care for us.⁵⁵

More than anything else, I hope this project has inspired my congregants and those who may read this to re-focus on listening. I hope the quest documented here has provided the right inspiration and motivation for participants and readers to create the right space where this re-focus on listening to God can become a practical reality in each of our daily lives.

There is no better focus than to listen to God and there is no better practice than using the spiritual disciplines to aid us in this important task. If we do our part to listen, then surely God will do His part to speak. “God will speak to us if we slow down enough to listen and allow him to speak to us.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Seth Barnes, *The Art of Listening Prayer* (Gainesville, GA: Ashland Press, 2005), 14.

⁵⁶ Barnes, 24.

APPENDIX A

Doctorate of Ministry Project Summary

Presented to ECBC Church Council and approved: August 7, 2022

D.Min. Project Summary (written by Steven Bouknight for the members of Eau Claire Baptist Church of Columbia, South Carolina).

Title: A Workshop on the Spiritual Disciplines: Teaching Church Members How to Listen to God through Prayer, Meditation, Solitude, and Journaling.

Proposal: Teach members of ECBC how to listen to God by participating in a five-week teaching workshop using the spiritual disciplines of:

- Prayer
- Meditation
- Solitude
- Journaling

Scriptural Foundation: Modeled after the seven churches of Revelation and various scriptures from the book of Hebrews.

Abstract: Teach participants a renewed listening strategy based on biblical passages of listening to God's voice with special emphasis on key spiritual disciplines.

Outcome: Participants will develop appropriate listening skills of how to listen to God through use of the spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, solitude, and journaling.

Strategy: Conduct five teaching sessions where participants will work to develop their listening skills through the practice of applying the spiritual disciplines in their personal lives.

Key Measurements:

1. Measure progress towards the regular practice of the spiritual disciplines in the lives of participants.
2. Journaling – written reflections of what was learned in the teaching session and what participants feel God might be speaking to them personally.
3. Reflective feedback measuring the effectiveness of listening to and hearing the voice of God through use of the spiritual disciplines.

Statements / challenges:

1. How can church members develop their listening skills to hear what God says to them both individually and corporately?




2. Amount of effort given to hear God's voice compared with the lack of spiritual discipline in the lives of church members.
3. Address those who have "fallen away" in their faithfulness of church attendance.
4. Address the need of discernment with how the church can best move forward in continued ministry as a result of the pandemic (empower the moving forward of a renewal process).

Goals:

1. Introduce participants to the importance of the spiritual disciplines in their personal lives as a means to hear God's voice. Disciplines used: Prayer, Solitude, Meditation, Journaling.

Measurement: Likert scales to gauge participants' understanding and impact of the spiritual disciplines as evidenced in their ability to hear God's voice more clearly.
2. Produce outcomes of measuring the level of spiritual renewal desired by participants as well as gauging readiness to enter a process of congregational discernment.

APPENDIX B

 <h3>Eau Claire Baptist News</h3>	Volume 32 Issue 17 August 11, 2022
<p>MISSION STATEMENT</p> <p>“As pursuers of GOD and His purpose, our fellowship exists to minister to the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of others, taking special care to equip those growing in Christ, so that in everything we do, we model the Lord Jesus Christ.”</p> <p>Sundays & Wednesdays</p> <p>We continue to gather on Sundays at 10 a.m. in the Sanctuary and via Facebook Live (on the ECBC facebook page) with messages also being available for later viewing on  YouTube, linked to the church website. Please let us know if you need help accessing the zoom meetings.</p> <p>All services Streaming on Facebook and available on YouTube.</p> <p>Prayer Meeting Wednesdays 7pm on Zoom</p>	 <p>Workshop on the Spiritual disciplines: Teaching Church Members How to Listen to God through Prayer, Meditation, Solitude, and Journaling.</p> <p><i>This workshop will take place on Sunday evenings in the church fellowship hall from 6–7:30 p.m. on the evenings of Sept 11, 18, 25, and Oct 2, 9. Please contact Rev. Steven Bouknight if you would like to participate. Sessions will last anywhere from 45 to 75 minutes and participants will be asked to respond to surveys throughout the workshop. Responses will be confidential. Members of church council are asked to participate, though all members are welcome to attend. Attendance will be capped at sixteen participants.”</i></p>

APPENDIX C

Participant Covenant

I, _____, agree to take part in this five-week workshop in which I will seek spiritual renewal by learning how to use spiritual disciplines in order to better listen to God.

As part of this covenant, I am agreeing to:

- Attend each session (as able) with an expectant heart
- Attend each session (as able) with an attentive mind
- Attend each session (as able) with a listening ear

I will:

- Be present
- Be prepared
- Be proactive

Each week, I will:

- Take time to listen to God throughout the week
- Take time to do the at home assignment
- Take time to journal my thoughts with how God is speaking to me

My prayer:

Dear Lord,

I want to hear your voice. I ask you to give me ears to listen what you are saying to me. It is my desire to experience spiritual renewal in my life. Please speak to me. Amen.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Pastor

Date:

APPENDIX D

Workshop Pre-Assessment

Instructions: Please answer the following questions by circling the number that best applies and by filling in your answer where applicable.

1) Within the last five weeks, I have heard or sensed in some way God speaking to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

2) Within the last five weeks, I have been intentional in listening to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

3) Within the last five weeks, I have practiced using the spiritual disciplines in my personal life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

4) Within the last five weeks, I have used journaling to help me in my spiritual life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

5) Within the last five weeks, I have regularly practiced the use of private prayer to help me in my spiritual life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

6) Within the last five weeks, I have regularly practiced the use of meditation to help me in my spiritual life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

7) Within the last five weeks, I have regularly practiced the use of solitude to help me in my spiritual life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

8) Within the last five weeks, I have clearly heard God speak to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

9) I have a clear understanding of how God can speak to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

10) I have a clear understanding of why God wants to speak to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

11) I am familiar with the spiritual disciplines.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

12) I can name at least four spiritual disciplines.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

13) Within the last five weeks, I would describe myself being on an intentional spiritual journey.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

14) I understand the meaning of the “inward” disciplines.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

15) I understand the meaning of the “outward” disciplines.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

16) I understand the meaning of the “corporate” disciplines.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

17) The spiritual disciplines help me better listen to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

18) My personal prayer time includes at least five minutes for intentional listening.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

19) Within the last five weeks, I have regularly practiced "listening prayer."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

20) Within the last five weeks, I have regularly practiced intentional meditation on Scripture.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

21) Meditation on Scripture is an important regular practice for me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

22) The thought of solitude makes me uncomfortable.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

23) Solitude helps me experience genuine "soul rest."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

24) Within the last five weeks, I have practiced solitude to help enhance my spiritual listening.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

APPENDIX E

Session 1 Pre / Post Assessment

Instructions: Please answer the following questions by circling the number that best applies and by filling in your answer where applicable.

1) I regularly take time to listen to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

2) I confidently know what the Bible says about listening to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

3) I confidently know why I should listen to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

4) I am motivated to listen to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

5) I desire to listen to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

6) I need to listen to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

7) I clearly understand ways in which people can hear God's voice.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

8) I hear God speak to me through His *still, small voice*.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

9) Within the last week, I have practiced listening to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

10) Within the last week, I have heard God speak to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

11) I feel prepared to listen to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

Session 2 Pre/Post Assessment

Instructions: Please answer the following questions by circling the number that best applies and by filling in your answer where applicable.

1) Within the last week, I have heard or sensed in some way God speaking to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

2) Within the last week, I have been intentional in listening to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

3) Within the last week, I have practiced using the spiritual disciplines in my personal life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

4) Within the last week, I have used journaling to help me in my spiritual life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

5) Within the last week, I have clearly heard God speak to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

6) I am familiar with the spiritual disciplines.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

7) I can name at least four spiritual disciplines.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

8) I understand the meaning of the “inward” disciplines.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

9) I understand the meaning of the “outward” disciplines.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

10) I understand the meaning of the “corporate” disciplines.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

11) The spiritual disciplines help me better listen to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

Session 3 Pre/Post Assessment

Instructions: Please answer the following questions by circling the number that best applies and by filling in your answer where applicable.

1) Within the last week, I have heard or sensed in some way God speaking to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

2) Within the last week, I have been intentional in listening to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

3) Within the last week, I have practiced using the spiritual disciplines in my personal life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

4) Within the last week, I have used “listening prayer” to help me in my spiritual life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

5) Within the last week, I have clearly heard God speak to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

6) I am familiar with the concepts of “listening prayer.”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

7) Within the last week, my prayer time included 5 minutes for intentional listening.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

8) Generally speaking, I spend most of my personal prayer time “listening.”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

9) I clearly understand what it means for God to speak through “revelation.”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

10) I clearly understand what it means for God to speak through “illumination.”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

11) “Listening prayer” helps me hear the voice of God more clearly in my life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

Session 4 Pre/Post Assessment

Instructions: Please answer the following questions by circling the number that best applies and by filling in your answer where applicable.

1) Within the last week, I have heard or sensed in some way God speaking to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

2) Within the last week, I have been intentional in listening to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

3) Within the last week, I have practiced using the spiritual disciplines in my personal life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

4) Within the last week, I have used meditation to help me in my spiritual life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

5) Within the last week, I have clearly heard God speak to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

6) I am familiar with the concepts of “Christian meditation.”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

7) Within the last week, I have regularly meditated upon scripture as part of my day.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

8) Meditation on Scripture is an important regular practice for me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

9) Christian meditation is different from all other forms of meditation.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

10) I understand the difference of “detachment” and “attachment” regarding meditation.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

11) I practice certain steps to help me “prepare” for Christian meditation.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

Session 5 Pre/Post Assessment

Instructions: Please answer the following questions by circling the number that best applies and by filling in your answer where applicable.

1) Within the last week, I have heard or sensed in some way God speaking to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

2) Within the last week, I have been intentional in listening to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

3) Within the last week, I have practiced using the spiritual disciplines in my personal life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

4) Within the last week, I have practiced solitude to help me in my spiritual life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

5) Within the last week, I have clearly heard God speak to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

6) Within the last week, I have taken time to “retreat” to solitude for my spiritual wellbeing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

7) The thought of solitude makes me uncomfortable.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

8) Solitude helps me experience genuine “soul rest.”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

9) I feel there is a genuine need to practice solitude to help me better listen to God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

10) I feel the practice of solitude is a means to open the presence of God for me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

11) In the last week, I have allowed time for “sacred space” in my walk with God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Somewhat					Very much so

APPENDIX F

Session # 1 Lesson Plan

Title: “An Introduction to Listening to God: Why? How? When?”

Scripture: Leviticus 25:1-12

Goal: The goal of this session is to help participants understand the scriptural basis of taking time to listen to God.

Objectives:

Participants will:

1. Participate in active learning by attending session one (scheduled 9/11 at 6:00 p.m.)
2. Complete pre-assessment (prior to week 1)
3. Complete post-assessment (at the conclusion of week 1)
4. Participants will complete a pre-project assessment to help measure their understanding of listening to God and to measure their practice of the spiritual disciplines.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Participants will learn the scriptural importance of listening to God.
2. Participants will be able to answer the question “why” they should listen to God.
3. Participants will be able to answer the question “how” God speaks.
4. Participants will practice “when” they listen to God by participating in at home assignments, which will consists of scheduling ten minutes each day used to practice listening to God.

Homework:

1. Journal about ways you have heard God speak to you during the last week.
2. Journal about what you have done within the last week to help you listen to God.
3. Practice listening to God by setting aside ten minutes each day to be used for quiet listening.

Sermon emphasis on Sunday, September 11:

The congregation heard a sermon from Lev 25 with special emphasis on listening to God. Members of the control group were asked to be present for the sermon and were asked (along with the entire congregation) to hear and heed the call to be more intentional in their focus of listening to God.

Session # 2 Lesson Plan

Title: “An Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines.”

Scripture: Revelation 2-3

Goal: The goal of this session is to introduce participants to the Spiritual Disciplines.

Objectives:

Participants will:

1. Participate in active learning by attending session two (scheduled 9/18 at 6:00 p.m.)
2. Complete pre-assessment (prior to week 2)
3. Complete post-assessment (at the conclusion of week 2)

Expected Outcomes:

1. Participants will learn an overview of the spiritual disciplines.
2. Participants will learn about the spiritual discipline of journaling.
3. Participants will learn about what God has to say to the church, using the seven churches of Revelation as a model (Rev 2, 3).
4. Participants will grow in their practice of the spiritual discipline of journaling.

Homework:

1. Journal what you believe God is speaking to you as a member of Eau Claire Baptist Church.
2. Journal what you believe God is speaking corporately to Eau Claire Baptist Church.
3. Practice listening to God by journaling three days this week.

Sermon emphasis on Sunday, September 18:

The congregation heard a sermon from Rev 2-3 with special emphasis on hearing the message given to the seven churches of Revelation. Participants of the control group were asked to be present during the sermon and the congregation was challenged to give thought to what message God might be speaking to Eau Claire Baptist Church.

Session # 3 Lesson Plan**Title:** Prayer**Scripture:** Luke 11:1-13**Goal:** The goal of this session is to teach participants how to use the spiritual discipline of prayer.**Objectives:**

1. Participants will take part in an exegetical study of prayer from Luke 11:1-13
2. Participants will participate in the spiritual discipline of prayer through corporate use of the Lord's Prayer.
3. Participants will take a pre / post measure assessment in which they will rate their personal use of prayer as a spiritual discipline in their own life.

Homework: Participants will be given three prayer assignments during the week in which they will practice using the spiritual discipline of prayer.**Expected Outcomes:**

1. Participants will increase their understanding of the spiritual discipline of prayer.
2. Participants will become more familiar with the spiritual discipline of prayer by increasing their use of this spiritual discipline in their own lives.
3. Participants will complete daily prayer assignments during the week (modeled after the Lord's Prayer) in which they will practice the use of this spiritual discipline in their own lives.
4. Participants will follow the model of the Lord's Prayer in a corporate setting.

Sermon emphasis on Sunday, September 25:

The congregation heard a sermon from Luke 11:1-13 with special emphasis on prayer. Participants of the control group were asked to be present during the sermon and the congregation was challenged to spend intentional time during the week devoted to focused prayer with specific emphasis on listening to God.

Session # 4 Lesson Plan

Title: Meditation

Scripture: Hebrews 6:6, 11-12; 10:19-25; 12:1-3

Goal: The goal of this session is to teach participants how to use the spiritual discipline of meditation.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be taught encouraging messages from the book of Hebrews for use in spiritual discipline of meditation.
2. Participants will learn about the spiritual discipline of meditation.
3. Participants will take a pre / post measure assessment in which they will rate their personal use of meditation as a spiritual discipline in their own life.

Homework: Participants will be given three homework assignments in which they will practice using the spiritual discipline of meditation.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Participants will become more familiar with the spiritual discipline of meditation.
2. Participants will increase their use of the spiritual discipline of meditation in their own lives.

Sermon emphasis on Sunday, October 2:

The congregation heard a sermon from Heb 6 with special emphasis on meditation. Participants of the control group were asked to be present during the sermon and the congregation was challenged to spend intentional time during the week devoted to focused meditation with specific emphasis on listening to God.

Session # 5 Lesson Plan

Title: Solitude

Scripture: Various

Goal: The goal of this session is to teach participants how to use the spiritual discipline of solitude.

Objectives:

1. Participants will learn about the spiritual discipline of solitude.
2. Participants will participate in a self-guided personal retreat to help them practice solitude.
3. Participants will take a pre / post measure assessment in which they will rate their personal use of solitude as a spiritual discipline in their own life.

Homework: Participants will take part in a self-retreat during which they will practice listening to God through use of the spiritual disciplines to include journaling, prayer, meditation, and solitude.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Participants will increase their awareness of the spiritual discipline of solitude.
2. Participants will increase their use of the spiritual discipline of solitude in their own personal lives.
3. Participants will take part in a self-guided personal retreat.

Sermon emphasis on Sunday, October 9:

The congregation heard a sermon from Mark 6:31 with special emphasis on solitude. Participants of the control group were asked to be present during the sermon and the congregation was challenged to spend intentional time during the week devoted to focused solitude with specific emphasis on listening to God.

APPENDIX G
JOURNALING

Desire	To be alert to my life through writing and reflecting on God’s presence and activity in, around and through me
Definition	Journaling is a tool for reflecting on God’s presence, guidance and nurture in daily comings and goings. Journals can be kept regularly or during time of transitions.
Scripture	Psalm 16:7, 25:4 Habakkuk 2:1 Joshua 1:8 Psalm 119:18
Practice Includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping a written record of God’s ways in your life; journals can include a collection of clippings, drawings, collages, articles, poems, quotes and so forth • Journaling daily or weekly or during significant events and transitions • Making journals and scrapbooks for children or others • Recording external or internal journeys – or both • Telling your “exodus” story in a journal • Recording prayers, prayer requests, answers to prayers and responses to God in all of this
God-Given Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping company with Jesus through reflective journaling • Listening to God and praying your life • Slowing down and reflecting on where God shows up in ordinary routines • Remembering God’s faithfulness throughout your journey • Leaving a legacy for others • Awareness of God’s way of turning all things for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28) • Awareness of phases and stages of your personal pilgrimage

“The meaning of earthly existence is not, as we have grown used to thinking, in prosperity, but in the development of the soul.”⁵⁷

Aleksandr Solzhentsyn

⁵⁷ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that transform us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 65.

LISTENING PRAYER

Desire	To quiet the inner and outer noise so I can open my heart and listen for God's voice
Definition	Listening prayer allows God to set the agenda for prayer and responds to the word that is given
Scripture	1 Samuel 3:10 Isaiah 55:3 Matthew 11:15 John 10:27 Revelation 3:20
Practice Includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to God's agenda for prayer • Reading a Scripture and listening to what "lights" up, letting this be the focus of prayer • Notice when a song or reading grabs at the heart; don't move on; listen for what God is saying at that moment and respond • Listening to God rather than talking to God
God-Given Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayers that don't dictate to God • Learning to recognize God's voice • Trusting God to speak – in God's own time • Listening skills • A more quiet center

“The real ‘work’ of prayer is to become silent and listen to the voice that says good things about me...To gently push aside and silence the many voices that question my goodness and to trust that I will hear the voice of blessing – that demands real effort.”⁵⁸

Henri Nouwen

⁵⁸ Calhoun, 266.

MEDITATION

Desire	To more deeply gaze on God through the written Word and the created order
Definition	Meditation is a long, ardent gaze at God, his work and his Word. Slowing down and giving one's undivided attention to God lies at the core of Christian meditation.
Scripture	Joshua 1:8 Psalm 63:6 Psalm 77:12 Psalm 19:14
Practice Includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading creation as “a most elegant book, wherein all creatures great and small, are as so many characters leading us to see clearly the invisible things of God (Belgic Confession) • Mulling over, chewing on and ruminating over God's Word and its application • Meditating on people; seeing them as God sees them and expressing delight in them as he does • Paying attention to God with our body by slowing down, relaxing and breathing deeply • Meditating on Jesus and on Scripture
God-Given Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing sight for the interior things of God in the natural and external world • Seeing beyond a first glance and first impression to the heart of God • Developing depth of insight • Developing a love for gazing on God • Experiencing calmness, serenity and quietness stemming from an awareness of the nearness of God

“A spiritual kingdom lies all about us, enclosing us, embracing us, altogether within reach of our inner selves, waiting for us to recognize it. God Himself is here waiting our response to His Presence. This eternal world will come alive to us the moment we begin to reckon upon its reality.”⁵⁹

A.W. Tozer

⁵⁹ Calhoun, 191.

SOLITUDE

Desire	To leave people behind and enter into time alone with God
Definition	The practice of solitude involves scheduling enough uninterrupted time in a distraction-free environment that you experience isolation and are alone with God. Solitude is a “container discipline” for the practice of other spiritual disciplines.
Scripture	Mark 1:35 1 Kings 19:11 Lamentations 3:28
Practice Includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving God time and space that is not in competition with social contact, noise or stimulation • Taking a retreat • Observing Sabbath refreshment by abstaining from constant interaction with others, information and activities • Addressing your addiction to being seen • Communing with God alone while you walk or run by yourself • Practicing disciplines alone: study, prayer, examen, journaling and so forth
God-Given Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom from the need to be occupied and stimulated • Moving away from letting the world squeeze you into its mold (Romans 12:2) • Liberation from constantly living your life in reference to other people • Quieting the internal noise so you can better listen to God • Giving yourself time and space to internalize what you already know • Speaking only what you hear from God rather than out of your store of opinions • Including solitude and retreat as part of your lifestyle

“We are so afraid of silence that we chase ourselves from one event to the next in order not to have to spend a moment alone with ourselves, in order not to have to look at ourselves in the mirror.”⁶⁰

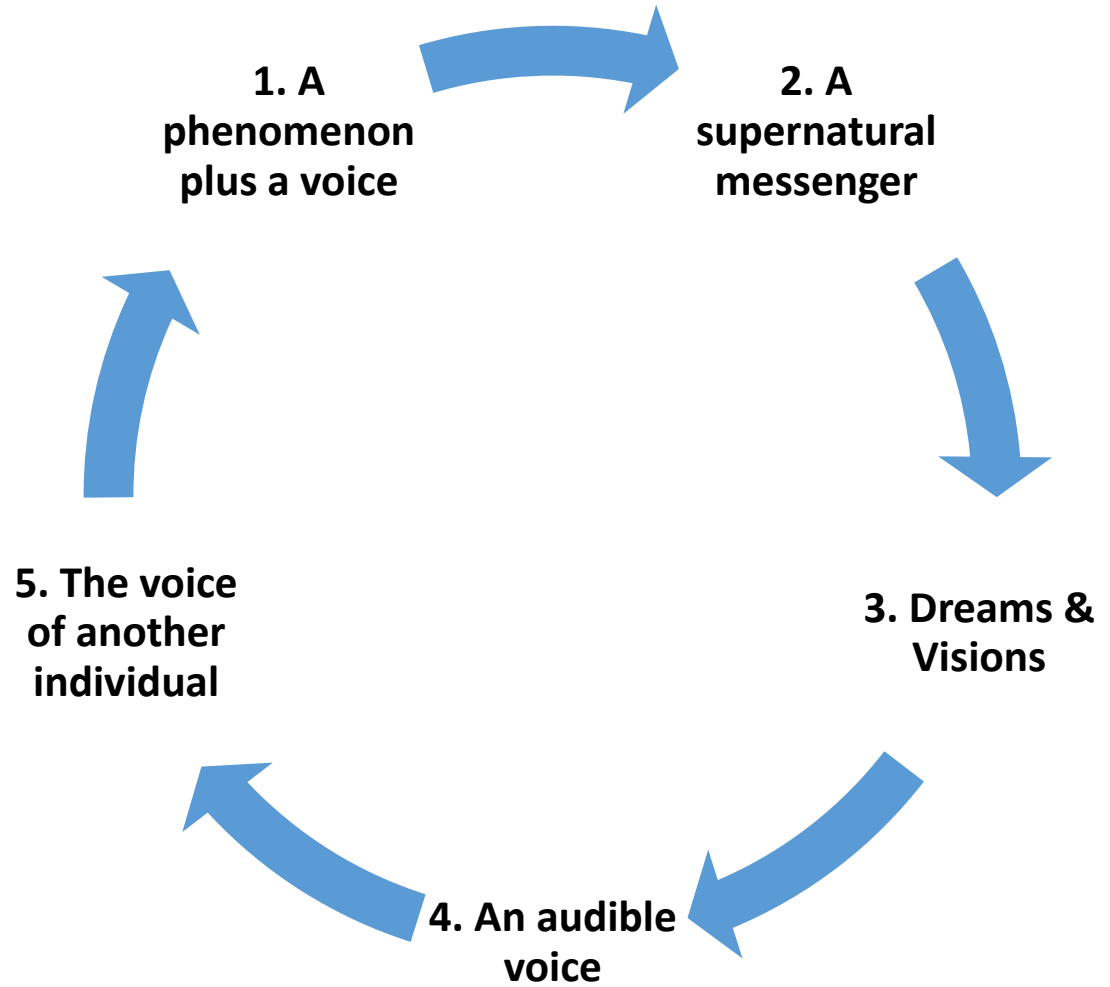
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

⁶⁰ Calhoun, 128.

APPENDIX H

Ways God Speaks

Used during Session 1 teaching session as adapted from *Hearing God* by Dallas Willard.



APPENDIX I

Listening Prayer – Guided Activity (Session 3)

Preparation Time: 5:55 – 6:05

1. Please find a comfortable seating location and settle in.
2. Close your eyes, tune your mind and heart to focus on the Lord.
3. Begin with a prayer to the Lord – ask for clarity.
4. Open your Bible to your selected passage of scripture and begin reading through.
5. If it helps you, write a brief prayer to the Lord in your journal.

Quiet Yourself and Examine Your Heart: 6:05 – 6:10

1. Listen in quiet worship, meditate as the song of worship is played.
2. At the conclusion of the song, ask God:
 - a. Are there ways in which I have offended you?
 - b. What can I do to keep from offending you in the future?
 - c. Is there anything you would like to share with me?
3. Listen

Listening Prayer Using Scripture: 6:10 – 6:15

1. Listen
2. Use your selected scripture of meditation when and if needed.
3. Read your selected scripture through one or two times very slowly. As you read, ask God to highlight one thought or one word to you as you read. Sometimes it is helpful to write notes in your journal from the scripture.
4. Pray

Hearing What God Says: 6:15 – 6:30

1. Turn your prayers into questions and write them out.
2. As you pray, formulate some additional questions that you desire to ask and write them out.

Examples:

- Lord, what am I doing wrong?
 - Lord, show me what to do in this situation.
 - Lord, teach me how to...
3. Wait in silence and begin to *write the first thoughts that spontaneously begin to come in reply to the questions.*

When you are finished, or around 6:30, please quietly dismiss to the fellowship hall downstairs. We will discuss and talk through the concepts of listening prayer as we gather downstairs in the fellowship hall.

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