

Prayer's Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship of Christian religious couples between marital prayer, either with spouse or for spouse, and the Biblical directive found in the New Testament that husbands and wives should both love and respect their spouse. Previous research is explored which finds multiple benefits religiosity and prayer have upon a couple's relationship. The benefits of religiosity include couples view marriage as sacred and God as their moral authority which produces higher marital satisfaction and marital commitment. Benefits of relational prayer include increased trust, increased marital satisfaction, increased forgiveness, higher ability to resolve marital conflict, lower marital infidelity, higher accountability, a promoter of relational change, positive psychological well-being, and health benefits. Prayer is also found to be a tool to improve and strengthen relationships. Love and respect has not been studied often, but the few studies find couples view these concepts as necessary in the marital relationship. Due to the gap in research of prayer's impact upon love and respect, Christian couples have been recruited from religious faith leaders to participate in thirty days of prayer with or for their spouse. Prior to the study and after the study, participants were given the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS) to determine how marital prayer impacts love and respect in marriage. Based upon positive results of relational prayer, it is hypothesized that love and respect in marriage will be positively impacted.

Keywords: *prayer, religious faith, marriage, love and respect, Christian, Ephesians 5:33*

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to the couples who describe prayer as the “heartbeat of their marriage.” There are those who have mentored myself and my husband in this area, encouraging us to grow in our prayer life. There are other couples we know who are spending their marriages building a firm foundation on prayer together. And lastly, there are those who pray with their spouse throughout their marriage until one arrives at heaven’s gates. During the writing of this study, one of our dearest married friends, who participated in this study, lost their spouse. Their marriage was devoted to prayer together and we are grateful for their example.

Most importantly, I dedicate this study to my husband, the one whom my heart loves, as his encouragement and shared passion for marriage and prayer has made a significant difference in my life and the person I am. Our thirty years of marriage have been the biggest blessing of my life. Some of our favorite songs capture my heart on our life together. Matt Maher writes in *Wedding Ring*, “Not another soul could know me this well, and in the mystery of what the time will tell, love is learnin’ how to stay right where you fell. Said I did, and I do. I always will, still willin’ to. The magic in a wedding ring.” Steven Curtis Chapman writes in *Together*, “And if it wasn’t for God’s mercy and His grace, there’s no way we would be standing in this place, but because He has been faithful every step along the way, here we are together.” The impact of prayer on our marriage has been foundational and has made Song of Songs 6:3a true. “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine” (New International Version). I love you, Michael.

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Above all I am overwhelmed with gratitude to my Lord, Jesus Christ who placed this dissertation idea on my heart and handpicked three hundred and fifteen couples who were willing to participate. May these findings remind us of His desire to connect with us through prayer. To Him be the Glory Alone.

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List of Abbreviations

American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Baylor Religion Survey (BRS)

The Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS)

Partner Focused Petitionary Prayer (PFPP)

Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI)

Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

Marriage is an institution that is acknowledged in most cultures around the world and finds its source in the foundation of human society. Within certain religions, marriage is esteemed as a faith driven, purposeful union. Among these, Christian religion has many injunctions for how its adherents should live out their faith, including directives for husbands and wives to express their religious beliefs through one's behaviors, such as selflessness and forgiveness, towards their spouse. In fact, the Christian Scriptures, the Bible, give instructions for married couples to serve God through their marriage and interactions with their spouse, specifically by giving the directive to love and respect their spouse. Relatedly, Christianity has many faith practices that provide individuals opportunities to express their belief in God. Prayer is a practice historically performed both corporately and individually by Christians, that is mentioned regularly throughout Scripture as a means of communing with God, building a relationship with God, and providing the adherent insight, discernment, and direction. In addition to the primary, divinely focused purpose, is it possible that prayer could secondarily enhance a couple's ability to carry out the directives found in the Bible regarding the marital relationship? Exploring marital prayer and each spouse's experience of love and respect in the marriage would provide insight into this question.

Background

While various studies in the social sciences have sporadically addressed the impact of religion in general over the past century, in the last ten years, numerous notable studies have been done to explore religion, marriage, and religious practices. Research has found married religious couples find faith provides multiple benefits including marital meaning (Dollahite et al., 2012; Shichida et al., 2015), improved marital quality (Millett et al., 2018), higher sexual frequency (Cranney, 2019), higher marital satisfaction (Klausli, 2020; Lister et al., 2020), increased marital stability (Karimi et

al., 2019), and positive marital outcomes (Kelley et al., 2020; Mullins, 2016). Many of these studies found specific faith practices including prayer, church attendance, worship, spiritual discussions, and religious community involvement were the mechanism in which religion benefited marriage (Fincham & May, 2021; Kelley et al., 2020; Klausli, 2020; and Lister et al., 2020). Subsequent research then began to focus upon the individual religious mechanisms to better understand their impact upon the marriage.

Research on prayer in marital relationships has studied both prayer with spouse and prayer for spouse. Findings included marital prayer created a sense of oneness, closeness, intimacy, togetherness, and like-mindedness in marriage (Mullins, 2016). It was also found that marital prayer impacted marital quality (Sauerheber et al., 2021), marital satisfaction (Davis et al., 2018), marital forgiveness (David & Stafford, 2015), protection against marital infidelity (Rayesh & Kalantar, 2018), prosocial marital behavior (Greenway, 2020), and promoted change in the marriage (Hatch et al., 2016). Religious couples who genuinely participate in prayer to commune with God, have found a rare phenomenon that such prayer secondarily benefits their marriages.

In the past, religious directives or teachings on marriage were confined to the theological realm. Numerous scholars have preached, taught, and written about love and respect as core components in marriage. Theologians such as Augustine (354-430/1999), Luther (1522/1962), Greeley (1991), Thomas (2000), and Köstenberger (2010), have encouraged married couples in their pursuit of a holy marriage and the Biblical directives that shape a Christian marital union. While this information was informative and helpful within the Christian community, only recently has research been done to explore religion and marriage in the social sciences. Kelly et al. (2020) recently studied how the biblical directives of love and respect impact a marital relationship among Christian couples. In doing so, they discovered married religious couples' belief that love and respect are necessary to

give to one's spouse in the relationship and in doing so, provided a uniting influence upon the marriage.

The social sciences have spent many years exploring how religiosity impacts social systems, particularly marriage. In the early 19th century, social scientists studied how one's beliefs in God could influence or direct social actions in relationships (Booth et al., 1995). These questions were studied throughout the years to further explore the correlation between religiosity and marriage. Most studies resulted in finding various links between religiosity and marital functioning focusing on religious homogamy or shared religious practices such as church attendance (Mahoney, 2010). Mahoney (2010) focused more specifically on the religious behaviors and activities that created an idea of sacredness in religious marriages. They found religious couples believed marriage revealed their shared experience of God and thus produced higher perceptions of the spirituality of marriage (Mahoney, 2010). Mahoney's (2010) research was groundbreaking, as it encouraged social scientists to look deeper into marital religious beliefs and their impact upon the actions and behaviors produced within the marriage. This would encourage future research to not only examine religious beliefs, but also the direct impact of various religious practices, including prayer, in a marital relationship.

Historically, prayer has been studied by theologians who examined the purpose of prayer, the significance of prayer, and the philosophical meaning of prayer (Francis & Evans, 1995). Empirical studies involving the benefits of prayer began in 1872 correlating high life expectancy with clergy who prayed (Francis & Evans, 1995). Eventually, studies began to focus on married couples and their use of prayer. In the 1980's multiple studies were conducted that found married couples utilized prayer when dealing with marital problems and marital adjustment (Francis & Evans, 1995). Researchers began to investigate prayer even further to ascertain its effects upon the marital relationship. Gruner (1985) found that frequency of individual prayer in marriage produced high marital adjustment in couples who are members of a religious community. Gruner (1985) also found

that Evangelical participants utilized prayer to cope with marital problems. Studies such as these then paved the way for exploring marital intercessory prayer (Skipper et al., 2018), marital partner-focused petitionary prayer (PFPP) (Cooper et al., 2019; Fincham & Beach, 2014; May et al., 2019) and marital prayer with spouse (Lambert et al, 2012). These studies then prompted other researchers to explore the benefits of prayer upon the marital relationship.

Many of these studies have grounding in several theories that emphasize love and respect in the marital relationship. Gottman (1994) concluded throughout his work that love and respect are essential elements in the marital relationship as they provide foundational intimacy between the couple. Gottman (1994) used the concepts of love and respect in his Sound Relationship House model, which encouraged couples to follow steps to nurture love and respect in their relationship. Eggerichs (2004) explored love and respect from a theological perspective which examined religious behavioral responses of each spouse to meet the stipulations outlined in Ephesians 5:33. Eggerichs (2004) chose to emphasize that husbands were responsible for loving their wives and wives were responsible for respecting their husbands. Louis and Louis (2022) support the theological basis for love and respect in the marital relationship but encourage a reciprocal understanding of love and respect finding support for both being demonstrated dyadically by spouses in Scripture. All the above theories agree on the importance of love and respect in the marriage as well as behavioral expressions of each by spouses.

The coalescence of marriage, religiosity, the expression of one's faith in relationship, and prayer have been experienced and valued by Christian couples for quite some time. Many theologians, philosophers, social scientists, counselors, and pastors have explained the relationship between them throughout the centuries. However, only in the last century has documented research in the social sciences been done to find correlations between marriage, expression of one's religious beliefs, and prayer. While this research has been enlightening, ongoing research is needed to

understand further how religiosity, prayer, and the outward expression of religious beliefs impact the institution of marriage. The proposed research involving marital prayer with or for spouse and its mediating effect on the expression of love and respect in the marital relationship would help significantly to contribute to this area of research.

Problem Statement

While significant research has studied the effects of prayer in relationships, and specifically marriage relationships, there is little to no research specifically examining the effect of marital prayer on the Biblical concepts of love and respect in a marriage. Past studies examined marital prayer's impact on the relationship by focusing on forgiveness, gratitude, marital satisfaction, and marital quality, as there are verified assessments to study these facets of relationship. One of the most pressing problems in studying the Biblical concept of love and respect between spouses, was the lack of a verified measure to assess love and respect in the marital relationship. However, Louis and Louis (2021) recently developed the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS), which allows spouses to rate their experience of their spouse's actions of love and respect in the relationship. This assessment was helpful in solving this problem.

There have also been problem areas in marital prayer research regarding research participants. Limitations of these studies include utilizing college students in unmarried relationships in previous studies, thereby making it difficult to generalize the results to a married population (Fincham et al., 2010; Lambert et al., 2013; Lambert et al., 2012b). Further participant limitations included participants of only one race and socioeconomic group (Brimhall & Butler, 2007; Butler et al., 2002; Klaus, 2020; Lister et al., 2020; Olson et al., 2015; Skipper et al., 2018), participants identifying as highly religious (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007; Dollahite et al., 2018; Lambert & Dollahite, 2006; Lambert & Dollahite, 2008), and participants located in only one region of the United States (Klaus, 2021). These participant limitations need to be considered as new studies are created.

Regarding prayer, many studies have examined prayer for one's partner and fewer studies examined prayer with one's partner, making it challenging to determine if the results could be applied to both groups (Fincham et al., 2008; Lambert et al., 2013; Mullins, 2016; Olson et al., 2015). Chelladuari et al. (2018) noted a difficulty in quantifying a couple's experience of prayer, thus limiting result correlations. When highly religious participants are studied, Ellison et al. (2020) stated one limitation to their research was determining if high quality relationships promote religious practices or if one's religiousness produces higher relationship satisfaction in marriage. Results from past studies may be problematic to generalize, as prayer may not be an effective change agent for all with religious convictions (Fincham et al., 2010). Past studies also contain uncertainty whether PFPP was already utilized by couples as a means of religious belief or practice (May et al., 2019). Lastly, researchers found limitations in studies where data was collected from an observational standpoint and the husbands and wives were both present listening to each other's answers given to research questions regarding religiosity and prayer in marriage (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006; Winchester & Guhin, 2019). All the above limitations need to be taken into account when designing future studies regarding prayer.

The current research problem includes lack of an appropriate assessment, difficulties with participant populations, lack of comparison of and distinction between prayer with or for partner, and difficulty generalizing results regarding the religious practice of prayer. This study seeks to further the research surrounding prayer in a marital relationship and the outward expression of love and respect by the couple by having a large sample size of married heterosexual participants across the United States. They would be longitudinally assessed to determine if prayer mediates the experience of love and respect in the marital relationship.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine how a Christian married couple's prayers with or for one another mediate their experience of their spouse's love and respect in the marital relationship. Convenience sampling was used to study a representative sample regarding the variable of interest (Boss, 1980; Heppner et al., 2016). Using a convenience sample will not allow results to be generalizable to the general population, but it will allow for a thorough exploration of the hypotheses regarding the Christian nature of the research questions. A large sample size of 315 Christian married heterosexual couples from across the United States were gathered by referrals from religious leaders in various Christian churches, representing various Christian denominational traditions, as well as from Facebook posts from the author's personal and professional Facebook page. Participants resided in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Each couple was over twenty-one years of age, heterosexual, married for a minimum of one-year, professed belief in Christian principles, and was willing to participate in prayer. Participants were any ethnicity, education, or income level. Participation was voluntary and non-compensated. Participants were given a pretest and posttest with either a 30-day prayer intervention or no intervention between the tests. This design allowed the independent variable (Christian married heterosexual couples), and the dependent variable (love and respect in the marital relationship), to be studied by examining the mediating effect prayer (with or for spouse) has upon the marriage.

Significance of the Study

The proposed study seeks to further explore prayer's impact upon marriage by examining each spouse's expression of love and respect for the other. Multiple studies have correlated marital prayer with improved marital behavioral actions including expression of forgiveness (David & Stafford,

2015; Fincham & May, 2017; Lambert et al., 2013; Lambert et al., 2010), reduced marital conflict (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006), protection against marital risks (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007; Fincham et al., 2010; Olson et al., 2015; Rayesh & Kalantar, 2018), mechanisms of marital change (Dollahite et al., 2018; Hatch et al., 2016), higher generosity toward spouse (Wilcox & Dew, 2016), and higher sexual frequency (Cranney, 2019). While these studies are helpful and lay a strong foundation to build on, inadequate research has explored the behavioral actions of love and respect in marriage. Kelly et al. (2020) recently studied married couples' beliefs that marriage necessitates love and respect reciprocally in marriage. Even so, there is an absence of research to assess prayer's influence upon improving marital behavior in this area. The proposed study will augment and enrich research upon prayer and marriage by providing depth and insight into love and respect theories promoted by Gottman (1994), Eggerichs (2004), and Louis and Louis (2022). Understanding each spouse's perception of love and respect in marriage can provide insight into utilizing prayer as a relationship tool, therapeutic intervention, and pastoral instrument.

Research Question(s)

RQ1: Does prayer with one's spouse or prayer for one's spouse for thirty days affect a Christian husband's and wife's perceptions of love and respect in their marital relationship, as measured by the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS)?

RQ2: Does prayer with one's spouse or prayer for one's spouse for thirty days mediate any of the eight sub-scales of the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (Appreciative and Affectionate, Considerate and Understanding, Romantically Intimate, Responsible and Principle Driven, Dependable and Companionable Financially Reliable, Healthy with In-Law Boundaries, Committed and Dedicated) given to Christian married couples?

RQ3: Are the effects of prayer for one's spouse or prayer with one's spouse different for husbands and wives?

Definitions

Marriage – a religious institution created by God as a lifelong heterosexual monogamous relationship to bring glory to God and for the purposes of producing offspring and growing in holiness (Köstenberger, 2010; Thomas, 2000).

Prayer – a personal or shared conversation with God, rooted in one's faith, that arises from acknowledgement that God is divinely involved in one's life and is viewed as sacred which is prompted by the Holy Spirit through a personal relationship with God (Jung & Ellison, 2022; Hardin, 2016).

Religious faith – one's values, beliefs, and practices there of (Sauerheber et al., 2021).

Marital prayer – beholding one's spouse by connecting through spiritual intimacy in a shared conversation with God (Keating, 2013).

Marital intercessory prayer – practice of praying on behalf of and for one's spouse (Skipper et al., 2018).

Partner-focused petitionary prayer (PFPP) – focused prayer for one's spouse that is purposefully centered on their well-being and specific needs in their life (Cooper et al., 2019; Fincham & Beach, 2014).

Christian religious couples – married couples who profess a belief in Christian principles, attend a Christian church, and believe in the Biblical institution of marriage (Köstenberger, 2010).

Summary

While an interest in research regarding marriage, prayer, and religious behavioral actions has advanced in the last few years, more research is needed surrounding marital prayer and spouses' reciprocity of love and respect in marriage. Limitations of previous studies can be learned from and used as guidelines when developing new studies. The proposed study will utilize a larger sample size with qualified participants who meet the requirements of the study. The newly released LRMS will

allow for appropriate assessment of spouse's perceptions and experience of love and respect in the marital relationship (Louis & Louis, 2021). Utilizing a longitudinal study will allow for unique data collection from each couple, higher levels of validity, and examining the mediating effect of prayer in the marriage (Heppner et al., 2016). This study will be groundbreaking to explore the interaction of two religious' principles: prayer with or for one's spouse and the Biblical directive of love and respect in the marital relationship.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

The institution of marriage exists throughout all cultures and people groups. For Christian religious couples, the impact of faith upon marriage has been studied revealing multiple benefits. One area that has almost no literature surrounding it, is the practical outcome of the Christian directive for love and respect in the marital relationship (Ephesians 5:33; Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Peter 3:7). Another Christian practice, prayer, has been studied by numerous researchers to understand the impact it has upon individuals and marital relationships. For couples who pray in their marriage, how is the Biblical directive for love and respect impacted in their marriage? This study seeks to understand the interaction between marital prayer and the presence of love and respect in marriage in Christian religious couples.

The link between faith and marriage is present in Christian religious teachings which later were studied by the social sciences. Previous research has found couples who claim to practice a religious faith have reported the positive impact that faith has upon their marriage (Davis et al., 2018; David & Stafford, 2015; Dollahite et al., 2012; Dollahite & Lambert, 2007; Lambert & Dollahite, 2008; Shichida et al., 2015). The use of prayer in the marital relationship has shown to have many benefits (Fincham & May, 2017; Fincham & May, 2021; Hatch et al., 2016; Rayesh & Kalantar, 2018; Skipper et al., 2018; Wilcox & Dew, 2016). Researchers have also explored martial prayer for partner and marital prayer with partner and its impact upon the marital relationship (Cooper et al., 2019; Fincham & Beach, 2014; Lambert et al., 2012a; May et al., 2019). Less research has been done on the Christian principle of love and respect in marriage between the spouses, although it is beginning to be explored (Kelley et al., 2020). Detecting the impact of religious faith on various aspects of marriage through research has found correlations between the two.

Literature review findings indicate an absence of studies that investigate the effect of marital prayer on the experience of love and respect in the marital relationship. While several studies have been able to examine observable individual and relational traits in marital relationships, none has explored prayer's direct effect on the Biblical directive of Ephesians 5:33, "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (New International Version) (Lambert et al., 2013). To discern if prayer directly affects a spouse's actions of love and respect in marriage, assessing each spouses' attitude toward prayer would provide a basis to determine if the practice of this religious principle is important. Since both prayer and the directive to love and respect are based upon Scripture, it would be intriguing to explore if marital prayer, either between spouses or for spouse, impacts marital experience of love and respect.

Theoretical Framework

The principle of love and respect in a marital relationship has been corroborated by one marriage counselor and theorist who has done significant research with the couples he has worked with through the years. Gottman (1994) stated the importance of love and respect in the marital relationship. Gottman's (1994) independent research found that healthy marriages have discussions characterized by strong indications of love and respect. Gottman's Sound Relationship House model was developed to improve couple relationships by specific steps that create love and mutual respect between spouses (Davoodvandi et al., 2018). This model also encourages couples to show love to one another by investing in their spouses' inner thoughts, feelings, hopes, and ideas (Davoodvandi et al., 2018). By doing so, couples draw together to build intimacy. Once they do this consistently, they create emotional intimacy which when established, creates mutual respect in the relationship (Davoodvandi et al., 2018). Gottman's research and creation of therapeutic interventions focused on his belief that love and respect are core components of healthy marriages.

This principle is also upheld by a former pastor who counseled couples resulting in research based upon the principles of love and respect in marriage. Eggerichs (2004) has described the “Love and Respect Connection” in his work where he explores the “Crazy Cycle”, an absence of both love and respect, the “Energizing Cycle”, the motivating presence of both love and respect, and the “Rewarded Cycle”, the spiritual blessing resulting from giving love and respect in marriage (pp. 5, 115, 265). Eggerichs (2004) explained the concepts of both love and respect and broke them down into practical techniques and principles for both husbands and wives to practice thus producing love and respect in the marital relationship. Eggerichs (2004), assuming the complementarian interpretation of Ephesians 5:33, encouraged each spouse to be accountable for their own assignment, only focusing on their understanding and application of meeting their spouse’s needs. While Eggerichs (2004) provided extremely helpful and practical information couples can immediately put into use, he missed the opportunity to focus on the benefit and call of prayer in marriage as it is only briefly mentioned during a list of action points for husbands and never fully explained. Nevertheless, Eggerichs provided a fuller understanding of the expression of the biblical principles of love and respect in the marital relationship.

Several researchers have explored the significance Christian couples impart upon how their religious beliefs impact their marriage. Mahoney’s (2010) sanctification of marriage theory was proposed to describe “the extent to which couples engage in a variety of dyadic behaviors or hold perceptions about their marriage that are substantively religious or spiritual in content” (p. 333). Mahoney (2010) found that many husbands and wives interviewed described their marriage and marital interactions as sacred, associating a divine phenomenon interacting with their marriage. Couples further described their marriage as a manifestation of religious beliefs about God and faith which then influenced their interaction and beliefs toward one another (Mahoney, 2010). Exploring this theory further, Mahoney (2010) reviewed articles over a ten-year period to develop a conceptual

framework of relational spirituality to explore specific spiritual practices that clarify how one's religion can shape marital and family relationships. Mahoney (2010) found couples who find the same meaning in their religious practices impact marital sanctification, thus affecting their experience and behaviors regarding religious spousal roles in marriage. Significant findings support higher religious meaning and practice in the marriage relationship and maintenance of traditional marital bonds (Mahoney, 2010). This research recognizes a connection between a spouse's religious beliefs surrounding marriage and their direct effect upon their marital actions and behaviors.

The Bible places importance on many facets of marriage that are unique and contrary to modern day understandings and expectations of marital relationships. For example, the Bible emphasizes male and female roles in marriage, unique purposes of marriage, and instructions on how spouses should interact with one another. Marriage, as an institution, is introduced in the first chapter of the Bible, with God making His purpose known for this union. God created marriage as a lifelong heterosexual monogamous relationship which produces offspring and brings glory to God (Köstenberger, 2010). Christian tradition, as found in the *1662 Book of Common Prayer: International Ed.* (Bray & Keane, 2021), also states a three-fold purpose of marriage stating:

First, it was ordained for the procreation of children to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy name. Second, it was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication, that those persons who have not the gift of continency might marry and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body. Thirdly, it was ordained for the mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have the other, both in prosperity and adversity (p. 313).

Throughout Scripture the roles of husband and wife are described and encouraged (Köstenberger, 2010). One of the most direct passages of marital advice from Scripture is given by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:21-33 when he writes,

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. ‘For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

The summation of this Scripture contains the blueprint for marital interaction between spouses. Husbands are called to love their wives and wives are called to respect their husbands. While this passage is direct in speaking to husbands and wives, it is often interpreted as predicated on the notion of mutual submission rooted in Paul’s injunction of verse 21 “submit to one another,” allowing for husbands and wives to both give love and respect to one another.

Scripture also explicitly places emphasis on the need for love and respect on behalf of both the husband and wife. Louis and Louis (2022) have found in their research that love and respect, freely and purposefully given to each spouse by the other, creates a flourishing marriage. Scripture which directs a husband to love his wife is found in Ephesians 5:25, which uses the Greek verb *agapaō* to describe love (Louis & Louis, 2022). In Titus 2:4-5, a directive is found for wives to love their husbands, and the Greek verb *phileo* is used (Louis & Louis, 2022). Louis and Louis (2022) argue

that while two different verbs are used to describe love, it is likely they can be used interchangeably, as they are elsewhere in Scripture. Wives are directed to respect their husbands in Ephesians 5:33, while husbands are directed to respect their wives in 1 Peter 3:7. Once again, Louis and Louis (2022) point out that these verses both convey the directive to respect and honor one's spouse. When a husband and wife reciprocally give love and respect to one another, they are actively embracing the directives found throughout Scripture.

Prayer is an active expression of one's religious faith and beliefs. Scripture also places a high emphasis on prayer, stating that when two or more people gather to pray, God is among them and is listening to them (Matthew 18:19-20). Biblically, prayer is seen as conversational intimacy with God that arises from the Holy Spirit's prompting to commune with God (Hardin, 2016). Throughout Scripture God is portrayed as one who listens and is involved with those who make requests through prayer (Hardin, 2016). Abraham's servant prays to God for help in finding a wife for his master's son and the prayer is answered before he finished praying (Genesis 24:10–20). In the Old Testament we find examples of individuals praying to God with small and large requests. Samson prayed and God quenched his thirst, while Nehemiah asked God for favor when speaking to the king and was allowed to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem (Judges 15:18–20; Nehemiah. 1:11; Nehemiah 2:1–6). In the New Testament, while Paul was imprisoned, many believers were praying for his release when he miraculously escaped due to angel from the Lord (Acts 12:1–12). There are also times biblically where prayer is not answered, but intimacy and dependance upon God is the outcome. The Apostle Paul asks God three times to remove a "thorn in his flesh," but God denies his request saying, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:7–10).

The bible also describes prayer as sincere (Hebrews 10:22), reverent, and a humble understanding that God is able, willing, and personable in His interactions with humankind (Hardin, 2016). Scripture provides numerous examples for the manner of prayer or the attitude of the person

praying. In Psalm 51 David is coming before the Lord with a broken and contrite spirit after committing adultery. Believers are given the instruction to forgive others when praying (Mark 11:25). Christians are also reminded to be devoted to prayer with attentiveness and thanksgiving (Colossians 4:2). While Scripture does not directly state that husbands and wives should pray together, James 5:16 states, "pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" which could apply to married couples (New International Version). Prayer within marriage, either for spouse or with spouse, could be seen as a marital religious expression of individual faith and beliefs.

The Christian counseling community and pastors have often recommended couples begin praying together. Stoop and Stoop (2000) encouraged marital prayer suggesting it promotes spiritual connectiveness, accountability, and openness throughout the marital relationship. Stoop and Stoop (2000) recognized that marital prayer takes discipline, persistence, and patience that requires a willingness from both husband and wife to experience the long term benefits it provides in marriage. They acknowledged it leads to individual and marital change, humility, willingness to serve one another, deeper understanding of one's spouse, and selflessness (Stoop and Stoop, 2000). Stoop and Stoop (2000) suggested that the daily action of praying with one's spouse allowed the couple to deepen their own relationship and build a marital relationship with God. Stoop and Stoop (2000), along with Omartian (2014), provided sample prayers to help couples begin their journey of praying together and for one another. While realistic information is provided by Stoop and Stoop as well as Omartian, they lack information surrounding love and respect, as well as peer reviewed research on the method they are presenting.

Christian Scriptures point toward long term benefits and blessings for those who desire to keep Biblical directives. The apostle Peter states,

In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone (2 Peter 1:5-7, New Living Translation).

Does the application of Biblical directives upon a Christian marriage lead to a different experience in marriage? With many Christian couples also struggling with marital difficulties and possibly divorcing, could marital prayer make an impact on the couple's ability to demonstrate and experience love and respect in the marriage, thus strengthening their marital relationship?

For the current study, it is hypothesized that couples who pray with one another for thirty days will report a higher expression of love and respect in their marital relationship. It is also hypothesized that couples who pray for one another, but not with one another, will also experience some degree of change in their experience in love and respect in their marital relationship. Couples will be given one assessment, the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS) (Louis & Louis, 2021) both before and after the thirty days of prayer. This will allow a comparison to be made between pretest and posttest results by evaluating the impact of marital prayer upon the experience of love and respect in the marriage.

Related Literature

When studying married couples, a basic overview of current marital units within the United States is beneficial. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2021, there are a total of 131.4 million married individuals in America. The Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) has found seven out of ten Americans identify their religious beliefs as Christian (2021). The Pew Research Center (n.d.) conducted a survey of 35,000 individuals in 2014 regarding frequency of prayer. Of those individuals who reported they prayed, 55% prayed daily (Pew Research Center, n.d.). Of the

35,000 individuals they studied, 23,980 individuals identified as Christian (Pew Research Center, n.d.). Individuals who stated they had a strong belief in God and a high importance of religion, also had the highest percent of daily prayer with 85% and 79% respectively (The Pew Research Center, n.d.). The Pew Research Center (n.d.) found that 59% of women pray daily versus 41% of men who pray daily. Couples who are married reported 52% praying daily, 47% praying weekly, 46% praying monthly, and 41% seldom or never praying (The Pew Research Center, n.d.). These statistics demonstrate the significant number of married individuals, those who identify as Christian, and those who pray, supporting a study that explores the impact of daily spousal prayer upon marital love and respect.

Religious Faith and Marriage

To further develop a foundation regarding religious faith and marriage, establishing a definition of faith is necessary. For the purposes of this study, religious faith is best described as one's values, beliefs, and practices thereof in relation to the divine (Sauerheber et al., 2021). Davis et al. (2018) found highly religious individuals ascribe and adhere to their belief system in their day-to-day life. For those who adhere to a religious faith, an emphasis is frequently placed on God's design and participation in marriage (Davis et al., 2018). Therefore, religious couples' belief systems impact their meaning and experience of marriage.

To what extent and in what specific ways do couples view God's activity in their marital relationship? Goodman and Dollahite's (2006) research in this area indicated all but one couple in their sample reported God involved as a partner in their marriage, with couples perceiving God's involvement in various ways. Interestingly, a common way that many couples involved God in their marriage and life was through prayer (Goodman & Dollahite, 2006). For couples who perceived God as directly involved in marriage, God was seen as divinely involved through being or doing (Goodman & Dollahite, 2006). Divine involvement by doing was seen in answering prayers,

involvement of the Holy Spirit, and giving of grace (Goodman & Dollahite, 2006). Therefore, couples' perceptions of God as actively involved through various ways enabled couples to see God as an equal presiding partner who invested in the couple's relationship.

Religious faith and marital meaning

This view of being in partnership with God sheds light on the connection married couples had with God. Dollahite et al., (2012) explored religious marriages (Christian, Jewish, and Muslim) to understand how couples' religious beliefs impact the meaning they attach to their marital union. Results found a core concept reported by couples which stated that marriage is greater than a relationship between two individuals, but is rather a sacred covenant between husband, wife, and God (Dollahite et al., 2012). Mahoney et al. (2003) found most couples view their marriage as sacred, with God as an active participant, and this also extended to couples perceiving sacred qualities in their marital sexual relationship as well. Due to religious couples reporting God's involvement in their marriage, prayer could be an instrument through which the couple strengthened their connection with God.

Not only does the couple's perception of God impact their marital union, but an individual's own perception of God does as well. Shichida et al. (2015) explored the dynamics of individual perception of God as a moral authority on Christian marriages. Results showed that those who perceived God in this manner reported their marital bond was strengthened by God, they had a shared view of obedience to God, and spouses spent time reflecting upon God's commands to change their behavior in the marriage (Shichida et al., 2015). When couples view God as a transcendent moral authority, commitment to God and God's marital ideals are positively influenced (Shichida et al., 2015). Shichida et al. (2015) also found that individuals with this view of God described God as a strengthening influence in their marriage. Therefore, couples who perceive God as a moral authority might desire to obey God's directives for prayer as well as love and respect in marriage.

Religious faith and marital satisfaction

Many religious couples studied reported a faith-based motivation for their marriage which impacted marital satisfaction. Brimhall and Butler (2007) explored the correlation between intrinsic and extrinsic religious motivation on marital satisfaction. Individuals who are extrinsically motivated are those who experience religion as a practice apart from themselves, while intrinsically motivated individuals are those who define themselves by their religious practices (Brimhall & Butler, 2007). Results partially confirmed the hypothesis that intrinsic religious motivation would correlate more positively with marital satisfaction (Brimhall & Butler, 2007). Since the activity of marital prayer and obedience to the marital directive located in Ephesians 5:33 would be found intrinsically, these religious practices might also impact marital satisfaction.

Interestingly, results on intrinsic and extrinsic religious motivation were different for husbands and wives. For husbands, intrinsic religious motivation did result in positive marital satisfaction (Brimhall & Butler, 2007). However, Brimhall and Butler (2007) found that for wives, extrinsic religious motivation was correlated with higher marital satisfaction. Possible explanations for this outcome include gender differences or power dynamics in the marital relationship (Brimhall & Butler, 2007). Findings from this research indicate that husbands would rely on intrinsic religious motivation, while wives would rely on extrinsic religious motivation when carrying out a religious practice, such as prayer.

Religious faith and marital commitment

Religiosity can also have an impact on a couple's marital commitment. Lambert and Dollahite (2008) explored the relationship between religiosity and marital commitment by applying Mahoney et al.'s (1999) sanctification of marriage theory as a framework for their study. Results showed three themes in the data including: couples' perception of God as the third party in their marriage; couples' belief that marriage is a lifelong religious institution; and couples' commitment to

marriage provides meaning in their lives (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008). Lambert and Dollahite (2008) concluded that these themes described potential mechanisms in the relationship between religiosity and marital commitment. These themes could act as a helping agent for couples who commit to praying together.

Couples in this study also used a biblical metaphor to describe God's investment in their marriage. Lambert and Dollahite (2008) reported that couples made reference to Ecclesiastes 4:12, suggesting that a cord or bond between the husband, wife, and God was created to sustain the marriage. The main theme that emerged from this research was the concept of God influencing the individual spouse's commitment to their marriage thus providing meaning through their religious beliefs (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008). The couple's perception of God investing in their marriage resulted in a stronger marital commitment.

Prayer and Marriage

Prayer is often viewed as an important aspect of one's expression and relational connection with God. Prayer is one of the main forms of religious expression and spiritual practices in many different religions (Rayesh & Kalantar, 2018). Prayer by an individual or by a couple is seen as a key component of one's spirituality and expression of faith as it creates an intimate oneness with God (Holland et al., 2016; Puchalska-Wasyl & Zarzycka, 2020). Prayer is a lived expression of one's faith, experience of God, and growing relationship with God.

Because prayer is an important aspect in the Christian faith, a working definition is necessary for the purposes of this study. Prayer is defined as a personal or shared conversation with God that is rooted in one's faith and is viewed as sacred (Jung & Ellison, 2022; Puchalska-Wasyl & Zarzycka, 2020). From a Christian perspective, this is seen also through multiple supporting Scriptures such as Ephesians 6:18; James 5:16; Matthew 6:9-13; Colossians 4:2; and Jeremiah 29:12. This conversation with God builds relationship between the individual and God, creates a sense of intimacy with God,

and creates meaning for one's life (Holland et al., 2016). Prayer by an individual or by a couple is seen as a key component of one's spirituality and expression of faith as it creates an intimate oneness with God (Holland et al., 2016). Prayer builds a relationship with God while participating in a holy practice that provides meaning for an individual.

Biblically, there are multiple examples of different individuals praying to God in various ways for numerous purposes. Prayers can be inward, outward, or upward, allowing for differences in motivation, expression, and cognition (Ladd & Spilka, 2013). There are many types of prayer including but not limited to healing prayer, individual prayer, and marital prayer (among others). Healing prayer can be seen in Scripture regarding physical healing, spiritual healing, and emotional healing (Psalm 6:2; James 5:6; Revelation 21:4). Individual prayer is a time of personal private connection with God. Marital prayer can be done either as partner focused petitionary prayer (PFPP) or prayer with spouse.

Healing prayer

Healing prayer is a familiar form of prayer and consists of praying for oneself, for others, requesting prayer, or praying corporately. Levin (2016) explored the use of healing prayer in the United States of America using data from the 2010 Baylor Religion Survey (BRS). Eight religious variables and their association with healing prayer were explored (Levin, 2016). Levin (2016) analyzed data to determine if praying for healing is a result of one's religious practices and beliefs. The eight religious variables explored include religiousness, religious attendance, reading Scriptures, private prayer, non-congregation prayer, belief in God, loving God, and meditation (Levin, 2016). Levin sought to determine which variable most influenced healing prayer.

Results from this study provide insight into prayer for self and prayer for others. Levin (2016) found that over 75% of BRS participants have prayed for someone's healing, 50% participated in prayer groups, and 25% participated in laying-on-of-hands. Levin (2016) found that the most

consistent religious variable that affected healing prayer is loving God. The author also found that those who reported loving God also prayed for others and asked for prayer more than other participants. With over 75% of the study's participants previously praying for others, this may show some comfortability with prayer for participants in the proposed study.

Individuals may have experiences based on healing prayer in their life. Thunström and Noy (2022) found that Christians who are prayed for by others experience emotional comfort because someone thought to pray for them. It was also found that 82% of Christian participants in the study felt prayer resulted in God's lessening of their emotional pain (Thunström & Noy, 2022). When prayed for by others, 78% of Christian participants expected God to answer the prayer (Thunström & Noy, 2022). For those participants who expected emotional comfort or lessening of emotional pain, prayer for healing was seen in a positive light.

Individual prayer

Individual prayer consists of many cognitive patterns of thought. Individual prayer can be described as inward (connecting with oneself), outward (connecting with others), or upward (connecting with God) (Ladd & Spilka, 2002). Ladd and Spilka (2002) discovered participants reported thought patterns of confession, intercession for others, reliance upon rituals or tradition, meditation, resting, and petition during times of prayer. Furthermore, Ladd and Spilka (2002) found that participants thought patterns included inward and upward prayer as connection with God that is intangible. This insight helps give significance to the internal thoughts of individuals as they pray.

Some people view individual prayer as a means to strengthen and soothe themselves due to their connection with God. Winchester and Guhin (2019) examined prayer through an Evangelical lens of sincere prayers that are both problem-solving and problem-generating. The findings of this study discovered prayer was viewed as an informal discussion with God which resulted in change, decision making, soothing attributes, and relational interaction (Winchester & Guhin, 2019).

Interestingly, the authors found evidence of a contrasting component of Evangelical prayer as well. Winchester and Guhin (2019) found some Evangelicals shared their concern that their prayers could become empty, rote, and insincere if they were not internally in a prayerful state. Insight into an individual's perception of their experience during prayer is helpful when exploring how this might also be perceived during shared marital prayer or prayer for spouse.

Individual prayer and psychological well-being. While Christian tradition has long held that prayer has a spiritual effect on those who practice it, social scientific research indicates that individual prayer has psychological effects on the person praying. Whittington and Scher (2010) sought to explore the relationship between six individual prayer types and psychological well-being. Results indicated three types of prayers positively affected psychological well-being. Prayers of thanksgiving proved to be the most effective form of prayer as it predicted self-esteem, optimism, and subjective well-being (Whittington & Scher, 2010). Prayers of adoration had positive effects on meaning of life and optimism (Whittington & Scher, 2010). Prayers of reception positively shaped meaning of life, self-esteem, and optimism (Whittington & Scher, 2010). Prayers of thanksgiving, adoration, and reception positively affect individuals which could influence their behavior or actions in their marriage.

Praying individually impacts the behavior of the one praying. Greenway (2020) critically reviewed previous research searching for a link between prayer and prosocial behavior that could explain how prayer could influence behavior change in individuals. Greenway (2020) found a well-researched correlation between prayer and prosocial behaviors. These correlations included prayer and coping styles as well as prayer and change of perspective, both of which implied that prayer can influence coping and perspective positively (Greenway, 2020). Prayer positively affected one's view of marriage as sanctified which could lead to prosocial behavior by which couples would strive for higher marital goals related to a concept of God, prayer and self-reflection, and prayer and self-

control (Greenway, 2020). These results suggest that a study asking couples to pray together or for one another could have similar outcomes that would positively affect psychological well-being and impact change in marital behavior by striving for higher marital goals.

Marital prayer

While both individual prayer and marital prayer involve expression of one's religious faith, marital prayer differs from individual prayer. Marital prayer is defined by Keating (2013) as beholding your spouse. Keating (2013) explains further to suggest each spouse must allow their spouse's heart and identity to be understood within spiritual intimacy that can best be reached through spousal prayer. Marital prayer than has an aspect of intimacy and knowing one's spouse that could be developed to enrich the marital experience.

Marital prayer produces cognitive and behavioral blessings for the marriage. Butler et al. (2002) hypothesized that prayer aids in experiencing a meaningful relationship with God. Results from their study confirmed this hypothesis and showed three areas of clinical relevance for couples. Couples who prayed experienced a relationship with their personal Deity which promoted accountability (Butler et al., 2002). Couples reported that prayer reduced their negative actions and thoughts toward their spouse which lessened emotional reactivity and increased empathy (Butler et al., 2002). Lastly, couples reported that prayer helped individual spouses to focus on self-change and higher relationship responsibility (Butler et al., 2002). These results suggest marital prayer impacts both one's personal relationship with God and joint marital benefits and thus hold the potential to positively impact love and respect outcomes for couples.

Marital intercessory prayer. Marital intercessory prayer is the practice of praying on behalf of your spouse. Skipper et al. (2018) explored how intercessory prayer functions as a source of resiliency and strength in Christian African American married couples. Skipper et al. (2018) found three themes regarding intercessory prayer for the couples: "Interceding Prayers Build Personal

Strength, Interceding Prayers Strengthen Marital Bonds, and Interceding Prayers Unite Communities” (p.379). Skipper et al. (2018) hypothesized that when looking at the marital dyad, prayers might reduce marital stress, prayers may show a desire for the spouses to grow closer, or prayer may shine a light on spirituality as a strength in marriage. Again, these results support prayer as positively affecting marital outcomes in relationship to love and respect.

Some studies found a harmful outcome for couples who prayed. Gardner et al., (2008) examined religious couples' conceptions and interpretations of the couple-Deity triangle, by focusing on prayer-based, harmful triangulations between each spouse and their Deity during marital conflict. Gardner et al. (2008) found these harmful triangulations were in part based upon couples' problematic interpretations of their perception of Deity and the required spiritual practices. Results confirmed that marital couples can enter harmful triangulation in their couple-Deity relationship during conflict, showing wives have a stronger disposition to engage in this harmful triangulation than their husbands (Gardner et al., 2008). This would need to be kept in mind when reviewing outcomes of the proposed study.

Marital partner-focused petitionary prayer. Research has also explored couple's daily prayer for partner to explore the impact on the marital relationship. May et al. (2019) examined the impact of partner-focused petitionary prayer (PFPP) on both relationship quality and communication as well as cardiovascular functioning. Results showed that PFPP could improve not only relationship quality but also the efficiency of myocardial mechanisms (May et al., 2019). Cooper et al. (2019) conducted a literature review on stress in couple relationships and the role of religious behaviors, especially prayer. PFPP was identified as an effective buffer for stress in relationships due to research studies that found PFPP can help couples break conflict cycles, build unity in relationships, promote positive communication, and encourage cooperative tendencies (Cooper et al., 2019). PFPP has multiple benefits to the marital relationship, both physical and mental.

PFPP was also explored to discover if there was an effect on marital satisfaction and commitment. Fincham and Beach (2014) conducted two studies to determine if PFPP has benefits to relationships and results found higher levels of relationship satisfaction and increased levels of commitment in the relationship. Results of the first study found a connection between PFPP and increased commitment in the relationship (Fincham & Beach, 2014). The second study's results replicated findings of the first study and, in addition, found PFPP increased both the commitment and marriage satisfaction for one spouse, which then in turn positively affected the other spouse's increased relationship satisfaction (Fincham & Beach, 2014). PFPP appears to have positive marital relationship impact, which makes it a viable option to be explored in comparison to praying with one's spouse.

Marital prayer with spouse. There are very few research studies that examine praying with one's spouse. Most previous literature on prayer in coupled relationships explores couples who pray *for* one another, however Lambert et al. (2012a) conducted one of very few studies which focused on couples who pray *with* one another. Lambert et al. (2012a) defined couples as romantic partner or close friend, not necessarily married couples. Lambert et al. (2012a) found a correlation that praying with a partner or friend does increase the trust in the relationship. The findings of this study are based on university students and therefore different results could emerge in couples who are older and married (Lambert et al., 2012a). Research on religious married couples who pray with one another is necessary to see if these results can be generalized in a married population.

Besides increasing trust in the relationship, other results were discovered. Findings also included a correlation between increased unity in the relationship which also could enrich the relationship between prayer and trust (Lambert et al., 2012a). The results of this study suggest that prayer could be an appropriate intervention with couples in counseling to increase trust (Lambert et al., 2012a). Increasing trust in the marital relationship through praying with one another could impact

each spouse's desire to act in love or respect toward the other.

Prayer's Impact Upon Marriage

Prayer within marriage, either prayer for spouse or prayer with spouse, can impact the marriage in multiple ways. Mullins (2016) found that married couples prayed about relational issues, spiritual growth, forgiveness, and marital conflict. When married couples spent time in prayer, a sense of togetherness was fostered in the relationships (Mullins, 2016). Prayer in marriage also produced feelings of closeness, like-mindedness, and intimacy (Mullins 2016). Many couples reported that prayer with or for their spouse, as well as corporate prayer with a prayer group, enhanced their marital relationship (Mullins, 2016). The aforementioned effects produced positive feelings in the marital relationship.

Prayer can also impact marriage negatively. If prayer becomes manipulative, accusatory, or blaming, it was shown to be counterproductive and created conflict (Mullins, 2016). In these marital relationships, a poor use of prayer created feelings of isolation, defensiveness, and separation between the husband and wife (Mullins, 2016). Unfortunately, this then resulted in increased and prolonged marital conflict that wounded spouses, as the prayer was under the guise of being holy or sacred (Mullins, 2016). This use of prayer in marriage is unproductive and damaging to the spousal relationship.

Prayer and marital relationship quality

Several research studies found a correlation between prayer and marital quality. Ellison et al. (2010) hypothesized couples who share religious values and beliefs report greater relationship satisfaction than those who do not share similar beliefs (Ellison et al., 2010). When studying African American and Hispanic communities, they found a positive connection between prayer and relationship quality (Ellison et al., 2010). Sauerheber et al., (2021) examined relationships between an individual's religious faith, marital satisfaction, and political orientation. Findings included husbands

who reported a strong religious faith had wives who reported higher marital satisfaction (Sauerheber et al., 2021). Both husbands and wives reported that prayer positively impacted their marital quality.

Other studies have explored how one's view of marriage, in light of their religious beliefs, would correlate with marital quality. Davis et al. (2018) examined how Evangelical women's level of religious commitment and a sanctified view of marriage would relate to marital satisfaction. Findings showed that women who viewed marriage as sanctified reported higher marital satisfaction (Davis et al., 2018). Women who had lower views of marital sanctification reported lower views of religious commitment and marital satisfaction (Davis et al., 2018). These studies show correlation between couple's religious faith, values, beliefs, and practices with marital quality.

Prayers of gratitude in marriage

Prayer is a common vehicle to express gratitude to God and can be explored to find the impact upon the marital relationship. Because other research showed many positive individual effects of gratitude including fewer depressive symptoms, fewer physical health symptoms, more hope, and higher individual health, Fincham and May (2021) desired to explore how prayers of gratitude could also impact marriages. Fincham and May (2021) found marital satisfaction was related to prayers of gratitude and general gratitude for both husbands and wives. The authors were not surprised at this finding as gratitude may predispose couples to look for the good in their marriage (Fincham and May, 2010). Regardless, prayers of gratitude correlated to higher marital satisfaction for couples.

To further explore this concept, the authors looked at the differences between husbands and wives. Fincham and May (2021) also discovered that wives' prayers of gratitude predicted husbands' marital satisfaction, but the inverse was not found. Possibilities for this difference include women praying more, women's higher awareness and expression of feelings, and studies that show women have higher levels of gratitude (Fincham & May, 2021). This prompts an exploration of whether or

not both husbands and wives will have the same results regarding prayer and the relationship to love and respect in the proposed study.

Prayer for partner in marriage

Prayer for partner may have mediators that produce higher relationship satisfaction. Fincham et al. (2008) focused on the spiritual practice of prayer to determine how it impacted development in young adult relationships. They conducted three separate studies and found prayer for one's partner in young adult relationships is related to relationship satisfaction (Fincham et al., 2008). Fincham et al. (2008) studied mediators of this effect such as prayer decreasing negative aspects of relationship, increasing positive aspects of relationship, or increasing the ability to recover from negative relationship aspects. Fincham et al. (2008) also found evidence to support that partner prayer shows relationship satisfaction despite positive or negative relationship behavior as well as prayer for partner positively relating to forgiveness of that partner (Fincham et al., 2008). These results suggest that relationship satisfaction remains stable when prayer for one's partner is present.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to ponder if the same results would be present for prayer for one's partner among married couples. Fincham et al. (2008) also found that prayer and relationship satisfaction correlation in a younger population had similar results to married couples in prior research. In each study, most participants were female, so it is difficult to generalize the results to both a male and female larger population (Fincham et al., 2008). These results could affirm prayer is tied to relationship satisfaction and that spouses could individually work toward behaviors of love and respect in the marriage despite evidence of positive or negative behavior in the relationship.

Prayer and relational forgiveness

Religious communication in marriage transpires through prayer, shared Bible study, and/or discussions on spirituality. David and Stafford (2015) studied the link between forgiveness, individual relationship with God, religious communication, and marital satisfaction to explore couples' religious

communication and the relationship with marital satisfaction utilizing a relational model of God in marriage. David and Stafford (2015) found multiple benefits of religious communication on marital satisfaction. Results indicated that individual relationship with God is important to marital quality by indirectly affecting religious communication with spouse (David & Stafford, 2015). Therefore, one's individual spirituality impacts marital religious communication.

When religious communication is present in a marriage, the husband and wife experience benefits in their marriage. Marital quality is positively linked to forgiveness of self and forgiveness of spouse, while lack of forgiveness is detrimental to marital quality (David & Stafford, 2015). Couples who communicate about religion have higher marital quality, with mixed-faith couples reporting less marital satisfaction than same-faith couples (David & Stafford, 2015). This study gives examples of many benefits of religious communication upon marital satisfaction (David & Stafford, 2015). Logically, love and respect are biblical directives that spouses observe out of their own individual relationship with God. For the purposes of the proposed study, could prayer between spouses or prayer with spouse motivate love and respect toward the other, thus having potential to be a beneficiary of religious communication between spouses, thereby agreeing with David and Stafford's (2015) results?

Partner focused petitionary prayer and forgiveness. If couples' marital religious communication has benefits to the marriage, does partner-focused prayer lend individuals toward more cooperative tendencies and forgiveness? Lambert et al. (2013) desired to correlate praying for one's partner to active behavioral responses in the marriage relationship. They found that those who prayed for their partner did have more observable forgiving behavior (Lambert et al., 2013). They also showed that those assigned to the pray for partner group reported increased forgiveness with behavioral changes that were evident to their partners (Lambert et al., 2013). Lambert et al. (2013) found that praying for a partner's well-being resulted in cooperative behavior and forgiveness on

conflictual days. Thus, prayer for one's partner did show favorable religious behavioral responses toward one's spouse in marriage.

Prayer for partner could also produce emotional responses in marital relationships as well. Fincham and May (2017) assessed if partner-focused petitionary prayer (PFPP) predicted lower aggression in romantic relationships, forgiveness, and partner forgiveness all while controlling for relationship satisfaction. Fincham and May (2017) found that PFPP lowers aggressive tendencies in the relationship and is positively associated with forgiveness independent of relationship quality. Results also showed PFPP related to the other partner reporting greater forgiveness in the relationship (Fincham & May, 2017). Lambert et al. (2010) examined if praying for one's partner would result in forgiveness of transgressions and explore prayer's effect in facilitating forgiveness. Results found those who prayed for their partner had higher forgiveness scores which showed an increase in a willingness to forgive as well as increased selfless concern for others (Lambert et al., 2010). Cooperativeness, forgiveness, and selfless concern for one's spouse would all be helpful components for couples working to add behaviors of love and respect to their marital relationship.

Prayer and marital conflict

During marital conflict, the influence of religious practices provides couples the opportunity to resolve issues. Lambert and Dollahite (2006) researched religious couples to discover how their religious beliefs and practices influenced marital conflict and if so, in what way. After interviewing 57 highly religious couples, Lambert and Dollahite (2006) found that religious beliefs helped couples prevent problems, resolve relational conflict, and work towards relationship reconciliation. Most couples reported that their religious faith was a help in times of conflict, allowing them to use their religious beliefs as a strength during conflict.

Couples in the study described how their religious beliefs were practically utilized in relation to marital conflict. Lambert and Dollahite (2006) found three religious practices participants

identified as helpful: prayer, discussion of scriptural teachings, and religious service attendance.

When they discussed prayer, couples stated it created open communication and decreased expression of anger (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006). Lambert and Dollahite (2006) also found participants stated that prayer was also helpful when reconciling their relationship. Prayer is a useful tool when working through marital conflict.

Prayer and sacrifice in relationships

Several studies have explored if prayer contributes to an individual's satisfaction with their sacrifice for their partner. Lambert et al. (2012b) explored how prayer affects satisfaction with sacrifice in relationships (either couples or close friends). Their construct of sacrifice in relationship encompassed giving up time, personal needs, and personal interests for the sake of their partner (Lambert et al., 2012b). Results proved the authors hypothesis that praying for a close relationship partner predicted satisfaction with sacrifice six-weeks later (Lambert et al., 2012b). Results also showed that those who were in the prayer for friend group had higher satisfaction with sacrifice scores, lower emergent goals, and higher couple identity (Lambert et al., 2012b). Lambert et al. (2012b) also found data to support that the prayer for the friend group also worked to protect the relationship instead of winning the argument resulting in greater satisfaction with sacrificing. These studies shed light on how prayer relates to sacrifice in a relationship.

This research was further developed to explore if prayer causes a feeling of satisfaction within the relationship. Lambert et al. (2012b) desired to account for mechanisms that link prayer, sacrifice, and feelings of satisfaction in participants relationships. Lambert et al. (2012b) instructed a prayer for partner group to pray for their partner one time a day for four consecutive weeks then filled out an online journal logging time prayed and descriptions of their prayers for partner. Results concluded that 'pray for partner' group had greater satisfaction with sacrificing, suggesting that prayer

contributed to feelings of satisfaction in the relationship (Lambert et al., 2012b). This study is important as it used both self-reporting and observable measures to find these conclusions.

Prayer and marital infidelity

Several studies have been done to explore the link between religious behaviors and marital infidelity. Dollahite and Lambert (2007) explored how highly religious couples' beliefs and practices encourage fidelity in their marriage and why religion acts as a protective factor for marital infidelity. Results found four themes that emerged as couples described how their religious faith protected their marriage from infidelity. Couples indicated that they viewed their marriage as sanctified and this resulted in higher marital quality (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007). Couples also indicated that their faith and religious vows reinforced their commitment to fidelity (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007). Couples reported that their moral values were strengthened by their religious beliefs and involvement (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007). Finally, couples stated that their religious beliefs strengthened their individual relationships with God, thereby avoiding actions which would disappoint or displease God, such as infidelity (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007). This study's results align with Atkins and Kessell (2008) who found a notable correlation between "Nearness to God and Attendance", a correlation between "Infidelity and Attendance", and a low correlation with all other religiousness subscales (p. 411). When couples view their marriage through a faith perspective, studies have found a correlation between religious beliefs and marital fidelity.

Research has found that prayer in marriage is correlated with lower infidelity in married couples. Fincham et al. (2010) conducted three studies to determine how prayer affects romantic relationships by exploring whether prayer could reduce both thoughts and behavior regarding infidelity. Fincham et al. (2010) furthermore hypothesized that those who perceived their relationship as sacred and then prayed for their partner would appear to others as more committed to their relationships. Results from this study found that partner prayer resulted in lower levels of infidelity by

influencing both thoughts and behavior thereby affecting important choices of an individual in the relationships (Fincham et al., 2010). Prayer then can influence thoughts, actions, and behaviors toward one's spouse and toward God.

The use of prayer as a protective factor to marital infidelity can be found in Muslim marriages as well. Rayesh and Kalantar (2018) explored the role of prayer for one's spouse and sanctification of marriage in reducing marital infidelity in Muslim marriages. Rayesh and Kalantar (2018) found that prayer for spouse and sanctification of marriage negatively correlated with marital infidelity. Those who had higher scores in prayer for spouse and sanctification of marriage have a lower probability of marital infidelity, which is similar to previously studied Christian and Jewish populations (Rayesh & Kalantar, 2018). These findings correlate with other research that has found religion to be a protective factor because couples experience God as a partner with them in the marriage.

Prayer and marital change

Studies have also explored whether prayer promotes change mechanisms within the marriage. Hatch et al. (2016) explore how prayer correlates with individual changes and facilitates changes in marriage dynamics. In a diverse sample of 184 religious couples, Hatch et al. (2016) found that participants reported prayer fosters personal transformation and growth that in turn affects one's marriage. Used individually, prayer strengthens their marriage relationship, and prayer is a catalyst for change both individually and as a couple (Hatch et al., 2016). Hatch et al. (2016) also found prayer promotes positivity and humility, helps couples communicate and understand each other, and brings couples together to resolve conflict. Studies such as these suggest prayer is transformative in both individual and marital change and explores how and why prayer is connected to individual and marital change.

Change that can be attributed to either individual or couple prayer has varying motivations and timeframes. Dollahite et al. (2018) found prayer can be a “Transforming and a Maintaining Influence” as this may encourage some individuals to grow and change through prayer while others may pray as a ritualistic behavior (p. 232). The practice of prayer was found to influence participants’ desires to live out religious principles in their daily lives (Dollahite et al., 2018). Dollahite et al. (2018) found that participants who reported changes as a result of prayer found change was typically gradual, although some reported rapid change in their relationships. These results suggest that prayer with spouse or for spouse will positively impact both actions and thoughts of love and respect in marriage over time.

Benefits of prayer in marriage

Several studies show a correlation between prayer and helpful behavioral actions in the marriage relationship. Wilcox and Dew (2016) examined social and cultural predictors to determine generosity in marriage. Findings included generosity in marriage was higher for couples who shared childcare and housework resulting in more acts of kindness, service, and forgiveness toward their spouse (Wilcox & Dew, 2016). For religious couples, those who prayed together, attended services together, and believe God was active in their marriage reported more generosity toward one another in their marriage (Wilcox & Dew, 2016). Mahoney (2010) found that highly religious spouses use private prayer to manage conflict, reduce negative emotions, problem solve, create empathy, take responsibility for change, find perspective, and improve communication. Mahoney (2010) referenced one negative use of prayer by a spouse if their anger with one another is projected onto God or if one spouse tries to manipulate the other by declaring an alignment with God to win a disagreement. Findings in these studies showed prayer provided an abundance of benefits in marriage, with only a few unhealthy aspects of prayer.

When couples participate in religious practices, such as prayer, some studies find multiple positive outcomes. Fraser et al. (2021) found married couples who mutually participate in prayer experience higher levels of shared spirituality or religiousness. This shared religiousness was positively correlated to higher marital satisfaction, emotional intimacy, and individual wellbeing in the marriage (Fraser et al., 2021). Interestingly, their results found individual religiousness was not linked with higher marital satisfaction, only shared religiousness produced these outcomes (Fraser et al., 2021). Therefore, couples who frequently participate in religious activities report a positive influence upon their marriage and themselves individually.

Prayer for spouse has the potential to protect against risk factors in marriage. Olson et al. (2015) explored direct effects of prayer for spousal well-being, religious homogamy, and forgiveness on marital satisfaction as well as prayer protecting against marital risks including family of origin parental divorce, stressful marriage, and premarital cohabitation. They hypothesized marital satisfaction would be positively affected by prayer for one's spouse and a couple's religiosity would protect against known marital risk factors (Olson et al., 2015). Olson et al. (2015) found that prayer for spousal well-being, religious homogamy, and perceived forgiveness by spouse did relate to higher marital satisfaction levels. These benefits of prayer in marriage demonstrate that prayer for spouse and marital prayer could produce positive love and respect outcomes in a marital relationship.

Frequency of prayer of married individuals is also associated with sexual frequency in marriage. Cranney (2019) found that there is a positive association between sexual frequency and religion when studying spirituality and frequency of prayer. Cranney (2019) also found that religion, including faith practices such as religious service attendance and prayer, are significantly associated with sexual satisfaction. Hernandez-Kane and Mahoney (2018) found that couples who perceive their marriage as sacred report greater sexual satisfaction and sexual frequency. Yet, in their longitudinal study, they found that higher frequency of prayer in marriage correlated with less sexual satisfaction

over time (Hernandez-Kane & Mahoney, 2018). While these two studies have some similarities, there are obvious differences regarding prayer and sexual satisfaction that call for further exploration.

Prayer and faith practices in marriage

Several studies have explored how religious faith practices are correlated with prayer. Klausli (2020) explored how religious service attendance, religious views of marriage, prayer, and religious discussion are correlated with marital satisfaction. Klausli (2020) also explored how a couple's length of marriage might moderate the correlation between religious homogeneity and relationship satisfaction. Klausli's (2020) findings partially supported that higher relational satisfaction would be found with all indicators of spirituality, with higher relationship satisfaction correlated with a vocational view of marriage, marital religious discussion, and shared prayer. When couples viewed marriage as a vocation, with the belief their marriage is sacred, their religious discussions and relationship satisfaction increased (Klausli, 2020). Klausli (2020) then concluded that couples who were married longer placed a higher emphasis on discussing spiritual topics. A couple's marriage was positively impacted when they actively practiced their faith, including shared prayer and religious discourse.

Of special interest is exploring the difference between husbands and wives in the proposed study to see if gender differentiates the correlation between prayer and love and respect in marriage. Lister et al. (2020) found couples who spent time in family worship and personal prayer reported higher levels of marital satisfaction, conflict resolution, and emotional attunement. Results found couples who had a stronger belief in traditional gender roles were those who spent time in personal prayer (Lister et al., 2020). The authors also found that the husbands in the study reported higher satisfaction with marriage, more emotional attunement with their wives, and higher satisfaction in resolving marital conflict as compared to the wives (Lister et al., 2020). The authors were unclear as to the

reasons the distinction between men and women was present (Lister et al., 2020). Personal prayer in marriage continues to be related to multiple marital benefits, which previous research supports.

Prayer and faith practices in families

Some researchers have hypothesized family prayer would positively impact individual relationships within the family based upon research which found couple prayer improves marital relationships. Chelladuari et al. (2018) built upon this hypothesis and studied the group activity of family prayer. The authors theorized that family prayer would produce positive relational outcomes for families who engaged in this religious ritual (Chelladuari et al., 2018). They also acknowledged that family prayer could have harmful consequences if it were misconstrued or used manipulatively and found that, if families were not unified due to lack of religious homogamy, prayer time was an empty ritual with little to no meaning (Chelladuari et al., 2018). This was the one negative outcome the authors found regarding family prayer.

Overall, the authors found family prayer had multiple benefits to family imparting positive relational qualities to the family. Chelladuari et al. (2018) found several outcomes for family group prayer time including: togetherness and interaction; meeting family needs and offering support to one another; and teaching children about religion and faith. Authors also found family prayer provided opportunity to discuss any issues or concerns; lowered family tension and conflict; and families felt unified, bonded, and connected (Chelladuari et al., 2018). Chelladurai et al. (2018) suggested that counselors must assess a family's use of prayer to better understand a family's faith. Just as couple prayer can strengthen a marital relationship, family prayer could be used to strengthen family systems.

Prayer as a relationship tool

Prayer can also be used as a relational tool in marriage. Interestingly, Bannister et al., (2015) found that Christian couples who received therapy from faith-based or Christian marriage counselors

not only expected therapists' qualifications to be equal to secular counselors but also expected the counselors to utilize spiritual interventions during therapy. Couples preferred both implicit and explicit spiritual interventions such as reading Scripture and prayer but did not expect therapists to have the knowledge or expertise of a pastor (Bannister et al., 2015). Bannister et al. (2015) found that clients' expectations were high regarding use of spiritual interventions by Christian therapists. While this conveys that prayer could be meaningful in therapy, Christian counselors who utilize this intervention must be mindful of how they do so.

Prayer could be used in a healing nature during marital counseling but also could be used to enrich marriages. Beach et al. (2011) explored the use of prayer as a relational enhancement for couples by randomly assigning African American couples to one of three marital enhancement programs, one of which included prayer, to determine the impact it would have on couple relationships. The marital enhancement program, which included prayer (Prayer Focused PREP), had an addition of a spiritual component that incorporated a prayer-focused aspect which taught couples how and why to pray for one another (Beach et al., 2011). Beach et al. (2011) found that a culturally sensitive PREP program, with a focus on prayer, is as effective as a traditional PREP program. Furthermore, Beach et al. (2011) found that positive change in the relationship was highest in the areas of communication, listening, positive intentions toward the partner, and overall positive evaluation of one's marital relationship. Training on purposeful prayer for a spouse has potential to positively impact the aforementioned areas of the marital relationship.

Studies demonstrate that prayer can be substituted for skills-based interventions in a marital relationship during therapy. Beach et al. (2008) suggested that prayer can be utilized as a marriage intervention with couples who already pray individually or together regularly by exploring four documented situations in which prayer facilitates marital skills training. Beach et al. (2008) proposed that prayer helps couples regain perspective by reflecting on God's love and its extension to their

spouse and marriage. Couples learning to break negative thought patterns can use prayer to remove themselves and focus on compassion, understanding, and love of their spouse (Beach et al., 2008). Couples who need help during conflict with high negative physical internalization, could utilize prayer to meditation upon the presence of God to reduce their physical reactions (Beach et al., 2008). Lastly, when couples need to dialogue with someone who is supportive and listening, they could talk with God to express their thoughts and feelings (Beach et al., 2008). This would encourage couples to utilize prayer as a relational tool in their marriage.

Exploring the benefits and detriments of incorporating religious practices in marital therapy is necessary when desiring to utilize prayer in marital counseling. Sullivan and Karney (2008) support utilizing a religious practice the couple mentions independently during therapy, as it might be already established, and the therapist could build on that concept. For example, if a couple mentions that they are comfortable with prayer and often pray together, then the therapist could ask the couple if praying for the changes they desire to see in their relationship could be helpful (Sullivan & Karney, 2008). Millet et al. (2018) discovered prayer was seen as a source of strength, and faith was utilized as a coping mechanism. Prayer could be used as a relationship tool to foster love and respect in a marital relationship if results of the proposed study find positive outcomes.

Love and Respect in Marriage

Love and respect are key marital components when looking at marriage through a faith perspective. Scripture compares a husband's love to the love that Christ has for his church, suggesting sacrificial, selfless, and servanthood characteristics (Ephesians 5:33). Scripture also encourages wives to love their husbands, as older wives are encouraged to teach the younger wives how to do so (Titus 2:4-5). A wife's respect has components of submission and is described to parallel a wife's willingness to submit to a loving, protective heavenly Father (Ephesians 5:33). A husband's respect for his wife found in 1 Peter 3:7 and often translates with the word *honor* (Louis &

Louis, 2022). Love and respect have been much harder to define from a psychological standpoint in marriage due to the overlap of these constructs (Louis & Louis, 2021). Louis and Louis (2021) comment on several major theories that categorize love into various concepts such as erotic love, compassionate love, companionate love, liking, and passionate love, all of which can describe various components of the concept of marital love. Respect is even more elusive to define in a marital relationship, as most research surrounding this concept has been about the lack of respect towards individuals and within relationships (Louis & Louis, 2021). There is little to no research exploring the combination of love and respect, from a Biblical viewpoint, in a marital relationship.

Exploring how religious beliefs and practices, such as love and respect, are applied in the marriage helps to discover the impact upon a marital relationship. Kelley et al. (2020) is one of few studies that found components of love and respect in religious couples' marriages by exploring highly religious couples to understand how religious practices, religious beliefs, and religious communities can unite or divide marriages. Results found numerous accounts of couples who described both uniting and dividing influences of their religion upon their marriage (Kelley et al., 2020). Overall, uniting influences included how religious beliefs and practices are applied in the marriage rather than on the specific beliefs themselves (Kelley et al., 2020). Results indicated one uniting belief found in marriages was the view that marriage necessitates love and respect to be given to one's spouse (Kelley et al., 2020). Results also found couples reported prayer was the most common unifying religious practice couples participated in together (Kelley et al., 2020). This study alludes to a connection between prayer and love and respect in marriage but cannot make a direct correlation.

Summary

This study sought to determine the effect of prayer on love and respect in the marital relationship. While prayer among highly religious married couples has been shown to provide various benefits to the relationship, what effect does prayer for partner or prayer with partner have on

the Biblical command to husbands and wives to love and respect? From a religious perspective, any practice, such as prayer, that the church could encourage to help marriages to fulfill biblical roles and grow closer in their faith would then support the tenants of their faith.

A multitude of research surrounding religious faith, prayer, and marital wellbeing is present in literature. Previous research provides a solid foundation for the impact of a couple's religious faith upon their marital relationship including a sacred meaning (Mahoney et al., 2003), God as a moral authority (Shichida et al., 2015), marital satisfaction (Brimhall & Butler, 2007), and increased marital commitment (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008). Research also provides numerous benefits of prayer upon marriage including positive psychological well-being (Whittington & Scher, 2010), a change agent in relationship (Greenway, 2020; Butler et al., 2002; Hatch et al., 2016), a promoter of accountability (Butler et al., 2002), a source of resiliency and strength (Skipper et al., 2018), health benefits (May et al., 2019), increased relational trust (Lambert et al., 2012a), increased marital quality and satisfaction (Davis et al., 2018; David & Stafford, 2015; Fincham & May, 2021; Klausli, 2020; Lister et al., 2020; Olson et al., 2015), increased relational forgiveness (Lambert et al., 2013), lower aggression in relationship (Fincham & May, 2017), ability to resolve marital conflict (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006; Mahoney, 2010), reduce marital infidelity (Atkins & Kessell, 2008; Dollahite & Lambert, 2007; Fincham et al., 2010; Rayesh & Kalantar, 2018), as well as being a relationship tool (Beach et al., 2008; Beach et al., 2011; Millet et al., 2018; Sullivan & Karney, 2008). Love and respect have been studied far less with Kelley et al. (2020) finding love and respect as an important uniting belief that strengthens marital relationships. While the research is robust regarding prayer and marriage, more is needed regarding prayer's effect specifically on love and respect in the marital relationship.

A review of the current literature reveals an absence of information related to marital prayer, either with spouse or for spouse, and its impact upon the experience of the biblical injunctions to love and demonstrate respect in the marital relationship. This study sought to fill this gap in research.

Therefore, a sample of religious couples took a pretest of the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS) prior to being assigned to one of three groups to pray with one's spouse for thirty days, pray for one's spouse for thirty days, or no prayer for one's spouse for thirty days (Louis & Louis, 2021). After thirty days, participants were again asked to take the LRMS to determine how marital prayer will impact the experience of love and respect in the marital relationships. Research questions include: how is the importance of prayer in married religious couples' relationship related to love and respect in married religious couples' relationships? Within religious married couples, how is prayer with spouse related to love and respect in the marital relationship? Within religious married couples, how is prayer for spouse related to love and respect in the marital relationship?

This study sought to provide experimental support for both Gottman, Eggerichs, and Louis and Louis' theories surrounding love and respect in marriage, as well as to provide a practical approach that pastors, churches, and Christian counselors can use to grow these traits in marriage through shared marital prayer. Both prayer and the directive to love and respect in marriage are Biblically inspired through a Christian worldview. By infusing these into marriages, Christian marital relationships could thrive, thus impacting their families, communities, and the world at large.

Chapter Three: Methods

Overview

Christian religious married couples have tenants of their faith that impact their marital relationship. Two tenants of Christian faith, prayer and the directives found in the New Testament instructing husbands and wives to love and respect their spouses, have almost no social scientific literature surrounding a correlation between the two. Previous research has studied the impact of faith and prayer, including prayer with spouse and prayer for spouse in marriage (Cooper et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2018; Fincham & May, 2017; Lambert et al., 2012a). This study sought to understand the relationship between marital prayer, either with spouse or for spouse, and the relationship to love and respect in marriage in religious couples.

A quasi-experimental design was used to study the relationship between independent and dependent variables when a thirty-day prayer intervention was introduced. Participants included 315 married religious couples who took The Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS) as a pre-test and post-test to detect an increase in the average differenced LRMS score. The participants were nonrandomly assigned to one of three groups: prayer with spouse, prayer for spouse, or no prayer assigned. This design allowed the research questions and hypotheses to be tested. One assessment was used to determine couples' perception of love and respect in the marital relationship. Data was analyzed with RStudio to find the effects of the intervention upon the dependent variable the LRMS score. Statistical analyses included a series of one-way ANOVA's and Tukey's HSD test. Results attempted to explain the relationship between prayer and love and respect in marriage.

Design

For this study, a quasi-experimental design was used with a pretest/posttest. This design allowed the researcher to study the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables after the application of the thirty-day prayer intervention. Demographic variables deemed

relevant included length of current marriage, marriage demographics (first, second, or third marriage), male or female, religious affiliation, church attendance, regularity of prayer life, ethnicity, education, age, employment status, and income range. The dependent variables was the LRMS score, as well as sub-categorical LRMS scores. This allowed the researcher to study the effects of a prayer intervention upon the couple's perception of love and respect in the marital relationship.

In this design, participants were nonrandomly assigned to the prayer with spouse group, prayer for spouse group, and no directed prayer group. The participant pool for this study was restricted, as those who volunteer must meet the qualifications of the target population to be studied (Heppner et al., 2016). Research has shown that volunteer participants tend to be agreeable and will follow through on their promise to participate as it aligns with an altruistic self-concept (Capra et al., 2021). Nonrandom sampling was used in this study due to participants volunteering for the study and then placing them in one of the three groups based on their self-report regarding prayer. The participants that were assigned to the no directed prayer group are those that indicate they do not currently pray with or for their spouse or they are not comfortable praying with or for spouse. This nonrandom assignment considers the ethical considerations of participants comfortability with prayer.

For the purposes of this study a one-way ANOVA test was used to initially compare the average differenced LRMS scores across three groups. Each group was given one pre-test and one post-test, as this allowed for examination of possible pretreatment differences between groups (Heppner et al., 2016). By utilizing a factorial design, prayer with spouse, prayer for spouse, and no directed prayer were assessed to determine how each affected love and respect in the marital relationship. This type of design provides more insight into the effects of the dependent variables it initially considers (Heppner et al., 2016). One downside of a pretest-posttest design is that the participants are familiar with the test the second time it is taken (Heppner et al., 2016). Overall, a pre-test and post-test design were most effective for this type of study because it blocks the potential

effects of confounding variables, such as personality traits, relationship history, and communication skills, and cultural background.

Research Questions

RQ1: Does prayer with one's spouse or prayer for one's spouse for thirty days effect a Christian husband and wife's perception of love and respect in their marital relationship, as measured by the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS)?

RQ2: Does prayer with one's spouse or prayer for one's spouse for thirty days mediate any of the eight sub-scales of the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (Appreciative and Affectionate, Considerate and Understanding, Romantically Intimate, Responsible and Principle Driven, Dependable and Companionable Financially Reliable, Healthy with In-Law Boundaries, Committed and Dedicated) given to Christian married couples?

RQ3: Are the effects of prayer for one's spouse or prayer with one's spouse different for husbands and wives?

Hypotheses

Let μ_{ijkl} denote the population mean for the i^{th} subscale of the j^{th} treatment group on the k^{th} gender at the l^{th} time, where $i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, 8$; $j = 1, 2, 3$; $k = M, F$; and $l = A, B$.

Example 1: Suppose you wanted to discuss the true population mean for the third subscale ($i = 3$) on the husbands ($k = M$) in the pray for your spouse group (e.g., $j = 2$) before the intervention ($l = B$). Then, we would attempt to make an inference about μ_{32MB} .

Example 2: Suppose you wanted to discuss the true population mean for the first subscale ($i = 1$) for all people (husbands and wives, i.e., $k = \cdot$) in the pray with your spouse group (e.g., $j = 3$) after the intervention (e.g., $l = A$). Then, we would attempt to make an inference about $\mu_{13\cdot A}$.

- By focusing on each participant's differenced score in the post-test vs. pre-test LRMS evaluation, we can omit each participants' unique baseline evaluation of where they fall on the LRMS scale prior to the 30-day study. This differenced group parameter can be denoted by: μ_{Dijkl} , where $\mu_{Dijkl} = \mu_{DijKA} - \mu_{DijKB}$
- Therefore, to show that the pray for spouse group (e.g., $j = 2$) showed improvement on the fifth subscale ($i = 5$) for wives ($k = F$), we would state the null and alternative hypotheses:

$$H_0: \mu_{D52F} \leq 0 \text{ vs. } H_A: \mu_{D52F} > 0, \text{ respectively, where } \mu_{D52F} = \mu_{52FA} - \mu_{52FB}.$$

Hypothesis 1: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray with spouse group (i.e., $j = 3$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$). $H_0: \mu_{D\cdot 3\cdot\cdot} \leq \mu_{D\cdot 1\cdot\cdot}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D\cdot 3\cdot\cdot} > \mu_{D\cdot 1\cdot\cdot}$, where $\mu_{D\cdot 3\cdot\cdot} = \mu_{\cdot 3\cdot A} - \mu_{\cdot 3\cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray for spouse group (i.e., $j = 2$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D\cdot 2\cdot\cdot} \leq \mu_{D\cdot 1\cdot\cdot}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D\cdot 2\cdot\cdot} > \mu_{D\cdot 1\cdot\cdot}$, where $\mu_{D\cdot 2\cdot\cdot} = \mu_{\cdot 2\cdot A} - \mu_{\cdot 2\cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Appreciative and Affectionate (i.e., $i = 1$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray with spouse group (i.e., $j = 3$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D13\cdot\cdot} \leq \mu_{D11\cdot\cdot}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D13\cdot\cdot} > \mu_{D11\cdot\cdot}$, where $\mu_{D13\cdot\cdot} = \mu_{13\cdot A} - \mu_{13\cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Appreciative and Affectionate (i.e., $i = 1$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray for spouse group (i.e., $j = 2$) compared to the no

directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D12..} \leq \mu_{D11..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D12..} > \mu_{D11..}$, where $\mu_{D12..} = \mu_{12 \cdot A} - \mu_{12 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 5: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Considerate and Understanding (i.e., $i = 2$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray with spouse group (i.e., $j = 3$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D23..} \leq \mu_{D21..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D23..} > \mu_{D21..}$, where $\mu_{D23..} = \mu_{23 \cdot A} - \mu_{23 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 6: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Considerate and Understanding (i.e., $i = 2$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray for spouse group (i.e., $j = 2$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D22..} \leq \mu_{D21..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D22..} > \mu_{D21..}$, where $\mu_{D22..} = \mu_{22 \cdot A} - \mu_{22 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 7: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Romantically Intimate (i.e., $i = 3$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray with spouse group (i.e., $j = 3$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D33..} \leq \mu_{D31..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D33..} > \mu_{D31..}$, where $\mu_{D33..} = \mu_{33 \cdot A} - \mu_{33 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 8: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Romantically Intimate (i.e., $i = 3$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray for spouse group (i.e., $j = 2$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D32..} \leq \mu_{D31..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D32..} > \mu_{D31..}$, where $\mu_{D32..} = \mu_{32 \cdot A} - \mu_{32 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 9: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Responsible and Principle Driven (i.e., $i = 4$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray with spouse group (i.e., $j = 3$) compared to the no

directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D43..} \leq \mu_{D41..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D43..} > \mu_{D41..}$, where $\mu_{D43..} = \mu_{43 \cdot A} - \mu_{43 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 10: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Responsible and Principle Driven (i.e., $i = 4$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray for spouse group (i.e., $j = 2$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D42..} \leq \mu_{D41..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D42..} > \mu_{D41..}$, where $\mu_{D42..} = \mu_{42 \cdot A} - \mu_{42 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 11: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Dependable and Companionable Financially Reliable (i.e., $i = 5$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray with spouse group (i.e., $j = 3$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D53..} \leq \mu_{D51..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D53..} > \mu_{D51..}$, where $\mu_{D53..} = \mu_{53 \cdot A} - \mu_{53 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 12: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Dependable and Companionable Financially Reliable (e.g., $i = 5$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray for spouse group (i.e., $j = 2$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D52..} \leq \mu_{D51..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D52..} > \mu_{D51..}$, where $\mu_{D52..} = \mu_{52 \cdot A} - \mu_{52 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 13: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Financially Reliable (i.e., $i = 6$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray with spouse group (i.e., $j = 3$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D63..} \leq \mu_{D61..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D63..} > \mu_{D61..}$, where $\mu_{D63..} = \mu_{63 \cdot A} - \mu_{63 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 14: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Financially Reliable (i.e., $i = 6$) after the

30-day prayer intervention in the pray for spouse group (i.e., $j = 2$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D62..} \leq \mu_{D61..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D62..} > \mu_{D61..}$, where $\mu_{D62..} = \mu_{62 \cdot A} - \mu_{62 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 15: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Healthy with Boundaries (In-Laws) (i.e., $i = 7$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray with spouse group (i.e., $j = 3$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D73..} \leq \mu_{D71..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D73..} > \mu_{D71..}$, where $\mu_{D73..} = \mu_{73 \cdot A} - \mu_{73 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 16: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Healthy with Boundaries (In-Laws) (i.e., $i = 7$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray for spouse group (i.e., $j = 2$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D72..} \leq \mu_{D71..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D72..} > \mu_{D71..}$, where $\mu_{D72..} = \mu_{72 \cdot A} - \mu_{72 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 17: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Committed and Dedicated (i.e., $i = 8$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray with spouse group (i.e., $j = 3$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D83..} \leq \mu_{D81..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D83..} > \mu_{D81..}$, where $\mu_{D83..} = \mu_{83 \cdot A} - \mu_{83 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 18: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Committed and Dedicated (i.e., $i = 8$) after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray for spouse group (i.e., $j = 2$) compared to the no directed prayer group (i.e., $j = 1$): $H_0: \mu_{D82..} \leq \mu_{D81..}$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D82..} > \mu_{D81..}$, where $\mu_{D82..} = \mu_{82 \cdot A} - \mu_{82 \cdot B}$.

Hypothesis 19: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS test after 30 days for husbands. $H_0: \mu_{D..M} \leq 0$ vs. $H_A: \mu_{D..M} > 0$, where $\mu_{D..M} = \mu_{..MA} - \mu_{..MB}$

Hypothesis 20: There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS test after 30 days for wives. $H_0: \mu_{D..F} \leq 0$ vs $H_A: \mu_{D..F} > 0$, where $\mu_{D..F} = \mu_{..FA} - \mu_{..FB}$

Participants and Setting

Based on the nature of this study, only religious Christian couples were sampled. A non-probability sampling method, convenience sampling, was used to draw the participants needed for this study (Heppner et al., 2016). Boss (1980) contended to develop significant theoretical constructs, participants studied must be representative and exemplary regarding the variable of interest. While this will not make these results generalizable to the general population, it will allow for a more complete understanding of the hypothesis based on the Christian nature of the research question. Since the purpose of the study is to understand the variables of interest in a Christian marriage context, this will allow more richness and depth of data collected.

To determine a sufficient sample size, an a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power v. 3.1.9.4 based on the highest level of analysis. To assess the initial difference in average LRMS scores among the three groups, we assumed a moderate effect size (0.25) as recommended by Cohen (1962) and a significance level of 5% to obtain a desired power of 0.90. While our power analysis produces a total sample size requirement of 324, we believe that, due to the stringent recruitment process, a total sample size of 300 (i.e., 100 per group) is sufficient.

Participants needed for this study included married religious couples who are comfortable with prayer. Participants needed to be over twenty-one years of age, heterosexual, married for at least one year, attendees of a Christian church, profess belief in Christian principles, live in the United States, and indicate a willingness to participate in prayer. Belief in Christian principles included justification by grace through faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the supremacy of Holy Scripture in matters of faith and practice. Participants were selected from Protestant denominations.

Protestant denominations included in this study were Baptist, Non-Denominational, Methodist, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Church of Christ, and Episcopalian/Anglican. Participants were of any ethnicity. Education level or income level was documented but no minimum is required for participation. Participants were not compensated for their participation in this study.

To compile over 600 religious' participants (315 married couples), participants were referred by religious leaders as well as from Facebook posts from the author's personal and professional Facebook page. Participants resided in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Participants included those who were actively involved in their faith community and considered their religious beliefs to be important in their daily lives. Religious leaders were asked to provide potential couples for consideration to the researcher. Couples were also recruited from themarriagedesign.com and by word of mouth.

Prospective participants were contacted via email saying they were referred by their religious leader to participate in a faith-based marriage study. Participants voluntarily decided to participate once they received information regarding the study. To assess the strength of relationship between prayer and love and respect, over 300 married couples were needed to provide adequate statistical analysis (Warner, 2013). This will allow for those who fail to complete the study or drop out.

Instrumentation

Prior to the study demographic information was collected from all participants including length of marriage, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, protestant denomination, church attendance, how they pray, religious beliefs, ethnicity, education, number of children, and income range. In addition, one instrument was employed: The Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS) (Louis & Louis, 2021) as both a pre-test and post-test. The LRMS and all demographic information

was given via an email link to an online assessment. Although the husband and wife took the tests separately, and remained anonymous, they were coded as a couple to assess couple scores.

A newer assessment was used to explore love and respect in the marital relationship. Louis and Louis (2021) developed a self-report assessment which measures the interaction between love and respect in a marriage, The Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS). For the express purpose of validation, the LRMS was measured against eight other well utilized marital assessment scales such as the Relationship Quality (RQ), Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS), Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS), Marital Adjustment Test (MAT), Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Subscales (DASS-21), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) (Louis & Louis, 2021). Reliability of the LRMS scale was conducted by using Cronbach's alpha and omega values which exceeded the recommended minimum level (Louis & Louis, 2021). The correlation of LRMS subscales with other established marital assessments resulted in compelling evidence for construct validity (Louis & Louis, 2021). The LRMS will allow for multiple avenues of exploration of love and respect in each couple's marriage.

The LRMS consists of a 46-question assessment focusing on eight subscales; "Appreciative and Affectionate, Considerate and Understanding, Romantically Intimate, Responsible and Principle-Driven, Dependable and Companionable, Financially Reliable, Healthy with Boundaries (In-Laws), and Committed and Dedicated" (Louis & Louis, 2021). The LRMS is rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = completely untrue, 2 = mostly untrue, 3 = slightly more true than untrue, 4 = moderately true, 5 = mostly true, 6 = describes him/her perfectly) (Louis & Louis, 2021). Scores are averaged for each subscale, with those receiving a score of 4 or above representing a healthy rating for that subscale (Louis & Louis, 2021). Averaged subset scores of 3 or lower would indicate the individual felt that area was unhealthy and did not indicate love and respect.

LRMS items from the “Appreciative and Affectionate” subscale include “My spouse often displays their affection by touching and or kissing me during the day” and “My spouse often encourages me” (Louis & Louis, 2021, question 25, question 30). The “Considerate and Understanding” subscale include “My spouse listens to me with respect even when we disagree with each other” and “My spouse is quick to forgive me for my mistakes” (Louis & Louis, 2021, question 31, question 36). LRMS items from the “Romantically Intimate” subscale include “My spouse does not use his/her age as a reason to not be physically intimate” (Louis & Louis, 2021, question 32). LRMS items from the “Respect and Principle-Driven” subscale include “My spouse does not make significant purchases without discussing with me first” and “My spouse is not only nice to me when he/she wants to be physically intimate with me” (Louis & Louis, 2021, question 28, question,43). LRMS items from the “Dependable and Companionable” subscale include “My spouse is my best friend, or one of my best friends” (Louis & Louis, 2021, question 13). LRMS items from the “Financially Reliable” subscale include “My spouse handles his/her part of the finances of our household well” (Louis & Louis, 2021, question 22). LRMS items from the “Healthy with Boundaries (In-Laws)” subscale include “My spouse draws healthy boundaries with his/her own parents and protects me well” (Louis & Louis, 2021, question 15). LRMS items from the “Committed and Dedicated” subscale include “My spouse is more dedicated to our marriage than to his/her work” (Louis & Louis, 2021, question 16). These are a small example of the various questions utilized on this test.

Procedures

International Review Board (IRB) approval was acquired before the study began. Proposal information was submitted to the IRB with information about the study, research methods, participants, all informed consent procedures, data collection method, and research funding (Heppner et al., 2016). The IRB reviewed the proposal and determined the risks and benefits to any involved

participants, as well as the ethicality of the study (Heppner et al., 2016). IRB approval was acquired, allowing the study to begin.

Pastors or religious teachers were contacted at various churches to recommend religious couples for this study. This doctoral candidate also reached out to friends and acquaintances to request participation in this study via her personal and professional Facebook page. Each couple who expressed interest in the study received an informational email giving a brief study overview and requesting their participation in the study. Participants were given information that explained the study and received a brief explanation of the requirements of the study. A link was included for participants that agreed to participate in the study which gathered consent forms, confidentiality, study information, comfort with prayer, and demographic information from each couple. Informed consent explained the requirements of individual participation as well as information regarding the study so prospective participants could determine if they wanted to participate and emphasized participation in the study is voluntary (Heppner et al., 2016). Once individuals filled out the forms, they were given an identification number to link them with their spouse and remain anonymous.

After this information was collected, religious couples were nonrandomly assigned to three groups: prayer with spouse group, prayer for spouse group, and no directed prayer group. Couples who indicated they currently do not pray for their spouse or only pray individually were placed in the no directed prayer group. Couples who indicated they are comfortable with prayer, were placed in either the prayer for spouse or prayer with spouse group. Each couple was sent an email with a link to take the LRMS. The email encouraged couples to take each test individually without consulting their spouse. Each test was available online and a reminder was sent to the couple if they have not completed it in three days. Each participant had a unique identifier assigned to them so that they can later be paired as a couple if needed, when data is examined to study results. A pilot study was not done as it would be too time consuming.

After the pre-test was received from the couple, another email was sent to the prayer with spouse and prayer for spouse group. These emails provided directions and a short list with topical prayer examples that couples could pray for the next thirty days, while still encouraging couples to pray in their own words. Couples who were in the pray for spouse received these prompts: topics for prayer can include but are not limited to your spouse regarding marriage, their work, shared family life, their concerns, praises, their relationships, marital intimacy, children, decisions they are making, their health, and their spiritual life. Couples who were in the pray with spouse group received these prompts: topics for prayer can include but are not limited to, your marriage, your spouse, work, family life, concerns, praises, your relationship, your intimacy, children, decisions, and your spiritual life. It was also conveyed to couples in both groups these are merely suggested topics, but they were free to include their own to personalize their prayers.

Couples were reminded the prayer exercises need only to take less than five minutes per day. Every ten days, until the thirty days were completed, couples were sent a reminder email about their daily prayer time to promote completion of the study. The control group, which was the no directed prayer group, was sent an email after they have taken the pre-test with a reminder that they would have one more online assessment in thirty days. The control group was not given any directions regarding prayer in any form (individual, for or with their spouse), as their only directed participation was the completion of the pre-test and post-test.

At the end of the thirty days, all three groups were sent another email link to take the LRMS again. Couples were reminded to take the post-test individually without their spouse's input. If a couple did not take the test in one week, an email reminder was sent to encourage them to complete their participation in the study. Couples used their unique identifier assigned to gain access to their post-test so results could be paired for data analysis. When post-tests were completed and turned in, each couple received an email expressing gratitude for their participation in the study as well as

information if they were interested in the results of the study. Each religious leader that referred couples to the study was also sent information to read the results of the study once the analysis was completed. Data from the pretests and posttests was recorded and analyzed through RStudio.

Data Analysis

To determine if there is a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores on the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS) after thirty-days of prayer in the three experimental groups, a series of one-way ANOVA's was performed. This allowed for assessment of whether the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test changed or differed across groups (Warner, 2013). If the one-way ANOVA comparing differenced LRMS averages across the three groups was statistically significant, at least one of the three groups (prayer with spouse, prayer for spouse, or no directed prayer) was determined to be different from the other two (Warner, 2013). P-value results from the ANOVA that were <0.05 were considered significant (Warner, 2013). These analyses allowed for assessment of H1 and H2.

To assess H3 through H16, an exploratory analysis was implemented for the initial screening data (Warner, 2013). This analysis was used to examine any relationships found between variables that initially were not of interest, yet were discovered during analysis (Warner, 2013). Investigating the differenced LRMS subscales allowed for in-depth insight to what specific aspects of marriage the prayer intervention might have had.

Finally, Tukey's HSD test, was used to examine all pairs of groups to determine if the ANOVA was significant. This pos hoc test not only explored whether the relationship between two sets of data was statistically significant but also ran pairwise comparisons of means to determine significance of differences (Warner, 2013). This test allowed us to avoid the Bonferroni correction that often follows a statistically significant one-way ANOVA by using the adjusted p-values for

pairwise comparisons, which account for the familywise error rate. By using this Tukey's HSD test, H1 through H18 will be explored.

Validity and Quality Aspects

To control the validity of this study four types of validity must be considered. Heppner et al. (2016) stated statistical conclusion validity, internal validity, construct validity, and external validity all must be considered. For statistical conclusion validity, a Type I error would be the result of incorrectly determining a relationship exists between the variables when in fact there is not a relationship (Heppner et al., 2016). A Type II error would be the result of determining there is not a relationship between the variables when in fact there is a relationship (Heppner et al., 2016). To protect against Type I and Type II errors, the researcher must be cognizant of a sufficiently large sample size, utilize testing scales with proven reliability, account for any factors that could influence different outcomes, utilize the correct statistical tests for the variables studied, and note any potential outliers (Heppner et al., 2016). Cognizance of these four types of validity will show that the study was able to answer the research questions and is meaningful.

Internal validity must be assessed to correctly determine the relationship between the variables, prayer and measurement of love and respect in the marital relationship. One consideration is that religious couples may experience love and respect in the marital relationship regardless of their use of prayer. Another consideration is that couples who are married longer may express more love and respect in the marital relationship than couples who have been married less time. Examining individual pretest and posttest scores allowed ruling out hidden variables that would be a threat to internal validity (Heppner et al., 2016). Strong internal validity produces credible results.

Construct validity is important when measuring an observed dependent variable, the perception of love and respect in marriage. Construct validity must be considered to show the effectiveness of the independent and dependent variable measure what they intend to assess (Heppner

et al., 2016). Because love and respect are difficult concepts to measure, they must be assessed with the LRMS. It is possible that the prayer with spouse and prayer for spouse groups, may become more aware of the itemized constructs measured in the LRMS and be attuned to those during the thirty days prior to the posttest. It is also important that the researcher remained unbiased to the outcome of the study, as their bias could affect communication with participants.

Finally, external validity is necessary to generalize the research results to a broader population. Because this study involves a specific population, married Christian couples, external validity may be compromised due to lack of generalizability (Heppner et al., 2016). While most studies hope to generalize their findings to a larger population, this study may have broader meaning for married couples in religious communities. External validity might be strengthened in this study since participants will be collected from twenty-eight states including the Eastern, Southern, Southwest, Western, Pacific Northwest, and Central regions of the United States. Since the LRMS assessment is relatively new, as is the exploring the impact of prayer on love and respect in marriage, establishing external validity for the present study is impractical. However, to determine the robustness of these conclusions, this study would need repeated results to validate temporal validity.

Summary

To study two tenants of Christian faith, prayer with spouse and prayer for spouse as well as the directive instructing spouses to love and respect one another, a quasi-experimental factorial design was used. This prompts three research questions including “does prayer with one’s spouse or prayer for one’s spouse for thirty days effect a Christian husband and wife’s perception of love and respect in their marital relationship, as measured by the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS)?”; “Does prayer with one’s spouse or prayer for one’s spouse for thirty days mediate each of the 8 sub-scales of the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (Appreciative and Affectionate, Considerate and Understanding, Romantically Intimate, Responsible and Principle Driven, Dependable and

Companionable Financially Reliable, Healthy with In-Law Boundaries, Committed and Dedicated) given to Christian married couples?"; and "Are the effects of prayer for one's spouse or prayer with one's spouse different for husbands and wives?"

Demographic variables deemed relevant include length of current marriage, male or female, religious affiliation, church attendance, ethnicity, education, and income range. Dependent variables included the difference on scores between men and women, the subset score on the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS), and total couple scores on the LRMS. The independent variable and the dependent variable of love and respect in marriage were assessed once the thirty-day prayer intervention was applied to two of the three groups, prayer with spouse and prayer for spouse.

Participants included religious couples referred by Christian religious leaders and recruited via this authors personal and professional Facebook page. Participants were nonrandomly assigned to three groups and took one pre-test, the LRMS, followed by thirty-days of prayer, and concluded with a post-test of LRMS. Our suppositions included there will be a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores on the LRMS after the thirty-day prayer intervention in the pray with spouse group and the pray for spouse group; there will be a statistically significant difference on each of the eight subscales of the LRMS after the thirty-day prayer intervention in the pray with spouse group and the pray for spouse group; and there will be a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores on the LRMS for husbands and wives. Data was analyzed using exploratory analysis, a one-way ANOVA test to determine comparison among the groups, and Tukey's HSD test to explore relationships between two sets of data. Validity was prioritized so the study's results are meaningful and able to fill the research gap concerning prayer's impact on the perception of love and respect in the marital relationship for religious couples.

Chapter Four: Findings

Overview

This quasi-experimental, nonrandom, pretest/posttest survey study was designed to allow the researcher to examine the relationship between marital prayer, either with spouse or for spouse, and the relationship to love and respect in marriage in religious couples. Qualified couples were placed in one of three groups depending upon their self-report in the screening survey describing their frequency of prayer. Two of the three groups received instructions for a 30-day prayer intervention before they took the posttest. This design allowed for the following research questions to be explored.

Research question one explored “does prayer with one’s spouse or prayer for one’s spouse for thirty days affect a Christian husband’s and wife’s perception of love and respect in their marital relationship, as measured by the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS)?” Research question two examined “does prayer with one’s spouse or prayer for one’s spouse for thirty days mediate any of the eight sub-scales of the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (Appreciative and Affectionate, Considerate and Understanding, Romantically Intimate, Responsible and Principle Driven, Dependable and Companionable Financially Reliable, Healthy with In-Law Boundaries, Committed and Dedicated) given to Christian married couples?” Finally, research question three asked “are the effects of prayer for one’s spouse or prayer with one’s spouse different for husbands and wives?” This chapter will use the data collected to attempt an answer for these questions.

To examine the results for the research questions, descriptive statistics will be used. This empirical approach allows the researcher to summarize and describe all data collected and make conclusions based only upon the individuals sampled regarding the answers to the proposed research questions. To organize the data, the mean, median, and standard deviation were reported for quantitative measures, and the frequency and relative frequency were reported for categorical

responses. Data will also be tested for statistical significance, and graphs will be used to organize the descriptive statistics for ease of comprehension.

Descriptive Statistics

Population and Demographic Analysis

A total of 736 individuals submitted the initial screening survey to begin the study. Of these, 70 individuals' spouses did not submit a screening survey and were excluded from beginning the study. This left 666 individuals, resulting in 333 married couples who began the study. Of the 333 couples who undertook the study, 18 couples failed to complete the study, and were therefore, omitted. A total of 315 couples completed the study. Of these, 99 were placed in Group 1, 100 were placed in Group 2, and 116 were placed in Group 3. Therefore, this study included a total of 630 individuals, who were paired with their spouse, resulting in 315 married Christian heterosexual couples ($N = 315$) across the United States. Participants are residents of twenty-eight states including Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Frequencies and relative percentages for the categorical responses from the Screening Survey and Exit Survey are presented in Table 1 which presents demographic information for all participants, husbands, and wives respectively.

The participants in this study were not ethnically diverse. While this study was not aimed at a specific population, the majority (595 participants, 94.4%) of those who agreed to participate or who heard about the study identified as White. Sixteen participants (2.5%) reported their ethnicity as Hispanic. Nine participants (1.4%) reported their ethnicity as Black or African American. Ethnicities that had the fewest participants were those of multiple ethnicities (5 participants, >1%), Asian or Pacific Islander (3 participants, >1%), and American Indian or Alaskan Native (2 participants, >1%).

The majority of the participant sample was highly educated with 326 participants (51.8%) reporting a college degree, and 253 participants (40.2%) holding a graduate degree. More wives (176 participants) in the sample reported being college graduates (55.9%), whereas 150 of the husbands (47.6%) were college graduates. More husbands (133 participants) reported graduate degrees (42.2%), than the 120 wives reporting graduate degrees (38.1%). The majority of participants (219 participants, 34.8% of participants) earned more than \$100,000 per year. It is important to note that 109 participants chose not to provide information about their income level, resulting in 17.3% of participants' income being unreported. The majority of the participants (521 participants, 82.7%) reported being employed.

To participate in this study participants had to be married at least one year. For marital duration, the most populous subcategory reported being married 1-10 years (188 participants, 29.8%). Those who have been married 11-20 years represented 155 participants of the total sample (24.6%). Participants who have been married 21-30 years included 140 participants (22.2%). Those who reported being married 31-40 years included 93 participants (14.8%). Thirty-four participants (5.4%) stated they have been married for 41-50 years. Lastly, 20 participants (3.2%) reported being married for over 51 years.

Participants were asked to report if their current marriage is their first, second, third, fourth, fifth or more marriage. The majority of individuals (523 participants, 83.0%) stated their current marriage is their first marriage. Seventy-three participants (11.6%) stated their current marriage is their second marriage. Seventeen participants (2.7%) reported their current marriage is their fifth or more marriage. Eleven participants (1.7%) reported their current marriage is their third marriage. Lastly, six participants (1%) reported their current marriage is their fourth marriage.

Participants were also asked to report the number of children they currently have. The most reported number of children people had was two (244 participants, 38.7%). Those who have three

children included 187 participants (29.7%). Sixty-one participants (9.7%) report only one child. Fifty-six participants (8.9%) report four children. Forty-two participants (6.7%) report more than four children. Forty individuals (6.4%) report zero children.

Participants were given nine Protestant denominations to choose between. The most frequently cited religious affiliation among respondents was Baptist (277 participants, 44.0%) while forty-two percent of participants (264 participants) identified as non-denominational. Those who identified as Church of Christ were composed of 26 participants (4.1%), while twenty-four participants (3.8%) identified as Other. Sixteen participants (2.5%) identified as Presbyterian, and fifteen participants (2.4%) identified as Methodist. Episcopalian-Anglican (4 participants), Lutheran (2 participants), and Pentecostal (2 participants) had the smallest representation in this participant group.

All participants were asked to report their church attendance frequency, and how they to pray. The vast majority of participants (555 participants, 88.1%) report weekly church attendance. The remaining participants reported monthly attendance (53 participants, 8.4%), daily attendance (11 participants, 1.8%), yearly attendance (7 participants, 1.1%), and quarterly attendance (4 participants, <1%). The majority of participants (433 participants, 68.7%) reported they pray “with and for my spouse.” Interestingly, praying “with and for my spouse” was split almost evenly between husbands (215 participants) and wives (218 participants). One hundred sixteen participants (18.4%) reported they pray “individually only,” comprised of 56 husbands and 60 wives. Participants who prayed “for my spouse” included 58 individuals (9.2%) comprised of 30 husbands and 28 wives. Those who selected prayed “with my spouse” included 23 individuals (3.7%), with 14 husbands and 9 wives respectively.

The exit survey asked each group (group 1: no directed prayer; group 2: pray for spouse; and group 3: pray with spouse) if they felt they benefited from participation in this study. The majority of

all participants (299 participants, 47.5%) stated they “strongly agree.” Those who stated they “somewhat agree” included 182 participants (28.9%). Participants who stated they “neither agree nor disagree” included 132 participants (21.0%). Nine participants (1.4%) stated they “strongly disagree” and eight participants (1.3) stated they “somewhat disagree.”

The sample ($N = 630$) was evenly divided into husbands and wives, with 315 participants for each gender group. Ages of the participant sample overall ranged from 22 to 83 ($M = 47.07$, $SD = 13.66$). Husbands ranged in age from 22 to 83 years ($M = 47.72$, $SD = 13.76$). Wives ranged in age from 22 to 80 years ($M = 46.43$, $SD = 13.54$). Table 2 presents participants' ages including mean, standard deviation, median, and range.

Couples who were placed in group 2: pray for spouse or group 3: pray with spouse were asked two additional questions on the exit survey. Couples were asked their opinion on the importance of prayer in their marriage and the frequency of their prayer during the 30-day prayer intervention. The majority of participants in both group two (160) and group three (167) reported prayer is extremely important in their marriage. Participants who stated prayer is very important in their marriage included 35 participants from group two and 56 participants from group three. Participants who stated prayer is moderately important in their marriage included 4 participants from group two and 8 participants from group three. Only one participant from group two and group three stated that prayer was slightly important in their marriage. Table 3 provides this information.

Of the couples who were given the two different assignments to pray, the majority of both group two (135 participants) and group three (149 participants) stated they prayed always: once a day. Those who reported they prayed often: more than once a week, included 56 participants from group two and 67 participants from group three. Participants who reported they prayed sometimes: once a week, included 4 participants from group two and 10 participants from group three. Those who reported praying rarely: once every other week, included 2 participants from group two and 4

participants from group three. Only 2 participants from group three stated they never prayed during the 30-day period. Table 4 provides frequency of prayer for Group two and Group three.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Research Participants from Screening Survey and Exit Survey

Description	Husbands (n = 315)		Wives (n = 315)		Combined (n = 630)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Length of Marriage						
1-10 years	93	29.5	95	30.2	188	29.8
11-20 years	78	24.8	77	24.4	155	24.6
21-30 years	70	22.2	70	22.2	140	22.2
31-40 years	46	14.6	47	14.9	93	14.8
41-50 years	18	5.7	16	5.1	34	5.4
>51 years	10	3.2	10	3.2	20	3.2
Education Level						
High School	32	10.2	19	6.0	51	8.1
College	150	47.6	176	55.9	326	51.8
Graduate School	133	42.2	120	38.1	253	40.2
Income Level						
<\$50K/Year	27	8.5	83	26.4	110	17.5
\$50-100/Year	99	31.4	93	29.5	192	30.5
\$>100K/Year	165	52.4	54	17.1	219	34.8
N/A	24	7.7	85	27.0	109	17.3

Table 1 (continued)

Denomination						
Baptist	138	43.8	139	44.1	277	44.0
Church of Christ	1	<1.0	13	4.1	26	4.1
Episcopalian-Anglican	2	<1.0	2	<1.0	4	1.0
Lutheran	1	<1.0	1	<1.0	2	<1.0
Methodist	7	2.2	8	2.5	15	2.4
Non-denominational	134	42.5	130	41.3	264	41.9
Pentacostal	1	<1.0	1	<1.0	2	<1.0
Presbyterian	8	2.5	8	2.5	16	2.5
Other	11	3.5	13	4.1	24	3.8
Employed						
Yes	291	92.4	230	73.0	521	82.7
No	24	7.6	85	27.0	109	17.3
Church Attendance Frequency						
Daily	9	2.9	2	<1.0	11	1.8
Weekly	270	85.7	285	90.5	555	88.1
Monthly	28	8.9	25	7.9	53	8.4
Quarterly	3	1.0	1	<1.0	4	1.0
Yearly	5	1.6	2	<1.0	7	1.1

Table 1 (continued)

How Do You Pray?						
Individually only	56	17.8	60	19.1	116	18.4
For my spouse	30	9.5	28	8.9	58	9.2
With my spouse	14	4.4	9	2.9	23	3.7
With and for my spouse	215	68.3	218	69.2	433	68.7
Ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	<1.0	1	<1.0	2	<1.0
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	<1.0	1	<1.0	3	<1.0
Black or African American	6	1.9	3	1.0	9	1.4
Hispanic	9	2.9	7	2.2	16	2.5
White	295	93.7	300	95.2	595	94.4
Multiple Ethnicities	2	<1.0	3	1.0	5	1.0
Is Your Current Marriage Your First?						
1 st	255	81.0	268	85.1	523	83.0
2 nd	40	12.7	33	10.5	73	11.6
3 rd	6	1.9	5	1.6	11	1.7
4 th	3	1.0	3	1.0	6	1.0
>4	11	3.5	6	1.9	17	2.7

Table 1 (continued)

Number of Children						
0	22	7.0	18	5.7	40	6.4
1	29	9.2	32	10.2	61	9.7
2	123	39.1	121	38.4	244	38.7
3	92	29.2	95	30.2	187	29.7
4	27	8.6	29	9.2	56	8.9
>4	22	7.0	20	6.4	42	6.7
Do You Feel You Benefitted from						
Participation in the Study?						
Strongly Agree	149	47.3	150	47.6	299	47.5
Somewhat Agree	92	29.2	90	28.6	182	28.9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	66	21.0	66	21.0	132	21.0
Somewhat Disagree	4	1.3	4	1.3	8	1.3
Strongly Disagree	4	1.3	5	1.6	9	1.4

Note: N/A for Income Level indicates those participants who did not respond to that item on the demographic questionnaire.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Age of Research Participants

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Range
All Participants (<i>n</i> = 630)	47.07	13.66	46.5	22—83
Husbands (<i>n</i> = 315)	47.72	13.76	47	22—83
Wives (<i>n</i> = 315)	46.43	13.54	45	22—80

Table 3

Participants’ Response to the Statement, “I feel like prayer is important in our marriage.”

Response option	Group 2 (<i>n</i> = 200)		Group 3 (<i>n</i> = 232)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Extremely	160	80.0	167	72.0
Very	35	17.5	56	21.4
Moderately	4	2.0	8	3.4
Slightly	1	0.5	1	0.4
Not important at all	0	0	0	0

Note: The statement about the importance of prayer was left out of the material given to the participants in Group 1.

Table 4

How Often Did You Pray?

Frequency ^a	Group 2		Group 3	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Always	67 (67.0)	68 (68.0)	74 (63.8)	75 (64.7)
Often	28 (28.0)	28 (28.0)	32 (27.6)	35 (30.2)
Sometimes	4 (4.0)	3 (3.0)	7 (6.0)	3 (2.6)
Rarely	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.7)	2 (1.7)
Never	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)

Note: $n = 100$ couples for Group 2, and $n = 116$ couples for Group 3.

^aThe table has the number of participants who reported each frequency of prayer, followed by the percentage in parentheses.

Results

Instrumentation

One survey instrument that was used for inferential analysis was the LRMS. Participants were asked to complete the LRMS as both the pretest and posttest measure. This assessment is an objective measure to determine the husband's and wife's perceptions of love and respect in their marital relationship. The LRMS consists of 46 items that explore eight subscales to assess love and respect including: Appreciative and Affectionate, Considerate and Understanding, Romantically Intimate, Responsible and Principle-Driven, Dependable and Companionable, Financially Reliable, Healthy with Boundaries (In-Laws), and Committed and Dedicated (Louis & Louis, 2021). The overall scoring for all test participants was as follows. On the pretest all participants scored a $M = 226.8$, $SD = 29.31$, and $Mdn = 232$. On the posttest all participants scored $M = 233.3$, $SD = 31.69$, and $Mdn = 241$. This resulted in a difference of $M = 6.47$, $SD = 18.75$, and $Mdn = 5$. Means, standard deviation, median, and range for the LRMS with pretest and posttest scores are given in Table 5 for the entire sample, husbands, and wives, respectively. For a distribution of pre-test scores see Figure 2 in Appendix V and post-test scores see Figure 3 in Appendix W. Figure 4, found in Appendix X shows a histogram of the differenced LRMS scores by group.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS) Scores and for LRMS Subscales

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Range
All Research Participants (n = 630)				
Full LRMS Scale				
Pre-Test	226.79	29.31	232	109—271
Post-Test	233.27	31.69	241	64—276
Difference	6.47	18.75	5	-181—111
Subscale 1				
Pre-Test	31.95	7.57	33	8—42
Post-Test	33.57	7.39	35	9—42
Difference	1.35	4.39	1	-25—22
Subscale 2				
Pre-Test	37.10	7.72	39	10—48
Post-Test	38.96	7.72	40	10—48
Difference	1.86	4.65	1	-25—27
Subscale 3				
Pre-Test	34.55	7.17	36	10—42
Post-Test	35.60	7.32	38	7—42
Difference	1.05	4.64	1	-29—27
Subscale 4				
Pre-Test	33.45	4.13	34	11—42
Post-Test	34.04	4.05	35	7—42
Difference	0.59	3.34	0	-30—14
Subscale 5				
Pre-Test	43.91	4.92	45	17—48
Post-Test	44.31	5.39	46	10—48
Difference	0.40	3.40	0	-33—17

Table 5 (continued)

Subscale 6				
Pre-Test	14.43	3.66	15.5	3—18
Post-Test	14.94	3.38	16	3—18
Difference	0.51	2.23	0	-14—10
Subscale 7				
Pre-Test	15.92	2.52	17	4—18
Post-Test	16.23	2.42	17	3—18
Difference	0.31	1.95	0	-15—10
Subscale 8				
Pre-Test	15.21	2.78	16	5—18
Post-Test	15.61	2.78	0	3—18
Difference	0.40	2.05	0	-15—9
Husbands (<i>n</i> = 315)				
Full LRMS Scale				
Pre-Test	222.61	29.72	226	109—271
Post-Test	228.29	33.46	236	64—276
Difference	5.68	21.73	5	-181—111
Subscale 1				
Pre-Test	31.72	7.50	32	9—42
Post-Test	32.84	7.71	35	9—42
Difference	1.12	4.71	1	-25—22
Subscale 2				
Pre-Test	36.16	7.84	37	12—48
Post-Test	37.93	7.87	40	13—48
Difference	1.77	5.22	1	-25—27
Subscale 3				
Pre-Test	31.54	7.54	33	10—42
Post-Test	32.84	8.18	35	7—42
Difference	1.30	5.66	1	-29—27

Table 5 (continued)

Subscale 4				
Pre-Test	33.40	4.31	34	11—42
Post-Test	33.80	4.36	35	7—42
Difference	0.40	3.79	0	-30—10
Subscale 5				
Pre-Test	44.23	4.28	46	24—48
Post-Test	44.38	5.13	46	11—48
Difference	0.16	3.70	0	-33—14
Subscale 6				
Pre-Test	13.91	3.85	15	3—18
Post-Test	14.46	3.58	16	3—18
Difference	0.55	2.57	0	-14—10
Subscale 7				
Pre-Test	16.01	2.31	17	7—18
Post-Test	16.21	2.41	17	3—18
Difference	0.20	2.04	0	-15—9
Subscale 8				
Pre-Test	15.63	2.47	16	5—18
Post-Test	15.81	2.62	16	3—18
Difference	0.18	2.13	0	-15—6
Wives (<i>n</i> = 315)				
Full LRMS Scale				
Pre-Test	230.98	28.33	237	112—271
Post-Test	238.25	29.03	245	124—276
Difference	7.27	15.20	5	-41—86
Subscale 1				
Pre-Test	32.73	7.03	33	11—42
Post-Test	34.30	7.00	36	10—42
Difference	1.57	4.04	1	-12—18

Table 5 (continued)

Subscale 2				
Pre-Test	38.04	7.50	40	10—48
Post-Test	39.98	7.45	42	10—48
Difference	1.94	4.01	1	-10—18
Subscale 3				
Pre-Test	37.56	5.30	39	15—42
Post-Test	38.36	5.02	40	9—42
Difference	0.80	3.31	0	-22—17
Subscale 4				
Pre-Test	33.49	3.94	34	18—42
Post-Test	34.28	3.70	35	15—42
Difference	0.79	2.82	0	-7—14
Subscale 5				
Pre-Test	43.59	5.48	45	17—48
Post-Test	44.23	5.64	46	10—48
Difference	0.64	3.06	0	-11—17
Subscale 6				
Pre-Test	14.95	3.39	16	3—18
Post-Test	15.42	3.11	16	3—18
Difference	0.47	1.83	0	-7—10
Subscale 7				
Pre-Test	15.83	2.72	17	4—18
Post-Test	16.25	2.43	17	4—18
Difference	0.43	1.85	0	-5—10
Subscale 8				
Pre-Test	14.80	3.00	16	5—18
Post-Test	15.42	2.92	16	3—18
Difference	0.63	1.96	0	-6—9

Outliers

The process of detecting outliers is useful for evaluating the quality and integrity of the data analysis. Outliers can significantly affect the results and distort the interpretation of the findings, making their detection and handling a critical step in the research process. Here, we intend to identify outliers in three specific scenarios: LRMS scores before the prayer-group intervention, LRMS scores after the prayer-group intervention, and the difference between post-intervention and pre-intervention LRMS scores. Our criterion for identifying outliers is set at a z-score magnitude greater than 3, which would imply that a data point is located three or more standard deviations away from the group mean. While the threshold may seem conservative, it is chosen to ensure that only the most extreme data points are considered outliers.

The identification of outliers in these three scenarios is particularly valuable for this research. Detecting outliers in the pre-intervention scores provides insight into the initial distribution of LRMS scores within each group. Comparing this with the post-intervention LRMS scores allows us to assess the impact of the prayer intervention, with a focus on any substantial deviations from the expected changes. Finally, examining the outliers in the differenced LRMS scores helps in understanding the magnitude of change attributed to the intervention and whether any extreme shifts are notable.

The first step in detecting outliers involves computing z-scores (i.e., z_{ij}) for the LRMS scores of each individual (i) within each intervention group (j) such that

$$z_{ij} = \frac{(x_{ij} - \bar{x}_j)}{s_j},$$

where x_{ij} is the i^{th} individual LRMS score for the j^{th} prayer group, \bar{x}_j and s_j are the sample mean and standard, respectively, for the j^{th} prayer group, $i = 1, 2, \dots, n_j$, and $j = 1, 2, 3$. Z-scores are particularly useful as they allow for the standardization of the data, enabling comparisons across different groups and variables. The z-scores represent the number of standard deviations a particular

data point is from the group mean, providing a quantifiable measure of how extreme or unusual a data point is.

When examining the LRMS pretest scores, five outliers of the 630 participants scores were found. These five scores fell three Standard Deviations below the mean, resulting in any score below 138.86. The five outlier scores all fell below the mean, resulting in extremely low scores. These scores were examined by LRMS subcategories. It was found with the five outlier scores, that subcategory 2: Considerate and Understanding, had more scores of 1 (completely untrue) and 2 (mostly untrue).

When examining the LRMS posttest scores, eight outliers of the 630 participants scores were found. These eight scores fell three Standard Deviations below the mean, resulting in any score below 138.2. Interestingly, four of the participants who had outlier scores on the pretest also had outlier scores on the posttest. Once again, the eight outlier scores only fell below the mean, resulting in the lowest scores on the test. When the scores were examined by LRMS subcategories, subcategory 2: Considerate and Understanding had the lowest scores of 1 (completely untrue) and 3 (slightly more true than untrue) than another other subcategory. While this is an observation that can be seen by looking at the data, we do not have enough information to make a conclusion as to why subcategory 2: Considerate and Understanding received such low scores from these participants.

Reliability of Instrumentation with Sample

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to test for internal consistency and its values from both the pretest and posttest can be found in Table 6. The overall Cronbach's alpha values for the pretest and posttest results were .95 and .96 respectively, indicating the measurement of constructs was reliable to data used in this study. When looking at the LRMS subscales, the majority of the Cronbach's alpha scores fell between .80 to .92, placing internal consistency reliability in the "good" or "excellent" category. Subscale 4 was the only category with a Cronbach's alpha pre-test and post-test score of

.68 and .69, which is considered questionable (Warner, 2013). However, this was not particularly concerning, as the overall Cronbach's alpha was excellent.

Table 6

Item Numbers and Internal Consistency for LRMS Subscales

	FRMS Item Numbers	Cronbach's α	
		Pre-Test	Post-Test
Subscale 1	1, 9, 17, 25, 30, 35, 40	.89	.91
Subscale 2	2, 10, 18, 26, 31, 36, 41, 45	.90	.92
Subscale 3	3, 11, 19, 27, 32, 37, 42	.90	.93
Subscale 4	4, 12, 20, 28, 33, 38, 43	.68	.69
Subscale 5	5, 13, 21, 29, 34, 39, 44, 46	.89	.93
Subscale 6	6, 14, 22	.84	.85
Subscale 7	7, 15, 23	.80	.83
Subscale 8	8, 16, 24	.84	.85
Full FRMS	1 – 46	.95	.96

Hypotheses

We examined hypotheses initially stated in Chapter 3 to determine if they were statistically significant. Because the assumption tests utilized were the same for each hypothesis, those will be explained prior to the hypothesis findings. Hypothesis findings for Hypotheses 1 and 2 will be discussed together, as they each state the same hypothesis by comparing Group 3 vs. Group 1 and Group 2 vs. Group 1. Hypotheses 3-6 and 17-18 findings will be grouped together in pairs, in a similar fashion due to the only difference being the groups compared. Hypotheses 7-16 will discuss the results after Hypothesis 16 due to the similar results. Hypotheses 19 and 20 will also be discussed together, as they both explore an increase in scores on the post-test for both husbands and wives. Table 6 shows the overall scores for Group 3 vs. Group 1, Group 2 vs. Group 1, and Group 3 vs. Group 2, including ANOVA, p-values, and Tukey's HSD results.

Assumption Tests

In anticipation of conducting a series of hypothesis tests, we undertook a thorough sample size determination. To achieve an appropriate balance between statistical power and Type I error rate, we adopted a value of $\alpha = 0.05$, a power ($1 - \beta$) of 0.90, and a moderate effect size of 0.25. These decisions were informed by the practical significance of the differences we wish to detect in the study (Cohen, 1988). We calculated sample size determination using G*Power 3.1.9.4. through a power analysis.

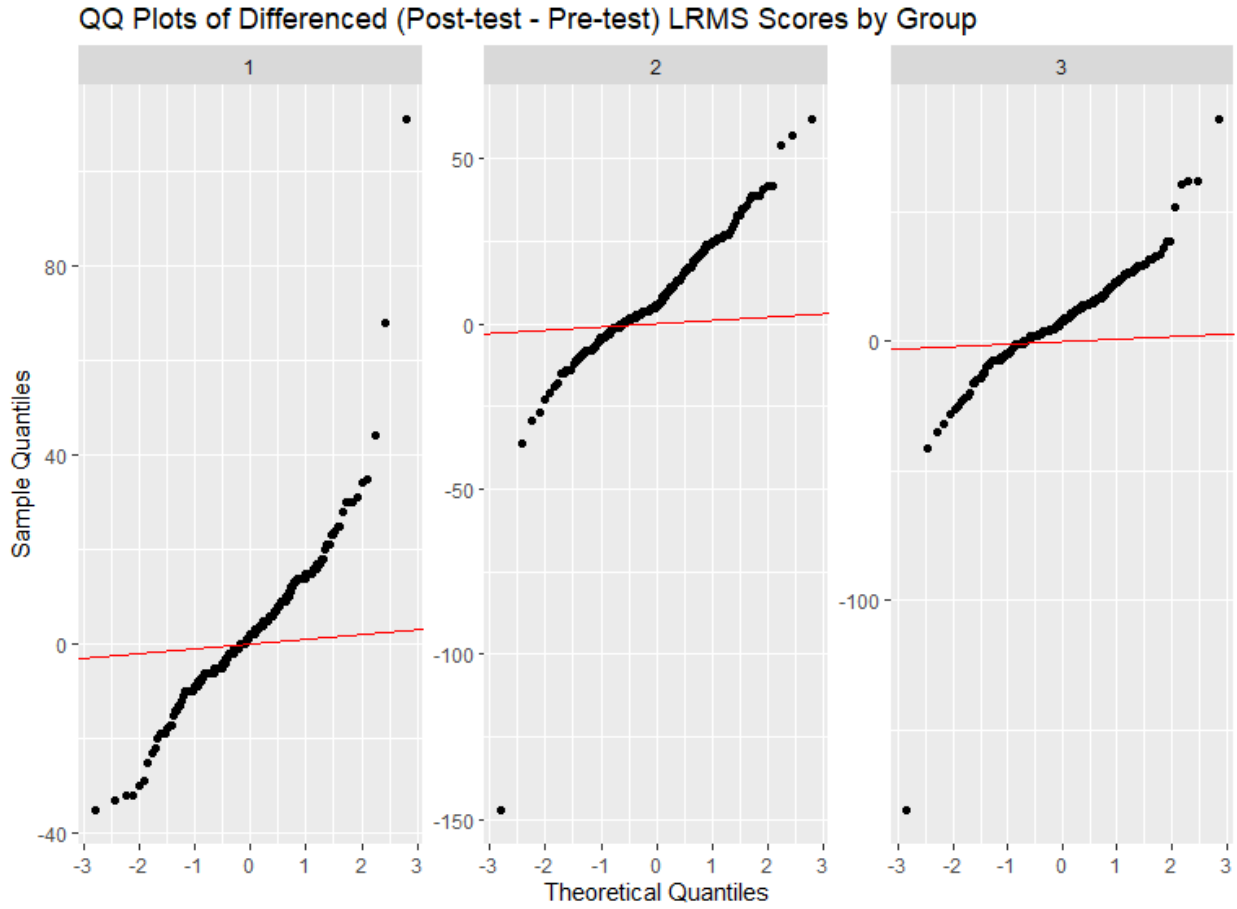
For a three-group design, an overall sample size of 200 participants per group was deemed sufficient to achieve the desired level of statistical power. Considering our research objectives, which emphasize the inclusion of married couples, we concluded that an aggregate sample size of 100 couples per group, rather than individual participants, better aligned with the requirements of our analytical framework. This decision reflects our commitment to a conservative approach in study design.

The Shapiro-Wilk test, employed to assess the assumption of normality of our sampling distribution, yielded statistically significant results ($W = 0.832$; $p < 0.0001$). However, we remark that the significance of this test should be contextualized within the nature of the data, which is characterized by inherent discreteness, thereby deviating from the normality assumptions inherent in parametric tests. Such discreteness is expected in real-world applications, especially when survey data are involved. Hence, while the Shapiro-Wilks test suggests deviations from normality, our initial finding is not substantively concerning given that the parametric tests we intend to implement, such as the one-way ANOVA, possess a degree of robustness, especially when group sample sizes are sufficiently large. In this context, the adequacy of the sample size per group plays a pivotal role in the validity of the analytical methods chosen here.

The one-way ANOVA, which assumes normality primarily for smaller within-group sample sizes, becomes less reliant on strict adherence to the normality assumption as group sample sizes increase. With an ample sample size of nearly 200 participants per group, as thoroughly determined in our study, the Central Limit Theorem comes into play, exerting its influence by endowing the distribution of sample means with a tendency toward normality, even in cases where the underlying population does not follow a normal distribution. The extensive sample size per group serves as a mitigating factor, assuring that the statistical inferences drawn from our analyses remain trustworthy and aligned with the principles of hypothesis testing. We employed Levene's test for homoscedasticity to ascertain the assumption of equal population variances of the differenced LRMS scores among the three considered treatment groups. Here, the test did not yield statistical significance ($F = 0.9449$; $p = 0.3893$), affirming the suitability of the assumption of homoscedasticity. The QQ plots, given in Figure 1, visually demonstrate that the differenced data for each of the three groups are clearly obtained from non-normally distributed populations.

Figure 1

QQ Plots of Differenced (Post-test - Pre-test) LRMS Scores by Group



Note: LRMS = Love and Respect Marriage Scale.

Hypothesis 1

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-with-spouse group (Group 3) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is rejected and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 2

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-for-spouse group (Group 2) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is rejected and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The initial one-way ANOVA test for equal differenced overall LRMS means across the three treatment groups resulted in a p-value of 0.00418, which is less than our stated α of 0.05. The conclusion from this output is that at least one of the three differenced prayer intervention groups has a different average than the other two. Next, using Tukey's HSD, which controls the family-wise error rate at 5%, we determined which specific group means were different. Both the pray-for-and-with spouse (Group 3) and pray-for-spouse-only (Group 2) differenced group means were found to be statistically significantly larger than that for Group 1. Tukey's HSD test did not reveal any notable difference in the average LRMS scores between the pray-with-and-for-spouse and pray-for-spouse-only groups.

Hypothesis 3

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat1: Appreciative and Affectionate after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-with-spouse group (Group 3) compared to the no directed prayer

group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is rejected and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 4

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat1: Appreciative and Affectionate after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-for-spouse group (Group 2) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is rejected and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The ANOVA test yielded a p-value that was statistically significant ($p=0.0090$), which implies that there is a statistically detected difference between at least two of the three original differenced LRMS prayer group averages. Using Tukey's HSD test, we determined that the pray-with-and-for spouse and pray-for-spouse only groups both had a statistically higher average differenced LRMS score than that for group 1. This result implies that, on average, either praying with and for your spouse or simply praying for your spouse can result in an increase in appreciativeness and affection in one's marriage as opposed to not praying with or for one's spouse. Tukey's HSD test did not reveal any notable difference in the average LRMS scores between the pray-with-and-for-spouse and pray-for-spouse-only groups.

Hypothesis 5

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 2: Considerate and Understanding after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-for-spouse group (Group 3) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is rejected and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 6

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 2: Considerate and Understanding after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-for-spouse group (Group 2) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is rejected and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The ANOVA test produced a p-value that was statistically significant ($p < 0.0001$), meaning that, on average, there was a notable distinction in the differenced LRMS scores for how considerate and understanding one is between at least two of the prayer intervention groups. From Tukey's HSD test, we determined that both the pray-with-and-for-spouse and pray-for-spouse only groups produced a statistically higher average improvement in LRMS score than for the group that did not pray either with or for their spouse. Tukey's HSD test did not reveal any notable difference in the average LRMS scores between the pray-with-and-for-spouse and pray-for-spouse-only groups. The conclusion we can make from this result is that either praying with and for one's spouse or for praying for one's spouse can result in a significant increase in being considerate and understanding in one's marriage, compared with not praying either with or for one's spouse.

Hypothesis 7

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 3: Romantically Intimate after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-for-spouse group (Group 3) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is retained and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 8

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 3: Romantically Intimate after the 30-day prayer

intervention in the pray-for-spouse group (Group 2) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is retained and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 9

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 4: Responsible and Principle Driven after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-with-spouse group (Group 3) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is retained and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 10

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 4: Responsible and Principle Driven after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-with-spouse group (Group 2) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is retained and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 11

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 5: Dependable and Companionable after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-with-spouse group (Group 3) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is retained and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 12

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 5: Dependable and Companionable after the 30-day

prayer intervention in the pray-for-spouse group (Group 2) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is retained and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 13

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 6: Financially Reliable after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-with-spouse group (Group 3) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is retained and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 14

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 6: Financially Reliable after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-for-spouse group (Group 2) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is retained and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 15

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 7: Healthy with In-Law Boundaries after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-with-spouse group (Group 2) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is retained and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 16

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 7: Healthy with In-Law Boundaries after the 30-

day prayer intervention in the pray-for-spouse group (Group 2) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is retained and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

The results for Hypothesis 7-16 are as follows. For LRMS subscales 3-7, additional one-way ANOVA tests were performed for the detection of statistically significant discrepancies in the differenced LRMS score for the three prayer intervention groups. In each of these 5 one-way ANOVA testing results, the p-value was not statistically significant (i.e., >0.05), and, therefore, we were unable to say that there was a statistically significant difference in the differenced LRMS scores in at least two of the prayer intervention groups after 30 days. While the hypotheses of inter-group mean differences remains plausible, our dataset, in its current form, did not yield statistically significant evidence to substantiate such distinctions for Hypotheses 7—16.

Hypothesis 17

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score form the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 8: Committed and Dedicated after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-with-spouse group (Group 3) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is rejected and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 18

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score form the average pre-test score on the LRMS subscale of Cat 8: Committed and Dedicated after the 30-day prayer intervention in the pray-for-spouse group (Group 2) compared to the no directed prayer group (Group 1). Based on the results, the null hypothesis is rejected and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The ANOVA test for the average differenced LRMS subscale measuring commitment and dedication resulted in a p-value that was statistically significant ($p=0.0242$). Through Tukey's HSD test, we were able to conclude that the pray-with-spouse only group produced a significantly higher average differenced score than the group that prayed neither with nor for their spouse. We remark that while the pray-with-and-for their spouse group was not significantly higher in a statistical sense, Tukey's adjusted p-value (0.0602) for comparing groups 3 and 1 was close to our originally set criteria of $\alpha = 0.05$.

Hypothesis 19

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS test after 30 days for husbands. Based on the results, the null hypothesis is retained and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 20

There will be a statistically significant increase in the average post-test score from the average pre-test score on the LRMS test after 30 days for wives. Based on the results, the null hypothesis is rejected and as a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The one-way ANOVA test to determine if at least one of the husbands' average differenced LRMS scores is statistically different from the other two prayer intervention groups produced a p-value that was not statistically significant ($p=0.354$). Therefore, we were not able to conclude that, on average, husbands showed notable improvement in LRMS scores after the 30-day intervention period when either praying with and for their spouse or when praying with their spouse only compared to those who did not pray either with or for their spouse.

However, the one-way ANOVA test for the wives' average differenced LRMS scores across all three treatment groups was statistically significant ($p=0.0002$), which implies that at least one of the differenced averages between prayer intervention groups were statistically disparate. Using

Tukey's HSD test, we were able to conclude that wives who both either prayed with and for their spouse or who prayed for their spouse produced a statistically higher average improvement in LRMS score than for the group that did not pray either with or for their spouse. Tukey's HSD test did not reveal any notable difference for wives only in the average LRMS scores between the pray-with-and-for-spouse and pray-for-spouse-only groups. Table 7 provides comparisons of LRMS differences scores using ANOVA and the Tukey HSD test.

Table 7

Comparisons of LRMS Difference Scores (Post-Test minus Pre-Test) for Participants in the Three Groups using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Tukey HSD Test

	ANOVA		Tukey's HSD Test		Statistical Significance
	<i>F</i> Ratio	<i>p</i> value	Groups	Adjusted <i>p</i> value	
Comparisons for LRMS Full Scale Scores					
All Participants (<i>n</i> = 630)	5.52	.0042			*
			3 vs. 1	.0087	*
			2 vs. 1	.0136	*
			3 vs. 2	.9989	
Husbands (<i>n</i> = 315)	1.04	.354			
			3 vs. 1	.3222	
			2 vs. 1	.7900	
			3 vs. 2	.7260	
Wives (<i>n</i> = 315)	8.97	.0002			*
			3 vs. 1	.0049	*
			2 vs. 1	.0002	*
			3 vs. 2	.5537	

Table 7 (continued)

Comparisons for LRMS Subscale Scores					
Subscale 1 Appreciative and Affectionate	4.75	.0090			*
			3 vs. 1	.0164	*
			2 vs. 1	.0254	*
			3 vs. 2	.9981	
Subscale 2 Considerate and Understanding	11.14	<.0001			*
			3 vs. 1	.0003	*
			2 vs. 1	<.0001	*
			3 vs. 2	.8789	
Subscale 3 Romantically Intimate	1.02	.363			
			3 vs. 1	.3412	
			2 vs. 1	.6068	
			3 vs. 2	.9098	
Subscale 4 Responsible and Principle-Driven	1.02	.36			
			3 vs. 1	.6657	
			2 vs. 1	.3300	
			3 vs. 2	.8113	
Subscale 5 Dependable and Companionable	1.13	.325			
			3 vs. 1	.2914	
			2 vs. 1	.6924	
			3 vs. 2	.7895	

Table 7 (continued)

Subscale 6 Financially Reliable	1.86	.157		
			3 vs. 1	.1507
			2 vs. 1	.8487
			3 vs. 2	.3957
Subscale 7 Healthy with In-Law Boundaries	1.51	.222		
			3 vs. 1	.5819
			2 vs. 1	.1929
			3 vs. 2	.6983
Subscale 8 Committed and Dedicated	3.74	.0242		*
			3 vs. 1	.0602
			2 vs. 1	.0354
			3 vs. 2	.9517

Note: LRMS = Love and Respect Marriage Scale. This table reports the results of 11 ANOVAs. Difference scores (post-test minus pre-test) for the full LRMS were analyzed in an ANOVA with data from all participants ($df = 2, 627$) and were analyzed in two other ANOVAs, one for husbands and one for wives ($df = 2, 312$). Difference scores for each of the LRMS subscales were also analyzed in a series of ANOVAs. LRMS data from six participants were missing from the ANOVA for Subscale 3 ($df = 2, 621$), but LRMS data from all participants was available for the ANOVAs for the other seven subscales ($df = 2, 627$).

* $p < .05$.

Research Question 1

Does prayer with one's spouse or prayer for one's spouse for thirty days affect a Christian husband's and wife's perceptions of love and respect in their marital relationship, as measured by the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS)?

After the pray-for-spouse (Group 2) and pray-with-spouse (Group 3) completed the 30-day prayer intervention, and the no-directed-prayer (Group 1) completed the 30-day waiting period, their pretest and posttest scores were compared using a one-way ANOVA test for equal differenced overall LRMS means across the three treatment groups. The data conclusion found that at least one of the three differenced prayer intervention groups has a different average than the other two. Tukey's HSD was used to determine which specific group means were different. Both the pray with spouse (Group 3 vs. Group 1, $p = 0.009$) and pray for spouse (Group 2 vs. Group 1, $p = 0.014$) differenced group means were found to be statistically significantly when compared to the no-directed-prayer (Group 1), therefore answering research question 1 in the affirmative.

Research Question 2

Does prayer with one's spouse or prayer for one's spouse for thirty days mediate any of the eight sub-scales of the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (Appreciative and Affectionate, Considerate and Understanding, Romantically Intimate, Responsible and Principle Driven, Dependable and Companionable Financially Reliable, Healthy with In-Law Boundaries, Committed and Dedicated) given to Christian married couples?

Each subscale on the LRMS underwent a one-way ANOVA test to yield a p-value to detect statistically significant discrepancies in the differenced LRMS score for the three prayer intervention groups. Three subscales were found to be statistically significant, including Cat 1: Appreciative and Affectionate ($p = 0.009$), Cat 2: Considerate and Understanding ($p = <0.0001$), and Cat 8: Committed and Dedicated ($p = 0.024$), demonstrating a statistically detected difference between at least two of the three original differenced LRMS prayer group averages. These three subscales underwent Tukey's

HSD test to determine that the pray with spouse and pray for spouse groups both had a statistically higher average differenced LRMS score than that for group 1. For Subscale Cat 1, Cat 2, and Cat 8, the data imply that praying with your spouse or praying for your spouse can result in increased appreciativeness and affection, increased consideration and understanding, and increased commitment and dedication.

Five other subscales, including Cat 3: Romantically Intimate, Cat 4: Responsible and Principle-Driven, Cat 5: Dependable and Companionable, Cat 6: Financially Reliable, and Cat 7: Healthy with In-Law Boundaries, one-way ANOVA test results found the p-value was not statistically significant (i.e., >0.05). This then implies that there was not a statistically significant difference in the differenced LRMS scores in at least two of the prayer intervention groups after 30 days. Therefore, only three of the eight subscales were mediated by prayer with one's spouse or prayer for one's spouse after thirty days.

Research Question 3

Are the effects of prayer for one's spouse or prayer with one's spouse different for husbands and wives?

When comparing the effects for the 30-day prayer intervention between husbands and wives, one-way ANOVA tests were used to determine if the average differenced LRMS scores is statistically significant from the other two prayer intervention groups. When comparing husbands scores across all three groups the p-value was not statistically significant ($p=0.354$), resulting in being unable to conclude that husbands showed notable improvement in LRMS scores after the 30-day prayer intervention. However, wives averaged differenced LRMS scores across all three treatment groups was statistically significant ($p=0.0002$), implying that at least one of the differenced averages between prayer intervention groups were statistically disparate. Tukey's HSD test results revealed that wives who either prayed with their spouse or who prayed for their spouse had a statistically higher average

improvement in LRMS score than for the no directed prayer group. Therefore, research question 3 is affirmative for the wives, but not for the husbands.

Summary of Results

Chapter 4 began with a discussion of the descriptive demographics of all participants in the study. The LRMS was the survey instrument used for inferential analysis as both a pretest and posttest. Data were presented and explained as to the overall scoring of the LRMS. Cronbach's alpha was conducted to conclude that the measurement of constructs for the LRMS fell in the "good," "excellent," and "acceptable" range. Tests to verify the appropriateness of the assumptions were summarized as they related to all hypotheses, and we were able to determine that all of our initial assumptions for the adopted tests were met. We initiated hypotheses 1 through 20 by conducting one-way ANOVA tests followed by the application of Tukey's HSD test upon detecting statistical significance. Tables were used to present the information collected. All three research questions were discussed, and conclusions were supported with one-way ANOVA and Tukey's HSD test results. Chapter 5 will include a discussion of the study findings, implications of this new research, limitations to be noted for this study, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Overview

This chapter presents a narrative discussion of study findings, implications for the findings of this study in marriage counseling and pastoral ministry, limitations that were present in the study, and suggestions for future research. The discussion will seek to correlate the results of this study with previous studies on prayer's impact on marriage. Implications will explain how this current study will be of importance regarding prayer and marriage both in ministry and counseling scenarios. Limitations that were found in the data collection will be discussed to explore possible hinderances to the research. Finally, suggestions for future research will be given so this topic can be studied further.

Discussion

This study has found a statistically significant result between prayer with spouse or prayer for spouse and its positive effect on a Christian husband and wife's perception of love and respect in their marital relationship. Participants included a total of 630 individuals, who were paired with their spouse, resulting in 315 married Christian heterosexual couples across the United States. Couples were placed in one of three groups: 99 were placed in Group 1, 100 were placed in Group 2, and 116 were placed in Group 3. Each group took a screening survey and a LRMS pretest/posttest separated by a 30-day timeframe. During this time, Group 1 waited and then took the exit survey and the LRMS posttest. Group 2 and Group 3 were both assigned a 30-day prayer intervention and then took the exit survey and the LRMS posttest. Group 2 was given the instruction to pray for their spouse each day for thirty days. Group 3 was given the instruction to pray with their spouse for thirty days.

Research Question 1

Does prayer with one's spouse or prayer for one's spouse for thirty days affect a Christian husband's and wife's perceptions of love and respect in their marital relationship, as measured by the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS)?

Study results found that those who prayed for their spouse or with their spouse had statistically significant results confirming that praying for or with one's spouse positively impacted their perception of love and respect. This finding correlates with much of the previous research exploring marriage and prayer, as well as marriage and the presence of love and respect. Gottman's (1994) research found that love and respect are core components of a healthy marriage. Similarly, Louis and Louis (2022) found that love and respect create a flourishing marriage. While the current study did not assess the health of the marital relationships, participants did report higher perceptions of love and respect in their marital relationship after thirty days of prayer for spouse or prayer with spouse which does align with Gottman's (1994) and Louis and Louis' (2022) combined findings that love and respect are core components of a flourishing marriage.

The findings of the current study also align with Stoop and Stoop's (2000), Cooper et al. (2019), and Lambert et al. (2012a) results that daily prayer with spouse deepens couple relationships and builds unity in these relationships. The results of this study demonstrated spousal perceptions of love and respect were changed positively, which could suggest increased unity and deeper relationship between the couple. Appendix T quotes unsolicited comments received via email from participants after completion of the study that allude to deeper marital relationships.

Previous findings regarding marriage and prayer discovered that prayer is a catalyst for change individually and as a couple (Hatch et al., 2016). In the current study, the prayer for spouse and prayer with spouse groups experienced a change in their perception of love and respect. It is unknown whether that change was due to individual or couple change, but results suggest that prayer was the catalyst for the couple's perceptions of change. Dollahite et al. (2018) found that prayer

influences individuals' desires to live out religious practices in their daily lives. Greenway (2020) also found that prayer affects one's view of marriage as sanctified which could lead to prosocial behavior, including couples striving for higher marital goals related to their concept of God. Desire to live out religious principles and higher marital goals could include purposefully acting upon the directives found in scripture regarding love and respect (Ephesians 5:33; Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Peter 3:7).

Participants in this study were given topics for prayer including, "your marriage, your spouse, work, family life, concerns, praises, your relationship, your intimacy, children, decisions, and your spiritual life." Previous research on types of prayer found that prayers of thanksgiving, adoration, and reception positively affected individuals, possibly influencing their behavior or actions in marriage (Whittington & Scher, 2010). Because participants were not given a script for prayer, but rather topics for prayer, it is unknown if these prayers included thanksgiving, adoration, or reception, yet results demonstrate potential for behavior or change in actions in which their spouse would perceive love and respect more positively after the prayer intervention.

Mahoney (2010) found that a spouse's religious beliefs about marriage directly affect that spouse's marital actions and behaviors. The majority of the current study participants' were weekly church attenders, who prayed individually, for their spouse, with their spouse, or with and for their spouse. While information was not collected on couple's religious beliefs, the data collected on their actions and behaviors may suggest that those who perceived higher love and respect in the marital relationship after thirty days of prayer was originally motivated by religious beliefs. Overall, results of the current study align with Klausli's (2020) findings that marriages were positively impacted when couples actively practice their faith through shared prayer.

Research Question 2

Does prayer with one's spouse or prayer for one's spouse for thirty days mediate any of the eight sub-scales of the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (Appreciative and Affectionate, Considerate and Understanding, Romantically Intimate, Responsible and Principle Driven, Dependable and Companionable Financially Reliable, Healthy with In-Law Boundaries, Committed and Dedicated) given to Christian married couples?

Out of the eight LRMS subscales that measure love and respect, participants scores found that three subscales, Cat 1, Cat 2, and Cat 8, resulted in perceived increased appreciativeness and affection, increased consideration and understanding, and increased commitment and dedication. Previous research has found specific areas of a couple's marriage were enhanced as a result of praying with or for their spouse. Many of these previous studies did not utilize the same language as the LRMS subscales, but the results of these studies have shared themes.

This study found that LRMS subscale Cat 1 was statistically significant, thus concluding that couples who prayed together or for each other demonstrated increased appreciation and affection within their marriages, on average. This suggests that shared spiritual activities contribute to a more loving and supportive atmosphere. Several previous studies correlated prayer with increased feelings closeness, like-mindedness, and intimacy following prayer for partner (Lambert et al. 2013; Mullins 2016). These feelings correspond with demonstrating appreciation and affection as found in the current study. Fincham and May (2017) found prayer for partner lowers aggressive tendencies allowing for an increase in a more supportive marital atmosphere. Couples who prayed together have been found to be more generous toward their spouse, suggesting displays of appreciation and affection in their marriage (Wilcox & Dew, 2016).

Results from this study revealed that LRMS subscale Cat 2 was also statistically significant, concluding that couples who incorporated prayer into their relationships displayed higher levels of consideration and understanding towards their spouses, on average. This indicates that prayer may

foster empathy and improved communication. Higher levels of understanding correlate with previous studies that found couples who prayed reported prayer created open communication, thus allowing for better understanding of each other (Cooper et al., 2019; Hatch et al., 2016; Lambert & Dollahite, 2006;). Other studies found that prayer increased empathy and reduced negative action and thoughts for their spouse, suggesting the foundational concepts of consideration and understanding would be present (Butler et al., 2002). Consideration and understanding in marriage are necessary ingredients for forgiveness. Many previous studies found that couples who prayed for their partner showed increased forgiveness behaviors as well as an increase in being willing to forgive thus creating reconciliation in relationship (Finchman & May, 2017; Lambert et al., 2010; Lambert & Dollahite, 2006; Lambert et al., 2013).

It was also found that LRMS subscale Cat 8 demonstrated statistical significance, determining that those who prayed within the context of their marriage, on average, reported feeling more committed and dedicated to their relationships. This commitment can lead to greater stability and satisfaction in the long term. Lambert et al. (2012a) found that praying with a partner can increase trust in a relationship, thus creating stability and commitment in the relationship. Increased levels of commitment in the relationship were also found in marriages where spouses prayed for one another (Fincham & Beach, 2014).

Many previous studies correlated prayer with marital satisfaction, which aligns with LRMS subscale Cat 8. These studies found higher marital quality, satisfaction, and unity in the relationship were the result of prayer and religious communication (Cooper et al., 2019; David and Stafford, 2015; Fraser et al., 2021; Klaus, 2020; May et al., 2019; Olson et al., 2015). Some previous research discovered prayer for spouse predicted satisfaction with the amount of self-sacrifice one contributes to marriage, thus affecting their overall marital satisfaction (Lambert et al., 2012b). Other studies

have found a higher level of shared spirituality in marriage as a result of mutual prayer which led to emotional intimacy which can foster commitment in marriage. (Fraser et al., 2021).

There were some LRMS subscales that previous research had shown prayer positively affected but were not found to be statistically significant for the current study. For example, LRMS subscale Cat 3 “Romantically Intimate,” results did not statistically confirm previous research findings. Cranney (2019) found a positive association between prayer and sexual frequency, as well as marital prayer being significantly associated with sexual satisfaction. Interestingly, Hernandez-Kane and Mahoney (2018) found that higher frequency of prayer in marriage correlated with less sexual satisfaction over time which may have some connection with the current study, but not enough information was given to find a correlation.

Research Question 3

Are the effects of prayer for one's spouse or prayer with one's spouse different for husbands and wives?

This study found there were differences in the way prayer intervention impacted husbands and wives. On average, wives showed more significant improvement in their perception of their marriages compared to husbands. While both genders benefited in different aspects from prayer, wives, on average, experienced a more pronounced change in their view of their marital relationship. A possible explanation of this difference between genders may be related to The Pew Research Center's (n.d.) survey that found 59% of women versus 41% of men pray daily. While these percentages provide general population information, current study results for Group 2, those who prayed for spouse, (N = 100) show 68% of wives prayed always (daily) versus 67% of husbands. The results for Group 3, those who prayed with spouse, (N=116) show 65% of wives prayed always (daily) versus 64% of husbands. The current study found very little percentage difference between the men and

women who prayed daily in each group, suggesting a higher percentage of daily prayer by both women and men.

Previous research by Sauerheber et al. (2021) found that husbands and wives both reported prayer positively impacted their marriage, thus agreeing with the current study that both spouses showed improvement but not supporting the finding that wives showed more improvement than husbands. Finchman and May's (2021) research might suggest an explanation to this difference as their study discovered that women pray more, women have higher awareness and expression of feelings, and women have higher levels of gratitude, all of which could combine to impact a wife reporting higher scores on her perception of love and respect. Interestingly, Lister et al. (2020) found the opposite in their research on marital prayer. They discovered that husbands reported higher marital satisfaction and better emotional attunement with their wives, contradicting the findings of the current study (Lister et al., 2020). Therefore, while this study was in agreement with previous research that found improvement for both husbands and wives, there was varied support on the finding that wives reported more improvement than their husbands.

Implications

This research is able to impact three important areas in which Christian marriages need encouragement and help. These areas include the church, counseling, and scholarship, including both trained counselors and pastors. The church is often on the front line of ministry and many Christian couples will attend a small group or Bible study about marriage to enrich or help their marriage. Other couples will reach out to counselors or therapists when their marriage is in need of help. The pastors and therapy providers who serve these couples also need knowledge and training regarding the results of this study and ideas for implementation in their appropriate spheres of influence.

The findings of this research beautifully connect with the themes mentioned in Ephesians 4:12-16, which summarizes the need “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the

body of Christ.” The church has the responsibility to equip the saints. They are often where a Christian couple has opportunity to grow and learn what God desires of them in marriage. Churches might take the opportunity to teach a class or small group on the importance of prayer for or with your spouse. A curriculum that explores prayer scripturally, as well as scholarly, could introduce many couples to the benefits of prayer. Christian authors such as Stoop and Stoop and Omartian have books that discuss and explore prayer in Christian marriages. From this author’s experience, classes or small groups on marriage and prayer are rare in churches today. The results of this study remind church leaders of the untapped potential of prayer to transform Christian marriages.

Therapists and counselors could utilize prayer with or for one’s spouse as a therapeutic intervention to impact their perception of love and respect in the relationship. Previous studies on prayer in Christian marriage have found prayer is an appropriate intervention in couples counseling that increases trust, facilitates marital skills training, breaks negative thought patterns, and helps couples express their thoughts and feelings (Beach et al., 2008; Lambert et al., 2012a; Millet et al., 2018; Sullivan & Karney, 2008). Studies have also found that couples in marriage counseling prefer implicit and explicit spiritual interventions, such as prayer (Bannister et al., 2015). The LRMS could be given to the couple during counseling to assess and understand areas of love and respect in the relationship. The couple could then be asked to complete a prayer assignment for or with one another for a certain amount of time. This study has shown that this has the potential to be beneficial to marriage and could positively impact a couple’s therapeutic experience.

For any of the above ideas to be effective, understanding of the relationship between prayer and marriage must be taught on a scholarly level. Christian Universities and Christian Seminaries, especially those who emphasize marriage and family therapy or ministry, would be best served to offer a class on prayer as it relates to marriage and family. Undergraduate and graduate students who can ascertain the research, findings, benefits, and impacts of prayer on marriage and family would

have a broader understanding of this spiritual practice. Previous studies found that clients had expectations that their Christian counselor would use spiritual interventions (Bannister et al., 2015). By providing education specifically on prayer, potential pastors and counselors could utilize prayer in a nonharmful way for healing and growth as they work with marriages and families.

Limitations

Many of the limitations of this study were found regarding participants and difficulties with surveys and assessments. The gathering of participants did not come without difficulties. Several limitations were found not only in the wording of many of the qualifying questions for participants, but also with the title of the study. Because both husband and wife needed to submit the screening survey and consent form, reminders were sent to the first spouse who did so to encourage their spouse to submit a screening survey and consent form as well. These email communications revealed at times that many couples, married less than ten years, did not know what "Protestant" meant. Therefore, their spouse would click "no" and their screening survey would end. After they clarified what denomination of church they attended via email, this author would confirm they were indeed Protestant and encourage them to resubmit their screening survey.

Also, a similar difficulty, although much less in frequency, was that some individuals confused the terms "heterosexual" with "homosexual" and answered "no" on that screening survey question. Again, the spouse would email, and clarification was made. Finally, one potential participant emailed this author and stated, "the language of Love and Respect was also off putting due to the harm Eggerichs' book by that name has done to so many women" and declined to participate. This author is aware of the negative feedback from Eggerichs' book and has attempted to only cite relevant information from his book regarding love and respect in regard to prayer. These limitations in gathering of participants quite possibly limited those who would have participated and lengthened the time it took to find 300 participants. Due to the fact that the IRB requested that any screening

survey that did not meet study qualifications was not saved or transmitted to this researcher, the true impact of these limitations is unknown.

As participants were being sought out for this study, it was difficult to find couples to fill Group 1, the no directed prayer group. If either the husband or wife choose pray "individually only" the couple was put into Group 1, as it would not be ethical to ask that individual to begin to pray with their spouse. It is possible that there could have been another way to identify couples who could have qualified for Group 1, such as "I do not pray" or "I pray occasionally." Group 1 was the last group to be filled and interestingly, many couples emailed the researcher back to clarify that all they had to do was wait for thirty days with no assignment to pray. Group 1 has multiple couples where one spouse chose to pray "individually only" and the other spouse choose pray "for my spouse" or pray "with and for my spouse." These couples were not given a prayer assignment for the thirty days as a part of the study and were not instructed to stop their current prayer routine. Therefore, it is possible that some of the couples in Group 1 had one spouse that was praying with or for their spouse during this time without the researcher's knowledge. It would be difficult to determine the exact threat to the internal validity of the study, as it is unknown if one spouse was praying in Group 1 and if that then influenced the results of the second LRMS.

After having 630 individuals take the LRMS, some limitations were found which could impact external validity. The LRMS was lacking in that it did not provide a "non-applicable" answer for any questions. A handful of participants emailed this researcher back with inquiries as to how to answer the in-law questions if one or both sets of parents had passed away. This included some couples married over forty years, but also applied to some of the couples married less time. Three participants also emailed and asked how to respond to sexual questions on the LRMS that were not applicable due to medical or age-related sexual difficulties. To work around these limitations and mediate the effect on external validity, the researcher noted the participants case numbers and then

did not include their responses in the “Romantically Intimate” section of the LRMS in the final results. This is a very special case of response bias. Generally, this occurs when a subject provides false or inaccurate answers when there is an incentive for participants to lie, but in this case the participants had no choice but to provide an inaccurate or missing response. This researcher will reach out to the authors of the LRMS and share the limitations that were found with the assessment. While these limitations presented some minor issues the researcher had to mitigate, the impact to the study is unknown.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research on this topic is suggested as study limitations and possible areas of interest were discovered during this study. The limitations mentioned in the above section provided some unperceived difficulties during the study and could be mitigated better in the future. The study also gathered quite a bit of demographic data that could also be assessed to find correlations with prayer and love and respect in the marital relationship. The impact of prayer on marriage has been studied in many ways, and this study sought to discover new findings surrounding spouses' perceptions of love and respect in the marital relationship.

To address study limitations that were found while conducting this study, several suggestions are given. It would be interesting if future studies could include the participants' ability to provide their own feedback about their experience of praying for or with their spouse. While this would add a quantitative element to the study, it would allow for personal remarks and responses that are difficult to explore in a qualitative study. Feedback could then be assessed to find themes of participants responses, possibly discovering information that was not assessed with the LRMS. It could also be helpful for participants to explain love and respect as they experience it in their marriage, in their own wording, thus enriching the understanding of Christian married couples' perception of love and respect.

Another limitation that needs to be addressed in the future is the ability to generalize the results to a Christian married population. To better represent the Christian population in the United States, future research could focus on being ethnically diverse as well as representative of the entire United States. The current study was not ethnically diverse, as the majority participant population identified as “white.” Only twenty-eight states were represented in this study with significant gaps in New England and the East Coast area. Future research might consider a means to reach a broader audience that would appeal to the target population such as coordination with several Christian denominations across the United States, partnering with various Christian Universities, or working with a Christian counseling organization, such as the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC).

This author is aware of the negative perception of Eggerichs' book that many in the church use to teach the concepts of love and respect. While there is useful information provided, there is also the perception it appears to be biased toward the husband regarding sexuality in marriage. It would be helpful to include in future research the opportunity to provide counselors and pastors with a framework on how to instruct couples principles of mutual love and respect without causing harm to either the husband or wife.

The testing mechanism, the LRMS, had some limitations that various participants communicated to the researcher. Different testing measurements could be used to study aspects of love and respect. The LRMS was chosen for this study, as it focuses on perceptions of love and respect in the marital relationship. Other assessments could be utilized that might focus on specific areas of love and respect. While this would provide more specific information about a single area, it might lose the ability to assess love and respect as a whole. If the LRMS is utilized in future studies, it must be revamped to provide answer choices that can be applicable to all participants.

As previously suggested, the LRMS could be utilized with married couples in the counseling process and discussed. Then the couple could be given a 30-day prayer assignment with the hope their LRMS scores could improve. Future research with only Christian couples in therapy utilizing the LRMS and prayer as an intervention technique would be of interest. This would add to research that has been done to support prayer as a therapy intervention.

The demographic data gathered could create new hypotheses and research questions that could provide valuable information for the social sciences in further research. Exploring if a couple's length of marriage impacts their perception of love and respect would be insightful. Discovering the impact of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th or more marriage on perceptions of love and respect is a possible avenue for study. Looking for correlations between religious beliefs, religious attendance, and perception of love and respect is of interest. Do any of these independent variables affect a couple's likelihood of praying the full thirty days? Also of interest, which was not asked in the study, were those participants placed in Group 1- no directed prayer, praying during the study? This study answered the questions it explored, but in doing so, opened more questions in the process. Future research could take each of these questions and hone in with a smaller lens to pinpoint more specific data surrounding this area of interest.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 28, 2022

Gabrielle Keenum
Jason Ward

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-52 Prayer's Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples

Dear Gabrielle Keenum, Jason Ward,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 3.(i). Research involving benign behavioral interventions in conjunction with the collection of information from an adult subject through verbal or written responses (including data entry) or audiovisual recording if the subject prospectively agrees to the intervention and information collection and at least one of the following criteria is met:

(C) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Consent

Consent

Title of the Project: Prayer's Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples

Principal Investigator: Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A., Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be over 21 years of age, heterosexual, married for a minimum of one year, comfortable with prayer, attending a Protestant Christian church, believe in Christian principles (including belief in justification by grace through faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the supremacy of Holy Scripture in matters of faith and practice), and living in the United States. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to determine the effect prayer has on experience of love and respect in Christian married couples. Significant research has been done to explore prayers effects in marital relationships, but little research has focused on assessing love and respect between spouses. This study will allow researchers to explore the effect prayer has on love and respect between spouses in the marital relationship.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Take the Love and Respect Marriage Survey (LRMS) individually. This will take approximately 20 minutes.
2. You will then be nonrandomly assigned to one of three treatment groups.
 - a. Two of the groups will participate in a 30-day prayer intervention. This intervention will consist of a 3–5-minute prayer for 30 days.
 - b. The other group will not participate in the intervention for 30 days.
3. At the end of the 30 days, individuals in all three groups will retake the Love and Respect Marriage Survey, as well as a short Exit Survey. This will take approximately 25 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are similar to those found in previous research studying marital prayer. Previous studies suggested possible outcomes could be changes in marital quality, marital satisfaction, marital intimacy, and like-mindedness in marriage. Prayer could also result in feelings of closeness to one's spouse and to God.

Benefits to society include more religious community involvement, church attendance, and commitment to religious beliefs for congregations with Christian married couples involved in this study.

Liberty University
IRB-FY22-23-52
Approved on 11-28-2022

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of a code assigned to each couple.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Gabrielle K. Keenum. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at gkkeenum@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Jason Ward, at jward165@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix C

Permission Request

[Insert Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient],

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to explore if prayer for one's spouse or prayer with one's spouse affects a Christian husband's or wife's perception of love and respect in the marital relationship by testing different aspects of love and respect in the marriage.

I am writing to request your permission to contact members of your church to invite them to participate in my research study. Participants must be over 21 years of age, heterosexual, married for a minimum of one year, comfortable with prayer, attending a Protestant Christian church, believe in Christian principles (including belief in justification by grace through faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the supremacy of Holy Scripture in matters of faith and practice), and living in the United States. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take the Love and Respect Marriage Survey (LRMS) individually. This will take approximately 20 minutes. The participants will then be nonrandomly assigned to one of three treatment groups. Two of the groups will participate in a 30-day prayer intervention. This intervention will consist of a 3–5-minute prayer for 30 days. The other group will not participate in the intervention for 30 days. At the end of the 30 days, individuals in all three groups will retake the Love and Respect Marriage Survey, as well as a short Exit Survey. This will take approximately 25 minutes.

Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to [REDACTED]. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

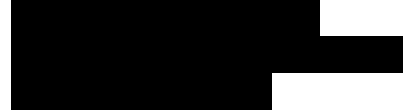
Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor

Appendix D

Permission Response

[Date]

Gabrielle K. Keenum



Dear Gabrielle K Keenum:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Prayer's Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples, I have decided to grant you permission to contact members of our church and invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- I grant permission for Gabrielle K. Keenum to contact members of the church to invite them to participate in her research study. I will attach a list of names and emails of potential couples.
- I will not provide potential participant information to Gabrielle K Keenum but will agree to provide her study information to church members on her behalf.
- I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.]

Sincerely,

[Official's Name]

[Official's Title]

Appendix E

Recruitment: Follow Up

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. Last week an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to respond if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is [Date].

Participants, if willing, will be asked to take the Love and Respect Marriage Survey (LRMS) individually. This will take approximately 20 minutes. The participants will then be nonrandomly assigned to one of three treatment groups. Two of the groups will participate in a 30-day prayer intervention. This intervention will consist of a 3–5-minute prayer for 30 days. The other group will not participate in the intervention for 30 days. At the end of the 30 days, individuals in all three groups will retake the Love and Respect Marriage Survey, as well as a short Exit Survey. This will take approximately 25 minutes. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click here [<https://marriageandprayer.com/>] to complete the attached screening survey.

A consent document is provided after the screening survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to type your name on the consent document. After you have read the consent form, you will receive an email with a participant study code and website link to begin your participation in the study. You will receive this email in three to five business days.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.
Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix F

Verbal Recruitment Script

Hello [Potential Participant],

As a graduate student in the Community Care and Counseling department/School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to determine the effect prayer has on the experience of love and respect in Christian married couples, and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

To participate, participants must be over 21 years of age, heterosexual, married for a minimum of one year, comfortable with prayer, attending a Protestant Christian church, believe in Christian principles (including belief in justification by grace through faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the supremacy of Holy Scripture in matters of faith and practice), and living in the United States. Participants will be asked to take the Love and Respect Marriage Survey (LRMS) individually. This will take approximately 20 minutes. The participants will then be nonrandomly assigned to one of three treatment groups. Two of the groups will participate in a 30-day prayer intervention. This intervention will consist of a 3–5-minute prayer for 30 days. The other group will not participate in the intervention for 30 days. At the end of the 30 days, individuals in all three groups will retake the Love and Respect Marriage Survey, as well as a short Exit Survey. This will take approximately 25 minutes. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Would you like to participate? [Yes] Great, could I get your email address so I can send you the link to the screening survey? [No] I understand. Thank you for your time.

A consent document is provided after the screening survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. **If you choose to participate, you will need to type your name on the consent document.** After you have read the consent form, you will receive an email with a participant study code and website link to begin your participation in the study. You will receive this email in three to five business days.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

Appendix G

Recruitment Email Letter

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to explore if prayer for one's spouse or prayer with one's spouse affects a Christian husband's or wife's perception of love and respect in the marital relationship by testing different aspects of love and respect in the marriage, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be over 21 years of age, heterosexual, married for a minimum of one year, comfortable with prayer, attending a Protestant Christian church, believe in Christian principles (including belief in justification by grace through faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the supremacy of Holy Scripture in matters of faith and practice), and living in the United States. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take the Love and Respect Marriage Survey (LRMS) individually. This will take approximately 20 minutes. The participants will then be nonrandomly assigned to one of three treatment groups. Two of the groups will participate in a 30-day prayer intervention. This intervention will consist of a 3–5-minute prayer for 30 days. The other group will not participate in the intervention for 30 days. At the end of the 30 days, individuals in all three groups will retake the Love and Respect Marriage Survey, as well as a short Exit Survey. This will take approximately 25 minutes. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click here [<https://marriageandprayer.com/>].

A consent document is provided after the screening survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to type your name on the consent document. After you have read the consent form, you will receive an email with a participant study code and website link to begin your participation in the study. You will receive this email in three to five business days.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix H

Recruitment Social Media

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to determine the effect prayer has on the experience of love and respect in Christian married couples. To participate, participants must be over 21 years of age, heterosexual, married for a minimum of one year, comfortable with prayer, attending a Protestant Christian church, believe in Christian principles (including belief in justification by grace through faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the supremacy of Holy Scripture in matters of faith and practice), and living in the United States. Participants will then take the Love and Respect Marriage Survey (LRMS) individually. This will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The participants will then be nonrandomly assigned to one of three treatment groups. Two of the three groups will participate in a 3–5-minute daily prayer intervention. After 30 days, individuals in all three groups will retake the Love and Respect Marriage Survey, as well as a short Exit Survey. This will take approximately 25 minutes. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please click the link provided at the end of this post. A consent document will be provided after the screening survey. Please review this page, and if you agree to participate, you will need to type your name on the consent document and then will receive an email with a participant study code and website link to begin your participation in the study. You will receive this email in three to five business days.

To take the survey, click here: [<https://marriageandprayer.com/>]

Appendix I

The Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS)

This LRMS is for personal use only. After the questionnaire is filled out, you may keep the questionnaire for your own reference. However, photocopying, scanning, distribution, and/or reproduction of this questionnaire are not allowed without prior written permission. If additional copies are needed, please email Dr John Philip Louis at johnphiliploouis@gmail.com for further information.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Listed below are statements that you might use to describe your spouse and how he/she treated you. Please read each statement and decide how well it describes him/her. Choose the rating from 1 to 6 that describes your spouse. Give your first impression and move on to the next item. Do not dwell on any item.

RATING SCALE:

1 = Completely untrue	4 = Moderately true
2 = Mostly untrue	5 = Mostly true
3 = Slightly more true than untrue	6 = Describes him/her perfectly

Item No.	Score	Description
1.		My spouse often calls or texts me to tell me how much he/she appreciates me.
2.		My spouse does not raise his voice when he/she is upset with me.
3.		My spouse does not convey to me that physical intimacy is a burden.
4.		My spouse is not in the habit of making large investments without my agreement, such as with "get rich quick" schemes.
5.		My spouse is there for me when I go through a hard time.
6.		My spouse saves and sets aside money consistently for major future expenses such as savings for a rainy day.
7.		My spouse does not allow his/her parents to be too intrusive with our affairs.
8.		My spouse does not allow other aspects of his life (work, hobbies, friends) to take priority over our family.
9.		My spouse says, "I love you" frequently, not just on special occasions like my birthday.
10.		My spouse does not belittle me.
11.		My spouse looks forward to making love with me.
12.		My spouse is not in the practice of socializing with irresponsible people.

John Philip Louis & Karen McDonald Louis (2021): The Development of the Love and Respect Marriage Scale, *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, DOI: 10.1080/0092623X.2021.1963362

RATING SCALE:

1 = Completely untrue	4 = Moderately true
2 = Mostly untrue	5 = Mostly true
3 = Slightly more true than untrue	6 = Describes him/her perfectly

Item No.	Score	Description
13.		My spouse is my best friend, or one of my best friends.
14.		My spouse sets aside money to go on holidays together with me and/or with our family.
15.		My spouse draws healthy boundaries with his/her own parents and protects me well.
16.		My spouse is more dedicated to our marriage than to his/her work.
17.		My spouse sends positive text messages "for no reason" from time to time.
18.		My spouse does not bring up past issues to support his/her side when we are having a conflict.
19.		My spouse does not use his/her physical illness or limitations as a reason to not be intimate.
20.		My spouse is not obsessed about being wealthy and successful.
21.		My spouse is someone I trust.
22.		My spouse handles his/her part of the finances of our household well.
23.		My spouse takes a stand for me when I am unfairly treated by my in-laws.
24.		My spouse does not prioritize his/her hobbies/interests over me.
25.		My spouse often displays his affection by touching and or kissing me during the day.
26.		My spouse does not become angry when he/she perceives I am not taking his/her side in a conflict.
27.		My spouse meets my sexual needs when I am spontaneous.
28.		My spouse does not make significant purchases without discussing with me first.
29.		My spouse loves me unconditionally.
30.		My spouse often encourages me.
31.		My spouse listens to me with respect even when we disagree with each other.
32.		My spouse does not use his/her age as a reason to not be physically intimate.
33.		My spouse is not rash when it comes to spending money on what he/she likes.
34.		My spouse treats me like an equal partner.

John Philip Louis & Karen McDonald Louis (2021): The Development of the Love and Respect Marriage Scale, Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, DOI: 10.1080/0092623X.2021.1963362

RATING SCALE:

1 = Completely untrue	4 = Moderately true
2 = Mostly untrue	5 = Mostly true
3 = Slightly more true than untrue	6 = Describes him/her perfectly

Item No.	Score	Description
35.		My spouse often says how much he/she admires my achievements and accomplishments.
36.		My spouse is quick to forgive me for my mistakes.
37.		My spouse does not find lovemaking to be boring.
38.		My spouse does not live beyond his/her means.
39.		My spouse emotionally supports my aspirations.
40.		My spouse asks me "how I am feeling" regularly.
41.		My spouse does not give me "the cold shoulder" when I disagree with him/her.
42.		My spouse does not use his/her tiredness and fatigue as a reason to not be intimate.
43.		My spouse is not only nice to me when he/she wants to be physically intimate with me.
44.		My spouse is understanding when I have had a hard day.
45.		My spouse gives me feedback in a respectful manner and does not put me down.
46.		When we are out together, we generally enjoy each other's company.

John Philip Louis & Karen McDonald Louis (2021): The Development of the Love and Respect Marriage Scale, *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, DOI: 10.1080/0092623X.2021.1963362

LRMS SCORING KEY

1 = Completely untrue	4 = Moderately true
2 = Mostly untrue	5 = Mostly true
3 = Slightly more true than untrue	6 = Describes him/her perfectly

Appreciative and Affectionate

1 _____ 9 _____ 17 _____ 25 _____ 30 _____ 35 _____
 40 _____ Mean _____

Considerate and Understanding

2 _____ 10 _____ 18 _____ 26 _____ 31 _____ 36 _____
 41 _____ 45 _____ Mean _____

Romantically Intimate

3 _____ 11 _____ 19 _____ 27 _____ 32 _____ 37 _____
 42 _____ Mean _____

Responsible and Principle-Driven

4 _____ 12 _____ 20 _____ 28 _____ 33 _____ 38 _____
 43 _____ Mean _____

Dependable and Companionable

5 _____ 13 _____ 21 _____ 29 _____ 34 _____ 39 _____
 44 _____ 46 _____ Mean _____

Financially Reliable

6 _____ 14 _____ 22 _____ Mean _____

Healthy with Boundaries (In-Laws)

7 _____ 15 _____ 23 _____ Mean _____

Committed and Dedicated

8 _____ 16 _____ 24 _____ Mean _____

TOTAL SCORE FOR LRMS: _____

John Philip Louis & Karen McDonald Louis (2021): The Development of the Love and Respect Marriage Scale, *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, DOI: 10.1080/0092623X.2021.1963362

Appendix J

Prayer's Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples

Exit Survey Questions

Prayer's Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples

Exit Survey Questions

Exit Survey for No Directed Prayer Group

[\[https://marriageandprayer.com/love-and-marriage-respect-scale-exit-1/\]](https://marriageandprayer.com/love-and-marriage-respect-scale-exit-1/)

What is your race or ethnicity?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- White
- More than one

Is your current marriage your

- 1st
- 2nd
- 3rd
- 4th or more

How many children do you have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

I feel like I benefited from participation in this study.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Then click submit & it takes them to the LRMS for the second time.

Exit Survey for Pray for Spouse

[\[https://marriageandprayer.com/love-and-marriage-respect-scale-exit-2/\]](https://marriageandprayer.com/love-and-marriage-respect-scale-exit-2/)

What is your race or ethnicity?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- White
- More than one

Is your current marriage your

- 1st
- 2nd
- 3rd
- 4th or more

How many children do you have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

How often did you pray?

- Always (once a day)
- Often (more than once a week)
- Sometimes (once a week)
- Rarely (once every other week)
- Never

I feel like I benefited from participation in this study.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel like prayer is important in our marriage.

- Extremely Important
- Very Important

- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Not at all important

Then click submit & it takes them to the LRMS for the second time.

Exit Survey for Pray With Spouse Group

[\[https://marriageandprayer.com/love-and-marriage-respect-scale-exit-3/\]](https://marriageandprayer.com/love-and-marriage-respect-scale-exit-3/)

What is your race or ethnicity?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- White
- More than one

Is your current marriage your

- 1st
- 2nd
- 3rd
- 4th or more

How many children do you have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

How often did you pray?

- Always (once a day)
- Often (more than once a week)
- Sometimes (once a week)
- Rarely (once every other week)
- Never

I feel like prayer is important in our marriage.

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important

- Not at all important

I feel like I benefited from participation in this study.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Then click submit & it takes them to the LRMS for the second time.

Appendix K

Prayer Instruction Email Letter Prayer For Spouse Group

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

For the purposes of this study, you are asked to spend time daily praying for your spouse. Your prayer need only to be 3-5 minutes in length and can be anytime during your day.

Topics for prayer can include but are not limited to, your marriage, your spouse, work, family life, concerns, praises, your relationship, your intimacy, children, decisions, and your spiritual life. These are merely suggested topics, feel free to include your own.

You have the option to pray out loud or silently. Please pray for your spouse when they are not present. Again, all that is asked of you is to spend 3-5 minutes per day praying for your spouse.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix L

Prayer Instruction Email Letter Prayer With Spouse Group

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

For the purposes of this study, you are asked to spend time daily praying with your spouse. Your prayer need only to be 3-5 minutes in length and can be anytime during your day.

Topics for prayer can include but are not limited to, your marriage, your spouse, work, family life, concerns, praises, your relationship, your intimacy, children, decisions, and your spiritual life. These are merely suggested topics, feel free to include your own.

You have the option to pray one at a time or take turns on various days. If one of you is more comfortable praying out loud, then feel free to do so. All that is asked of you both is to spend 3-5 minutes per day praying together.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix M

Prayer Instruction Email Letter No Prayer Group

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

Thank you for completing your survey and LRMS pre-test. In thirty days, you will be sent another email with the link to take the LRMS post-test.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix N

End of 30-Day Email Letter Prayer for Spouse Group

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

Thank you for participating in 30 days of prayer. You can now click on the link below to complete your participation in Prayer's Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples.

<https://marriageandprayer.com/love-and-marriage-respect-scale-exit-2/>

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix O

End of 30-Day Email Letter Prayer with Spouse Group

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

Thank you for participating in 30 days of prayer. You can now click on the link below to complete your participation in Prayer's Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples.

[\[https://marriageandprayer.com/love-and-marriage-respect-scale-exit-3/\]](https://marriageandprayer.com/love-and-marriage-respect-scale-exit-3/)

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix P

End of 30-Day Email Letter No Prayer Group

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

Thank you for your patience. You can now click on the link below to complete your participation in Prayer's Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples.

<https://marriageandprayer.com/love-and-marriage-respect-scale-exit-1/>

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix Q

Case Study Number Email Letter and LRMS Link No Prayer Group

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

Thank you for filling out the consent and the survey to begin participation in Prayers Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples.

Below you will find your unique case study numbers that you will use in this study. You will need to know both your and your spouse's case number to take the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS). Use the link below to begin the LRMS.

Your case study #:

Your spouse's case study #:

<https://marriageandprayer.com/lrms-1/>

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix R

Case Study Number Email Letter and LRMS Link Prayer for Spouse Group

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

Thank you for filling out the consent and the survey to begin participation in Prayers Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples.

Below you will find your unique case study numbers that you will use in this study. You will need to know both your and your spouse's case number to take the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS). Use the link below to begin the LRMS.

Your case study #:

Your spouse's case study #:

[\[https://marriageandprayer.com/lrms-2/\]](https://marriageandprayer.com/lrms-2/)

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix S

Case Study Number Email Letter and LRMS Link Prayer with Spouse Group

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

Thank you for filling out the consent and the survey to begin participation in Prayers Effect on Love and Respect in Christian Married Couples.

Below you will find your unique case study numbers that you will use in this study. You will need to know both your and your spouse's case number to take the Love and Respect Marriage Scale (LRMS). Use the link below to begin the LRMS.

Your case study #:

Your spouse's case study #:

<https://marriageandprayer.com/lrms-3/>

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix T

Participants Email Comments after Completion of Study

- It was beneficial to us, and our plan is to be more intentional in that daily prayer time going forward. We feel more connected.
- It was our pleasure to pray and grow! Blessings to you!
- Was a pleasure to support you in this and focus more intentionally on my marriage and prayer! It has bonded us deeply.
- We had fun answering these questions. We also appreciated the encouragement to pray consistently.
- We pray regularly, but this was a great reminder to increase our frequency and accountability with prayer!
- I can't believe it's over. It's developed a new habit in me that I really love and plan to keep. Truly saw a difference with my thoughts towards my husband from that intentional habit of prayer over him.
- We were happy to help - That and a little more prayer never hurts! Our marriage is happier.
- This has been good for us, so thank you! We were reminded of the value of prayer and marriage.
- We looked forward to our prayer time each day. It's added something to our marriage.
- We are excited to be apart and amazed how this has grown our marriage in ways we didn't know we needed.
- I see how prayer changed my responses to my LRMS. I focused more on her needs than my own.

Appendix U

Dear Participants,

I am pleased to provide you with a summary of the results from the recent academic study on the impact of a 30-day prayer intervention on the well-being of marriages. This study aimed to examine how prayer habits within a marital relationship may influence the overall well-being and satisfaction of couples. The findings suggest that prayer, especially when practiced with or for one's spouse, can lead to significant improvements in various aspects of the marital relationship.

Key Findings:

1. **Praying with Spouse and Praying for Spouse Benefits:** The study found that participants who engaged in prayer with their spouse or prayed for their spouse experienced greater improvements in their marriages compared to those who did not. Specifically, these participants reported enhancements in the following areas:
 - a. *Appreciative and Affectionate:* Couples who prayed together or for each other demonstrated increased appreciation and affection within their marriages. This suggests that shared spiritual activities contribute to a more loving and supportive atmosphere.
 - a. *Considerate and Understanding:* Participants who incorporated prayer into their relationships displayed higher levels of consideration and understanding towards their spouses. This indicates that prayer may foster empathy and improved communication.
 - a. *Committed and Dedicated:* Those who prayed within the context of their marriage reported feeling more committed and dedicated to their relationships. This commitment can lead to greater stability and satisfaction in the long term.
2. **Gender Differences:** Notably, there were differences in the way prayer intervention impacted husbands and wives. On average, wives showed more significant improvement in their perception of their marriages compared to husbands. While both genders benefited in different aspects from prayer, wives, on average, experienced a more pronounced change in their view of their marital relationships.

Study Details: the study included 630 participants, all of whom were heterosexual and identified as Christian. This balanced gender distribution involved 315 wives and 315 husbands.

I appreciate your participation in this research. Your valuable contributions have added meaningful insights to understanding the role of prayer in marriages. If you have further questions or would like to access the dissertation, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Thank you for your participation and support in this academic endeavor.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle K. Keenum, M.A.

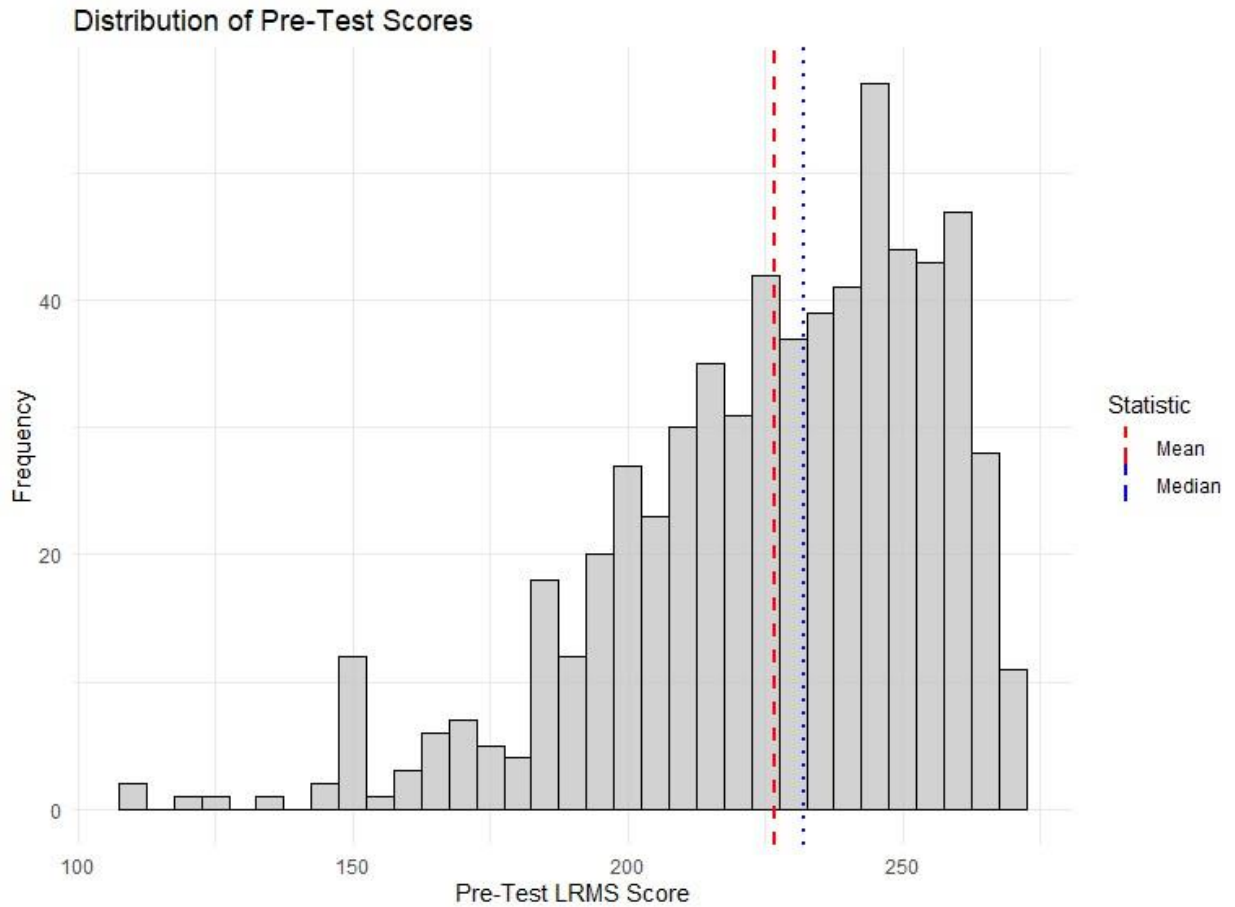
Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor



Appendix V

Figure 2

Distribution of Pre-test scores

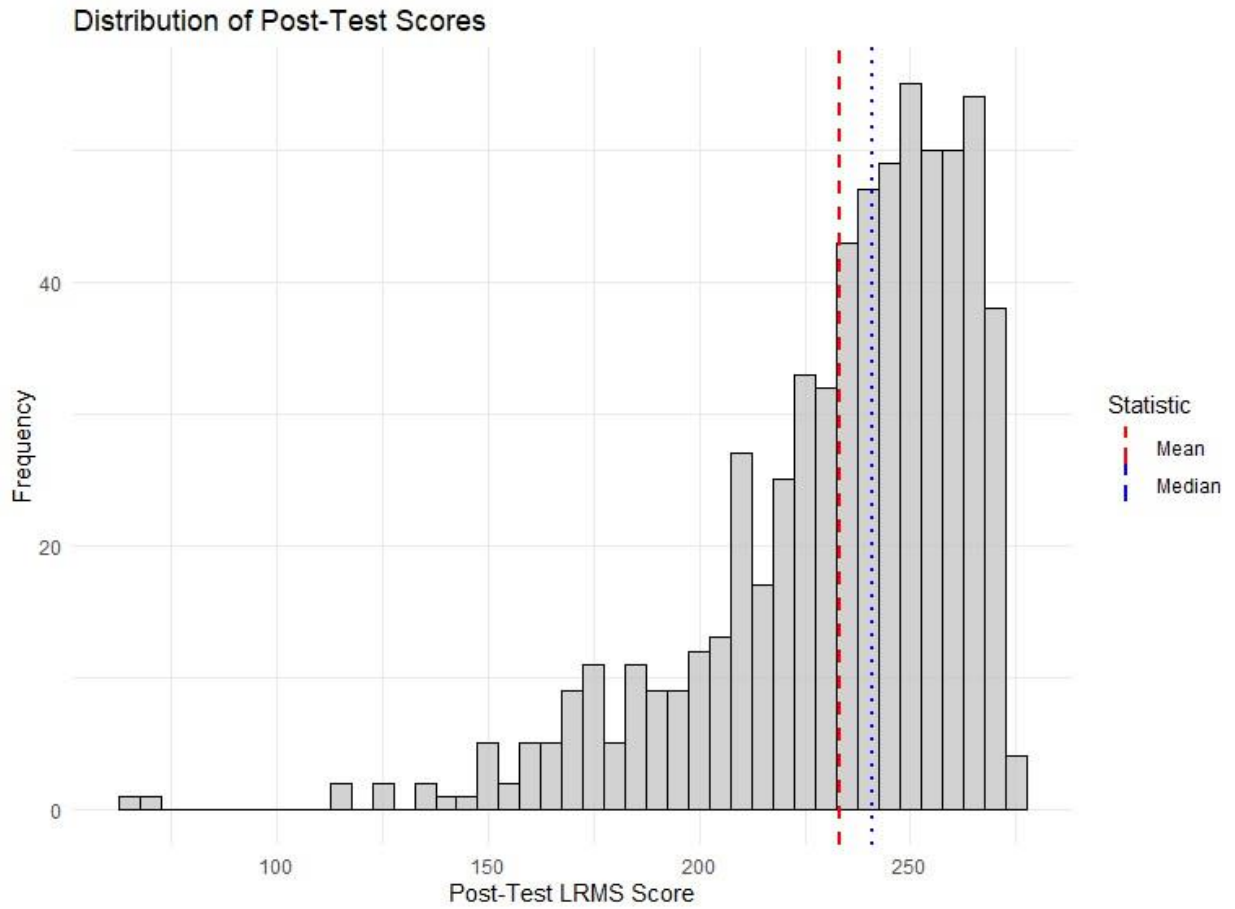


Note: LRMS = Love and Respect Marriage Scale.

Appendix W

Figure 3

Distribution of Post-test scores

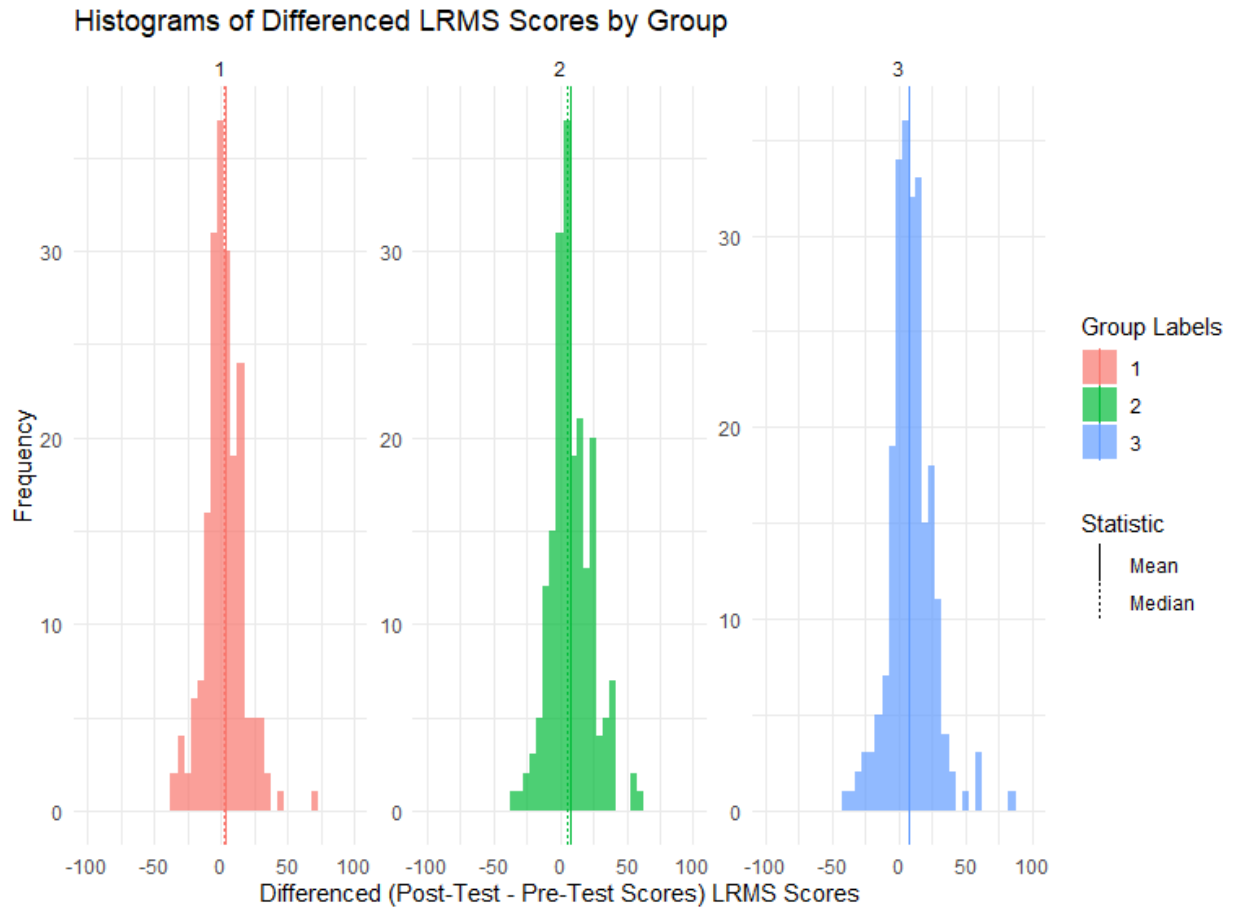


Note: LRMS = Love and Respect Marriage Scale.

Appendix X

Figure 4

Title for Figure



Note: LRMS = Love and Respect Marriage Scale.