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EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF PENDLETON STREET BAPTIST
CHURCH, GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA TO USE THE
BIBLE IN A DAILY TIME OF STUDY AND PRAYER

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Theodore John Richard
May 2016

To Jennifer,

my lovely wife.

“He who finds a wife finds a good thing
and obtains favor from the LORD”

(Proverbs 18:22 ESV)

APPROVAL SHEET

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PREFACE

The Lord used humility, brokenness, and discovery to impress upon me the importance of connecting with him daily through the Scriptures and through prayer, as a follower of Christ. He *humbled* me in the summer of 2000 soon after my wife, Jennifer, and I moved to Wake Forest, North Carolina to begin seminary. I will never forget being confronted with the disgust of my own hypocrisy: “You are here to be trained to teach and pastor others, and you won’t even get up early to be taught by God yourself?” Thanks to his gracious correction and Jennifer’s encouragement, I developed a daily devotional habit that has continued to this day.

In 2006, while allowing us to experience *brokenness* after a failed church planting effort and an unexpected resignation from my first church position, the Lord placed me into a situation where I would learn how to study the Bible actively and use Scripture passages as prayers of supplication. The lesson on active study came while I was listening to a sermon on my lunch break during a substitute teaching assignment one day. Here I received the most wonderful advice from John Piper: “Never read the Bible without a pen in your hand!” Despite the difficult circumstances in which I found myself, I began to study and pray the Scriptures in a more active manner, which opened up a whole new world of discovery and interaction with God through his Word.

Finally, in 2012, while serving in Pendleton Street Baptist Church’s evangelism ministry in Greenville, I decided to search the Scriptures for all of the

passages that taught that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, and then to record these verses in one place. Little did I realize that I had “accidentally” *discovered* a method of meditating upon the Scriptures by building my own doctrinal tool for ministry. Soon I had over fifty doctrines and subjects that I was continually looking for verses to catalogue during my devotional reading. As a result, the Scriptures came alive like never before, as the Lord developed in me a passion for his Word that continues to grow deeper with each new discovery.

Of course, this journey would never have been possible without the support and encouragement of my lovely wife, Jennifer, who has walked beside me every step of the way. I would also like to thank our four amazing children: Isaac, Joel, Silas, and Chloe. They continue to inspire and challenge me by providing a proven training ground for the ministry of the local church. Thanks also go to my mother-in-law, Diane Jewell, who was always so quick to believe in me and always willing to give me invaluable feedback on everything that I wrote. In addition, I would like to thank my parents, Bob and Carolyn Richard, and my mom, Mary Gologowski, for all of their support and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank Pastor Marty Price and all of the staff and members at Pendleton Street Baptist Church for giving me the opportunity and the trust to serve as their associate pastor for over eight years. Without this ministry opportunity, I would have never been able to return to school, much less complete this project.

Ted Richard

Greenville, South Carolina

May 2016

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip members of Pendleton Street Baptist Church (PSBC), in Greenville, South Carolina to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer.

Goals

The first goal of this project was to assess the daily Bible study and prayer habits of the church members who participated in this project. This assessment indicated the regularity with which these individuals engaged in personal devotions, and how they interacted with the Scriptures on a daily basis.¹ This goal was considered successfully met when all of the participants completed the survey and the survey was reviewed, yielding a clearer picture of their Bible study and prayer habits.

The second goal of this project was to create curriculum for a ten-week equipping course that taught participants to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer.² This goal was measured by a rubric used by an expert panel of pastors, to

¹This goal was measured by administering a pre-course survey of the participating members of PSBC. See appendix 1 for a sample of the survey that was used.

²See appendix 4 for the lessons that were included in the equipping curriculum.

evaluate the material and ensure that it was biblically sound and sufficient for equipping church members to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer.³ This panel of pastors would become known as the Lesson Evaluation Team (LET). This goal was achieved when a minimum of 90 percent of the indicators on the evaluation rubric met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal of this project was to use the curriculum to equip between twelve and eighteen members of PSBC to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer.⁴ This goal was measured by a post-course survey to see if the curriculum succeeded in equipping project participants to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer.⁵ This goal was successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive significant difference between the pre-course and post-course surveys.⁶

The fourth goal of this project was to recruit project participants to commit to using the course material to equip at least one other member of PSBC to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. This goal was measured by obtaining a commitment from at least 50 percent of the participants, to equip at least one other church member in the coming year. This goal was considered successfully met when 68 percent of participants committed to equipping another member of the congregation to use the Bible

³See appendix 2 for a copy of the evaluation rubric that was used.

⁴There were approximately 120 active members at PSBC when this project began.

⁵See appendix 1 for a copy of the Post-Course Survey.

⁶The results of the t-test can be found in chap. 5 on pp. 87-88.

in a daily time of study and prayer.

Ministry Context

This ministry project took place in the context of Pendleton Street Baptist Church, which is a one hundred and twenty-six year old congregation, located in the West End of downtown Greenville, South Carolina. There are three important concerns related to the context of PSBC that were significant to the implementation of this project.

First, PSBC was a theologically liberal and man-centered congregation for most of the previous forty years. As a result of being a part of this church for many years, several members over the age of forty-five were spiritually immature and therefore relatively weak in the areas of theology proper, ecclesiology, and spiritual formation. While the church leadership has made several healthy ministry and program-related changes, there has not been much of an effort to disciple members in the basics of following Christ daily. As a result, several of the middle-aged and senior members of PSBC do not have a healthy devotional study or prayer habit. As a result, only a few people from these age groups are mature enough in the Christian faith to disciple a younger man or woman, as instructed in the New Testament.

Secondly, PSBC has recently come out of a tumultuous and yet wonderful period of revitalization and change. In addition to the Lord's work through the leadership of the church staff, the driving force of biblical change came from members between the ages of eighteen and forty. During this period of transition, several of these younger adults were put into positions of leadership, without the normal amount of training or accountability. As a result, the church had deacons, small group teachers, evangelists, and other leaders who struggled to spend time in the Scriptures or in prayer on a daily basis.

While these individuals were very honest about their shortcomings, and also acknowledged the need for change, some of them were very quick to make excuses for their disobedience.

Finally, as PSBC moved forward in the direction of biblical faithfulness, the staff had noticed a recent trend of conversions, new members, and increasing evangelistic opportunities. As a result, the pastors have identified the formation of a clear and biblical model for discipleship as one of the congregation's greatest needs. In light of the other two aspects mentioned above, the potential danger that needed to be avoided was the placing of new believers and new members on a disciple-making track, without first ensuring that they understood how to use the Scriptures in a daily time of study and prayer. Therefore, this foundational Christian discipline must be included in any future PSBC discipleship plans, so that members can avoid spiritual stagnation in the pursuit of faithful ministry stewardship.

Project Rationale

The three concerns above clearly indicated the need for an intentional effort to equip church members to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. Therefore, the proposed project was implemented, since it would benefit the congregation in a number of critical ways.

First, by teaching a few of the older church members how to study and pray the Scriptures in a more intentional and active manner, they were better equipped to disciple younger Christians as taught in the Scriptures. Even if older and even middle-aged members failed to participate, this project still would have succeeded in preparing younger members for their obligation to instruct and mentor less mature believers in the

future. Now, with a larger group of mature believers who are equipped to train younger believers, PSBC is better suited to disciple church members to serve and glorify the Lord.

Second, since several leaders of PSBC participated in this project, there are now more teachers, ministry leaders, and deacons who spend time using the Scriptures to study and pray on a daily basis. As a result, they are now more equipped to minister to and serve the members of the congregation. This important need was made clear in several of the equipping lessons, which clearly taught that those who lead God's people are expected to connect with the Lord through his Word and prayer regularly.

While the primary focus of this project was on the individuals themselves and the health of the church, it should be noted that it also had a positive impact on some of the participants' families as well. Just as with any church ministry, the structure of a biblical institution like the family cannot be successfully built upon a sandy foundation. In order for a Christian man or woman to faithfully serve the Lord in the home, they must first connect with him on a daily basis, by studying his Word and praying in a biblical manner.

Third, because PSBC has come out of a season of revitalization and is back on the path to becoming a biblical church, new believers, as well as new and existing members, were in need of a discipleship training course that included a focus on the spiritual disciplines. Therefore, as the leadership of the church continues to develop a discipleship model to track and encourage members' spiritual growth and maturity, it now has an equipping course to use to help the congregation learn to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer.

If this project would not have been implemented at PSBC, then older members

would still remain ill-equipped to fulfill their biblically mandated role; younger leaders would still continue to serve by the strength of their own efforts; and the church leadership would still be in danger of implementing a new discipleship model, without a key, foundational component. Therefore, the development and execution of this project within the context of PSBC has been and will continue to be a great blessing to members of the church for years to come.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in this ministry project:

Bible intake. This is one of the most important spiritual disciplines and was instrumental to the success of this project. “All forms of encountering Scripture are gathered under the heading of ‘Bible Intake.’ This includes hearing, reading, studying, and memorizing God’s Word.”⁷

Bible study. This term was used to describe a specific type of Bible intake, namely the devotional reading and studying of the Scriptures.

Meditation. There are several unbiblical ideas and practices concerning the spiritual discipline of meditation, both inside and outside of Christianity. Throughout this project, this term was used to refer to the “filling of one’s mind with God and truth.”⁸

Prayer. Prayer is commonly understood to be one’s communication with God. In this project, a particular type of prayer was taught in conjunction with the study of the

⁷Donald S. Whitney, “Pursuing a Passion of God through Spiritual Disciplines,” in *A God Entranced Vision of All Things: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 112. Occasionally the term “Scripture intake” was used in this project synonymously to Whitney’s definition for “Bible intake.”

⁸Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 47.

Scriptures. Whitney describes a similar discipline accordingly: “After the input of a passage of Scripture, meditation allows us to take what God has said and think deeply on it, digest it, and then speak to God about it in meaningful prayer.”⁹

Spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines “are those personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.”¹⁰ The spiritual disciplines of Bible study, and prayer were emphasized and taught throughout this project.

Vertical orientation. Vertical orientation is a term that refers to the Christian discipline of keeping one’s focus on the glory and sovereignty of God, as well as the reality that every believer’s citizenship resides in Heaven.¹¹ This discipline, modeled several times in the Bible, is often commanded by the Apostle Paul in a variety of illustrative ways (e.g. Col 3:2). In the Bible, vertical orientation is usually practiced or commanded in the context of difficult circumstances.

Three limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre and post-course surveys was dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their devotional habits. Second, the effectiveness of the equipping sessions was limited by the consistency of the participant’s weekly attendance. Success for each individual depended upon his or her participation in the Bible studies, application time, and accountability pairings each week. Finally, the exponential impact of this project on other

⁹Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 86.

¹⁰Ibid., 17.

¹¹Jay E. Adams, *Wrinkled but Not Ruined* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1994), 16-17.

members of PSBC was limited by the project participant's willingness to commit to equipping others.

Three delimitations were placed on this project. First, the total number of church members that were allowed to participate was eighteen. This number still allowed for over 13 percent of the active membership to participate, and kept the amount of participants manageable. Second, in order for a member to participate in this course, they had to be at least eighteen years or older. This delimitation is significant because it limited participation to adults only. Third, this project was confined to an eighteen-week timeframe. This gave adequate time for the preparation, approval, and execution of the course material, as well as the administering of the post-course survey.

Research Methodology

The research instruments that were used for this project included a pre-course survey, a post-course survey, and an evaluation rubric.¹² Four goals were used to achieve the purpose of this project. The first goal of this project was to assess the daily Bible study and prayer habits of the church members that participated in this project. The group of participants included eighteen members of PSBC. They were invited to participate via the pulpit, the monthly PSBC newsletter, and in a few cases, by personal invitation. Prior to the first equipping session, a pre-course survey was completed by those members who chose to participate.¹³ Each participant was instructed to identify themselves on the survey using a three-digit code that was assigned to them and kept on file for the post-

¹²All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

¹³See appendix 1.

course survey. The surveys were collected prior to the first equipping session.

The pre-course survey provided two important pieces of information about each participant's daily interaction with the Lord. First, the survey assessed the nature of their daily prayer habits. These particular survey statements sought to determine if the participants were devoting a period of time each day to prayer. This part of the survey also attempted to discover if they were using any type of structure to guide their times of prayer, and to what extent they were using the Bible to pray. Second, the survey also assessed the characteristics of each participant's personal Bible reading habits. This section included statements that probed the frequency, method, and overall interaction that they had with the Word of God on a daily basis.

The second goal of this project was to create curriculum for a ten-week course that would equip participants to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. The course curriculum was submitted to the LET for approval during the seven-week period that immediately preceded the start of the equipping course. This goal was measured by a rubric that was used by the members of the LET to evaluate each of the nine lessons that made up this curriculum. The evaluation rubric helped them to evaluate the course material for biblical fidelity, clarity, consistency, and sufficiency in achieving the purpose of the project.¹⁴ If 90 percent of the indicators on the rubric had not score at the sufficient or exemplary levels, then the panel member's feedback would have been used to revise the course material, after which the material would have been resubmitted for their approval. This process would have continued until a minimum of 90 percent of the indicators on the evaluation rubric meet or exceeded the sufficient level.

¹⁴See appendix 2.

The third goal of this project was to use the curriculum to equip between twelve and eighteen members of PSBC to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. The equipping course took place during ten consecutive Sunday mornings, during the church's Christian Life Academy, which is a quarterly Bible training program. Participants were expected to attend at least eight of the ten equipping sessions, in order to complete the course. If a project participant missed more than two lessons, they were not allowed to participate in the post-course survey. Unfortunately, two of the eighteen participants were not able to attend the minimum number of sessions and were therefore, not able to take the post-course survey. Each week's lesson included a 30-minute exegetical Bible study, 15 minutes of teacher led application, and 15 minutes for accountability groups to meet.

On the tenth Sunday of the equipping course, participants met together as a group for a final time. The primary purpose of this concluding session was for the completion of the post-course survey by the participants. Only those who completed the pre-course survey and attended eight of the ten equipping sessions were permitted to complete the survey. Each participant was asked to identify themselves on the post-course survey using the same three-digit code that they had used on the pre-course survey. Like the initial survey, the post-course survey assessed each participant's daily prayer and Bible study habits.

A t-test for dependent samples was used to demonstrate if there was a positive significant difference between the pre-course and post-course surveys.¹⁵ A t-test for

¹⁵The results of this t-test can be found on pp. 87-88.

dependent samples “involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores.”¹⁶ Since the project involved a single group of the same subjects being surveyed under two conditions, a t-test of dependent samples was the appropriate test statistic.¹⁷ The third goal was successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive significant difference between the pre-course and post-course surveys.

The fourth goal of this project was to recruit project participants who would commit to using the course material to equip at least one other member of PSBC to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. The purpose of this goal was to create exponential ministry reproduction amongst the membership of PSBC. During the final session of the equipping course, participants were encouraged to commit to achieving this goal. Each willing participant was asked to make a written commitment, indicating their promise to equip another member of PSBC. This goal was considered successfully met when 68 percent of project participants committed to equipping another member of the congregation on how to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer.

¹⁶Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 191.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 189.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE REGULAR USE OF THE SCRIPTURES

Anyone who has watched enough commercials over the past thirty years can testify to the fact that there are many hungry and malnourished people living on several different parts of the planet. How many heart-tugging pleas have been made by an older Christian gentleman or various television personalities, for leisurely Americans to reach deep into their pockets, and for just the cost of a can of soda, help end this global tragedy. Even now, who cannot close their eyes and see the disturbing images of children standing by dilapidated houses with skeletal frames and protruding bellies?

Not to make light of the very real problem of world hunger, but this physical image of starvation is an accurate illustration of the spiritual starvation that is prevalent in the American evangelical church. *Malnutrition* is commonly defined as: “the unhealthy condition that results from not eating enough food or not eating enough healthy food.”¹ If this definition can be applied in a spiritual sense to the church, with “food” being understood to refer to the Word of God, then one can understand the dangers that such “spiritual malnutrition” would pose to the body of Christ. The author of Hebrews diagnoses this condition with inspired accuracy:

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a

¹*The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v. “malnutrition.”

child. (Heb 5:12-13)²

In order for Christians to begin to reverse this spiritually unhealthy condition, they will need to increase their study of God's Word and learn how to use the Scriptures to pray. By examining four passages from the Bible, it will be shown that the Scriptures clearly instruct God's followers to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer.

Man Shall Not Live on Bread Alone

For those who have been following the Lord Jesus Christ for any length of time, the phrase "wilderness experience" will evoke a wide range of emotions that bring to mind the dark periods of life that have been traversed or that are currently being experienced. Craigie rightly observes what this sort of brokenness does for an individual: "his own ability to provide for his needs is removed and he must learn again that his existence, physical and spiritual, can only be grounded in God."³ As a result, the period of time immediately following such a wilderness experience is an important opportunity for the follower of the Lord to learn an essential lesson: "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Luke 4:4b).

One of the remarkable features found in Deuteronomy, is how Moses takes advantage of such an opportunity after Israel's wilderness wanderings, which Craigie describes as a "backdrop" that stood in stark contrast "to the glories of the Promised Land."⁴ Near the end of both his life and his leadership of the nation, Moses gives a

²Unless otherwise indicated, the English Standard Version of the Bible is used throughout this work.

³Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 185.

⁴Ibid.

series of sermons that are designed to help the Israelites understand the importance of keeping the Law of the Lord as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. This was the perfect occasion for Moses to exhort the people, since the time of the Lord's discipline had ended and the coming conquest of the land would provide the nation with a level of prosperity, security, and content living that they had not enjoyed since leaving Egypt. Therefore, it was essential that the Israelites "learn to praise the Lord rather than follow their proclivity to forget him in their coming prosperity," which could lead to such pitfalls as the worshipping of other gods.⁵ While there are several sections in Deuteronomy that expound on the importance of living in accordance with the Lord's commands, verses 8:1-3 teach God's followers that spiritual health is sustained and increased, by learning to depend completely on every word that comes from his mouth. The implication for the nation of Israel, as well as for the Christian church today, is that in order to obey the Word of God, one has to know it, which means regular Bible study is an essential spiritual discipline.

The Truth Given

Like a master builder, who knows that the foundation must be laid correctly before building, Moses reminds the Israelites of the importance of obeying God's commands, in order to have life in the Promised Land. In Deuteronomy 8:1, Moses lays out this key principle and clearly connects it to the nation's hope of success:

The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. (Deut 8:1)

⁵Earl S. Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, in vol. 3 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 75.

Moses, like the author of Psalm 119, uses several synonymous and interchangeable terms (i.e. statutes, word, law, commandment, precepts, etc.) to refer to the Word of God. In this verse, he uses “commandment” to refer to the entirety of God’s Law, which had been given to the Israelites on this occasion.⁶ The Hebrew word for the noun “commandment” comes from the word for the verb “commanding.”⁷ This is clarified by the verbal phrase, “careful to do,” which is used twenty-two times in Deuteronomy, to instruct the Israelites to obey God’s law. This verb serves an important purpose in 8:1, as it connects the “keeping” of the commandments with the positive conditional promises of the Lord, regarding Israel’s occupation of the land. Moses makes it clear that their obedience will allow them to have life in the land, both in terms of existence and the fruitful multiplication of successive generations. In addition, their obedience to God’s commands is crucial to the success of the ensuing conquest of the land, which Moses indicates is what will allow them to “go in” and “possess” the land that God had promised to the Patriarchs.

The Truth Applied

One of the negative trends in the history of both old covenant Israel and the Christian church is that their religious leaders often became more concerned with outward behavior conformity than with the spiritual condition of an individual’s heart. While there is a lot of blame to go around when it comes to this man-centered trend

⁶Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 175.

⁷Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Bridges, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, ed. and trans. Edward Robinson [BDB], 4th ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), s.v. “מצוה.”

throughout the ages, no fault can be attached to the Bible. This is evidenced by the wonderful, diagnostic character of Deuteronomy 8:2, which provides the first and most crucial step in pursuing obedience to God's commands:

And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. (Deut 8:2)

Moses could have gone right from his imperative statement in 8:1 to the testimony of God's faithful wilderness provision in 8:4 and following, but instead he points their attention to the previous years of wandering in an attempt to help them understand how the Lord was testing their hearts. Merrill describes Moses' purpose in recalling this time "as a means of underscoring both the redeeming and preserving grace of God and the wicked unbelief and insufficiency of the people of Israel."⁸

This verse contains another of the key verbal phrases that can be found throughout the OT and especially here in Deuteronomy, "keep his commandments." The verb "keep" is used twenty-five times in this book to refer to one's obedience to the Word of God and is the same Hebrew word that is translated "be careful," which was discussed above.⁹ Moses brings up these wilderness tests in order to help the people understand not only the importance of obeying God's commands in the land, but also the connection between the amounts of material possessions one has and how that affects his dependence on the Word of God. Christensen explains such behavior: "It is when material blessings abound that we are most tempted to say in our hearts that we have done this."¹⁰

⁸Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 185.

⁹BDB, s.v. "שמר."

¹⁰Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 178.

Therefore, teachers and leaders in the church cannot simply exhort Christ's followers to obey the commands of the Lord without first helping them to diagnose the condition of their heart towards his word. In addition, they must commit to teaching the necessity of Bible intake as the primary means of spiritual sustenance that God's children were meant to live on.

The Truth Illustrated

If Deuteronomy 8:1 provides the prime directive for God's followers to live by (unyielding obedience to his word) and 8:2 reveals the crucial diagnostic step in uncovering what hinders one's outward obedience to God's commands, then verse 8:3 gives the believer the reason why they need to regularly intake Scripture. Moses does this with creative mastery, as he uses one of the "tests" mentioned in 8:2, which was the Lord's miraculous provision of manna in the wilderness:

And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. (Deut 8:3)

It was Moses' intention to connect the people's desperate need for God's physical provision in the wilderness to their desperate need of his spiritual provision in every area of life. As Kalland observes, "He made them hungry, then fed them with manna."¹¹ This miracle was intended to be seen as an obvious demonstration of God's power, so that the people would not be deceived into thinking that they had anything to do with the provision of food. "In fact, manna symbolized more than mere physical nourishment but the word of God itself, for the God who could provide in such a mighty and unexpected

¹¹Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, 75.

way was well worth listening to.”¹²

What was true for God’s children then is also true for God’s children today under the New Covenant of Jesus Christ, as Christensen confirms, “The basic source of life is God and the words of God.”¹³ Jesus demonstrated this truth when he quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to Satan, while the evil one was tempting him to sin by luring him onto the path of self-sufficient rebellion. According to Merrill, this was the point Jesus made clear to the devil: “There are relative values in life, and one of them is that spiritual food is more important than physical.”¹⁴ Therefore, God’s children today must realize that by itself their Christian “experience” is not only insufficient when it comes to being right with God, but also a poor indicator of spiritual health and a sure way to remain immature and susceptible to sin. In order for the church to experience true life in Christ and obediently fulfill the mission it has been given, leaders, as well as individual believers, must learn to live on a regular diet of God’s Word through the discipline of Bible intake, which Donald Whitney declares is the most important spiritual discipline.¹⁵

Delighting in the Law of the Lord

The first Psalm provides the reader of God’s Word with a perfect description of some of the most important indicative characteristics of both the wicked and the righteous. Weiser compares Psalm 1 to “a signpost” that “gives clear guidance regarding

¹²Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 185-86.

¹³Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 175.

¹⁴Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 186.

¹⁵Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 22.

the way in which they (God-fearing people) shall conduct their lives.”¹⁶ VanGemeran believes that the first Psalm was placed at the head of the Psalter by a later compiler, in order “to set the tone for the entire Psalter, because of its concern for God, for godly living, and for the hope of the godly in the realization of the promises of the covenant.”¹⁷ This Psalm, like so many that follow, exhorts the righteous to stay on The Lord’s path, which is clearly the path of his authoritative word. Therefore, Psalm 1:1-3 clearly teaches that it is characteristic of God’s followers to meditate upon the Scriptures daily.

Blessed Avoidance

Most people in our culture spend the majority of their time, energy, and resources in the pursuit of happiness. This observation should come as no surprise, since it is one of this nation’s guaranteed rights according to the Declaration of Independence. It would be helpful to be able to interview the late president and author of this document, Thomas Jefferson, in order to ask him what he meant by the term “happiness.” Thankfully, one does not have to wonder what the psalmist meant with his use of the term “blessed,” which appears at the beginning of Psalm 1: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers” (Ps 1:1). As VanGemeran observes, “The word ‘happy’ is a good rendition of ‘blessed,’ provided one keeps in mind that the condition of ‘bliss’ is not merely a feeling.”¹⁸

¹⁶Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 102.

¹⁷Willem A. VanGemeran, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 52.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 53.

The Psalmist begins his three-fold description of the “blessed man,” by first explaining what he does not do, with the use of three negative statements. Many have wrongly taught that these three statements, with their related action verbs (walk, stand, and sit) describe the digression of a man’s moral character into sin, which could in simple terms be characterized as “from bad to worse.”¹⁹ Some scholars agree that this is an erroneous way to interpret Psalm 1:1, which instead clearly uses these three clauses in typical parallel fashion, in an attempt to “profoundly portray the totality of evil.”²⁰ According to Broyles, “Poetic parallelism sets up a mirror image, where the second line is more specific than the first.”²¹ Instead of seeing this verse as teaching a downward spiral, it is far better to appreciate how the words are used in perfect, parallel sequence, and then to understand the emphatic warning that is being provided for the reader.

The three words used by the author to describe how an individual would participate (walks, stands, sits) with the wicked aids the reader in applying this warning to his or her own life, as well as to the lives of others. VanGemenen helps the reader by explaining that the three clauses found in verse 1:1 are intended to teach God’s children the necessity of “disassociation,” pertaining to one’s involvement with the unrighteous. He goes on to point out how the perfect mood of these three verbs “emphasize that the godly are never to be involved with anything tainted with evil.”²² The first thing the righteous are to disassociate themselves from is the “counsel of the wicked,” which

¹⁹Craig Broyles, *Psalms*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 11 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 41.

²⁰VanGemenen, *Psalms*, 54.

²¹Broyles, *Psalms*, 42.

²²VanGemenen, *Psalms*, 54.

stands in stark contrast to the counsel that they are to receive from God alone. How could one who claims to follow the Lord allow themselves to be guided by the advice of evil doers?²³ Yet, when a believer refuses to make Scripture intake a regular habit, they can unknowingly become conformed to the world's counsel on moral issues, which often conflicts with what is taught in God's authoritative word.

Blessed Delight

The conjunction “but” serves to indicate a major contrast between what has just been described (the way of the sinner), and what the psalmist will expound in terms of the positive description of the “blessed” man: “but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Ps 1:2). Notice how the psalmist does not write this as an imperative, by stating that it is the blessed man's “duty” or “obligation,” but instead tells the reader that it is indicative of a righteous person to “delight” in the law of the Lord. According to Broyles, this Hebrew word can be understood to describe “what turns on” an individual, as well as what he “truly values.”²⁴ For years Bible study has been commanded with such legalistic fervor, that so many have read their Bibles out of a sense of fear or duty. Instead of being motivated by the glory of God and a desire to please him, such individuals have been motivated to please man by conforming to expected behavioral patterns. According to VanGemeran, “The fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom is expressed as a delight in God's law and not only in

²³Weiser, *The Psalms*, 103.

²⁴Broyles, *Psalms*, 42.

pious words or a good feeling about God.”²⁵

The most significant part of this verse, which is also an important subject for many other psalms, happens to be the primary subject of verse 1:2, “the law.” The Hebrew word *t Torah* is used here, but some scholars agree that a better translation in the context of Psalm 1 would be “instruction.”²⁶ Craigie rightly observes that “the Torah can be used of the Law, the Pentateuch, and the entire OT; the word here basically means ‘instruction,’ specifically it is the instruction which God gives to his covenant people as a guide to life.”²⁷ According to the grammatical arrangement of this verse, God’s Torah is clearly what the psalmist is most concerned about, and therefore indicates clearly that it must be central to the life of the righteous man. While the mode of interaction with God’s instructions is essential to having one’s delight kindled, it is extremely important for the reader to understand that the Scriptures are the primary source of truthful counsel that he intends for his children to study and obey. “Revelation comes from God for the purpose of helping man to live in harmony with God’s will, whereas religion is man’s attempt to order his path and to explain the world around him.”²⁸

The word used to describe the mode of interaction the “blessed” man is to have with God’s law is translated in the English as “meditate.” The Hebrew word literally means “to mutter or growl” and is “somewhat analogous to ‘reading’ but also connotes

²⁵VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 55.

²⁶Broyles, *Psalms*, 41.

²⁷Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 60.

²⁸VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 54.

the notion of ‘mulling’ something over and over.”²⁹ The psalmist’s use of this word in verse 2 may not be intended to give instruction on a particular style of individual devotion, but could simply be informing the reader that the law of God preoccupies the thoughts of the blessed man, whom God has made righteous. According to VanGemeran, such meditation “is the reflection on the Word of God in the course of daily activities.”³⁰ The daily aspect is the key, in regard to understanding the regularity with which the blessed man delights in having his mind filled with the Lord’s instructions. Not only is such a habit indicative of the righteous, but it also encourages continued disassociation with the ways of those who are opposed to the Lord. Therefore, the daily studying and pondering of Scripture is an expected characteristic of the man or woman of God, as well as a necessity in continuing to grow and remain spiritually healthy.

Blessed Health

The third and final verse to be examined from this psalm provides a vivid illustration for what the blessed man is like, by using a simple agricultural picture that is timeless, as well as easy to understand and apply. This passage clearly teaches that these two pathways, the way of the sinner and the way of the blessed or righteous man, are the only two roads that exist. Therefore, every human being is on one path or the other. There is no third option, which of course man, as a result of his sinful nature, is always trying to find and justify. Here in verse 3, the healthy tree is used to symbolize the man or woman of God that walks along the narrow road (see Matt 7:13):

He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its

²⁹Broyles, *Psalms*, 42.

³⁰VanGemeran, *Psalms*, 55.

leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Ps 1:3)

According to Weiser, “The image of the tree speaks of the meaning of the value of life, which the godly man discovers by living his life in obedience to God.”³¹ Since the law of the Lord is the primary subject of this passage, it would be foolish to forget it as one examines this simile. If the tree is the righteous man, then it is safe to assume the life-giving water is symbolic for God’s divine instructions. Therefore, like a healthy tree that’s roots are deeply embedded in the rich soil, so too will the righteous man be grounded in and fed by the Scriptures. The results of both the tree and the man then will be continual health and the production of fruit. According to Craigie, this verse makes a theological point: “The state of blessedness or happiness is not a reward; rather it is the result of a particular type of life.” He goes on to state that “Just as a tree with constant water supply naturally flourishes, so too the person who avoids evil and delights in the Torah naturally prospers, for such a person is living within the guidelines set down by the Creator.”³²

Pray Then Like This

When learning to navigate the waterways on a boat or ship, there are several essential lessons that a pilot must learn. One in particular is learning to read and understand the various “aids to navigation” that have been placed to mark the channels for maritime traffic. Most channels and passes along the coast of the United States are marked by red and green signs during the day and corresponding lights by night. The

³¹Weiser, *The Psalms*, 105.

³²Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 61.

purpose of these red and green markers is to help boaters and pilots stay inside the channel and avoid running aground. The way a captain keeps his vessel in the channel is by continually making sure that the green marker is on one side of his boat and the red marker is on the other side. Therefore, while navigating the intercostal waterways as well as the passes in between barrier islands, the pilot must always reference these markers to keep his boat safely on course.³³ In a similar way, using an organized structure during one's devotional prayer time will help the child of God stay on course as he communes with the heavenly Father each day. Therefore, a brief exegesis of Matthew 6:9-13 will demonstrate that God's followers are to use the Bible to help structure and organize their daily time of prayer.

Matthew's account of what is commonly known as The Lord's Prayer is one of the most popular Bible passages of all time. The reason for its popularity is because for most of the church's history, this prayer has been recited word for word in many Christian traditions, both corporately and individually. While The Lord's Prayer can be prayed in this manner with all sincerity, it is the experience of most to repeat the words mechanically, and in a way that might be described as "lip service" elsewhere in the Scriptures (see Isa 29:13). Blomberg points out the irony of such a practice, especially in light of Jesus' condemnation of Gentile prayer in the preceding verses, which he describes as "vain repetition" (Matt 6:7 NKJV). Therefore, "The Lord's prayer is a better designation for John 17, whereas the model given here might be better entitled 'The

³³This knowledge comes from my time in the U.S. Coast Guard. When heading out to sea the green marker should be on the pilot's right and red marker on his left. When returning to port the sides the markers should be on will be reversed. One memory device for returning from sea is "red-right-returning."

Disciple's Prayer."³⁴ In order to properly understand the Lord's giving of these prayer instructions, it will be helpful to take into account the overall context of the larger section of Scripture that it is found, which is commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount.

As the Lord instructs his disciples in this section of Matthew's gospel account, he repeatedly uses the hypocritical religious practices of the Pharisees as a contrastive example of what not do. In addition to warning them about the "vain repetition" of the Gentiles, Jesus also commands his followers not pray like the hypocrite Jewish leaders who desire to be seen and to be well thought of by the people. Stott describes both vain repetition and hypocrisy as the "sin to be avoided in prayer."³⁵ Therefore, what the Lord Jesus teaches his disciples in this passage can be rightly considered "the Divine alternative to both types of false prayers," as well as "God-centered in contrast to the self-centeredness of the Pharisees, and intelligent in contrast to the mechanical incantation of the heathen."³⁶ In light of these observations, it is best to understand the Lord's two-fold concern in giving his followers this model of prayer. First, he wants to teach them to pray in such a way that they are mindful of the motive of their hearts, which should clearly be guided by the glory of God alone. This is seen as he instructs his disciples to pray privately and not in a way that draws attention (Matt 6:6). Secondly, Jesus is concerned with the manner that they address God in prayer. Instead of the aimless repetition of empty words, they should pray in the proper order and with purposeful structure. As Carson rightly observes, "By contrast with ostentatious prayer (vv. 5-6) or thoughtless

³⁴Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 118.

³⁵John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 142.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 150.

prayer (vv. 7-8), Jesus gives his disciples a model. But it's only a model: this is how [not what] you should pray."³⁷

Vertical Priority

The most important teaching that the Lord's instructions provides the believer is the fact that proper prayer begins with a focus on God, his glorious nature, and his work in redemptive history:

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matt 6:9-10)

One of the first observations that is usually made about this great passage is the fact that Jesus teaches his disciples to address God as Father, which was a revolutionary way for a Jew to relate to him and definitely not a central theme of the OT.³⁸ According to Blomberg, "Christians should consider God as accessible as the most loving human parent."³⁹ In addition to describing God in more familiar terms, Jesus also instructs his disciples to have a vertical focus on the Father's sovereign rule with the words "in heaven." Later, Stephen will demonstrate such a heavenward gaze as he is about to be stoned to death after condemning the hypocritical Jewish leaders (Acts 7:54-56). Paul, who witnessed this event, would later make "vertical orientation" a theme throughout his letters, with exhortations such as "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Col 3:2).

³⁷D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 169.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹Blomberg, *Matthew*, 119.

Next, Jesus demonstrates an important practice in the adoration of God, which is ascribing glory to him in the form of acknowledging his wonderful attributes. In this instance, he describes the Father's name as "hallowed," which is another way of saying that he is holy. According to BDAG, this Greek word is used here to instruct one "to treat as holy."⁴⁰ While there are many more divine attributes that could be and should be used in praising the Father, Jesus directs his disciples to focus on his holy nature for two reasons. First, while holiness is something believers are commanded to pursue as those who have been set apart (1 Pet 1:14-16), God alone is holy, when it comes to having absolute moral perfection. Therefore, when Christ's followers consider his sinless nature they should be reminded of their own fallen nature, as well as his redemptive work to bridge this gap through the Lord Jesus' atonement for sin, glorious resurrection, and sovereignty in saving them despite their sin. In commenting on this verse, Pink remarks, "We cannot pray aright unless the honor of God be dominant in our hearts."⁴¹ Stott also explains the importance of approaching the Lord in such a manner:

It is always wise, before we pray, to spend time deliberately recalling who he is. Only then shall we come to our loving Father in Heaven with the appropriate humility, devotion and confidence.⁴²

Before looking at the instructions that Jesus gives his followers to pray for their own needs, he focuses their attention on God's kingdom and his sovereign work in redemptive history. One of the unhealthiest trends within American Christianity over the past several decades has been the acceptance of the cultures' tendency toward

⁴⁰Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker [BDAG], 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. "αγιασθητω."

⁴¹A. W. Pink, *An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950), 161.

⁴²Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 146.

individualism. This trend has caused individual believers to isolate themselves within their own “personal relationship” with Jesus Christ. As a result, many in the church have lost sight of what the Lord of glory has been doing since the fall of man to redeem his children, and subsequently they have failed to see how he wants them to participate in a God-centered manner. By learning to pray with the coming of God’s kingdom in mind, as well as total commitment to his will (see Rom 12:1), believers can learn to surrender to his plans and be better prepared to serve the Lord each day. “The first three petitions, though they focus on God’s name, God’s kingdom, and God’s will, are nevertheless prayers that he may act in such a way that his people will hallow his name, submit to his reign, and do his will.”⁴³

Horizontal Reality

The second part of the Lord’s Prayer instructs God’s followers to bring their personal needs to the Lord as well. “Having expressed our burning concern for his glory, we now express our humble dependence on his grace.”⁴⁴ What better time to bring one’s requests before the Lord, but after worshipping his holy name, focusing on his glorious kingdom, and surrendering to his sovereign will:

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (Matt 6:11-13)

Stott correctly identifies an important grammatical change between the two parts of the prayer: “In the second part of the Lord’s Prayer, the possessive adjective changes from

⁴³Carson, *Matthew*, 170-71.

⁴⁴Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 148.

‘your’ to ‘our,’ as we turn from God’s affairs to our own.”⁴⁵ The first area of life that the believer is to seek provision from the Lord’s hand happens to be the one most people, especially in the first century, worry themselves over (i.e., Matt 6:25). The frequency with which God’s children are to pray for physical sustenance is clearly given by the Lord, as one is to ask for and be satisfied with his provision each day. The word for “daily” is a rare adjective that is only used twice in the NT (here and in Luke 11:3), and based on the context of this passage, could very well be translated as “bread for tomorrow.”⁴⁶

The next verse in the Lord’s Prayer shifts from man’s need for physical nourishment to his spiritual need of forgiveness. The Greek word used for “debts,” can according to BDAG, be defined as “obligation in a moral sense.”⁴⁷ Therefore, it is safe to assume that Matthew wants his readers to understand “debt” as referring to sin, which is a fitting description for the nature of man’s transgression against God. For the believer, unforgiven sin can be as dangerous spiritually as the lack of food is physically. This is true for both the receiving of forgiveness from the Lord and others, as well as the granting of forgiveness to those that have sinned against the individual. Unfortunately, this verse has been misunderstood by some to teach that God’s forgiveness is only merited by one’s forgiveness of another person’s sin against them. Such an interpretation contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture (e.g., Acts 10:43) and as a result, must be rejected. Stott likens this prayer for forgiveness to the parable of the unforgiving servant

⁴⁵Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 148.

⁴⁶Blomberg, *Matthew*, 119.

⁴⁷BDAG, s.v. “οφειληματα.”

(Matt 18:21-35), stating, “It is the disparity between the size of debts that is the main point.”⁴⁸ Seeking the Lord’s forgiveness and searching our own hearts to see if we are failing to forgive others are both important disciplines to a healthy prayer life.

The final request that disciples are instructed to make of their Father in heaven, concerns the reality of spiritual warfare. In addition to the previous verse, many have also misinterpreted 6:13 as well. One reason for their error is that they fail to understand the meaning of the word “temptation,” as well as the context of this verse. Carson observes that the Greek word for temptation was never translated as such before the writing of the NT, and was more commonly understood as referring to “testing” or a “trial.”⁴⁹ In addition, the Scriptures testify elsewhere that the Lord does not tempt individuals to sin (Jas 1:13-14) and that trials and testing are used by him for our benefit (Heb 12:3-17). Therefore, it is clear that Jesus is not instructing his followers to ask the Father not to cause them to sin, or to help them avoid trials and periods of testing.⁵⁰ Understanding the use of parallelism in the Psalms might assist one in understanding exactly what the Lord is teaching here, since it seems obvious that the second clause (“deliver us from evil”) is giving a more detailed explanation of what is meant by the first. Blomberg observes, “in light of the probable Aramaic underlying Jesus’ prayer, these words seem best to be taken as ‘do not let us succumb to temptation.’”⁵¹ A look at how Paul encourages believers with 1 Corinthians 10:13b would be helpful in further understanding Jesus’s words here: “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation

⁴⁸Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 150.

⁴⁹Carson, *Matthew*, 173.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Blomberg, *Matthew*, 120.

he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

Putting on the Armor of God

In addition to helping believers pray in a structured manner, the Bible is also intended to be used in helping to form the very prayers they pray. For example, the last verse of The Lord’s Prayer, instructs Christians to pray for the Father’s assistance in resisting temptation to sin. How can a follower of Christ pray for God’s protection in this very important area of spiritual warfare, beyond simply reciting Matthew 6:13? The answer is found in the final chapter of Ephesians, where the church is clearly instructed by Paul to pray for God’s protection against evil spiritual forces, by “putting on” God’s own armor. As O’Brien observes, “The apostle wants them to realize that a life of dependence on God in prayer is essential if they are to engage successfully in their warfare against the powers of darkness.”⁵² Therefore, an exegesis of Ephesians 6:13-18 will show that God’s followers are expected to pray the Scriptures in order to be equipped with his power.

The second part of Ephesians begins with the exhortation for believers “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which” they have been called (4:1). The key verb in this verse is “walk,” which Paul uses several times (4:17, 5:2, 8, 15) to describe the new life in which Christians are expected to live. According to BDAG, the verb “walk” when used in this context describes the “the conduct of one’s life.”⁵³ It is in this context that Paul gives the instructions for acquiring the panoply of God in order to help

⁵²Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 484.

⁵³BDAG, s.v. “περιπατησαι.”

them to live in a manner worthy of the One that called them. In verses 6:10-12 Paul gives the church the reasons why they must put on God's armor, in order to be strengthened by "his might." The first of four uses of the verb "stand" is found here, which hints at the central purpose of the armor itself, and creates the posture the believer will need in facing the multifaceted attack of the enemy: "Against the schemes of the devil, against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (6:11b-12). As Bruce observes, "They will do their best to reclaim the people of Christ for their own dominion, but their attempts will be fruitless if the people of Christ resist them with the spiritual resources which are now placed at their disposal."⁵⁴

Stand Firm

After describing the real and potential dangers faced by the follower of Christ, Paul gives the specific instructions for how they can receive the Lord's might: "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm" (Eph 6:13). Some scholars agree that Paul receives his inspiration from two primary sources. From the Scriptures, it is obvious that Paul has in mind the armor of Yahweh and his Messiah from various passages found in Isaiah (11:5, 49:2, 59:17, etc.).⁵⁵ From his surrounding environment, which most believe to be his two-year house arrest in Rome (AD 60-62), Paul is thought to be inspired by the weaponry of a Roman soldier. The reason for the armor appears in the form of the verbs, "withstand"

⁵⁴F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 406.

⁵⁵William Hendriksen, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), 274.

and “stand firm,” which emphatically repeat the purpose of Paul’s warning. According to BDAG, Paul’s usage of the verb “stand firm” in 6:14 means to “remain stable and to hold one’s ground.”⁵⁶ In regard to Paul’s multiple use of this word, O’Brien points out that “The entire passage is suffused with a spirit of confidence and hope and the reader is left, not with a feeling of despair, but with the sense that Satan can be defeated.”⁵⁷ It is also important for believers to understand the specific time that they will need to be outfitted with God’s armor, which Paul describes as “the evil day.” Since no Christian will ever know when that day will come, it would be wise to appropriate the armor of God every day, since at the very least, one can be assured that they will be tempted to sin on a daily basis.

In verse 6:14 Paul begins his detailed inventory of the armor of God, with the command to “stand therefore,” which appears as an aorist imperative, denoting the need for one to stand on a continual basis.⁵⁸ The danger for believers when it comes to interacting with the armor of God is paying too much attention to the imagery that Paul uses, and thus failing to understand the spiritual disciplines they represent. If one includes the instructions for supplication in 6:18, then these seven spiritual weapons are listed as follows: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer. Meditating on these seven glorious weapons of spiritual warfare can help one begin to understand the importance of implementing the disciplines they imply, as well as the spiritual danger that lies in wait for the Christian who ignores Paul’s exhortation.

⁵⁶BDAG, s.v. “στηναι.”

⁵⁷O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 464.

⁵⁸R. C. H. Lenski, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Commentary on the New Testament (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 664.

God's Panoply

“Each of the four participles which follow the imperative ‘stand’ (i.e., having put on) spell out the actions believers need to have taken if they are to stand firm.”⁵⁹ In addition, these participles are reminiscent of Paul’s command to “put on the new self” in Ephesians 4:24. The belt of truth most likely refers to the truth of God’s word, and signifies the need for one to prepare themselves for rigorous activity that will require protection from making decisions based on subjective feelings or emotions. The breastplate, which protected the soldier’s vital organs, is likened to the righteousness of Christ, and will be needed in order to avoid sin. Another passage that helps one apply the breastplate is Romans 13:14, which instructs believers to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh.” For shoes, the Christian is to put on the gospel of peace, which could be understood as illustrating the good news of Christ as one’s sure footing in combat, or “readiness to plunge into battle.”⁶⁰

Whereas the first three pieces were normally worn by a soldier at all times, the final three were put on prior to actually engaging in war. The shield of faith is to be taken up “in all circumstances,” and used to extinguish the fiery darts of the enemy, which could refer to all of his devices, or more specifically to those sins (i.e., fear, worry, anxiety, etc.) that rob one of faith. The helmet of salvation is best understood as the certain hope of one’s own crossing of the eternal finish line and their being adorned with the wreath of eternal victory. Some refer to this seldom taught discipline as “vertical orientation,” which allows one to fully surrender to God’s will when experiencing a

⁵⁹O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 473.

⁶⁰Lenski, *Ephesians*, 667.

difficult horizontal experience.⁶¹ Finally, the one and only offensive weapon, the sword of God's Word is provided for Christians to use much like the Lord Jesus did when resisting Satan's temptation in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11). Bruce describes the importance of this divine weapon: "The divine utterance, the product of the Spirit, lends itself readily to the believer who has laid it up in his heart for effective use in the moment of danger against any attempt to seduce him from allegiance to Christ."⁶²

It would be a crucial mistake to assume the armor of God ends with the sword and not with the emphatic imperative that Paul places on the discipline of prayer and supplication in 6:18. Not only is this verse connected to the previous section grammatically, but the prayer it instructs one to engage in is the means by which God has designed for the Christian to put on his armor.⁶³ As O'Brien states, "The military metaphors are limited to vv.14-17, while calling on God for strengthening is the way believers stand firm and appropriate the divine armor."⁶⁴ Therefore, this passage is just one example from the Scriptures that clearly instructs believers to use actual Bible verses as prayers, in order to receive the strength that the Lord has for those who call upon him each day.

Conclusion

In order for a Christian to avoid spiritual malnutrition and for the church in

⁶¹I heard Jay E. Adams use this terminology on many occasions during his lectures, while attending his biblical counseling institute (RBCTI) in Moore, SC.

⁶²Bruce, *Ephesians*, 409-10.

⁶³Ibid., 411. Both Bruce and O'Brien (*The Letter to the Ephesians*, 483) point out how the three participles of 6:18 connect better with the exhortation "stand" in 6:14 than the imperative "receive" in 6:17.

⁶⁴O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 483.

America to return to its doctrinal foundation, Scripture intake must become a daily priority for every believer, as well as for those who lead them. The Bible repeatedly instructs God's children on the importance of developing such a lifestyle. Deuteronomy 8:1-3 testifies to the fact that man was designed to live on every word that comes from God and not just on bread alone. In addition, Psalm 1:1-3 provides a clear and emphatic description of one of the most important indicative characteristics of those that are the blessed children of God: that they meditate on the instructions of the Lord daily. When it comes to the discipline of prayer, Matthew 6:9-13 shows how Christians are to use the Bible to order their daily time of prayer with the Father. Likewise, the words of God are also intended to be used to form a believer's prayers, which was Paul's intention with the giving of the armor of God passage in Ephesians 6:13-18. These important passages clearly demonstrate that the Bible is to be utilized by God's followers in a daily time of study and prayer.

CHAPTER 3
THE REGULAR USE OF THE SCRIPTURES
IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

An axiom that is rarely questioned and that is easily observed and experienced in all of life is the fact that healthy organisms grow. While there are many components that produce health, the one that is most common to all living things is the intake of the appropriate nutrients, which serves to prevent malnourishment and ensure survival. One amazing example of this principle is the method by which green plants convert the energy of the sun into food through a process known as photosynthesis. “Photosynthesis is a mechanism for converting the radiant energy of the sun into stored chemical form; the conversion of one kind of energy into another.”¹ What is true for plant life in the physical realm is also true for followers of Christ spiritually. Historian Gregg Allison describes this truth brilliantly: “Progress in the Christian faith requires nourishing oneself on God’s Word.”² The Christian doctrine that stands behind this truth is known as the Necessity of the Scriptures, which according to Grudem “means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will.”³ One way in which this theory can readily be observed is by examining the history of the

¹Arthur W. Galston, *Life Processes of Plants* (New York: Scientific American, 1994), 7, 23.

²Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 143.

³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 116.

church, where almost two thousand years of information reveals several individuals whose lives rise to the top, because of their commitment to the Word of God, regardless of the time period or circumstances in which they found themselves. Christian history, therefore, demonstrates a direct connection between the regular use of the Scriptures by God's followers and their spiritual health and ministry achievements.

The Regular Use of Scripture in the Patristic Period

The patristic or early church period (AD 100-500) is generally considered a time of health and growth within the larger story of Christianity. While there are several reasons for this, such as the church's proximity to the influence of the first century apostles or the threat of persecution, the church's attitude toward the Word of God is a primary cause of such health. This is confirmed by Allison who reports how "the early church was united in its conviction that nothing could be considered true belief unless it could be demonstrated from the Bible."⁴ The second and third generation believers learned to have such a posture toward the Bible, from the example of those who preceded them in the first century who "looked to the Jewish Bible as their sufficient source of doctrinal and practical instruction for a life of faith and obedience."⁵ Such a healthy posture can also be observed in the body of a green plant, which "has a simple and logical design, efficient for collecting light. For photosynthesis to be effective, the plant must present to the sun a light-absorbing organ, the leaf, oriented at a proper angle to the

⁴Allison, *Historical Theology*, 144.

⁵Ibid., 143.

incident radiation.”⁶ Just as the leaf provides the pathway for the sun’s energy to give life to the plant, the discipline of Bible intake sustains life and produces energy for the Christian who would serve the Lord consistently and faithfully. The regular use of the Scriptures was a crucial discipline for God’s followers in establishing the direction of the church during the patristic period.

Differing Hermeneutics

One of the developments in the patristic period that greatly influenced the church was the differing ways in which the Scriptures were interpreted. The primary method that influenced Christendom in this early period of history came to be known as the Alexandrian method, which is traced all the way back to the time of Christ and the Jewish theologian Philo. According to Olson, He “believed that the literal and historical references of the Hebrew Scriptures were of least importance,” and instead, “sought to discover and explicate the biblical narratives’ allegorical or spiritual meaning.”⁷ While this method of interpretation was not limited to the thinkers of Alexandria, it had a greater influence there than anywhere else in the Roman Empire. Men like Clement and Origen led the way and would often defend their method by appealing to Paul’s use of allegory in his epistle to the Galatians.⁸

In contrast to this hermeneutical method, theologians in Antioch developed a more literal method of interpreting the Scriptures, which contrasted with the Alexandrian process. According to Old, the School of Antioch became known for “its rejection of

⁶Galston, *Life Processes of Plants*, 8.

⁷Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 202.

⁸Ibid., 203.

Alexandrian allegory and insisted in a grammatical-historical interpretation of the text.”⁹ One influential theologian in Antioch was Theodore of Mopsuestia, who is credited with rejecting the allegorical method in favor of a more literal and historical hermeneutical process. Theodore, who lived during the fourth and fifth centuries, “shied away” from the allegorical method, and even considered the Song of Solomon as a literal, historical love poem, which is even rare among modern interpreters.¹⁰ When it comes to the study of the Scriptures for followers of Christ, the literal and historical method of interpretation would logically have a more profound effect on the individual, as opposed to the more subjective method of allegorical spiritualizing. According to Allison, “The necessity of Scriptures means Christians must engage in daily Bible readings.”¹¹ It would be the task of one of Theodore’s fellow Antiochene theologians to encourage such a practice, as well as going on to become one of the greatest preachers of the patristic era.

John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom is still considered to be one the greatest preachers and theologians in the history of the early church period. In addition, he is also known for his rise to the bishopric of the capitol city of Constantinople (AD 397), as well as his efforts to reform the corrupt church and government leaders in that famed city. Chrysostom is known to historians as the “golden-mouthed” or “golden-tongued,” because of his extraordinary ability to preach the Bible. Historian Roger Olson describes this legendary

⁹Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Patristic Age*, vol. 2 of *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 176.

¹⁰Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 203.

¹¹Allison, *Historical Theology*, 144.

preacher well:

A great and courageous preacher, reformer of worship and church life, spiritual guide and prophet to the powerful is considered the paradigm of a good theologian even though he never wrote a book of systematic theology or speculated about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. According to Eastern Orthodoxy, he who prays and preaches well is the best theologian.¹²

While his oratory gifts helped him to be an effective preacher, it was his commitment to explaining the Scriptures to his listeners that really set him apart. According to Old, Chrysostom was an expository preacher who “remains the crowning example of how the faithful preaching of the Word of God ever purifies and enlightens the church.”¹³

Evidently his preaching was effective in moving many of his hearers to stop chasing after worldly treasures and to devote themselves more wholly to Lord by recognizing their own need for the Bible. As Allison states, Chrysostom was convinced that without the Scriptures, the church “would be plunged into many evils.”¹⁴ While giving one of his homilies on the book of Romans, he declared,

For from this it is that our countless evils have arisen—from ignorance of the Scriptures; from this it is that the plague of heresies has broken out; from this that there are negligent lives; from this labors without advantage.¹⁵

In addition to his contributions from the pulpit, Chrysostom also wrote “the most impressive and readable collection of patristic expositions of Scriptures, which can

¹²Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 296.

¹³Old, *The Patristic Age*, 171.

¹⁴Allison, *Historical Theology*, 145.

¹⁵John Chrysostom, “The Argument,” in *Homilies on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, ed. Phillip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 335. Although this quote is from the original source, I discovered the subject of this sermon while reading Gregg Allison’s *Historical Theology*.

be found in his many sermons and commentaries.¹⁶” These treasures still provide insight into how he used both his sermons and his writings to encourage Christians to practice the discipline of Bible intake on a regular basis. Allison points out how Chrysostom “rebuked Christians who thought they did not need the Bible because they were not monks.”¹⁷ In a homily he delivered near the beginning of his preaching of Matthew’s Gospel account, he exhorted the congregation along these same lines: “For if thou wouldest learn how great is the profit of the Scriptures, examine thyself, what thou becomest by hearing the Psalms.”¹⁸ In other words, believers need the daily intake of the Scriptures to cure whatever ails them most. In similar fashion, while giving a homily on Colossians 3:16-17, Chrysostom again exhorted the congregation to turn to the Bible for relief: “If grief befall thee, dive into them as into a chest of medicines; take thence comfort of thy trouble, be it loss, or death, or bereavement of relations; or rather dive not into them merely, but take them wholly to thee; keep them in thy mind.”¹⁹

Such consistent instruction from a few of his many sermons demonstrates Chrysostom’s understanding of how essential it was that individual Christians spend time in the Bible on a consistent basis. For him, Bible study was a part of worshipping the Lord, which is made obvious by his comments on Psalm 41:

Nothing, in fact, nothing so uplifts the soul, gives it wings, liberates it from the earth, looses the shackles of the body, promotes its values and its scorn for

¹⁶Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 294.

¹⁷Allison, *Historical Theology*, 144-45.

¹⁸John Chrysostom, “Homily 2,” in *Homilies on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, ed. Phillip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004) 13. Although this quote is from the original source, I discovered the subject of this sermon while reading Gregg Allison’s *Historical Theology*.

¹⁹John Chrysostom, “Homily 9,” in *Homilies on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, ed. Phillip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 301.

everything of this world as does harmonious music and a divine song rhythmically composed.²⁰

While his ministry had a profound impact in the eastern part of the empire, the allegorical method of interpreting the Bible would win out in the western church, thus setting the stage for how the church would handle the Scriptures beyond the patristic period. As Allison observes, the sufficiency and necessity of the Scriptures would be “challenged by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) in the middle ages.”²¹ Regardless of what would occur in the future, Chrysostom was a shining example of what it looked like for a man of God to allow the Scriptures to be his regular teacher. While his example proved to be a blessing for his original audience, he would also go on to inspire several men who were instrumental in bringing about the Protestant Reformation.

The Regular Use of Scripture in the Medieval Period

Though the patristic era was generally considered a healthy time for the church, the same cannot be said for the medieval period of the Christian story, especially in regard to the church’s deteriorating relationship with the Word of God. In fact, the further the western church got away from the patristic and early Middle Ages, the less it depended on the Scriptures and the more corrupt and man-centered it became. While there are several specific circumstances that led to this tragedy, Allison is correct in attributing the main problem to the fact that the church would no longer come to view the Scriptures as sufficient or as necessary as they once did: “With these developments the doctrine of the sufficiency and necessity of Scripture, so much a part of the church in its

²⁰John Chrysostom, *Spiritual Gems from the Book of Psalms*, trans. Robert Charles Hall (Boston: Holy Cross, 2004), 46-47.

²¹Allison, *Historical Theology*, 142.

early years and the Middle Ages, was overthrown.”²² Sadly, the papacy would become plagued by one corruption after another, hardly resembling the leadership of the apostles and the many church leaders since their time. Even worse, the Christians in Europe would be deprived of the Bible in their own languages, subsequently becoming cut off from the spiritual-life giving nourishment that they were designed to sustain themselves with.

Allison describes this tragic development well:

The Roman Catholic Church came to affirm that Scripture is needed for the *bene esse* (well-being) but not the *esse* (existence) of the church. Because it possessed authoritative tradition, the church would exist even if the Scripture would disappear or be destroyed. But the Scripture was beneficial for the church to become all that God intended it to become. However, the church denied the sufficiency and necessity of the Scripture that it had once affirmed.²³

Thankfully, near the end of the medieval period, courageous heroes would appear on the scene, risking everything to free the Scriptures from the RCC and return them to the vernacular languages of the people. With such faithful sacrifices, the treasure of God’s Word would be returned to the common people. Apparently, the church was designed by its Savior and Creator to be able to sustain periods of drought and malnourishment, much like the green plant, which was built with ingenious survival mechanisms. “Such mechanisms must provide resistance not only against insect and microbial pests, but also against heat and cold, flood and drought, and the pollution of the air, water, and soil.”²⁴ The regular use of the Scriptures was rediscovered as an important and needed discipline by God’s followers in the medieval church period.

²²Allison, *Historical Theology*, 151.

²³*Ibid.*, 150-51.

²⁴Galston, *Life Processes of Plants*, 13.

John Wycliffe

By the time of the fourteenth century, the church would have hardly been recognizable as being “Christian,” by the apostles or the early church fathers. Nowhere was this truer than in England, where circumstances such as a corrupt church and the devastation brought on by the black plague added to the hopeless and seemingly dark times in this northern corner of the Holy Roman Empire. According to Ryle, “It is no exaggeration to say that for these three centuries before the Reformation, Christianity in England seems to have been buried under a mass of ignorance, superstition, priest-craft, and immorality.”²⁵ In such dark and hopeless times, only the light of God’s Word could break through and bring the life that was so desperately needed.

John Wycliffe, who has often been referred to as the “Morningstar of the Reformation,” would serve as one of the initial solutions to the spiritual darkness of fourteenth century England, by beginning to lay the foundations for the future doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*. According to Nichols, “The term *morning star* has been used alternately to refer to either the star Sirius or the planet Venus. It appears brightest in the predawn, the time when darkness still dominates, but also the time of promise—the time of the promise of the dawn and the rising sun.”²⁶ Wycliffe, who was born sometime around AD 1330 and who also became known as one of Oxford’s earliest great thinkers, “fully believed that the church of his day had lost its way and that Scripture alone provided the only way back.”²⁷ He knew that the best way to bring the people of England back in

²⁵J. C. Ryle, *John Wycliffe and His Work* (Auckland: Titus Books, 2013), loc. 12, Kindle.

²⁶Stephen J. Nichols, “The Morningstar of the Reformation,” *TableTalk*, July 2014, 15.

²⁷*Ibid.*

contact with God's Word was not just through teaching and preaching, but also by translating the Bible into the English language. According to Wycliffe,

It seems first that the knowledge of God's law should be taught in that language which is best known, because this knowledge is God's Word. Thus Christ and his apostles taught the people in that tongue that was best known to them. Why should men not do so now?²⁸

Eventually, Wycliffe would translate the Bible into English, which led Ryle to exhort that "we should gratefully remember that he was one of the first Englishmen who maintained the sufficiency and supremacy of Holy Scripture as the only rule of faith and practice."²⁹

His translation would become known as the Oxford Bible and would be illegally distributed throughout England by his followers, who became known as the Lollards.

"This heroic effort was the result of his deep convictions about the divine inspiration of the Scripture and the need of the English people to read it in their native tongue."³⁰

In addition to putting the Scriptures in the hands of his countrymen, Wycliffe also gave instructions on how to use it in his 1378 publication of *On the Truth of the Holy Scriptures*. Instead of the people simply knowing the Bible, he believed that "every Christian must be a theologian."³¹ To help with this, Wycliffe gave readers a "five-fold articulation of the truth that is to be kept by the faithful: speak the truth in reality, contemplation, prayer, preaching, and vocal instruction."³² Such action demonstrates that

²⁸William C. Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 1:186-87.

²⁹Ryle, *John Wycliffe and His Work*, loc. 33.

³⁰Steve J. Lawson, *Pillars of Grace: A Long Line of Godly Men* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2011), 2:357-58. .

³¹John Wycliffe, *On the Truth of the Holy Scriptures* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 300.

³²*Ibid.*, 186.

in addition to being a trained theologian, Wycliffe also had a pastor's heart and realized the need for instructing Christians on how to study the Bible in a daily and practical manner. Olson summarizes this aspect of his pastoral contribution well: "Perhaps Wycliffe's main achievement in theology was his advocacy of the supreme authority of Scripture for all of faith and life."³³ Wycliffe is rightly known as a forerunner of the Reformers but his work and example would go on to inspire many in his own land, as well as other medieval church leaders.

John Hus

One cannot mention the ministry of Wycliffe in England, without also recognizing the ministry of John Hus in Prague, in what is often referred to as the "Czech Reformation" of the fifteenth century. Historically, these men are connected in two ways: first and foremost, Hus was greatly influenced by the writings of Wycliffe, because of how they led him to the Scriptures, which had a profound impact on his relationship with God. Secondly, the two men were both condemned as heretics by the Council of Constance in 1415, where Wycliffe's bones were ordered to be exhumed and subsequently burned, while Hus was sentenced to be burned alive. Although little is known about Hus' early years, he did become a student and later a teacher at the University of Prague in the 1390s, where he most likely came into contact with the writings of Wycliffe. According to Denlinger,

Wycliffe's reforming program—which included strident criticisms of clerical immorality, rejection of the medieval doctrine of transubstantiation, and insistence upon lay access to the Scripture in the vernacular language—reached Bohemia thanks largely to Czech students who studied at Wycliffe's own Oxford

³³Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 359.

University.³⁴

Unfortunately, Hus is sometimes neglected by scholars who see him as one who simply parroted Wycliffe's pioneering work and did not provide any unique contributions of his own. Denlinger rightly warns against such a conclusion, stating that "Hus was no mere mime of Wycliffe."³⁵ One of his greatest contributions was the preaching ministry he had as rector of the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague. This opportunity afforded him the privilege of preaching twice a day in the language of the common people, where it is reported that "the building could not contain the swelling congregation."³⁶ Hus became so popular as a preacher in Prague that even after the Archbishop declared him a heretic, it was the latter who was forced to flee. According to Old, it was Hus' ability to apply the text of Scripture that set him apart among medieval preachers: "It was because he was able to preach to the common people in their own language what the Word of God had to say for their own lives that the spiritual leadership of the Czech reformer was followed."³⁷

Hus' most enduring contribution however would come as a result of his work on the Bohemian translation of the Bible, which he revised while in exile, thus greatly improving both the quality of the Czech Bible and the written language of the nation,

³⁴Aaron C. Denlinger, "The Goose," *TableTalk*, July 2015, 17.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 18.

³⁶Lawson, *Pillars of Grace*, 377.

³⁷Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Medieval Church*, vol. 3 of *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 484.

much like Luther would do in Germany.³⁸ According to Old, Hus' translation work "popularized the use of Czech as a devotional language, showing how it could be used to express the deepest thoughts of the heart and mind."³⁹ In another effort to create a legacy of the proper use of the Scriptures in Bohemia, Hus wrote to pastors who would carry the torch well beyond his own years of service. In one of his works, he exhorted pastors in their primary obligation:

A shepherd should be faithful to his Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Chief Shepherd of all spiritual sheep that are faithful, which he above all feeds in the pasture of his Holy Word. It is also expected of a godly shepherd to be able to lead his sheep to green pastures.⁴⁰

Although the medieval period of church history was mostly a time of spiritual darkness and hopelessness for many who claimed the name of Christ, this era ended with two brilliant stars who gave their lives to bring the Word of God to their people in their own tongue. Although the sentencing of both Wycliffe and Hus as heretics in 1415 may have been a crushing blow to the reform of the church, many of their followers, as well as other developments in Europe, would continue the movement throughout the remainder of the fifteenth century, setting the stage for the Protestant Reformation. According to Parsons,

The Reformers picked up the mantle of Wycliffe and Hus, crying *ad fontes*, "to the sources." They implored the church to return to the divine revelation, the original text of sacred Scripture by which the Holy Spirit brings life and liberty through the light of the gospel.⁴¹

³⁸William Dallman, *John Hus: A Brief Story of the Life of a Martyr* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2006), loc. 137, Kindle.

³⁹Old, *The Medieval Church*, 474.

⁴⁰John Hus, *A Good and Faithful Shepherd*, trans. Andrew Slabey (Bethlehem, PA: Slabey, 1973), 1.

⁴¹Buck Parsons, "The Dawn of the Reformation," *TableTalk*, July 2015, 2.

The Regular Use of Scripture during the Protestant Reformation

With the nailing of his ninety-five theses to the doors of the castle church in Wittenberg, Germany on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther began what would be known as the Protestant Reformation. As indicated above, this climatic event in the history of Christianity, did not happen randomly, but was predicated on the reform work of men such as Wycliffe and Hus, as well as several other “pre-reformers.” As Nichols reminds, “Luther stood on the shoulders of Hus, who stood on the shoulders of Wycliffe.”⁴² In addition to the efforts of these men, the stage was set for Luther and the other Reformers by several culminating events during the fifteenth century, such as the Renaissance, Christian Humanism, the invention of the Gutenberg Press, and Erasmus’ translation of the New Testament. Among the many contributions made by the Reformers during this period of time, *Sola Scriptura*, or “Scripture Alone,” would become one of the main themes of the Reformation, leading once again to the Bible becoming the “ultimate authority in the church.”⁴³ As a result, the Scriptures would be given back to the people, who would be encouraged and taught how to study the Words of God for themselves. Allison describes this principle well: “Thus the Spirit of God carries out his work of teaching only through the Word of God. The church is to learn the Bible, and the Bible alone, without any recourse to apostolic traditions or church decrees.”⁴⁴ During the

⁴²Nichols, “The Morningstar of the Reformation,” 15.

⁴³Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Age of the Reformation*, vol. 4 of *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 38.

⁴⁴Allison, *Historical Theology*, 154.

Protestant Reformation, the regular use of the Scriptures was reestablished as the normative way for knowing God and determining authority for God's followers.

Martin Luther

The green plant was designed with the ability to cope with stress but it was also engineered with the capacity to regenerate: "Thus, the plant 'tries' to avoid injury to its parts, but if it fails, every injured or discarded organ is potentially replaceable."⁴⁵ If the Middle Ages can be thought of as a time when such "injury" was done to the Christian church, then the Protestant Reformation can be considered as the period of "regeneration," which began with Luther's exposure to the life giving power of the Scriptures. This occurred between 1513-1517, while Luther was preparing lectures on such books as Psalms, Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews at the University of Wittenberg. According to Old, "Luther had for years submitted himself to the disciplines of medieval spirituality. They had not given him the peace they promised, but in his study of the Bible he rediscovered the gospel and began to preach it in the pulpit of the town church of Wittenberg."⁴⁶ Roland Bainton, who refers to these five years as Luther's "Damascus Road" experience, describes the outcome of this time in Luther's life: "Faith is not an achievement. It is a gift. Yet it comes only through the hearing and study of the Word. In this respect, Luther's own experience was made normative."⁴⁷

While Luther's contributions to the church were enormous and very well documented, his most important and enduring achievement came in the form of his

⁴⁵Galston, *Life Processes of Plants*, 15-16.

⁴⁶Old, *The Age of the Reformation*, 5.

⁴⁷Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1950), 60, 65.

excellent translation of the Bible into German. “Luther published his German New Testament on September 21, 1522; a remarkable gift to his countrymen. This translation caused the Reformation fires to spread even swifter.”⁴⁸ This great accomplishment began with his rapid completion of the NT while confined to the castle Wartburg, where he was taken for his own protection after the Diet of Worms in 1521. “It was there that the Word of God was etched on the German heart, as he made it possible to put the Bible in the hands of every one of his countrymen.”⁴⁹ Luther passionately describes what motivated him: “Let us then consider it certain and firmly established that the soul can do without anything except the Word of God and that where the Word of God is missing there is no help at all for the soul.”⁵⁰

In addition to his passion to see Christians study the Scriptures for themselves on a daily basis, Luther also encouraged believers to learn to use the Bible in prayer. One day while having his hair cut, Luther’s barber asked him how to pray, much like the disciples requested of Jesus. With loving devotion, the busy Reformer took the time to pen one of his shortest works, *A Simple Way to Pray*, which he later gave to his barber. In it, he outlined his own method of prayer, which consisted of using either one of the Ten Commandments, a portion of the Lord’s Prayer, or a section of the Apostle’s Creed. Luther would then take the selected passage and form it into a four-fold method of prayer. First, he would allow the chosen passage to “Instruct” him according to its content; secondly, he would offer up “Thanksgiving” based on the same truth; next, he

⁴⁸Steven Lawson, *The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2013), 19.

⁴⁹Old, *The Age of the Reformation*, 12.

⁵⁰William C. Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 2:14.

would formulate a prayer of “Confession” for his sins, which were revealed by the passage; and finally, he would form the selected verse into a prayer of “Request” for himself or for others.⁵¹ Luther describes how important the Lord’s Prayer, in particular, became to him through this method of prayer: “To this day, I nurse on the Lord’s Prayer like a child, and like an old man now, I eat and drink from it, but never get my fill.”⁵² As the pioneer of the Protestant Reformation, Luther made several contributions to the church, including the means by which Christians in his country could once again use the Scriptures in personal study and in prayer.

John Calvin

Considered by many to be the “theologian” of the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin, like Luther before him, had the course of his life changed by the Scriptures. His love and passion for the Word of God empowered him to help Christians learn to study and apply the Bible to their own lives. His most enduring contribution to the church, both in his day and ever since, was his systematic theology, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. One of the doctrines that Calvin was passionate about, both in his writing and preaching ministries, was the necessity of the Scriptures for Christians: “Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit. Just as nothing is omitted that is both necessary and useful to know, so nothing is taught except what is expedient to know.”⁵³ According to Allison, “With this, Calvin expressed the ‘formal principle’ of the

⁵¹Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, trans. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012), loc. 18, Kindle.

⁵²Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, loc. 187.

⁵³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 3.21.3, 608.

Reformation: Scripture and Scripture alone is the source and standard for the Christian faith.”⁵⁴ Just as he experienced the power of God’s Word to both save his soul and to call him away from worldly pursuits, Calvin was passionate about seeing the Scriptures transform the lives of others. “Calvin rejected natural theology in favor of God’s Word as the surest path to knowledge of God and elevated Scripture, inspired and illuminated by the Holy Spirit, as the sole supreme authority for the Christian faith and practice.”⁵⁵

While still in his mid-twenties, having published the first edition of the *Institutes* and already getting a taste of the power and dangers of the Reformation in France, Calvin was ready to settle down and spend the remainder of his life studying under Martin Bucer in Strasbourg. The Lord had other plans for the theologian, as he would redirect him to the Swiss city of Geneva, where he would spend most of the remainder of his life serving as the pastor. Although his attempts to reform the city were rejected at first, eventually the power of God’s Word would work to change the hearts of both the authorities and the people, making Geneva into one of the most Christian cities in the history of the church. According to Lawson, “Calvin believed not only that the mind should be filled with the truth of the Word, but that the heart must be devoted to godliness.”⁵⁶ The Scriptures took hold of the hearts of the people in Geneva as a direct result of the way in which Calvin preached, as he “followed the older Reformers in rejecting the allegorical interpretations of the Alexandrians and adopting the

⁵⁴Allison, *Historical Theology*, 155.

⁵⁵Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 410.

⁵⁶Steven J. Lawson, *The Expository Genius of John Calvin* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2007), 43.

grammatical-historical exegesis of Antioch.”⁵⁷ Calvin preached through the Bible at a remarkable pace, at times preaching as much as eight times a week. Such a commitment to making God’s Word so readily available had a remarkable effect in the lives of the people, which led many from Geneva to risk their freedom and their safety, in order to take the gospel into places like France and even Brazil.

When studying the life of Calvin, it is easy to focus on such things as his great writing career or his successful pastoral ministry, and neglect to realize how he allowed the Scriptures to first and foremost transform his own life. As Lawson describes,

Calvin fully understood that he must saturate himself with the proper knowledge of the Bible if he were to magnify the divine glory. Knowing that deep knowledge of the Bible comes only through much time in the text, he made disciplined study of Scripture a way of life, remaining in his study until the meaning was clear.⁵⁸

Before he could begin to be used effectively to implant the Word of God into the hearts and minds of his hearers, Calvin had to allow the Scriptures to penetrate his own heart, in order to bring his life into conformity with its truth. Perhaps he gives the reason for such consistent devotion himself with the following statement: “because error never can be eradicated from the heart of man until the true knowledge of God has been implanted in it.”⁵⁹ Both Luther and Calvin demonstrated how the Word of God can transform the heart and bring about healthy change in the lives of millions, thus putting the church back in a place of health and biblical functionality. With such a miraculous rescue from the man-centered corruption of the medieval Roman church, Protestants would need the help of future leaders to remain committed to the authority and necessity of the Scriptures.

⁵⁷Old, *The Age of the Reformation*, 93.

⁵⁸Lawson, *John Calvin*, 41.

⁵⁹Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.6.3, 28.

The Regular Use of Scripture during the Post-Reformation Period

The English Bible, which was produced in large part by the sacrificial efforts of William Tyndale during the Protestant Reformation, “has ever since been the treasure of English-speaking Christians.”⁶⁰ This treasure would be instrumental in helping Protestants in Great Britain to endure periods of heavy persecution by several monarchs who were influenced by such things as loyalty to the RCC and the need to maintain control of their kingdoms. Eventually, the fruit of their perseverance would come in the mid-seventeenth century, as the Puritans in England would become very influential in the direction of the country, both religiously and politically. New threats, such as the humanistic reason of the Enlightenment as well as Arminian and Liberal theology, would provide more unique challenges to the faithful resolve of English-speaking Christians, as well as to all who were committed to the Scriptures. Therefore, new heroes would be needed to continue to teach the church the Word of God and how to implement it into their daily lives, in order to prevent being led astray. Once again, the green plant provides a helpful illustration, as they have the ability “to predict the seasonal changes ahead by measuring signals from the environment,” in order to avoid being caught off guard by both future and sudden threats.⁶¹ Likewise, it was important for God’s followers in the Post-Reformation period to maintain their regular use of the Scriptures, in order to avoid both internal and external threats to their spiritual health.

⁶⁰Old, *The Age of the Reformation*, 138.

⁶¹Galston, *Life Processes of Plants*, 15.

Jonathan Edwards

It has been well documented that Jonathan Edwards is perhaps the greatest pastor-theologian to ever serve in North America. Growing up the son of a Harvard-trained pastor and the grandson of the famous Puritan preacher, Solomon Stoddard, Edwards was exposed to an enormous amount of Scripture as a child. Yet it was not until the second year of his master's program at Yale, at the age of seventeen, that he would be converted by Christ while reading from the NT.⁶² As a result of the impact that Scripture had on Edwards at the time of his conversion, he would develop and maintain a rigorous discipline of Bible study, and encourage others to do the same.⁶³ He describes this new found passion for God's Word:

I seemed often to see so much light exhibited by every sentence and such a refreshing food communicated, that I could not get along in reading; often dwelling long on one sentence to see the wonders contained in it, and yet almost every sentence seemed to be full of wonders.⁶⁴

For Edwards, the goal was not to simply read the Scriptures in a quantitative sense, but instead to spend as much time as necessary to allow the Words of God to saturate his soul and to fill up his mind with such wonderful truth. According to Whitney, "Edwards seemed particularly fond of meditating on Scripture while walking in solitude, or while on horseback, whether riding for relaxation or on a journey."⁶⁵

Like other heroes of church history, Edwards' devotion to the personal study of the Scriptures impacted his preaching and his overall ministry to others. His most notable

⁶²Steven J. Lawson, *The Unwavering Resolve of Jonathan Edwards* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2008), 6-7.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 113.

⁶⁴Whitney, "Pursuing a Passion of God through Spiritual Disciplines," 113.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

contribution to the Christian story was made through his many sermons, which he wrote in manuscript form and preached to his congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts. For Edwards his passion to preach God's Word was in part motivated by the need to protect his people from the influences of such things as Arminian theology, which he believed destroyed the very fabric of biblical Christianity. He was also concerned with the effects of rationalism, which he feared would keep the truths of Scripture from penetrating the heart, or as he put it, a person's "affections."⁶⁶ Undeterred by these dangers, his passion for God's glory through the studying and preaching of the Scriptures allowed him to be used mightily during the First Great Awakening to convert many individuals to Christianity and to grow many others who were already believers. He referred to this transforming power of God's Word as the "divine light," which he describes as "a true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the Word of God, and the conviction of the truth and reality of them."⁶⁷

Edwards' desire for others to come to love the Scriptures as much as he did was evident by his passion to teach people the Word of God, whether from his famous pulpit in Northampton, or while serving as a pioneer missionary to the Mohican and Mohawk Indians. As Edwards states, "the treasure of divine knowledge, which is contained in the Scriptures, and is provided for everyone to gather as much of it as he can, is far more rich than any one of gold and pearls."⁶⁸ What made him a true hero of the faith was not the years he spent preaching at the church his grandfather made famous, or

⁶⁶Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 504-05.

⁶⁷Jonathan Edwards, *Growing in God's Spirit*, ed. T. M. Moore (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), 25.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 75.

his many sermons during the First Great Awakening, or even his election to be the president of Princeton College, but his unwavering resolve to commit himself to the glory of God as a teacher and defender of the Scriptures. Whitney believed men like Edwards were rightly called heroes, “because they were devoted followers of Christ and people of his Word, who would protect the church far more than they would mislead the church.”⁶⁹

Charles Spurgeon

Another champion of the Word of God and protector of the church during this period of history was the “prince of preachers,” Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Like Edwards before him, Spurgeon grew up in a Christian home, being taught the Bible from an early age. In addition, he too was converted to Christ while being exposed to the Scriptures in his late teens; although for him, it would come from the preaching of a “reluctant lay preacher who stepped forward to expound a passage from Isaiah.”⁷⁰ A century after the ministry of Edwards, Spurgeon would also find himself defending the church against the threat of Arminian theology, which he claimed “truncates Scripture and militates against that wholeness of view which is necessary for the glory of God, the exaltation of Christ, and the stability of the believer.”⁷¹ In addition to this challenge and several others, Spurgeon was most known for warning Christians of the infiltration of liberal theology into the church, which is known to history as the Downgrade Controversy. Murray describes the state of the church in England during this time: “The church was not lacking in wealth, nor in men, nor in dignity, but it was sadly lacking in unction and

⁶⁹Whitney, “Pursuing a Passion of God through Spiritual Disciplines,” 109.

⁷⁰Steven J. Lawson, *The Gospel Focus of Charles Spurgeon* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2012), 4.

⁷¹Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 70.

power. There was a general tendency to forget the difference between human learning and the truth revealed by the Spirit of God.”⁷² The stage then was set for Spurgeon to unleash the Scriptures in such a dry and weary land.

Although he is said to have died prematurely, Charles Spurgeon made the most of his many years as a preacher. In addition to preaching to standing room only crowds in the famed Metropolitan Tabernacle, he is also credited with opening The Pastor’s College, starting both a gospel literature society and an orphanage, preaching up to ten times per week throughout Great Britain, and maintaining twenty-three preaching stations, which were manned by over a hundred lay preachers.⁷³ Yet with all this ministry success, it was Spurgeon’s private study of the Scriptures and a simple desire to make them known to others that truly motivated him: “The words of Scripture thrill my soul as nothing else even can. They bear me aloft or dash me down. They tear me in pieces or build me up. The words of God have more power over me than ever David’s fingers had over his harp string.”⁷⁴ While giving application to a passage from the Psalms he exhorted listeners to join him in such study: “You must take heed to your daily life, as well as study your Bible, and you must study your Bible that you may take heed to your daily life.”⁷⁵ In addition to emphasizing the need for personal Bible study, Spurgeon also believed in the importance of praying the Scriptures. While giving a lecture to his students he proclaimed:

It is a great thing to pray oneself into the spirit and marrow of a text; working into it

⁷²Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 21.

⁷³Lawson, *Charles Spurgeon*, 14-15.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁵Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 2:157.

by sacred feeding thereon, even as the worm burrows its way into a kernel of the nut. New veins of precious ore will be revealed to your astonished gaze as you quarry God's Word and use diligently the hammer of prayer.⁷⁶

Spurgeon proved to be a legendary champion of the Word of God; encouraging believers to remain committed to knowing it and believing everything contained within, regardless of the theological tendencies of those who would compromise the truth of the Scriptures.

Excursus: Prayer in Christian History

With great intentionality, the primary topic of this chapter has been the regular use of the Scriptures by church leaders throughout the course of Christian history. Yet, it would be a mistake to leave this brief historical examination without looking at the use of prayer by Christian leaders over the course of time. This short digression will provide a few examples of the ways in which Christ followers prayed and encouraged others to pray, from the different periods of church history.

The Early Church Period

According to Allison, the early church gathered frequently to “praise and thank God through song and prayer.”⁷⁷ To say the least, prayer was a very important part of the life of the church and was an excellent way for members of this young faith to fellowship, share needs, and glorify God. Several historians have noted some of the similarities between early church worship and Jewish practices of the preceding centuries. According to McGowan, “Around the end of the first century, the *Didache* provides a clearer picture of how and when one early Christian community wanted its

⁷⁶Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Lynchburg, VA: The Old-Time Gospel Hour, 1992), 42.

⁷⁷Allison, *Historical Theology*, 659.

members to pray. The basic prescription was simple: say The Lord's Prayer three times per day."⁷⁸ Since many of the first churches were started by missionaries from Jerusalem, and in many cases within some proximity to a synagogue, it should come as no surprise that an early church community using the Jewish practice of praying at three specific points of the day. "The *Didache* generally urges ritual practices comparable to Jewish ones."⁷⁹ Another practice of the early church was to pray together after receiving communion. The *Didache* also instructed believers to pray the following prayer after receiving the Lord's Supper: "We thank Thee, holy Father, for Thy holy name which You didst cause to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which You madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory forever."⁸⁰

The Medieval Church Period

During the middle ages, it became common for churches to use various liturgies during the mass to voice prayers to God. While there were a variety of liturgies used during the early part of this period, the Roman church attempted to standardize the liturgy around the beginning of the thirteenth century. According to Allison,

At the height of papal influence, the Catholic Church adopted a simplified Roman missal reworked by papal administration under Innocent III. This Roman missal theoretically became the liturgy for all the churches; in reality, however, great diversity continued to prevail.⁸¹

⁷⁸Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 189.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰*Didache*, 10.

⁸¹Allison, *Historical Theology*, 664.

In addition to the use of liturgies, another medieval practice, which was a shift from the early church, concerned confession of one's sins. According to Placher, "In the earliest church Christians confessed their sins to the whole community. It was in monastic communities, especially among the early Irish monks, that private confession to a priest and the assignment of penance became systematic."⁸² Finnian, a monk who served at a monastery in the early middle ages attempted to "bring some order" to the system of penance that was assigned.⁸³ *The Penitential of Finnian*, gives some evidence that he was attempting to preserve the Godward focus of one's confession: "If anyone has sinned in the thoughts of his heart and immediately repents, he shall beat his breast and seek pardon from God and make satisfaction, that he may be whole."⁸⁴

The Protestant Reformation Period

Earlier in this chapter, Martin Luther's prayer method was described as an example of a way in which the Scriptures were used to form prayers by a leader during the Reformation. In addition to his contribution, John Calvin gave instruction on the subject of prayer in his *Institutes*. His primary concern was that believers had a sense of the holiness and majesty of God when approaching his throne to pray:

But just as if in prayer we were conversing with one like ourselves, forgetting him, and allowing our thoughts to run to and fro. Let us know, then, that none duly prepare themselves for prayer but those who are so impressed with the majesty of God that they engage in it free from all earthly cares and affections.⁸⁵

In addition, Calvin was also concerned with another danger that Christians (especially

⁸²Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*, 1:131.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.20.5, 566.

those who had been influenced by Catholicism) could easily encounter while praying, which was approaching the Lord without meditating on what is was that they were praying. For example, it was common for former Catholics to pray in a rote manner that caused an individual to pray with their lips and not with their hearts. Calvin also warns against praying in such a manner: “Some murmur out prayers without meditation, their only principle being that God is to be propitiated by prayer. Believers ought to be specifically on their guard never to appear in the presence of God with the intention of presenting a request unless they are under some serious impression.”⁸⁶

Another Christian leader from the Reformation period, who taught believers how to pray, was the legendary Matthew Henry. Like Luther before him, Henry developed a method of helping Christians learn to pray the Scriptures. According to O. Palmer Robertson, “Henry was an exegete, a biblical theologian, a systematic theologian, and above all, a pastor with a heart filled with love for God’s people and a passion to minister to their needs and necessities.”⁸⁷ Henry’s method of prayer centered on using Scriptures to pray five different types of prayer in a specific order. The five different types of prayer that he arranged for believers to pray were “Praise, Confession, Petition, Thanksgiving, and Intercession.”⁸⁸ With each of these five disciplines, Christians were given specific passages, as well as prayers that Henry had written, which were based on the preceding words of Scripture. While most of these types of prayer are obvious by the titles given above, it is worth noting that for Henry, prayers of “Petition” concerned

⁸⁶Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.20.6, 567.

⁸⁷Matthew Henry, *A Way to Pray*, ed. O. Palmer Robertson (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2010), xiii.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 1-218.

acquiring the Lord's help to fight temptation and resist evil, while prayers of "Intercession" dealt with prayer requests for others or oneself. "Prayer in this form is nothing more and nothing less than what the old Puritans called 'pleading the promises.'"89

The Post-Reformation Period

John Bunyan, although known mostly for his writing of *Pilgrim's Progress*, made several other valuable contributions to the cause of Christ as well. One in particular was his book on the subject of prayer. As a child, Bunyan grew up in the Church of England, under the regular direction of the *Book of Common Prayer*, which outlined "public thanksgivings, confessions, and petitions; but no form of prayer."⁹⁰ After his conversion, while being imprisoned "for refusing conformity to the *Book of Common Prayer*," he decided at the risk of his life, to publish his book on prayer, while still in prison in Bedford jail.⁹¹ According to Bunyan,

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or according to the Word, for the good of the church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God.⁹²

One of the essential factors that Bunyan instructed Christians to include in their prayers was "sincerity." His concern, like many other leaders since the Reformation, was that

⁸⁹Henry, *A Way to Pray*, xii.

⁹⁰John Bunyan, *Prayer: On Praying in the Spirit and the Throne of Grace* (Louisville, KY: GLH Publishing, 1862) Kindle, loc. 71.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, loc. 84.

⁹²*Ibid.*, loc. 111.

Christians would pray empty prayers with their lips and not with their hearts. “Sincerity is the same in the corner alone, as it is before the face of the world. It knows not how to wear two vizards, one for appearance before men, and another for a short snatch in a corner.”⁹³ Bunyan’s contribution to the important subject of prayer would help protect Christians from hypocrisy and on a positive note, free them to pray in such a way that would glorify their Father in Heaven.

This brief excursus demonstrates that the regular use of prayer was also an important and crucial spiritual discipline throughout Christian history, especially when guarded by and used in conjunction with the Scriptures.

Conclusion

Just as food and water are needed in order for every living organism to survive and flourish, the Word of God is required for the Christian church to grow and remain spiritually healthy regardless of the external circumstances. This brief survey of a handful of leaders from the history of the church reveals the fact that there is a connection between the appropriate use of the Scriptures and the spiritual health of the individual and their ministries, in every period of the Christian story. Therefore, the regular use of the Scriptures by God’s followers is essential to maintain a healthy relationship with the Lord and to be used by him for his glory.

⁹³Bunyan, *Prayer*, loc. 125.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND SCHEDULE OF THE PROJECT

The ministry project was implemented over the course of eighteen weeks and culminated in the teaching of a ten-week course, entitled “Bread and Water.” The first seven weeks consisted of the creation of a nine-lesson equipping curriculum, the review and approval of the curriculum by the Lesson Evaluation Team (LET), and the promotion of the course to the members of Pendleton Street Baptist Church (PSBC). This initial phase included the fulfillment of the first goal of this project, which was to assess the daily Bible study and prayer habits of the course participants. The second goal was reached with the creation and approval of the equipping curriculum.

The next ten weeks involved the preparation, finalization, and execution of the nine-lesson equipping curriculum. Goal three of the project was achieved during this phase, with the successful delivery of the nine-lesson equipping curriculum. The final week served as a time for participants to review the main tenets of the equipping course, celebrate God’s work through the course, and to be challenged to teach the material to other church members. The fourth and final goal of this project was realized during this phase when 68 percent of participants committed to teaching the material to another church member in 2016. This chapter will describe the details of this project with a brief summary of the eighteen-week implementation period.

Phase 1: Promotion and Preparation

The first seven weeks were the most challenging of this entire project, as I had the task of writing nine separate lessons that would form a unified tool for the purpose of helping church members learn to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. What made this time even more challenging was the fact that I had to preach a four-week sermon series through Hebrews 12 for the senior pastor, who was on sabbatical. Little did I know that this preaching assignment was a gift from God, as it allowed me to promote the Bread and Water course as a means of applying the call to run the race of the Christian life with perseverance.

Week 1

During the week of August 16-22, 2015, I began to promote the Bread & Water equipping course to the members of PSBC. This process included an announcement during the message that I preached on August 16th, a direct invitation to church members who I had been leading in a sixth-month small group study, as well as to those that I had been counseling.¹ One of the stated delimitations of my project was that I would only allow between twelve and eighteen church members to participate. As a result, half of the spots were filled after this initial round of promotion. In addition to promoting the course, I also took the opportunity during the first week to contact the three men who comprised the LET, to ensure that they were prepared to receive my lessons, and to see if they had any questions about the evaluation process.

¹Prior to the implementation of my project I had the opportunity to take about twenty church members through two-thirds of Matt Rogers' *Aspire: Developing and Deploying Disciples in the Church for the Church* (Timmonsville, SC: Seed Publishing, 2014). This resource, as well as the six-month study, provided an excellent path into a course on Bible study and prayer.

Knowing that prayer would need to be an important part of a ministry project that was partly based on prayer, I made an early commitment to pray for the participants. Therefore, as individuals began to sign up for the course, I started praying for them on a weekly basis; a habit that I continued throughout the eighteen weeks.

Week 2

I outlined the nine-lesson equipping curriculum during week of August 23-29, which included such things as lesson subjects and the primary Scripture passages that would be taught and applied each week. After completing the outline, I sent a copy of it and a copy of the evaluation rubric² to each member of the LET. Each of the three members of the LET holds a Masters of Divinity and has served as a pastor.³ In addition, one of the three members of the team was the senior pastor of PSBC.

Week 3

During the week of August 30 through September 5, I wrote the first two lessons of the Bread and Water curriculum. Lesson 1, “Man Cannot Live on Bread Alone,” served as an introduction to the spiritual discipline of Bible intake. Using 1 Timothy 4:7-8 as a springboard into the subject of spiritual disciplines helped participants to understand the purpose of working hard to develop godly habits (“godliness” for this life and for the one to come). Although the project only included two of the disciplines, it was essential for the participants to learn how they were intended to function in the lives of Christians. In addition to this passage, a couple of thought-provoking quotes by

²See appendix 2.

³The three members of the LET attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Dallas Theological Seminary, respectively.

Donald Whitney enhanced this lesson.⁴ The primary teaching passage for this lesson was taken from Deuteronomy 8:1-6, which was also one of the four passages that I had researched in chapter 2 of this project. Other aspects of these lessons will be shared in the next section, which will deal more with the actual execution and application of the curriculum.

The title of the second lesson was “Lord Teach us to Pray,” which introduced the discipline of devotional prayer. With these first two lessons, I wanted participants to understand the basic difference between Scripture intake and prayer; the former being the primary way in which God speaks to us, and the latter being how we are to communicate with him. With the discipline of prayer, I discovered an abundance of useful material from such authors as A. W. Pink, O. Palmer Robertson, Matthew Henry, and Martin Luther. For a primary teaching passage, I used the version of The Lord’s Prayer that is found in Luke 11:1-13. Upon their evaluation of these first two lessons, the LET responded with greater than 90 percent of the indicators scored at “sufficient” or above. Lessons 1 and 2 were approved.

Week 4

I was able to successfully complete lessons 3 and 4 during the week of September 6-12. As I was outlining the nine-week curriculum, I knew that it would be essential to have a lesson designed to help diagnose and confront any negative habit patterns that were keeping the participants from connecting with the Lord on a daily

⁴Whitney’s two chapters on Bible intake from his *Spiritual Disciplines*, as well as his chapter on Jonathan Edwards’ spiritual discipline from *A God Entranced Vision of All Things*, eds. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004) provided a wealth of information for the writing of this curriculum.

basis. Therefore, lesson 3, “Establishing a Daily Study and Prayer Habit: Diagnose—Repent—Repair,” began by looking at four key passages that I wanted to use to help participants identify and “put off” negative habits, while simultaneously learning to “put on” more God-glorifying patterns of study and prayer.⁵ The primary teaching passages used in lesson 3 were Ephesians 4:17-24 and 5:18. These passages helped the participants to understand how biblical habit change works, as Paul gives the principle (4:22-24), several examples (4:25-32), and reminders of whose power would be needed (4:23-24, 5:18).

With lesson 4, I deviated a little from the flow of the lessons and presented the participants with a biblical example of using Scripture intake and prayer in the milieu of life. I wanted to use an example from the OT to demonstrate such a healthy habit of coming to the Lord to both hear his Word and to connect with him through prayer. Therefore, I decided to use the example of King Hezekiah from 2 Kings 18-19. Specifically, I showed the class how Hezekiah was a man after God’s own heart (18:1-7), how he turned to the Lord through his Word (in the form of Isaiah the prophet), and how he prayed in the face of adverse circumstances (18:13-19:20). Upon their evaluation of these two lessons, the LET responded with greater than 90 percent of the indicators scored at “sufficient” or above. Lessons 3 and 4 were approved.

Also during week 4, I began making personal contact with each of the participants, ensuring that they understood the requirements and expectations of taking

⁵The four key passages were Mark 7:6-7 (The Problem: The Heart); Heb 5:11-14 (The Symptoms: When God’s Word Is Neglected); Col 3:16-25 (The Diagnostic: The Impact of Bible Study on One’s Marriage, Parenting, Workplace Relationships, etc.); and Eph 4:11-16 (The Solution: The Gift of God’s Word Being Used in a Congregation by the Gift of God’s Under Shepherds).

part in the Bread and Water course.

Week 5

During the week of September 13-19 I produced lessons 5 and 6 of the equipping curriculum. Lesson 5 marked the beginning of a four-week explanation of the BREAD and WATER acronyms, and how they were designed to help guide the participant's use of the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer.⁶ This lesson would examine the first two letters of the BREAD acronym, which stand for "Bible and Reading." The lesson began by addressing the reality that although Christians (in America) have more availability to the Word of God than at any other time in history, only about a third of professing believers read the Bible on a regular basis.⁷ The purpose of the first two letters in the BREAD acronym is twofold. First, I wanted participants to understand that the Bible must be our primary source of devotional study, and second, we need to read through books of the Bible from beginning to end, as opposed to jumping around randomly. The two passages that I used to demonstrate this were Luke 24:25-49 (Jesus' encounter with the Emmaus road disciples, and the apostles in the upper room) and Joshua 1:7-9 (God's charge to Joshua as he prepared to replace Moses).

Lesson 6 focused on the final three letters of the BREAD acronym, which stand for "Early, Active, and Daily." I started this lesson by sharing how the Lord helped me to develop the habit of study and prayer over the previous fifteen years. I also shared with participants how I discovered the value of rising "early" to spend longer periods of

⁶See appendix 3 for the details of these two acronyms.

⁷Statistics were shared from the American Bible Society's *State of the Bible* 2014 survey. I also used a very poignant quote by R. C. Sproul that got to the heart of the problem, which is our laziness. This information can be seen in the lesson itself which is included in appendix 4.

private and undisturbed time with the Lord. I utilized the Lord's example in Mark 1:35-39, as well as the Psalmist's habit in Psalm 119:147-148 to make this point.

The habit of "Active" study is really the heart of the BREAD acronym, and makes use of the biblical discipline of Scripture meditation. To show the importance of this discipline, I explained and applied the truths found in Psalm 1:1-3. I also used some of the material that I had developed during my research of this passage from chapter 2. The "Daily" component of the BREAD acronym is implied in each of the other points, but was still worth examining in its own right. To do this, I used Moses' instructions for Israel's future king from Deuteronomy 17:18-19, as well as Paul's instructions to the church in Romans 12:1-2. Upon their evaluation of these two lessons, the LET responded with greater than 90 percent of the indicators scored at "sufficient" or above. Lessons 5 and 6 were approved.

Also during week 5, I created one of the two application tools that participants would begin using during their devotional times. This instrument is called the Discovery Inventory tool, and corresponds to the "Active" part of the BREAD acronym. It works by helping participants to create their own doctrinal catalogue, by recording "discovered" passages under a variety of doctrinal headings.⁸ This tool is based on one that I created for my own personal use four years ago, which is located in my devotional Bible.

Week 6

Over the course of September 20-26, I wrote lesson 7 of the equipping course curriculum, the first of two lessons that would teach through the WATER prayer acronym. Lesson 7 covered the first three letters of this acronym, which are "Worship,

⁸The Discovery Inventory tool can be found in appendix 5.

Admit, and Thank.” I began the lesson by introducing the participants to the ACTS prayer acronym, which is commonly known and has been used by many people over the years. I shared with them how I was taught this method of prayer at seminary and how it served as the basis for my WATER acronym.⁹ This lesson included several more passages of Scripture than the other lessons. Instead of using one or two primary passages, I used several to help the participants understand the importance of these disciplines from various angles.¹⁰ For each section of this lesson, I used a verse that gave clear instruction for each discipline (e.g., 1 John 1:9 for admitting one’s sin), as well as a number of other passages that looked at the motivation behind the command or that showed examples from the lives of biblical heroes. In addition, I used several key quotes from the likes of Matthew Henry, A. W. Pink, Donald Whitney, and O. Palmer Robertson to enhance my teaching. Upon their evaluation of this lesson, the LET responded with greater than 90 percent of the indicators scored at “sufficient” or above. Lesson 7 was approved.

During week 6, I also administered the Pre-Course Survey, which fulfilled the first goal of this project.¹¹ In addition, I was able to organize the participants into “same gender” accountability pairings. To ensure success with this step, I spent a lot of time praying and thinking over the best matches of personality and spiritual maturity. My final accomplishment for this week was the development of the Equipping Prayer tool, which

⁹ACTS stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. I have not confirmed the origin of this prayer acronym, but some have attributed it to Matthew Henry.

¹⁰These additional passages can be found in lesson 7, which is located in appendix 4.

¹¹See appendix 1 for a copy of the Pre and Post-Course Survey.

the participants would begin to utilize in the next lesson.¹² This tool was designed to help students to begin to form key passages into prayers that could be used on a daily basis.

Week 7

I wrote lessons 8 and 9 of the equipping curriculum during the week of September 27 through October 3. Lesson 8 examined the final two letters of the WATER prayer acronym, which are “Equip and Request.” While the other four letters of the WATER acronym are also represented in the ACTS prayer acronym, “Equip” is my original contribution to praying in this manner. While at seminary, I learned from one of my professors to form prayers (e.g., praying for the “filling of the Spirit,” by forming Eph 5:18 into a prayer) from key Scripture passages.¹³ Since I was already using the ACTS prayer acronym, I just added a time of “equipping” prayer in between my times of thanksgiving and supplication, which is where I found that it fit best. This is why the word “water” provided the perfect acronym for teaching others how to pray, because it maintained the important prayer disciplines found in the ACTS acronym, while also allowing for the word “equip” to be used in the appropriate location.

Lesson 8 began with a look at both Martin Luther and Matthew Henry’s prayer methods, which they used and taught throughout their legendary ministries. The primary passages that I used for the “equip” portion of this lesson were Psalm 119:9-11 (Storing up Scripture in your heart) and Ephesians 6:10-18 (The Armor of God). Both of these passages instruct believers to intentionally use Scripture to fight temptations to sin on a

¹²See appendix 6 for the Equipping Prayer tool.

¹³I was encouraged to pray in this manner by David Allan Black, while taking his NT course at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2002.

regular basis, fulfilling one of the primary purposes for this prayer discipline. In addition, the participants were able to discuss and interact with Jesus' final prayer imperative in The Lord's Prayer, which is found in Matthew 6:13 ("Lead us not into temptation"). When the time came to teach the "request" portion of the lesson, I decided to use several well-known passages, such as Philippians 4:5b-7 and 1 John 5:13-15.

Lesson 9 was designed to summarize and tie together the BREAD and WATER acronyms and apply them to the participants' daily life. I began this lesson by interacting with John 6:35, which was one of my theme verses for the entire Bread and Water course. We then reviewed several of the key tenets of the acronyms, which also provided an opportunity for participants to give testimonies from their time in the course. I used two primary passages to apply these two spiritual disciplines. First, I took the participants through 2 Timothy, which allowed them to discover several passages where Paul exhorted Timothy to make use of the Scriptures in the course of his life and ministry. Then I shared from Psalm 90, where Moses gives readers an excellent example of how to approach the Lord in prayer. Upon their evaluation of these two lessons, the LET responded with greater than 90 percent of the indicators scored at "sufficient" or above. Lessons 8 and 9 were approved.

In addition to the completion of these two lessons, I also prepared the room where the course was to take place, and assembled the student notebooks as well. Since the students were being placed in accountability pairings and triads, the classroom would have to be arranged to accommodate this type of "one to one" learning. Therefore I chose a room that was large enough to have several smaller tables so that the participants could sit with their accountability partners, allowing for private interactions during the lesson

times. Each student's notebook contained a place for the weekly lessons (which I distributed each week), the application tools, and chapters 2 and 3 of this project, which were provided for additional study.

With the completion of this initial phase, goal two of the project was met, which was the creation and subsequent approval of the nine-lesson equipping curriculum. With the curriculum in place, the participants prepared, and the classroom organized, I was now ready to implement the Bread and Water course.

Phase 2: Implementation of the Bread and Water Course

The second phase of my ministry project was much more enjoyable, compared to the seven-week marathon of creating the equipping curriculum and preparing the participants for the start of the course. The duration of this part of the project would be ten weeks; nine weeks for the nine lessons of the equipping curriculum to be taught, and one week for a bonus lesson, which would be taught during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, when several of the participants would be out of town.¹⁴ This phase of the project took place from October 4 through December 6.

Weeks 8 through 17

Although the execution of the Bread and Water equipping course was the highlight of the project, most of the weeks were similar in regard to the details of the schedule that I followed, as well as what the students experienced. Therefore, instead of following the week by week outline from the previous section, I will describe this part of

¹⁴This bonus lesson examines the congregational practice of Scripture intake and prayer within the ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah and has been included in appendix 4 with the rest of the curriculum.

the project according to the different components of each week's lesson, as well as what would be expected from the participants.

Study and preparation. During the weeks leading up to each session, I would spend the necessary amount of time preparing each lesson to be taught. First, I would re-read through each lesson and look for content that was in need of editing or improving. Such improvements might include a more appropriate supporting Scripture passage or a more impactful quote from one of my sources. During this time I would also implement any helpful suggestions that were made by the members of the LET in the "comments" section of the corresponding lesson evaluation. Next, I would spend time studying through the passages that were a part of the lesson, which included supporting passages and the primary teaching passages. During this time, I would also record any points that I wanted to make or illustrations that would help to explain the truth of God's Word. Finally, I would print out the final version of the lesson and place a copy at each of the participant's seats in the classroom, while praying for them individually and in the context of their accountability pairings.

Interactive learning. Earlier in 2015 I had the opportunity to attend a semester of the Renewal Leadership Institute (RLI), which is a ministry of The Church at Cherrydale (TCC), in Greenville, SC. This course is based on *Aspire*, which is a discipleship and leadership curriculum, written by Matt Rogers.¹⁵ During the weekly courses I was exposed to a highly interactive method of leading a small group study, which included lecturing, round table discussions, large group interaction, and

¹⁵Matt Rogers is also the lead teaching pastor at TCC, and one of the instructors at RLI.

application time. My exposure to this style of teaching greatly impacted how I would teach the Bread and Water course at PSBC, making it much more interactive and far less passive. For example, Bread and Water participants would have several opportunities to interact with one another during each session. Additionally, every lesson contained two or three opportunities for “one to one” time, where participants would discuss specific passages that I was teaching. I also gave the class ample opportunities to discuss and give feedback during the large group teaching time.

Accountability. In addition to being highly interactive, the sessions also included time for the participants to meet with their accountability partners. For example, they were given the first ten minutes of class to meet together to discuss the previous week’s homework assignments, and to share any experiences that they had from their daily times of connecting with the Lord in study and prayer. The participants were also given about five minutes at the end of each session to make plans for contacting each other during the upcoming week. As a part of their weekly homework assignments, they were expected to contact each other at least once, and were even encouraged to meet together from time to time. To help support their efforts to hold each other accountable, I would also send out a weekly e-mail reminder, which contained a PDF and brief review of the lesson, as well as a preview of the upcoming lesson and a reminder to contact one another.

Homework. I learned the value of homework through my training as a biblical counselor. Therefore, going into the creation phase of the equipping curriculum, I knew that I would need to put a lot of time and thought into the type, amount, and variety of

homework assignments for this project. The last thing that I wanted to do was to give participants mundane busy work. On the contrary, it was my desire to challenge them with applicable assignments that would assist with the overall goal of the project, as well as foster meaningful accountability relationships.

Each homework assignment contained a key memory verse that was directly connected to the lesson content and to the overall application goals that pertained to the spiritual disciplines of Bible study and prayer. Participants were not only asked to memorize the passages but were also encouraged to meditate upon them through the course of the week and to share their experiences with their accountability partners before each lesson. In addition, I would usually begin each lesson by reviewing the memory verses, which I used as a bridge into the teaching material.

The homework assignments for the first 3 weeks differed from the other 6 in scope and purpose. Since lesson 3 dealt with the changing of habit patterns as it pertained to their daily routine of study and prayer, I used the homework for the first 3 lessons to help participants identify and change unhealthy patterns. Beginning with lesson 4, I assigned sections of the Bible for the entire class to read during their daily devotion times. These assigned passages were intended to prepare the students for the following Sunday's lesson, and were designed to help enhance the accountability relationships that were taking place throughout the week.

Prior to the lessons that explored the BREAD Bible study acronym, students were introduced to the Discovery Inventory tool and were instructed on how to incorporate it into their daily devotion time. Likewise, the class was given the Equipping Prayer tool just prior to the lessons on the WATER prayer acronym. Once a tool was

given to the students, these tools then became a part of the regular homework assignments as the course progressed. Each week as a part of their homework, students were also encouraged to maintain contact with their accountability partners.

Phase 3: Conclusion and Commitment

The final week (December 7-13) of the project allowed for the course participants to review several key truths from the equipping curriculum, share testimonies of the Lord's work in their lives, and to make important commitments toward future faithfulness. Although there was not an additional lesson for our final session, it proved to be a great opportunity for the students to finish out the course in an appropriate manner.

Week 18

The final session began with the last accountability time, as participants shared their devotional experiences from the previous week. For the final homework assignment, I had them read through seven of the greatest prayers found in the Bible during the course of their devotional reading.¹⁶ I decided that the best way to begin our time together would be to read each of these passages and then have the participants share any discoveries that they had made. After that we reviewed the "Lessons Learned" section of the curriculum, which contained the core truths from each of the nine equipping lessons. This time led to a lot of valuable discussion and application for the group.

Next, I spent time encouraging the participants on how they could continue to stay committed to the new spiritual habits that they had formed during the course. In

¹⁶See the "Final Session" in appendix 4 for a list of these seven "prayer" passages.

addition, I gave each student the opportunity to commit to teaching another church member the Bread & Water curriculum over the course of 2016. Sixty-eight percent of the participants did commit to sharing the material with another member, fulfilling the fourth and final goal of this project.

Finally, I had the students complete the Post-Course Survey. During the following week, I added up the scores of both the Pre and Post-Course Surveys and conducted a t-test for dependent samples. The results of the t-test confirmed that the project was a success, as there was a significant increase between the Pre and Post-Course Survey scores.¹⁷

Conclusion

Helping Christians to develop a love and passion for connecting with the Lord on a daily basis has been a goal of mine for many years. Prior to conducting the Bread and Water course, I have only been able to help individuals that were participating in the counseling ministry at PSBC. Now as a result of this assigned doctoral project, I have a proven discipleship tool that can be used repeatedly in varying contexts to help equip believers to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. These past eighteen weeks in particular have been one of the highlights of my ministry career. It is my hope to continually utilize this resource throughout my career as a pastor, in whatever ministry context the Lord sovereignly assigns me to serve in.

¹⁷The results of the t-test can be found in the following chapter on pp. 87-88.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Now that the project has reached its conclusion, it is time to evaluate the purpose, goals, and overall success of its impact on the participating members of Pendleton Street Baptist Church (PSBC). In addition, this final chapter will also consider the project's strengths, weaknesses, and theological reflections, as well as my own personal reflections.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip members of PSBC in Greenville, South Carolina, to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. In chapter 1 of this project, I explained the three reasons that helped me to recognize the need for this type of training in our congregation. First, PSBC was a theologically liberal congregation for several decades, which left many of our older and middle-aged members weak in the area of spiritual formation and unsure of how to properly use the Scriptures. Second, during the most difficult years of our revitalization effort, the staff placed several younger members in positions of leadership, without the normal amount of vetting or training that would have otherwise taken place. Later, this would come back to haunt us as we discovered that there were deacons and key leaders, who although saved and supportive of the staff, struggled to connect with the Lord on a regular basis. Third, as the church began to see more new converts and members, the need for foundational discipleship

training became more and more apparent.

After successfully implementing the project at PSBC, I can confidently say that all three of the factors given above have been addressed. Of the 18 members who participated in the project, 8 were over the age of 50, 3 of whom were senior adults (65 or over). Several from this group gave testimonies of how the Lord used this project to greatly enhance their use of the Scriptures in devotional study and prayer. In some cases, the older members were able to develop more regularity in their daily times of Bible study and prayer, while in other cases, those who already had a healthy devotional habit were able to improve the quality of their time with the Lord.

In addition, 7 of the 18 participants were part of the younger contingent of members who were placed into key leadership positions during the years when we were battling for control of the church. One of these individuals, who serves as our Church Clerk, shared how the project helped her to go from having an irregular time of devotion, to being able to form a new habit of connecting with the Lord on a daily basis. Another participant, who serves on the deacon board of PSBC, shared with me how he went from not having a daily time of devotion, to getting up every morning with his wife (who also participated in the project) to study and pray the Scriptures.

While I was disappointed that none of our more recent believers or members were able to participate in the project, I was still encouraged by the fact that the church now has the means to train those who are new to Christ and the congregation in the future. Since the start of my project (August 2015), the congregation has decided to move out of our aging building and to begin meeting in a hotel at the beginning of 2016. With all the difficulties that come with such a transition, it will be important to utilize the

Bread and Water course as a tool to train and equip future members of PSBC who are sure to come as a result of the exciting changes that face the church.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The project consisted of four goals, the first of which was to assess the daily Bible study and prayer habits of the church members that would be participating. A pre-course survey was administered prior to the first equipping session, to meet this first goal.¹ The results of the pre-course survey provided several important pieces of information and confirmed my concerns about the devotional habits of the congregation. Of the 18 church members who began the equipping course, only 2 did not complete the course, as a result of missing more than two of the ten equipping sessions.

Of the twenty-seven statements on the survey, I have chosen two to demonstrate the participants' self-evaluation of their study and prayer habits prior to the start of the equipping course. The first of these survey statements was "My habit of devotional prayer sets a good example for other believers." The second is similar, but with "Bible study" as the spiritual discipline instead of "prayer." Of the 16 participants who successfully completed the project, only 1 answered higher than "Agree Somewhat" on the statement regarding prayer. On the other hand, 10 of the 16 participants answered "Disagree Somewhat" or lower. In regard to the statement concerning Bible study, 7 of the participants answered "Agree Somewhat," while 9 answered "Disagree Somewhat" or below. The information gathered from these two statements demonstrates the effectiveness of the pre-course survey in achieving the first goal, as well as the need for this project at PSBC.

¹See appendix 1 for a copy of the Pre and Post-Course Survey.

The second goal of this project was to create curriculum for a ten-week equipping course. The curriculum consisted of nine lessons that were taught over the course of ten one-hour sessions, and focused primarily on the spiritual disciplines of Bible study and prayer. These disciplines were also applied through the use of the BREAD and WATER acronyms, which I developed over the course of several years of connecting with the Lord on a daily basis. This goal was measured by a rubric used by the Lesson Evaluation Team (LET), which consisted of three seminary trained pastors.² The rubric helped the members of the LET to assess each lesson based on clarity, relevance, commitment to Scripture, consistency, and practicality. In order for the goal to be met, the LET must have scored at least 90 percent of the indicators at “sufficient” or above. After evaluating each lesson, the LET scored 100 percent of the indicators at “sufficient” or above. Therefore, no lesson required revision in order to gain LET approval. The second goal of this project was achieved.

The third goal of this project was to successfully use the equipping curriculum, entitled “Bread and Water,” to train between twelve and eighteen members of PSBC to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. The ten-week equipping course was successfully completed by 16 of the 18 participants who began the course by taking the pre-course survey. This goal was measured through their completion of the post-course survey during the tenth and final equipping session. These survey results were compared to the results of the pre-course survey using a t-test for dependent samples. The mean score for the pre-course survey was 83.94, while the mean for the post-course survey was 107.31. The t-test showed that the teaching of the Bread and Water curriculum to the

²See appendix 2 for a copy of the Curriculum Evaluation Rubric.

participants made a statistically significant difference, resulting in an improvement in their use of the Scriptures to study and pray on a daily basis ($t(31) = 2.132, p < .001$).

Therefore the third goal of this project was successfully achieved.

The fourth goal of this project was to recruit participants who had completed the course to commit to using the equipping curriculum to teach at least one other member of PSBC to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. This goal was measured by obtaining the written commitments of at least 50 percent of the participants during the final session. Of the 16 participants who completed the course, 11 committed to teaching the Bread and Water material to another church member. It should be noted that the 5 participants who did not commit to the fourth goal had five of the six lowest score increases between the pre and post-course surveys. With over 68 percent of the participants making commitments, the fourth goal was successfully met.

Strengths of the Project

The BREAD and WATER devotional acronyms were a definite strength of this project.³ There are two reasons why this was true. First, the members of PSBC were already familiar with these acronyms at some level, because I had been using them in my teaching and counseling for over two years.⁴ Therefore, the project participants already had some understanding of this tool and how it was intended to be used. Second, as the one teaching the equipping course, I had been studying the Bible and praying devotionally in this manner for several years. This factor brought a sense of proven

³See appendix 3 for a detailed explanation of these two acronyms.

⁴In 2013, I created a brochure for the members of PSBC that outline and explained how the BREAD and WATER acronyms could be used to enhance a Christian's study of the Bible and prayer life.

experience and credibility to my efforts at training the participants on how to use the Bible in their own relationship with the Lord. Additionally, the two acronyms are biblical and yet very simple to understand and incorporate into one's life.

The outline that I used to design the equipping curriculum lessons was also a strength of this project. Lessons 5 through 9 of the curriculum were designed to explain and apply the BREAD and WATER acronyms. With such perfect application built into the second half of the curriculum, I created lessons at the beginning of the course that exegeted the importance of Bible study and prayer from key texts of the Scriptures. Often when pastors write sermons or lessons, they spend so much time and energy on the exegetical portion that they do not have much left when it comes to the application. This was not the case with the Bread and Water course. The early sessions also included a key lesson on biblical habit change, where participants were taught how to identify and remove "old self" sin patterns and how to replace them with corresponding "new self" habits that glorified God (e.g., Eph 4:17-32).

The accountability groups of two or three participants provided another strength to this project.⁵ I knew early on in my planning that developing a way for students to have a "shared experience" while participating in the course would help to ensure its success. Although I had always planned to build an accountability component into the course, it was not until the course was set to begin that I decided to fill the classroom with several smaller tables so that the groups could sit together. With this arrangement, members of each accountability group connected their shared experience from the equipping sessions into the context of their weekly phone calls, meetings, and

⁵It was my desire to place each participant into a two-person accountability group, but with 9 men and 9 women signing up for the course, I was forced to have a three-person group for each gender.

homework assignments.

The “one to one” discussion and application times were yet another strength of this project. These intentional times of accountability and discussion were built into each lesson. Participants spent five to ten minutes with their accountability partners at both the beginning and end of each session. The opening time period allowed for students to resume discussion from their weekly conversations and to share the results of their weekly homework assignments, which included memory verses and assigned devotional readings from the Scriptures. The time at the end of each session allowed for participants to begin a conversation on what they had just learned, review the coming week’s assignments, and to make plans to contact each other during the coming week. In addition to these two “one to one” times, the exegetical portion of each lesson contained two or three opportunities for accountability partners to discuss and apply points that were made during the teaching.

The assigned devotional readings and the related devotional tools were a final strength of this project. Beginning with the fourth lesson, students were assigned to read the same passages of Scripture during their devotional times over the course of the seven days in between sessions. These assigned readings were in most cases from the same book of the Bible, related to the following lesson, and intentionally connected to the accountability relationships. The Discovery Inventory tool allowed for participants to create a catalogue of their own doctrinal discoveries as they actively read the Scriptures with a pen in their hand.⁶

I stumbled upon this method of meditation about four years ago when I

⁶See appendix 5 for a copy of the Discovery Inventory tool.

decided to locate all the verses in the Bible that gave evidence of Jesus Christ being the only way of salvation. Now, four years later, I have well over fifty doctrinal categories that I am filling with discoveries in the course of my daily devotional readings. As a result of this method of Scripture meditation, the Word of God has come alive for me in a way that I had never known before. A once spiritual duty, fueled by the fact that I was a pastor, has become a passionate love for the Bible that gets me out of bed early each morning with excitement as to what I might discover and learn from the Lord.

The Equipping Prayer tool allowed for participants to learn how to pray Scripture passages that were intended for us to use daily, in order to be equipped by the Spirit to serve and glorify the Lord.⁷ This tool provided another way for students to meditate upon and apply the Scriptures in real time. In giving the students this tool, I provided them with prayers that I use each day. I also encouraged them to develop their own prayers from what they discovered in the course of their Bible reading. I received positive feedback from several of the participants due to the successful use of these two tools in the course of their daily devotions. I also believe that these two tools had a lot to do with the large score increases between the pre and post-course surveys for these same individuals.

Weaknesses of the Project

The amount of material that was expected to be covered in each sixty-minute equipping session was a definite weakness of this project. The hurried pace of most of the

⁷See appendix 6 for a copy of the Equipping Prayer tool.

sessions caused participants to have less time to discuss material as a large group and caused me to have to move on from certain passages prematurely. On a few occasions, I had to skip valuable “one to one” application times because of the amount of material that remained. Even worse, during two of the lessons, I was forced to skip entire teaching points because of the lack of time left.

The accountability component, which I listed as a strength in the previous section, was a second weakness of this project. While it was a positive experience for most of the participants, there were a few accountability groups that did not function as intended. Not surprisingly, members of these particular groups had some of the lowest score increases between the pre and post-course surveys. While the majority of the students had a positive experience with it, I believe it is flawed in its current design, especially for male participants. The female participants were better at contacting one another and maintaining accountability, whereas the men struggled in their efforts.

What I Would Do Differently

The improvements that I would make to this project, relate to the weaknesses described in the previous section. First, I would add at least three additional lessons to the equipping curriculum, making it a thirteen-week course. In reviewing the material, I have already discovered a few points where I would separate certain lessons into two. For example, I taught through the ten letters of the BREAD and WATER acronyms in only four lessons. While not every concept represented by the acronyms requires individual attention, the two (“Active” from the BREAD acronym and “Equip” from the WATER acronym) that are connected to the application tools should be the subject of their own lessons. Additionally, extra attention to the spiritual disciplines of Bible study and prayer

would enhance the project. The curriculum would be greatly improved by adding lessons that demonstrate how these disciplines are practiced in the Bible. This could be achieved by incorporating the “Bonus” lesson that I taught over the Thanksgiving holiday into the curriculum, which was based on the revival efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem (Neh 8-10).

I could also improve this project by using the information provided by the participants in the pre-course survey to form the accountability pairings. While I did put a lot of time, prayer, and thought into the creation of these groups, I based my decisions largely on the intimate knowledge I had about each of the participants as a result of being their pastor for several years. For whatever reason it did not occur to me to use the information obtained from the first goal of this project to help in grouping the students. I realized the need for this improvement based on the likelihood that I will have future opportunities to teach this material to groups of Christians that I am less familiar with personally.

A final thing that I would do differently in the future also concerns the accountability pairings. While most of the groups had a positive and productive accountability experience, a few did not. Incorporating a system of redundancy into the accountability part of this project would allow for me as the teacher to ensure that groups are calling and meeting with one another during the weeks in between sessions. This could take several forms, whether personally meeting with the groups during the early weeks of the project to help get them started, or creating clusters of married couples or singles that are participating. It will be essential to make such a change in the future, especially in regard to the male participants, since they proved to have a more difficult

time than the women at maintaining this crucial equipping relationship.

Theological Reflections

This project reminded me of just how important the Word of God is to a Christian's sanctification. Jesus demonstrated the reality of this truth in his prayer to God the Father: "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). If a believer is not spending time actively studying (i.e., meditation) the Bible each day, their spiritual growth will be stunted and they will be less effective in serving and being used by the Lord. Not only will the individual struggle to please God and walk in holiness, but their relational areas of responsibility will also suffer. The others who would suffer from the believer's neglect might include their spouse, their children, their church family, or their coworkers. This connection between one's daily time with the Lord in study and prayer and their horizontal relationships is clearly implied in Romans 12, Ephesians 5, and Colossians 3. By disciplining oneself to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer, an individual Christian is allowing the Lord to build the appropriate foundation for a God-glorifying marriage, family, church, and witness.

The necessity for Christians to learn how to meditate upon the Scriptures was another theological truth represented in this project. This discipline is instructed by God several times in his Word, most notably in the first chapters of Joshua and the Psalms. In his important book on the spiritual disciplines, Donald Whitney lists seventeen different ways to meditate upon the Scriptures.⁸ What makes his contribution special is the fact that he provides a unique way for every Christian to meditate upon the Scriptures, helping them to go beyond just reading them passively. The method of Scripture

⁸Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 55-68.

meditation contained within this project represents yet another way for Christ followers to engage the Bible actively each day, in order to encourage their sanctification and bring about excitement for studying God's Word.

Finally, this project helped believers to understand the importance of communication in their relationship with the Lord. Most people will agree that communication is a key component within any human relationship structure. How often do pastors and counselors discover the lack of healthy communication as one of the root problems in a troubled marriage or parent-child relationship? If healthy two-way communication is so important to our earthly relationships, how much more important is it for a Christian in his or her relationship with the Lord?

The simple communication model is built upon the assumption that information has successfully been sent and received by at least two parties. If one party fails to send or receive that information, then healthy communication has not occurred and the relationship will suffer.⁹ Therefore, when it comes to our relationship with the Lord, it is imperative that we take the time to hear from him through his Word, and then after being appropriately informed, speaking to him through prayer that is seasoned with the words of Scripture. This discipline is taught throughout the Bible in such passages as Proverbs 15:31-33 and Ecclesiastes 5:1-5, which encourage both listening and talking to the Lord in an appropriate manner. In addition to providing another way to mediate upon the Bible, this project also benefited the church by teaching believers how to pray in a spiritually healthy way, by formulating the Scriptures into actual prayers.

⁹I hold a B.A. in Communication and am knowledgeable in this subject area.

Personal Reflections

The biggest lesson that I have learned as a result of conducting this project at PSBC is that it is futile to try and build local church ministry upon the lives of Christians who are failing to connect with the Lord through his Word on a daily basis. For years I have invited members into leadership and ministry participation simply because of what I had observed in terms of their gifting, experience, or outward behavior. Never did I ask about their personal Bible study habits, prayer life, or even how they were leading in their homes. I chose instead to look the other way, while ignoring the clear warnings in my heart. Thanks to this project I have become more convinced than ever of the necessity for every follower of Christ to eat and drink from the Scriptures each and every day, and to connect with the Lord in God-centered and Bible-saturated prayer.

During the course of this project, I was also reminded of the fact that simple is sometimes better. In terms of the depth and scope of a typical doctoral ministry project, mine was very basic. In fact, the Bread and Water course was my third idea for a ministry project to conduct with the members of PSBC. Originally, I had wanted to conduct a project that would help to overhaul the entire disciple-making process of the church. Thankfully, as an associate pastor it was beyond my scope of responsibility and I was forced instead, to discover what the Lord had for me to do all along. In my time here at PSBC, I have formed downtown evangelism teams, hosted evangelism conferences, helped to create and initiate new small groups, and worked to begin a biblical counseling ministry. Yet, despite their size and complexity, each of these ministry attempts eventually ran out of energy and fell flat (with the exception of the counseling ministry). In hindsight, I now know the value of working to ensure a healthy foundation before

trying to build large and exciting ministry structures on the shoulders of God's people.

Despite the overall success of my project, 2 of the 16 participants who finished the course had essentially no positive increase in their habit of using the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. When I tabulated and compared the results of the pre and post-course surveys, I was heartbroken to see that these two individuals had the lowest scores both before and after the execution of the Bread and Water course. It is at times like these that I can be encouraged by the fact that of the ten lepers that were healed by the Lord, only one returned to thank him. Therefore, I thank the Lord for the overall success of this project in most of the participants' lives, but I am also motivated to improve the material and the execution of this ministry project for future use.

Finally, I was extremely thankful to have conducted this ministry project just prior to two major transitions that the members of PSBC will be facing at the start of 2016. First, January will be the final month of the church's occupation of the building where they have gathered for over sixty years. With the recent sale of the property where our building sits, the church will begin meeting offsite for a few years before building a new facility on the remaining land. It is my hope and belief that the success of this ministry project will provide much needed health and stability to the members during this time of transition. Secondly, January will also be my last month on staff as the associate pastor of PSBC. I was thankful to have been able to execute this project at the church where I have learned and grown so much over the past eight years. I pray that my contribution will serve to bless and grow the church members for many years to come. In addition, I look forward to utilizing the material from this project in the church that the Lord has called me to help plant in the coming year.

Conclusion

This project represents yet another example of the value of remaining teachable as a local church pastor. In 2004 after graduating with a Master of Divinity from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS), I was hired to plant a church in Florida. Ultimately this church planting effort failed, which truly humbled me and led me to acknowledge that I still had a lot to learn from the Lord. Since then I have learned the value of being teachable and humble as a Christian and as a pastor. Such a God-given attitude allowed me to recognize my need to be the associate pastor here at PSBC, and to eventually enroll in the Doctor of Ministry program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS). I am confident that what I have learned from the Applied Theology seminars and from this ministry project will serve me and the congregations that I lead for years to come. I am also confident that the Lord will provide for me many more opportunities to be humbled and to learn over the course of my remaining years of ministry.

APPENDIX 1

BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER SURVEY

The purpose of this survey was to assess the daily Bible study and prayer habits of the PSBC members who participated in this project. The survey was broken into two parts. Part 1 contained a mixture of multiple choice and fill-in the blank questions. These questions were intended to provide both personal and demographic information. Part 2 contained questions based on a Likert scale, which were used to analyze the effectiveness of this project.

BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help you develop the habit of using the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. This research is being done by Pastor Ted Richard for the purposes of ministry research. In this research, you will be asked to share honest information about your current devotional practices, attend eight out of ten classroom sessions on Sunday mornings, regularly correspond with an assigned accountability partner from within the class, and include suggested study and prayer methods during your time of daily devotions. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Part 1: Personal Information

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer. For the fill-in the blank question, write the appropriate answer in the space provided.

1. Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ alone for salvation?
 A. Yes
 B. No

2. How many years has it been since the Lord saved and converted you? _____

3. What is your gender?
 A. Male
 B. Female

4. What was your denominational upbringing?
 A. Baptist
 B. Roman Catholic
 C. Other Protestant Denomination (If so, which one? _____)
 D. Other Religion (If so, which one? _____)

CONTINUE SURVEY ON THE NEXT PAGE

5. What age range do you fall into?
 A. 25 or below
 B. 26-39
 C. 40-54
 D. 55-64
 E. 65 and over
6. Do you have any children age 18 or younger living in the home?
 A. Yes
 B. No
7. What is your employment status?
 A. Full-time
 B. Part-time
 C. Unemployed
 D. Homemaker
 E. Retired
7. Which Statement best describes your reason for participating in this course?
 A. I have a regular devotion time and would like to learn how to enhance it.
 B. I struggle to have a regular time of devotion and need help establishing this habit.

Part 2: Opinion Analysis

Directions: Each statement is designed to gauge your beliefs and practices in regard to regular Bible study and prayer. Please use the following scale: **SD** = strongly disagree, **D** = disagree, **DS** = disagree somewhat, **AS** = agree somewhat, **A** = agree, **SA** = strongly agree. Please circle the appropriate answer:

8. I believe the Bible is God's Word.
 SD D DS AS A SA
9. I believe the Bible is the primary way that God speaks to his followers.
 SD D DS AS A SA
10. I believe that prayer is the primary way Christians are to speak to God.
 SD D DS AS A SA
11. I believe that Christians should read the Bible and pray every day.
 SD D DS AS A SA
12. In general, I am satisfied with my prayer life.
 SD D DS AS A SA

CONTINUE SURVEY ON THE NEXT PAGE

Directions: Each statement is designed to gauge your beliefs and practices in regard to regular Bible study and prayer. Please use the following scale: **SD** = strongly disagree, **D** = disagree, **DS** = disagree somewhat, **AS** = agree somewhat, **A** = agree, **SA** = strongly agree. Please circle the appropriate answer:

13. I am satisfied with my daily time of devotional prayer.
SD D DS AS A SA
14. My devotional prayer time is structured and well-ordered.
SD D DS AS A SA
15. I have a time of devotional prayer at least 5 out of 7 days of the week.
SD D DS AS A SA
16. My habit of devotional prayer sets a good example for other believers.
SD D DS AS A SA
17. My time of devotional prayer includes intentional confession of sin.
SD D DS AS A SA
18. My time of devotional prayer includes intentional worship of God.
SD D DS AS A SA
19. My time of devotional prayer includes intentional thanksgiving to God.
SD D DS AS A SA
20. I regularly pray Bible passages during my time of devotion.
SD D DS AS A SA
21. I read the Bible for at least fifteen minutes, 5 out of 7 days each week.
SD D DS AS A SA
22. In general, I am satisfied with my Bible study each day.
SD D DS AS A SA
23. I primarily read from the Bible during my devotion time.
SD D DS AS A SA
24. I get excited about what I will discover when I study the Bible.
SD D DS AS A SA
25. When I study the Bible I read through a particular book in order.
SD D DS AS A SA

CONTINUE SURVEY ON THE NEXT PAGE

Directions: Each statement is designed to gauge your beliefs and practices in regard to regular Bible study and prayer. Please use the following scale: **SD** = strongly disagree, **D** = disagree, **DS** = disagree somewhat, **AS** = agree somewhat, **A** = agree, **SA** = strongly agree. Please circle the appropriate answer:

26. My time of devotional study and prayer takes place early in the day.

SD D DS AS A SA

27. When I study the Bible I write down the things that I discover.

SD D DS AS A SA

28. I can locate three Bible passages that teach about the Scriptures.

SD D DS AS A SA

29. I can locate three Bible passages that teach about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

SD D DS AS A SA

30. I can locate three Bible passages that teach that Jesus is God.

SD D DS AS A SA

31. I can locate three Bible passages that teach on some aspect of salvation.

SD D DS AS A SA

32. I can locate three Bible passages that teach on the Trinity.

SD D DS AS A SA

33. My habit of devotional Bible study sets a good example for other believers.

SD D DS AS A SA

34. Overall, I am satisfied with my habit of devotional prayer and Bible study.

SD D DS AS A SA

THE END OF THE SURVEY

Personal Identification Number: In order to measure your pre and post-course survey results, while simultaneously protecting your identity, you will need to provide a three-digit personal identification number in the spaces below. Please make sure that you remember this number, because you will need it for the post-course survey as well.

_____ - _____ - _____

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

This rubric is an assessment tool that was used to by the Lesson Evaluation Team (LET) to evaluate each of the nine lessons that were included in the equipping course curriculum. The members of the LET used this tool to help ensure that each lesson was biblically sound and sufficient for equipping the participants to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer.

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Directions: Rate each area by placing an “X” in the box that most accurately reflects your assessment of how the course materials meet the listed standard. Clarifying comments are encouraged.

Equipping Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson Evaluation (To be used for all lessons)					
1= Insufficient 2=Requires Attention 3= Sufficient 4=Exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical and Theological Consistency					
The lesson is theologically consistent.					
The lesson material is biblically faithful.					
Teaching Methodology					
The lesson’s main idea is clearly stated.					
The lesson’s supporting points are clearly stated.					
The flow of the lesson is logical.					
Lesson Scope					
The lesson provides sufficient detail to support the main idea.					
Exercises, readings, and assignments clearly support the main idea and supporting points.					
Overall Lesson Effectiveness					
The lesson offers effective points of application.					
The lesson content aligns well with the lesson objectives.					
The lesson supports the overall course objectives.					

Return Instructions: You may return the completed form by mail or as an attachment to an email.

APPENDIX 3

ACRONYMS USED IN THE EQUIPPING COURSE

Course participants used these two acronyms during the application portion of each equipping lesson. The acronym that was used for the spiritual discipline of Bible study was, B.R.E.A.D., which was designed to assist participants in their daily time of Bible study. The acronym that was used for the spiritual discipline of prayer was, W.A.T.E.R., which was designed to assist participants in their daily time of devotional prayer. I personally created both of these acronyms in 2013.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE EQUIPPING COURSE

B.R.E.A.D.¹ Devotional Bible Study Acronym:

1. B – Bible: Speaks to the source of study during one’s devotional time.
2. R – Reading: Speaks to the methods of reading through the Bible (e.g., going through a book in order, as opposed to jumping around randomly).
3. E – Early: Speaks to the most effective time of the day to devote to the Lord.
4. A – Active: Speaks to the discipline of meditation used to engage the text (e.g., use of the Discovery Inventory tool found in appendix 5).
5. D – Daily: Speaks to the importance of studying the Bible each day.

W.A.T.E.R.² Devotional Prayer Acronym:

1. W – Worship: Speaks to the necessity of intentional worship and adoration of the Lord in times of prayer.
2. A – Admit: Speaks to the importance of confessing and seeking the Lord’s forgiveness for sin while praying.
3. T – Thank: Speaks to the necessity of intentional thanksgiving in prayer.
4. E – Equip: Speaks to the discipline of being equipped by praying select Bible passages (e.g., use of the Equipping Prayer tool found in appendix 6).
5. R – Request: Speaks to the importance of making intercession through prayer.

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APPENDIX 4

EQUIPPING COURSE CURRICULUM

The purpose of this nine-lesson equipping course curriculum was to help participants to develop the habit of using the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. The process of creating the curriculum is recorded in Chapter 4 of this project. This appendix also includes a bonus lesson that was taught over a holiday weekend, as well as a copy of the outline for the final session, which took place the week following lesson nine.

EQUIPPING COURSE CURRICULUM

Bread & Water Course: Lesson 1

Bible Intake: “Man Cannot Live on Bread Alone”

Introduction

“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” (1 Timothy 4:7-8)

- Spiritual Discipline – Should not be confused with indicatives (something you are) or spiritual fruit (something you receive), but instead, is *something you do*. – Donald Whitney¹
 - Apart from faith and the right motives when practicing them, they can become dead works (i.e. Legalism, Graceless Christian Religion).
 - Proper Motive for spiritual disciplines: Read **1 Corinthians 10:31**, **Philippians 3:8**
 - Knowing and Treasuring God for His glory!
 - The two Disciplines for this study: *Bible Intake & Prayer*
- Bible Intake – Includes every means of gathering God’s Word, such as hearing, reading, studying and memorizing the Scriptures.
 - **1 To 1**: What is your favorite means of taking in the Scriptures?
- Meditation – Involves thinking in a prolonged and focused way about something found in the text while hearing, reading, studying or memorizing it.
 - “I seemed often to see much light exhibited by every sentence, and such refreshing food communicated, that I could not get along in reading; often dwelling long on one sentence to see the wonders contained in it.” (Edwards)
 - “The tendency of most Christians in our hurried, overburdened times is to close the Bible as soon as we’ve read it and turn to the next thing on our to-do list. If pressed, we’d usually have to admit—immediately after closing the Bible—that we don’t remember a thing we’ve read.” (Whitney)
 - **1 To 1**: What is meant by the phrase “Read less; meditate more?” What does this look like?

¹The Information used about spiritual disciplines, Bible intake, and meditation comes from two of Donald Whitney’s resources: His book *Spiritual Disciplines* and his chapter on Jonathan Edwards’ disciplines from *A God Entranced Visions of All Things* (edited by John Piper and Justin Taylor).

Turning to the Word

Deuteronomy 8:1-6

- I. The Truth Given (8:1)
 - a. “The whole commandment” – synonymous with the Word of God
 - b. “You shall be careful to do” – Obedience to God’s Word is the primary expectation that God has for his children.
 - i. How can you “keep” what you do not know?
 - c. “That you may _____” (what could we as Christians today write on this line?)
- II. The Truth Applied (8:2)
 - a. “Remember the whole way” – Let’s take a diagnostic of your behavior these past 40 years to see how you have “kept” the Lord’s commandments.
 - b. “That he might humble you; testing you” – Examining their behaviors/performance will help to reveal the condition of the heart.
 - c. “To know what was in your heart” – The key to keeping the Lord’s commandments externally is to first, learn to keep them in one’s heart!
- III. The Truth Illustrated (8:3-4)
 - a. “He humbled you; Let you hunger” – Why this test from the Lord?
 - b. “and fed you with manna” – What was the point of this object lesson
 - c. “Man does not live by bread alone...” – What is far more important than physical sustenance?
 - i. How is your physical food habit pattern?
 - ii. How is your spiritual food (Bible Study) habit pattern?
- IV. Motivated to Obey (8:5-6)
 - a. Motivated by God’s Discipline
 - b. Motivated by the Fear of the Lord
 - i. Read **Psalm 128:1-4**

One 2 One

- Read **Psalm 19:7-11**
 - List the many benefits that come from God’s Word
 - Discuss how these benefits would assist you as you serve the Lord

Memory Verse: “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” (**John 17:17**)

Homework

- If you are not connecting with the Lord in study & prayer on a daily basis, or your time of devotion is somewhat of a drudgery, then complete the following tasks:
 - Identify and record the reasons why this is the case:

- Determine the best time and location for you to spend 30 minutes each day (preferably in the morning) being fed by the Lord.

- Call you accountability partner once this week to see how they are doing in connecting with the Lord (be sure to exchange phone numbers).

Bread & Water Course: Lesson 2

Biblical Prayer: “Lord Teach us to Pray”

One 2 One

- Take turns sharing the memory verse (**John 17:17**) with one another, as well as any insight you received from meditating on this passage.
- Share the results of last week’s homework assignment. (1.) Did you discover what is keeping you from spending time with the Lord; or why your time is lacking energy and passion? (2.) Did you determine the best time and location for your time of devotion?

Introduction

If it is true that the primary way in which the Lord *speaks to us* is through His written Word, than what can we consider prayer but the primary way in which we are to *communicate with him*.

- Why is Prayer such an important discipline for the Christian?
 - Read **James 5:16**
- Besides the obvious reasons for prayer, what is the Lord also doing in us “behind the scenes” as we pray?
 - Read **Ex. 33:11a, 17**; Read **Matthew 21:22**
 - “Not only would prayer be answered that would give great glory to God. Christians would be transformed as they reshaped their souls daily by praying in the language of Scripture itself.” (O. Palmer Robertson)
- What are some different types of prayers?
 - “In Scripture prayer includes much more than merely making known our requests to God. We need to be reminded of this. Moreover, we believers need to be instructed in all aspects of prayer.” (A.W. Pink)

Turning to the Word

Luke 11:1-13

- I. The Lord’s Example (11:1a)
 - a. If it was important for the Son of God to pray, then how much more important is it for _____.
 - b. What is significant about the phrase “in a certain place?”
- II. The Disciples’ Question (11:1b)
 - a. Why should the disciples be admired for their questioning of Jesus?
 - b. What else (other than his example) encouraged the disciples to ask Jesus?
- III. Jesus’ Prayer Instructions (11:2-4)
 - a. What jumps out at you when you look at these instructions?

- i. Worship –
 - ii. Request –
 - iii. Admit –
 - iv. Equip –
 - v. Anything else?
 - b. **1 To 1:** How does your current discipline of prayer reflect or not reflect what Jesus teaches here? Encourage and Exhort one another accordingly.
- IV. God Answers His Children’s Prayers: Illustrations (11:5-8, 11-12)
 - a. The Giving Neighbor
 - b. The Giving Father
- V. God Answers His Children’s Prayers: Promises (11:9, 13)
 - a. Ask, Seek, and Knock...Be Persistent in Prayer and Faith!
 - b. From lesser to GREATER...We have a great Heavenly Father!

One 2 One

- Paul *prays for the church*: Read **Ephesians 1:15-18**
 - How much of an encouragement is it to know that someone is praying for you?
 - What can we learn from Paul’s apostolic prayer that can help us know how to pray for the church, missionaries, and other Christians?
- Paul asks the church *to pray for him*: Read **Ephesians 6:18-20**
 - What is great about Paul (as an Apostle) asking the church for prayer?
 - What specifically does he ask them to pray for? Why is this significant?

Memory Verse: “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” (**Matthew 6:7-8**)

Homework

- Continue working on the assignment from last week as you seek to establish or enhance your daily devotional routine:
 - **Remove** parasitic habits that are keeping you from spending time with the Lord each day!
 - **Establish** the habit of making time daily, at a designated spot.
 - **Establish** the habit of reading the Scriptures daily.
 - **Establish** the habit of praying to the Lord daily.
- Remember to contact your accountability partner at least once this week.

Bread & Water Course: Lesson 3

Establishing a Daily Study & Prayer Habit: Diagnose—Repent—Repair

One 2 One

- Take turns sharing the memory verse (**Matt. 6:7-8**) with one another, as well as any insight you received from meditating on this passage.
- Share the results of last week’s homework assignment. **Were you able to:**
 - **Remove** parasitic habits that are keeping you from spending time with the Lord each day?
 - **Establish** the habit of making time daily, at a designated spot?
 - **Establish** the habit of reading the Scriptures daily?
 - **Establish** the habit of praying to the Lord daily?

Introduction

- Been to the Doctor or the Mechanic lately? Put these steps in the proper order:
 - ____Diagnostic ____Problem ____Solution ____Symptoms
- “God makes Christ-like people out of busy people, and he does so through the biblical Spiritual Disciplines...God offers his life-changing grace to taxi-driving, errand-running moms; to hard working, overcommitted dads; to homework-heavy, extracurricular-busy students; to schedule packed singles; to responsibility-overloaded single parents—in short to every believer—through the Spiritual Disciplines.” (Donald Whitney)
 - The Problem – Read **Mark 7:6b-7a (Isa. 29:13)**
 - Context: The Hypocrisy of the Pharisees
 - Where does the problem begin? Why is this significant?
 - The Symptoms – Read **Hebrews 5:11-14**
 - **1 to 1:** Identify all of the symptoms of someone who is still a “child” in regard to the Scriptures (from this passage):
 - The Diagnostic – Read **Colossians 3:16-25**
 - Is the Word of Christ dwelling in you richly?
 - If so, you should answer affirmatively to all of the following questions that can be formed from what follows...
 - The Solution – Read **Ephesians 4:11-16**
 - The Primary solution is _____
 - God’s solution is in the form of a gift: _____
 - What his solution brings:

Turning to the Word

Ephesians 4:17-24, 5:18

- I. The Biblical Process for Habit Change
 - a. Bad/sinful habits are leftovers from the “Old Self” (4:17-19)
 - i. **1 to 1**: What “old self” sins keep you from connecting with the Lord on a daily basis?
 - b. Only believers can “put off” the Old Self (4:20-22)
 - i. Is it “Christian” to allow Old Self habits to stick around, unchecked?
 - ii. What bad habit(s) needs to be removed in order for you to connect with God on a daily basis?
 - iii. What heart-sin conditions do these behaviors lead back to?
 - c. Putting off the Old Self is not enough! (4:23-24)
 - i. What is significant about being “renewed in the spirit of your minds?”
 - ii. What does the “new self” look like when it comes to habit change?
 - iii. What is special about our New Self?
 - d. Habit Change for Connecting with God (5:18)
 - i. “Do not get drunk with wine” – illustrative for “what is controlling you other than God?”
 - ii. “Be filled with the Spirit” – Connected to the “Renewal of the mind” and the “Word of Christ dwelling richly.”

Memory Verse: “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (**Psalm 139:23-24**)

Homework

- Apply the 4 headings from this lesson to your own habit of *Connecting with God* (according to your specific needs for change or enhancement)?
 - The **Problem**:
 - The **Symptoms**:
 - The **Diagnostic**:
 - The **Solution**:
- Apply this method of biblical habit change to any other sinful habits that you have (behavior that does not please God and is contrary to the Scriptures).

- Remember to contact your accountability partner and hold each other accountable for implementing a change or improvement to your daily habit.

Bread & Water Course: Lesson 4

Learning From King Hezekiah: How to “hold fast” to the Lord

One 2 One

- Take turns sharing the memory verse (**Psalm 139:23-24**) with one another, as well as any insight you received from meditating on this passage.
- Share the results of last week’s homework assignment:
 - How were you able to apply the following habit-change process to your daily devotion time?
 - The **Problem**:
 - The **Symptoms**:
 - The **Diagnostic**:
 - The **Solution**:

Introduction

- “Prayer is the breath of the new nature in the saint, as the Word of God is its food...the Word of God should be our directory in prayer.” (A.W. Pink)
- Meditation Exercise: **Psalm 25:4-5**
 - What is the emphatic plea of David in this passage?
 - How does this passage demonstrate the importance of combining the disciplines of Bible Intake and Prayer?
- Read **Deuteronomy 17:18-19**
 - How does the OT Law address a King’s relationship with God’s Word?
 - What is significant about this in terms of the King’s position?

Turning to the Word

2 Kings 18-19

- I. Hezekiah: A man after God’s own Heart (2 Kings 18)
 - a. **1 to 1**: Which of Hezekiah’s character qualities stands out to you the most? (18:3-7 & the list from 2 Chronicles)
 - b. The context: Assyria had recently taken the Northern Kingdom of Israel into captivity and now 8 years later, have their sights set on Judah to the south.
 - i. Catalyst: Hezekiah sends tribute but refuses to abdicate his throne!
 - c. King Sennacherib and his Rabshakeh (general) have disdain for the Lord and his covenant people. (18:19-35)
- II. Hezekiah turns to the Lord through His Word and in Prayer (2 Kings 19)
 - a. Background: What happen to Judah’s army? See **2 Chronicles 28:6**
 - b. 185,000 Enemy Soldiers at Your Doorstep: What do you do? (19:1-7)

- i. Hezekiah’s “Kneejerk” – He humbles himself and seeks the “Word of the Lord” from Isaiah.
 - ii. The Lord replies: “Do not be afraid” (I got this!)
- c. Assyria’s King continues to Defy the Lord (19:8-13)
- d. 185,000 Enemy Soldiers *Still* at Your Doorstep: What do you do? (19:14-20)
 - i. Hezekiah’s Response to God’s Word – Seek the Lord in Prayer
 - ii. The Lord replies: “I have heard your prayer” (Watch what I will do!)
 - iii. **1 to 1**: How do Hezekiah’s examples of turning to both the Word of the Lord and to him in Prayer, serve to encourage us when we face immediately challenging circumstances?
- e. The Lord Directs His Word Towards King Sennacherib (19:21-28)
 - i. Like Nebuchadnezzar, the Assyrians thought they were the ones achieving all their success (notice the use of first person pronoun, “I”).
 - ii. The Lord reminds them of His Sovereignty!
 - iii. Assyria’s fate is sealed!
- f. The Lord Encourages Hezekiah and Destroys the Army (19:29-37)
 - i. Encouragement with the Promise of Immediate and Future Blessing!
 - ii. Encouragement through the Utter Destruction of Assyria’s Army!
 - iii. Encouragement by the Death of their Enemy!

One 2 One

- Read through the *Bread & Water Brochure* together
- Discuss how this method of organizing your Study and Prayer can help you maintain or enhance your habit of connecting with the Lord daily.

Memory Verse: “You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.” (**Psalm 73:24-25**)

Homework

- Read through **2 Chronicles 29-32** (Extended account of King Hezekiah) in your daily devotion time this week (about half a chapter each day).
- Memorize the *Bread & Water* acronyms, and become familiar with the content of the brochure.

- Remember to contact and pray for your accountability partner this week!

Bread & Water Course: Lesson 5

BIBLE—READING

One 2 One

- Take turns sharing the memory verse (**Psalm 73:24-25**) with one another, as well as any insight you received from meditating on this passage.
- Share the results of last week’s homework assignment:
 - Have you become familiar with the Bread & Water Acronyms?
 - What did you discover from your time in **2 Chronicles 29-32** this past week?

Introduction

- Read **2 Peter 1:19-21**
- “Here then, is the real problem of our negligence. We fail in our duty to study God’s Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is work. Our problem is not a lack of intelligence or passion. Our problem is that we are lazy.” (R.C. Sproul)
- Recent Statistics¹
 - 88% of Households own a copy of the Bible; 4.7 Bibles per Household
 - 15% of Americans read the Bible every day; 35% of Practicing Protestants
 - 47% say they “don’t have enough time” as an excuse for not reading
 - 47% of Americans believe the Bible, Koran, and BOM are simply different expressions of the same truth.

Turning to the Word

BIBLE – Luke 24:25-27, 44-49

- I. The Emmaus Road Disciples (24:25-27)
 - a. Their Foolishness (24:25)
 - i. They were “foolish” for being “slow of heart to believe” what?
 - b. God’s Expectations of His Disciples (24:26)
 - i. Imagine the look on their faces when he asked this question.
 - c. Jesus’ Bible (24:27)
 - i. What are “Moses” and the “Prophets?”
 - ii. What did Jesus consider Moses and the Prophets to be?
 - iii. What did he do with the Scriptures?
- II. In The Upper Room Disciples (24:44-49)
 - a. What is the “Law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms?” (24:44)
 - b. Before Giving the Great Commission, what did Jesus do to the disciples? (24:45)

¹These statistics come from surveys taken by the *Barna Group* for the *American Bible Society* in 2014.

- c. **1 to 1:** Why is it significant that Jesus builds the Great Commission upon the authority of the Scriptures as he sends them out as witnesses? (24:46-48)

What/Who else would they need before proclaiming the Gospel? (24:49)

READING – Joshua 1:7-9

- I. Strength and Courage needed for Success in Serving God (1:7)
 - a. What would Joshua need to do in order to have the strength and courage necessary to be successful as God’s servant?
 - b. What illustration does God give to help him understand? Where else in Scripture do we find this illustration used, and by whom?
- II. Daily Interaction with God’s Word is the Key (1:8)
 - a. What does it mean to “meditate” upon the Scriptures? How often was he to do this? What would such a habit help him to do (see 1:7)
 - b. Be prosperous and have good success in what?
 - c. The key to being in the Lord’s presence at all times (1:9)

One 2 One

- What is the **Discovery Inventory Tool**?
- How is the Bible like a *meal* and devotional publications like *vitamins*?
 - Why is it best to use God’s Word as your primary study tool and a devotional as a study supplement?
- If I sent you *66 letters* that I wrote to you, how would you read them?
 - Why is it best to read through books of the Bible in order? What would be lost if we simply jumped around from passage to passage each day?

Memory Verse: “I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word. (**Psalm 119:15-16**)

Homework

- Read through **Psalm 119** in your daily devotional time this week (about 25 verses per day). Look to discover all of the different truths about God’s Word that you can find.
- Look to discover all of the different truths about God’s Word that you can find. Be sure to use your *discovery inventory tool*.
- Remember to contact your accountability partner!

“Lessons Learned” Collection

- Make the Bible your Primary Devotional Tool of Study; allow devotionals to be supplemental.
- The Bible is how God speaks to us; be quick to listen and slow to speak!
- Read Through a book of the Bible in order; Quality better than Quantity.
- Return to one of the four Gospel accounts every 4 months or so.
- Try to add more Bible reading locations as your passion for reading grows.

Bread & Water Course: Lesson 6

EARLY—ACTIVE—DAILY

One 2 One

- Take turns sharing the memory verse (**Psalm 119:15-16**) with one another, as well as any insight you received from meditating on this passage.
- Share the *discoveries* that you made this week while reading through **Psalm 119**.

Introduction

- My Method of *Early*, *Active*, and *Daily* study:
 - Daily/Early – Seminary Conviction, 2000; Continued Obedience, 2006
 - Active – John Piper, 2007; “Accidental” Discovery, 2012
- Application must be Active and Daily as well!
 - “Where there is not an increasing conformity of heart and life to God’s Word, then increased knowledge will only bring increased condemnation.” (A.W. Pink)
 - Read **Matthew 7:24-27**

Turning to the Word

EARLY – Psalm 119:147-148, Mark 1:35-39

- “There’s value in reading the Bible just before you drop off, but if this is the only part of the day when you read the Scriptures then you should try to find another time. There are two reasons for this. First, you will retain very little of what you read when you’re tired and sleepy. And second, you probably do very little evil in your sleep. You need to encounter Christ in the Scriptures when it will still have an impact on your day.” (Donald Whitney)
- Read **Psalm 119:147-148**
 - Is it natural and automatic to “rise before dawn?” Why can we think of this as worship, sacrifice, and/or a discipline?
 - How are prayer and the active study of the Scriptures merged here?
- Read **Mark 1:35-39**
 - **1 to 1:** What is significant about Jesus’ example?
 - Why was it so important for him to seek God early in the day?
 - If the God—Man sought his Heavenly Father each day, then...

ACTIVE – Psalm 1:1-3, Acts 17:11, Psalm 119:15-16

- “*Reading* is the exposure to Scripture—and that’s the starting place—but *meditation* is the absorption of Scripture. And it’s the absorption of Scripture that causes the water of the Word of God to percolate deeply into the parched soil of the soul and refresh it.” (Donald Whitney)

- Read **Psalm 1:1-3**
 - *Blessed Avoidance*, Verse 1 – How do the verbs “walks, stand, and sit” describe their actions? Read the first verse again but now replace the evil action with “the Word of God.”
 - **1 to 1: Blessed Delight**, Verse 2 – How does the blessed man demonstrate that *his delight* is in the law of the Lord (his action)?
 - *Blessed Health*, Verse 3 – What is significant about the illustration of a tree? What do you notice about the tree that would also be true of the blessed man?
- Read **Acts 17:11** – Notice the example of the Bereans! How are their actions an example of an active study and application of God’s Word?

DAILY – Deuteronomy 17:18-19, Romans 12:1-2

- “Take at least one thing that you’ve read and think deeply about it for a few moments. Your insight into Scripture will deepen, and you will better understand how it applies to your life. And the more you apply the truths of Scripture, the more you’ll become like Jesus.” (Donald Whitney)
- Read **Romans 12:1-2**
 - What picture is formed in your mind while reading the first verse?
 - **1 to 1:** Why is *transformation* by the Lord better than *conformity* to the world? How does this imply the need for a daily discipline?
 - Why is the phrase “renewal of your mind” so significant and what does it refer to?

Memory Verse: “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.” (**Ezra 7:10**)

Homework

- Read through **Titus** in your daily devotional time this week (about half a chapter each day).
- Look to discover all of the different truths about God’s Word that you can find. Be sure to use your *discovery inventory tool*.
- Remember to contact your accountability partner!

“Lessons Learned” Collection

- Make the Bible your Primary Devotional Tool of Study; allow devotionals to be supplemental.
- The Bible is how God speaks to us; be quick to listen and slow to speak!
- Read Through a book of the Bible in order; Quality better than Quantity.
- Return to one of the four Gospel accounts every 4 months or so.
- Try to add more Bible reading locations as your passion for reading grows (i.e. OT Reading, NT Reading, Wisdom/Poetry Reading, etc.).

- The beginning of your day will always be the best time to study God's Word and seek him through prayer!
- Meditation, using a pen, and creating a discovery inventory tool are great ways to actively engage the Scriptures.
- Not Studying the Scriptures on a daily basis can be likened to not eating on a daily basis, and yet how much more important are the Words of God than food?

Bread & Water Course: Lesson 7

WORSHIP—ADMIT—THANK

One 2 One

- Take turns sharing the memory verse (**Ezra 7:10**) with one another, as well as any insight you received from meditating on this passage.
- Share the discoveries that you made this week while reading through **Titus**.

Introduction

- The ACTS acronym – Matthew Henry, *A Way to Pray*
 - Adoration – **W**orship
 - Confession – **A**dmit
 - Thank – **T**hank
 - Supplication – **R**equest
- “He will hear every prayer of His children, even when our prayers are weaker than a snowflake. That is why of all the Spiritual Disciplines, prayer is second only to the intake of God’s Word in importance.” (Donald Whitney)
- Read **Matthew 11:25-30** (a Smaller “Lord’s Prayer”)

Turning to the Word

WORSHIP – It is Important to Begin every time of prayer by worshipping the Lord!

- “But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, “Great is the LORD!” (**Psalm 40:16**)
- Motivation for Worship – Read **Psalm 103**
- Demonstrated by David – Read **Psalm 145**
 - **1 to 1**: List everything that David worships God for:
- Modeled and Taught by Jesus – **Read Matthew 6:5-10**
- Paul worships God for his Sovereign Salvation – Read **Ephesians 1:3-14**
 - “Approach God with a heart full of praise for the glories of His person and work.” (Matthew Henry)

ADMIT – Before proceeding any further in prayer, we must confess and receive forgiveness for our sins from the prior day.

- “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in” (**1 John 1:9-10**)
- Isaiah’s example – Read **Isaiah 6:5-7**
- David’s example – Read **Psalm 38:18** (Short), **Psalm 51:1-12** (Long)
 - **1 to 1**: What are some of the features of David’s prayer of confession?

- Taught by Jesus – Read **Matthew 6:12**
 - “There is still another aspect (of prayer) that ought to take precedence over thanksgiving and petition, namely self-abhorrence and confession of our unworthiness and sinfulness.” (A.W. Pink)

THANK – It is important to have a time of thanksgiving after confession. This provides a second time of worship, but now in regard to what the Lord has done for us in particular, which also helps to catapult us (from confession) into God’s glorious grace and forgiveness!

- “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.” (**Col 4:2**)
- Exhorted by Paul to be included in the course of our prayers – Read **Colossians 3:15-17**
- Demonstrated by David – Read **Psalms 9:1-2** (Short)
- Demonstrated by the Psalmist – Read **Psalms 136** (Long)
- Connected to the purpose of evangelism – Read **2 Corinthians 4:15**
 - “But if you proceed from confession to thanksgiving for the full forgiveness found in Christ, you will maintain a more balanced perspective on your life before God, man, and yourself.” (O. Palmer Robertson)

Memory Verse: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**)

Homework

- Read through **Matthew 5-7** (The Sermon on the Mount) in your daily devotional time this week (about half a chapter each day).
- Look to discover all of the different truths about God’s Word that you can find. Be sure to use your *discovery inventory* tool.
- Read through the *equipping prayer* examples that have been provided.
- Begin thinking and praying about someone that the Lord might have you teach the BREAD and WATER material to.
- Remember to contact your accountability partner!

“Lessons Learned” Collection

- Make the Bible your Primary Devotional Tool of Study; allow devotionals to be supplemental.
- The Bible is how God speaks to us; be quick to listen and slow to speak!
- Read Through a book of the Bible in order; Quality better than Quantity.
- Return to one of the four Gospel accounts every 4 months or so.
- Try to add more Bible reading locations as your passion for reading grows (i.e.

- OT Reading, NT Reading, Wisdom/Poetry Reading, etc.).
- The beginning of your day will always be the best time to study God's Word and seek him through prayer!
 - Meditation, using a pen, and creating a discovery inventory tool are great ways to actively engage the Scriptures.
 - Not Studying the Scriptures on a daily basis can be likened to not eating on a daily basis, and yet how much more important are the Words of God than food?
 - A healthy habit to develop is beginning every prayer time (short or long) with an intentional time of worship, focused on the attributes of the Lord.
 - Before proceeding any further in our devotional prayer time, it is essential that we confess our sins and seek the forgiveness that is ours by the grace of the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross!
 - An intentional time of thanksgiving provides us with a second time of worship, while also reminding us of the grace of God after our time of confession. Unlike the earlier time of worship, this focuses on the many specific ways that He has blessed us.

Bread & Water Course: Lesson 8

EQUIP—REQUEST

One 2 One

- Take turns sharing the memory verse (**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**) with one another, as well as any insight you received from meditating on this passage.
- Share the discoveries that you made this week while reading through **Matthew 5-7**.

Introduction

- The ITCP study/prayer method – Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*
 - Instruction
 - Thanksgiving
 - Confession
 - Prayer
- The PCPTI prayer method – Matthew Henry, *A Way to Pray*
 - Praise –
 - Confession –
 - Petition –
 - Thanksgiving –
 - Intercession –
- “Distinctive is Matthew Henry’s model for Christians to make exclusive use of the language of Scripture to express their prayers. What could be more obvious as a proper method of praying? What could be more encouraging to Christians desiring to enrich their prayer experience, and to make their prayers more likely to be heard and answered by the Lord? What could be more threatening to the devil than to hear believers in Christ approaching the throne of grace with expressions in prayer that will be honored by the Lord?” (O. Palmer Robertson)
- Newer Resource: Donald Whitney, *Praying the Bible*

Turning to the Word

EQUIP – While there are many ways to use the Scriptures in prayer, equipping prayers make use of specific passages that were given in order to help us live obediently and for the glory of God on a daily basis.

- Demonstrated by the Psalmist – Read **Psalm 119:9-11**
 - The Word guards our way from the devastation of sin. (119:9)
 - The need for charts in order to safely navigate waterways
 - The Word helps us to commit our hearts completely to the Lord, thus preventing us from wandering away from Him. (119:10)
 - The Word must be stored in our hearts through prayer. (119:11)
- Instructed by Jesus – Read **Matthew 6:13**
 - **1 to 1**: What does Jesus mean by “lead us not into temptation?” (be sure to

- look up **James 1:13**)
- How can the second clause of this verse help us to understand the first?
- Implied by Paul – Read **Ephesians 6:10-18**
 - How are we to put on the armor of God?
 - **1 to 1**: What has every piece of armor been forged with?
 - How does the proximity of verse 6:17 to verse 6:18, once again demonstrate the close relationship of God’s Word and Prayer?
- “Prayer in this form is nothing more and nothing less than what the old Puritans called ‘*pleading the promises*.’ God has made promises to his people. His people respond by redirecting those promises to the Lord in the form of prayer... If Christians would join together and form their prayers with the maturity and insight provided by Scripture itself, the impact on the world could not be measured.” (O. Palmer Robertson)
- The *Equipping Prayers* Tool

REQUEST – While many Christians start their prayer time here, it is better to begin with an intentional time of worship, confession, thanksgiving, and equipping, so that the follower of Christ will be better prepared to make his or her requests known to God.

- Instructed by the Lord in the OT – Read **Psalms 50:14-15**
- Instructed by the Lord in the NT – Read **John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24**
- Commanded by Paul – Read **Philippians 4:6-7**
- Encouraged by John – Read **1 John 5:13-15**
 - “I have long been convinced there is no better way—no more practical, valuable, and effective way—of expressing solicitude and affection for our fellow saints than by bearing them up before God by prayer in the arms of our faith and love.” (A.W. Pink)

Memory Verse: “Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.” (**Psalm 55:22**)

Homework

- Read through **Nehemiah 1-7** in your daily devotional time this week (one chapter each day).
- Look to discover all of the different truths about God’s Word that you can find. Be sure to use your *discovery inventory* tool.
- Uses some of the *equipping prayers* that have been provided or some that you have developed.
- Decide which person you will teach the BREAD and WATER material to.
- Remember to contact your accountability partner!

“Lessons Learned” Collection

- Make the Bible your Primary Devotional Tool of Study; allow devotionals to be supplemental.
- The Bible is how God speaks to us; be quick to listen and slow to speak!
- Read Through a book of the Bible in order; Quality better than Quantity.
- Return to one of the four Gospel accounts every 4 months or so.
- Try to add more Bible reading locations as your passion for reading grows (i.e. OT Reading, NT Reading, Wisdom/Poetry Reading, etc.).
- The beginning of your day will always be the best time to study God’s Word and seek him through prayer!
- Meditation, using a pen, and creating a discovery inventory tool are great ways to actively engage the Scriptures.
- Not Studying the Scriptures on a daily basis can be likened to not eating on a daily basis, and yet how much more important are the Words of God than food?
- A healthy habit to develop is beginning every prayer time (short or long) with an intentional time of worship, focused on the attributes of the Lord.
- Before proceeding any further in our devotional prayer time, it is essential that we confess our sins and seek the forgiveness that is ours by the grace of the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross!
- An intentional time of thanksgiving provides us with a second time of worship, while also reminding us of the grace of God after our time of confession. Unlike the earlier time of worship, this focuses on the many specific ways that He has blessed us.
- By developing and using equipping prayers to pray the very words of Scripture, believers will store up God’s Word in their hearts and will be better prepared by the Spirit to face each day.
- Prayers, supplications, and petitions are included in an intentional time of Requests, where we can make our needs, as well as the needs of others known to the Lord. By saving this more familiar time of prayer for the end, we are in a healthier spiritual position to approach the throne of God, after a time of worship, confession, thanksgiving, and equipping.

Bread & Water Course: [Bonus] Ezra Builds Walls Too

NEHEMIAH 8-10

One 2 One

- Take turns sharing the memory verse (**Psalm 55:22**) with one another, as well as any insight you received from meditating on this passage.
- Share the discoveries that you made this week while reading through **Neh. 1-7**.

Introduction

- One of the Great “Recommitment” Assemblies of God’s people
- “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.” (**Ezra 7:10 ESV**)
- Context:
 - These Judean exiles (and their recent descendants) were in tune with their recent history and ready to learn from God’s Word.
 - The Physical Walls had been rebuilt; now for the spiritual walls!
 - The condition of the hearts of the people was ripe for revival and recommitment.

Turning to the Word

God’s Word Brings Revelation (8:1-8)

- Who requested God’s Word? (8:1)
- What is “The Book of the Law of Moses?” (8:1)
- How did Ezra and the people react to God’s Word? (8:6)
- Who was there to help teach the Word? And how did they help the people understand? (8:7-8)

God’s Word Causes Recognition (8:9-12)

- How did the people react after they had the Word of God explained to them? How does this demonstrate the power of God to bring recognition?(8:9)
- Why did Nehemiah and Ezra redirect them from sorrow to celebration? (8:9-10)
- How was this time of celebration both vertically and horizontally oriented? (8:11-12)

God’s Word Leads to Worship (8:13-18)

- Who gathered together on day two, and what did they come together to do? (8:13)
- Why is it significant that this was a gathering of community leaders? What did their study of God’s Word lead to? (8:13-14)
- What is significant about the Feast of the Booths? (8:16-17)
- What took place during this festival? (8:17-18)

God's Word Produces Confession and Repentance (9:1-31)

- Why do we see worship preceding confession and repentance? (8:9, 9:1-2)
- What is significant about how they entered into this sacred time? (9:1-5)
- What does their historical recitation of the Exodus—the Babylonian Exile indicate? What is the one major overarching theme? (9:6-31)

God's Word Results in Recommitment (9:32-10:39)

- What is significant about the people's response? (9:32-37)
- How do we see evidence of God's Word working to revive the people's hearts? (9:38-10:39)

Memory Verse: “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (**Hebrews 4:12**)

Homework

- Read through **2 Timothy** in your daily devotional time this week (about half a chapter each day).
- Look to discover all of the different truths about God's Word that you can find. Be sure to use your *discovery inventory* tool.
- Read through the *equipping prayer* examples that have been provided.
- Begin thinking and praying about someone that the Lord might have you teach the BREAD and WATER material to.
- Remember to contact your accountability partner!

“Lessons Learned” Collection

- Make the Bible your Primary Devotional Tool of Study; allow devotionals to be supplemental.
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- The beginning of your day will always be the best time to study God's Word and seek him through prayer!
- Meditation, using a pen, and creating a discovery inventory tool are great ways to actively engage the Scriptures.
- Not Studying the Scriptures on a daily basis can be likened to not eating on a daily basis, and yet how much more important are the Words of God than food?

- A healthy habit to develop is beginning every prayer time (short or long) with an intentional time of worship, focused on the attributes of the Lord.
- Before proceeding any further in our devotional prayer time, it is essential that we confess our sins and seek the forgiveness that is ours by the grace of the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross!
- An intentional time of thanksgiving provides us with a second time of worship, while also reminding us of the grace of God after our time of confession. Unlike the earlier time of worship, this focuses on the many specific ways that He has blessed us.

Bread & Water Course: Lesson 9

Putting it All Together

One 2 One

- Take turns sharing the memory verse (**Hebrews 4:12**) with one another, as well as any insight you received from meditating on this passage.
- Share the discoveries that you made this week while reading through **2 Timothy**

Introduction

- Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” (**John 6:35**)
- Review
 - **B** –
 - **R** –
 - **E** –
 - **A** –
 - **D** –
 - **W** –
 - **A** –
 - **T** –
 - **E** –
 - **R** –
- Active – How have you been able to engage God’s Word more actively?
 - “I rejoice at your word, like one who finds great spoil.” (**Psalms 119:162**)
- Early/Daily – Have you been able to develop a daily habit of connecting with the Lord in the morning?
- Worship – How has beginning with worship, enhanced your prayer time?
- Equip – Have you been able to pray God’s Word each day?
 - “Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.” (**Psalms 119:133**)
- Bread – “To this day, I nurse on the Lord’s Prayer like a child, and like an old man now, I eat and drink from it, but never get my fill.” (Martin Luther)
- Water – “So what is the simple solution to the boring routine of saying the same old things about the same old things? Here it is: *when you pray, pray though a passage of Scripture, particularly a psalm.*” (Donald Whitney)
 - **1 to 1**: How can you continue to be an encouragement to one another as this course ends?

Turning to the Word

2 Timothy – Paul: The Proper Handling of the Scriptures (“laced with Scripture”)

- I. Paul’s Instructions regarding God’s Word:
 - a. 1:8-11 –
 - b. 1:13-14 –
 - c. 2:1-2 –
 - d. 2:8-9 –

- e. 2:15 (“Awana passage”) –
- f. 3:14-15 –
- g. 3:16-17 –
- h. 4:2-4 –
- i. 4:13 –
 - i. **1 to 1:** Share: which of these passages from **2 Timothy** resonates the most with you?

Psalm 90 – Moses: Approaching the Lord in Prayer

- II. Moses’ example of praying to the Lord:
 - a. 90:1-6 – How does Moses worship/acknowledge the Lord?
 - b. 90:7-11 – How does Moses acknowledge the consequences of their sin?
 - c. 90:12-15 – How does Moses ask the Lord to equip them?
 - d. 90:16-17 – How does Moses request the Lord’s provision?
 - i. **1 to 1:** Discuss: how are you encouraged by Moses’ example of coming to the Lord in prayer?

Memory Verse: “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? (**Psalm 56:3-4**)

Homework

- Read through Some of the Great Prayers of the Bible: **Exodus 15:1-18**, , **1 Samuel 2:1-10**, **Ezra 9:1-15**, **Psalm 86**, **Luke 1:46-55; 68-79**, **John 17**, **Ephesians 1:3-23** (One passage per day).
- Look to discover all of the different truths about God’s Word that you can find. Be sure to use your *discovery inventory* tool.
- Uses some of the *equipping prayers* that have been provided or some that you have developed.
- Contact the individual you have decided to teach the BREAD & WATER material to and begin planning a time.
- Remember to contact your accountability partner!

“Lessons Learned” Collection

- Make the Bible your Primary Devotional Tool of Study; allow devotionals to be supplemental.
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- An intentional time of thanksgiving provides us with a second time of worship, while also reminding us of the grace of God after our time of confession. Unlike the earlier time of worship, this focuses on the many specific ways that He has blessed us.
- By developing and using equipping prayers to pray the very words of Scripture, believers will store up God’s Word in their hearts and will be better prepared by the Spirit to face each day.
- Prayers, supplications, and petitions are included in an intentional time of Requests, where we can make our needs, as well as the needs of others known to the Lord. By saving this more familiar time of prayer for the end, we are in a healthier spiritual position to approach the throne of God, after a time of worship, confession, thanksgiving, and equipping.
- When you learn something, become a teacher to someone else and the information that has been learned will become ingrained in your mind and present in your actions.

Bread & Water Course: Final Session

Wrapping Things Up

One 2 One

- Take turns sharing the memory verse (**Psalm 56:3-4**) with one another, as well as any insight you received from meditating on this passage.

Introduction

- Share the discoveries that you made this week while reading through:
 - **Exodus 15:1-18** –
 - **1 Samuel 2:1-10** –
 - **Ezra 9:1-15** –
 - **Psalm 86** –
 - **Luke 1:46-55; 68-79** –
 - **John 17** –
 - **Ephesians 1:3-23** –
- “The words of Scripture thrill my soul as nothing else even can. They bear me aloft or dash me down. They tear me in pieces or build me up. The words of God have more power over me than ever David’s fingers had over his harp string.” (C.H. Spurgeon)
- “It is a great thing to pray oneself into the spirit and marrow of a text; working into it by sacred feeding thereon, even as the worm burrows its way into a kernel of the nut...New veins of precious ore will be revealed to your astonished gaze as you quarry God’s Word and use diligently the hammer of prayer.” (C.H. Spurgeon)

Share

- How has the Lord used this course (and everything that went along with it) in the context of your life and/or your relationship with Him?
- What are your action steps (in regard to connecting with the Lord in study and prayer daily) moving forward?

“Lessons Learned” Collection (Review)

- Make the Bible your Primary Devotional Tool of Study; allow devotionals to be supplemental.
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- Before proceeding any further in our devotional prayer time, it is essential that we confess our sins and seek the forgiveness that is ours by the grace of the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross!
- An intentional time of thanksgiving provides us with a second time of worship, while also reminding us of the grace of God after our time of confession. Unlike the earlier time of worship, this focuses on the many specific ways that He has blessed us.
- By developing and using equipping prayers to pray the very words of Scripture, believers will store up God's Word in their hearts and will be better prepared by the Spirit to face the difficulties and temptations of each day.
- Prayers, supplications, and petitions are included in an intentional time of "Requests," where we can make our needs, as well as the needs of others known to the Lord. By saving this more familiar time of prayer for the end, we are in a healthier spiritual position to approach the throne of God, after a time of worship, confession, thanksgiving, and equipping.
- When you learn something, become a teacher to someone else and the information that has been learned will become ingrained in your mind and present in your actions.

Commitments

- Continue to maintain and enhance your daily devotional habits!
- Continue to maintain an accountability relationship with your partner or someone else.
- Commit to teaching the Bread & Water material to another PSBC member or another follower of Christ outside of our church.

Administration of the Post-Course Survey

- Please remember to write the same personal PIN # that you used for the Pre-Course Survey on the last page of this survey!
- Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX 5

DISCOVERY INVENTORY TOOL

The discovery inventory tool was created to help participants learn to meditate upon the Scriptures by creating a catalogue of doctrinal categories from passages that were discovered during their daily readings. This tool was designed after a similar tool of my own making, which is found in the Bible that I use for my morning devotions. Participants were also encouraged to form unique doctrinal and practical categories that were important to them, as they learned to meditate upon God's Word.

DISCOVERY INVENTORY TOOL

The Deity of Christ

The Trinity

The Scriptures

Salvation

The Holy Spirit

Prayer

Grace

Jesus/Only Way

God, The Father

Fear of the Lord

Forgiveness

The Church

Love

Pastors/Elders

Election/Pre-destination

Mercy

Thanksgiving

Evangelism

Repentance

Faith

The Cross/Blood

The Gospel

Worship

The Glory of God

Redemption

Vertical Orientation

Motives

Discipleship

Hope

Marriage

Creation

Reconciliation

Preaching

Sovereignty of God

The Resurrection

Heaven

Wisdom

Humility

Keeper/Doer of Word

God's Will

The Heart

The Son of God

The Second Coming

Parenting

Baptism

Women in Ministry

Church Unity

Hypocrisy

Patience

Sin

God-Centered/Man

Homosexuality

False Teachers

Eternal Life

Abortion

Giving/Sacrifice

Love Others

Committed to God

Perseverance

Love for God

Peace

APPENDIX 6

EQUIPPING PRAYER TOOL

The equipping prayer tool was designed to help participants learn to form key Scripture passages into prayers, for the sake of being strengthened by the Lord, at the start of each day. The specific Bible passages that were included in this tool are ones that I have been using in my devotional prayer time over the past several years. Participants were also encouraged to create their own equipping prayers from passages that they discovered while meditating upon the Scriptures.

EQUIPPING PRAYER TOOL

Of First Importance

- Great Commandments – Matt. 22:37-39
- New Commandment – John 13:34-35
- Great Commission – Matt. 28:28-20, Acts 1:8
- Glory of God – 1 Cor. 10:31

Total Commitment/Spirit-Filled

- Eph. 5:18
- Rom. 12:1-2
- Col. 3:16-17
- Luke 9:23
- Eph. 4:22-24

Prayer Instructions/Exhortations

- Matt. 6:9-13
- Luke 11:1-4
- Eph. 6:18-20
- 1 Thess. 5:17
- Col. 4:2

Fruit of the Spirit

- Gal. 5:16-26
- 1 Cor. 13

The Armor of God

- Eph. 6:10-18
- Col. 3:1-4 (Helmet)
- Heb. 11:1,6 (Shield)
- Rom. 13:14, 1 Cor. 10:13, Psalm 119:11, 1 Pet. 1:13-16, 2 Cor. 10:5 (Breastplate)
- Heb. 4:12, John 17:17, Col. 3:16, Psalm 1:1-3, Joshua 1:8-9 (Sword)
- 1 Pet. 3:14-17 (Shoes)
- John 8:32 (Belt)

Relationships

- Marriage – Eph. 5:22-33, Col. 3:18-19, 1 Pet. 3:1-7
- Parenting – Deut. 6:1-9, Eph. 6:4, Col. 3:21
- Children (towards parents) – Col. 3:20, Eph. 6:1-3
- Employee/Employer – Col. 3:21-25

- Church Members (John 13:34-35 and the many “one another” passages)

Communication/Speech

- James 1:19-20
- Eph. 4:29-32
- Col. 4:6
- 1 Cor. 13:1
- James 5:12 (Matt. 5:37)

Evangelism/Missions

- Matt. 28:19
- Mark 16:15
- 1 Pet. 3:15
- 2 Tim. 4:2-5

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF PENDLETON STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA TO USE THE BIBLE IN A DAILY TIME OF STUDY AND PRAYER

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The purpose of this project was to equip members of Pendleton Street Baptist Church (PSBC), in Greenville, South Carolina to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer. Chapter 1 explains the ministry context of PSBC and demonstrates the need for equipping church members to learn to meditate upon the Scriptures, by studying and praying them on a daily basis. Chapter 2 gives theological evidence that supports the purpose of this project, by demonstrating that the Bible clearly teaches and expects God's people to study and pray the Scriptures regularly. Chapter 3 gives historical and practical evidence that supports the purpose of this project by demonstrating the importance of Scripture meditation through regular study and prayer, by Christians throughout the history of the church. Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of this project's creation and implementation at PSBC. Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the project. This chapter determines if the equipping course curriculum was effective in training church members to use the Bible in a daily time of study and prayer.

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