

Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Effect of Prayer on God-Schemata

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### Abstract

Religious ideologies and spiritual frameworks are first formed and later held together by the linking of encounters with the sacred, a spiritual Entity, ritualistic practices, and/or the recognition of spirituality in others or within one's self. The concept of schemata, which are the mind's processing frameworks wherein the individual connects information in a purposeful and meaningful way is fundamentally tied to this process of deliberating faith. According to the Christian faith, prayer molds this conceptualization of God. This study endeavors to establish the relationship between the subjective nature of schemata and its supernatural implications: how prayer influences one's view of God. In an effort to tap into varying understandings of biblical themes and ensuing behaviors, each participant completed the Spiritual Assessment Inventory, a question pertaining to the most persistent descriptors of his/her own understanding of the nature or character of God, and an open-ended question given as an opportunity to expound upon his/her God-view. Participants completed this questionnaire (the post-test was slightly altered from the pre-test) before and after the incorporation of the experimental forty days of prayer. Results showed changes across all of the SAI's subscales. The most *active* (the attribute with the highest frequency of change) was All-Powerful. The post-assessment open-ended question revealed two trends: participants highlighted God's non-human qualities and a heightened awareness of His desire for a relationship with creation.

### Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Effects of Prayer on God-Schemata

In the psychological realm, a schema is a cognitive medium through which constructs, associations, life's unspoken understandings, and explicit revelations are absorbed. Schemata are the mind's experientially-derived records of material absorbed from interaction with the world. These structures are constantly changing and reinventing themselves in an effort to adapt to the perpetually changing nature of reality (Beals, 1998). The purpose of a schema is to incorporate an alignment between this new data and the mind's preexisting collection of information. To understand the student participant's conceptualization of the supernatural, faith, or ubiquitous meaning in the present life, one potential starting point is a portrait of his/her God-schema. In the eloquent words of A.W. Tozer (1961):

[t]he most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God. This is true not only of the individual Christian, but of the company of Christians that composes the Church. Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for her silence is often more eloquent than her speech. She can never escape the self-disclosure of her witness concerning God. (p. 1)

The aspiration here is to observe how a person contemplates, accepts, rejects, and/or applies spiritual information as a means of developing an awareness, understanding, or consideration of God. This study examined prayer (the independent variable) as the

behavioral lens through which this perception of God was assessed. Prayer was observed in terms of type, content, and outcome.

The consequences of the present study are significant to the Bible-believing participants, but are also influenced by the schism between science and faith. Religion is a paradoxical concept and force: one that has not always shared an amiable relationship with the science of psychology. On one hand, many view charity and altruism as either derivatives or relatives of religious faith. Many others remain convinced that the antithesis of this notion is true: that organized religion is the source of only division and embitterment. Faith stands amid these contradicting views; therefore, there is an abundant need for further exploration. This study's first objective is met through an initial (pre-empirical) inquiry regarding the participants' prayer life, spiritual health, and notion of God. After participants' incorporation of a daily time of prayer, these three constructs were analyzed in order to assess the (anticipated) resulting change. Prayer was hypothesized to have a substantial bearing on participants' conceptualization of God. In addition to fostering a happier, richer, more fulfilled life, prayer has been known to (and is therefore hypothesized to) result in a more functional God-schema.

### **Schemata and Prayer**

#### **Understanding Schemata**

When humans come into contact with information, whether it be experiential, sensory, or cognitive in nature, a transaction occurs in which preexisting and dynamic frameworks, often termed schemata, serve as the accommodating vehicles through which the mind makes sense of new data (Bing, Xu-Yan, & Yu, 2007). In an effort to examine

the way information is systematized into pillars of convoluted mental abstractions, theories explaining schemata depict the mind's configurative processes as incorporating "reasoning, categorization, evaluation, inferences, and so on. [This subject] intrigues the interest of scholars including linguists, anthropologists, psychologists and experts on artificial intelligence" (p. 13). Through this assemblage, the brain establishes meaning and ventures to make sense of surroundings (Buri, 1990). It is the process of how and why different, nonrelated, and/or counterintuitive factions become linked that is of most interest to the present study's attempt to investigate the somewhat physiological side of faith.

**Schemata theory.** A reoccurring thread in literature pertaining to this subject (which encompasses both conscious and subconscious variables) is the idea of the brain's plasticity. The progression from intake to classification to linkage is constant and dynamic. Schemata are not definitive: they represent understanding, contain variables, hold other schemata-one within another, are dynamic, and are identification/classification contrivances (Beals, 1998). When confronted with a stimulus comprised of new information, the mind instantaneously desires to plug this foreign fragment into existing constructs (Beals, 1998). This desire to assign new material allows that which was unfamiliar to become functional/useful for present purposes or impending recall. A schemata is "the mode by which the environment is broken down and organized into its many psychologically relevant facets" (Padesky, 1994, p. 267). When the mind comes into contact with alien information (that which cannot be reasonably connected to prior knowledge or experience) the brain may inadequately react to such novelty by illogically

assigning it to the brain's preexisting material. The implication here is that the mind's intense desire to make a connection may override its capacity for rational assessment. The brain is quintessentially interactive; some would refer to it as "organismic" (Bing et al., 2007).

Despite the dexterous nature of schemata at the intake stage, they can be relatively inflexible from a therapeutic standpoint. A therapeutic scenario often involves external probing, possibly from an unwelcomed individual. Because a schematic alteration is provoked by someone else defensiveness and other complications may occur. This notion is understandable as humans often resist extrinsic pressures, especially those prompting difficult change. This phenomenon is more frequently displayed in long-term struggles (addressed in therapy), as the schemata have more time to be steadily ingrained and reinforced within the mind, to the extent that even contradictory evidence pointing toward the inefficiency of a schema's framework remains an arduous thought for the patient to swallow as the initial step of a lifestyle change (Padesky, 1994). The schematic tendency to resist change comes from the mind's tendency to create equilibrium: to reconcile the mind with changing reality but only to the extent that this remains preferable to the individual. Schemata are persistent in maintaining longevity. Evidence of this can be seen when one discards information, even if it is relevant and potentially helpful, to perpetuate the schema's current state. The schema's voluntary sieving action renders this topic essential in a clinical context, as the forces against a therapist are often obstinate. The paradoxical claim remains, however, that many schematic formations are done so reflexively. One is not always aware of the filing action accompanied by his/her

present interaction with the realities at hand (Welburn, Coristine, Dagg, Pontefract, & Jordan, 2002). For this reason, scientists have utilized non-self-report measures to eliminate biases when attempting to zone in on destructive schemata for therapeutic purposes.

**God in terms of schemata.** The consideration of God in the context of cognitive measures can be illustrated by examining the new field of Neurotheology. This new branch combines science and religion and seeks to understand qualities of persons affected by supernatural happenings in the brain, why certain individuals experience such a phenomenon, and criteria surrounding the occurrences of these accounts (Bergley, 2001). Under this new science, religious epiphanies are delineated as ruptures of electrical activity in the frontal lobes and a result of an abundance of sensations or feelings (Harkin, n.d.). Unembellished implications of such studies render God's existence exclusively to the confines of the human brain. Consequently, any divine concept is no more than a figment. Because schemata result from the plasticity of thought development (the brain's automated response to the changing nature of experience), there are multiple factors that influence the formation of these cognitive tools. Rationalism, and perhaps more importantly, the very nature of reality and truth, change the formation of these cognitive structures. Here is where the conceptualization of God becomes both a fascinating deliberation and relevant to the systematic mind. If learning and schemata-construction are a result of the absorption or dismissal of truth, then fact must exist outside of human intelligence in addition to within it. Should the antithesis of this be the

case, the mind would need to evade those peripheral influences that would only cheapen the superior nature of its own inherent content (Beals, 1998).

**God-concepts.** Throughout history, one of the most discussed topics of the psyche has been man's consideration of God. From His acknowledgement during the acceptance speech of televised ceremony (which reveal God to be a bestowing entity); to the rote, nationalistic pledges uttered in formal settings (which speak to His sovereignty); to the desperate or helpless soul who cries out to the image of love and compassion (which reveals our connection to Him): the human impression of God varies in depth and connotation. From the Judeo-Christian portrayal of God as a personal, loving, and moral Image, to the scientific God of Johannes Kepler and Isaac Newton, Who was submerged in logic and exemplified the world's order through His association with methodology, one sees the futility in attempting to encapsulate even a mere glimpse of God (Giberson, 2005). Even God's most manifest representation in literature mentions the impracticality of an attempt for the created to comprehend his Creator (Is. 55:8-11). As articulated by the well-known Christian theologian, Karl Barth, "God cannot be known by the powers of human knowledge" (Giberson, p. 7). Yet, throughout the entire Bible, God calls His followers to emulate Him. Perception of the One who is to be revered precedes an impersonation of Him (which is a Christian's call). Thus, although a human is limited to a grossly incomplete understanding of God, this elemental conception is of utmost importance to both God and man. For purposes of this study, it is the medium through which He is sought (prayer) which will impact this dynamic interpretation of God's personhood.

**The formation of God-schemata.** There are many routes to exploring the multidimensional concept of God-schema. The Attachment Theory can be used to apprehend the correspondence between one's background and/or dealings with others, and his/her analysis of God. The Attachment Theory exists to explore the ramifications of one's upbringing, namely in terms of his connection with the parental figure(s), on ensuing adulthood perceptions of the self, others, and the connection between the two. One of the theory's primary elements is its conjecture that the caregiver's treatment of a child during his first few years is crucial in arbitrating how the child approaches future relationships. For instance, the fear of desertion, following neglectful rearing, often metamorphoses into those defense-mechanisms involving disguised and distrustful behavior. Attachment is a developmental process, one of maturation. Attachment behavior is understood to be a materialization of cravings for security or stability. In the case of a troubled child who desires the solace of his caregiver, the child obviously desires close proximity with a parent. However, this scenario does not necessarily result from the child's yearning for a tangible being (the parent), but rather from the longing for feelings associated with a protected state (Moriarty, Hoffman, & Grimes, 2007). Herein lies a significant tie to one's conceptualization of God through the lens of Attachment Theory. The child seeks being held, not the actual holder. The adult version of this exists when an individual seeks a God's direction toward a solution rather than His mere Personhood (Merton, 1969).

For purposes of the present study, there are three models that assimilate faith, God-views, and the logic of the Attachment Theory. A "compensation model" (Moriarty,

et. al., 2007, p. 47) suggests that when one lacks adequate past or present attachment formations, his/her view of God is altered accordingly so that He becomes the atoning figure, a Form of reimbursement. The “correspondence model” (Moriarty, et. al., p. 47) holds that God is seen in a similar light as the individual’s attachment figure from childhood. Thirdly, a conglomerated view illustrating the sequential merging of these two models exists to describe a model in which one’s maturity dictates his/her view of God. This integrated model affirms that in his youth, a child views God similarly to his/her perception of parental figures (correspondence model). Then, as the child grows and becomes cognizant of the parent’s shortcomings, he, in an effort to gain a sense of equilibrium, imagines an embellished God who neutralizes his newfound understanding of the flaws he sees in man (compensation model).

Just as Attachment Theory provides some justification as to how one arrives at his/her view of the divine, so is one’s personality telling of behavioral and motivational manifestations of belief. Self-view is largely dependent upon an individual’s personality and consequently, “how one sees oneself influences how one sees others and the world” (Greenway, Milne, & Clarke, 2003, p. 46). Personality’s dictation of the self-view has been shown to sway an individual’s conception of God. This is exemplified in multiple studies showing that participants with characteristically pessimistic self-regard have a parallel understanding of God’s features. Such individuals labeled Him as cold and distant. As would be expected, the reciprocal findings were also shown: when self-observation resulted in more optimistic findings, God was deemed loving.

As has been established, the accumulative nature of schema-formation has great bearing on the fact that God-views are swayed by past and circumstantial variables. One of the most apparent forms of this causal link is tragedy's effect on one's perception of God (Moriarty, et. al., 2007). Charles Darwin is a telling example of this common phenomenon. In response to the death of his adored daughter, his faith in God ceased. Prior to his heart-wrenching loss, he associated God with all things good; however, subsequent to a period of mourning, he doubted his optimistic view of God and saw it as irreconcilable with his condition that remained unchanged by the reportedly *good* God. Analogously, though on a much larger scale, Christianity experienced a period of disintegration after the tragedies of the Holocaust. Many equate this mass exodus in Christianity to a widespread questioning of God's allowing such travesties and pain in His creation. Like all schemata, conceptualizations of God are bent by the idiosyncratic reception and interpretation of life events, the most significant of which tend to be those associated with bereavement (Giberson, 2005).

**Theories of God-images.** Countless human pictures of God indicate wide ranges in spiritual thought. Many hold that a God-image is unattainable either because He does not exist or because He exists outside of the boundaries of human comprehension. Others claim that cognitive awareness (as an enlightened awareness of God) has only been reached by several individuals (notorious prophets, Apostles, or other impactful figures in religious movements). The aforementioned Neurotheological claims trace only the physiological manifestation of His presence/existence. However, many Christians would claim that "God's gracious, self-giving, guiding activity-centered in Jesus Christ-...]

goes on in the lives of all humans in history. [The question remains however, whether the] person concerned is attentively conscious of the reality” (Lehrer, 2007, p. 19).

### **Prayer**

If one seeks God’s Personhood, in an effort to learn more about His nature, will, and plan for this individual’s life, cannot the schemata be altered, and grant this person a better understanding of life, in general? This is the question of greatest importance to this study. A Roper poll estimated that approximately half of Americans pray or meditate at least daily. Why do so many turn to prayer? In a study utilizing the Prayer Experience Questionnaire, subjects reported feelings of tranquility and God’s nearness or reassurance following prayer time. Scholars of infinite disciplines and time periods speak to man’s inquisitive nature and instinctive desire for meaning. Prayer is germane to the human experience because it is often pursued out of a desire to reach out to an entity superior to the self (Sheler, 2004). As will shortly be discussed in an explanation of religion’s prosocial connotation, society as a whole connects prayer with improved overall welfare via its association with meditation, improved self-worth, reparation, and redemption (Dein & Littlewood, 2008).

To reflect its draw on the conscience, prayer has been dubbed the “native language of the soul” (Sheler, 2004, p. 2). Such a description alludes to the inherent human condition which leaves its victims with a desire to commune with the divine. William James (1890) showed agreement with this idea in his claim that “the reason we pray is simply that we cannot help praying” (p. 316). The inference in the

conceptualization of prayer as communicative (and more than merely meditative) implies practices of speaking, absorbing, and discussing (Dein & Littlewood, 2008).

C.S. Lewis described prayer as “either sheer illusion or a personal contact between embryonic, incomplete persons (ourselves) and the utterly concrete Person” (as quoted in Sheler, 2004, p. 3). Lewis claimed that God reveals Himself and His nature to the seeker during prayer, as opposed the notion of prayer’s consisting of the all-powerful Being merely responding to specific petitions. Lewis accounted for his assertion by pointing to Christ’s pre-crucifixion prayer in the garden wherein he expressed a request for his cup to be taken from him (Matthew 26:39 New International Version). The fact that His plea was not granted is an integral component of a biblical understanding of prayer. Lewis pointed to the implication that Christ’s question was more relational than petitional; he knew the cup would not pass, yet he still posed (rather shared) the question. The paradox that prayer’s greatest Instructor (by Christianity’s standard) was denied His desired answer exemplifies the kinship and confessional components of prayer (Sheler, 2004).

The first biblical prayers were personal conversations between Adam, Abraham, Moses and their Creator. In the New Testament, Jesus instructed His followers how to pray by warning them to evade showy prayers, and to pray with assurance and faith: asking for God’s will and fleeing from selfish wishes (Sheler, 2004). To Muslims, prayer is seen as a means of adulation and is conducted ritualistically (five times daily) as the prayer faces Mecca. Hindus also pursue formalistic prayers, many of which take the form of guided requests (as instructed by the Vedas) requests. For Buddhist monks, the gong-

like signal at morning, noon, and night signals a call to a prayer in which one attempts to summon the dormant and inner abilities of strength, compassion, and understanding. Despite varied views of the conceptualization of and communion with God, countless religions have found common ground in the belief in the healing power of prayer (Breslin & Lewis, 2008). This petitioning for a cure often serves as the underlying reason why prayer is continually sought.

**Types and effects of prayer.** According to Poloma and Pendleton (1991), prayer can be severed into four types: ritualistic, petitionary, colloquial, and meditative. Ritualistic prayers are delivered through text reading or memory. Petitionary prayers are offered as requests for the meeting of needs for the self or others. Colloquial prayers also pose requests, but for purposes of furthering His will as opposed to an individual's desire. Meditative prayer assumes more of a state than actual dialogue in that it is focused on being in God's presence, recognizing one's bond with Him, and merely contemplating God's existence and ways.

Widespread reports of prayer's aftermath render it a variable topic. God instructs those seeking him to "be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10) Then 1 Kings 19:11-12 speaks of God utilizing a "still, small voice." This intersection of scriptures wherein the reader can first learn to be at rest and then receive quiet instruction, tells of the give-and-take nature of prayer. According to one model, four experiential classifications of prayer exist (confirmatory, responsive, ecstatic, and revelatory) in order to account for post-prayer experience. The first and most common among Americans is a confirmatory understanding, which consists of feelings of verification that one's outlook

is a truthful portrayal of meaning in life. Secondly, a responsive interpretation consists of reciprocated acknowledgement between God and man. The common Christian themes that are salvation and miracles fall under this heading, as they both have the element of faith which precedes the beneficial occurrence. An ecstatic response occurs when a relational element is perceived through prayer. Lastly, a revelational understanding occurs when the perception of a message regarding God's will for one's actions is present (Breslin & Lewis, 2008).

According to another model, there are three manifesting and advantageous effects of prayer: psychological, physiological, and spiritual (Breslin & Lewis, 2008). The physiological impact arises as meditative qualities of prayer have been seen to induce a healthier state which includes decreased heart rate, controlled breathing, and looser muscles. From a psychological standpoint, the praying individual may benefit from a renewed sense of purpose, significance, and optimism. Additionally, the psychological processes of desensitization, hypnosis, regression, perception, and conditioning are all connected to prayer. Aside from the obvious spiritual consequences of prayer, one's spiritual development has a substantial bearing on, not necessarily the outcome of the prayer (this is debatable), but on the individual's reaction to it.

**Prior study of prayer.** Empirical reporting of the healing effects of prayer was presented by a 1988 study of 393 coronary-care patients. An unknowing group of patients (this was a double-blind procedure) was appointed a volunteer Christian prayer who would intercede on behalf of the sick individual by asking God for healing. The other group of patients served as the control counterpart (and did not receive assigned prayer).

The results showed that the group that was prayed for ended the experiment in much better condition than the control group. Three patients who were prayed for versus eighteen control patients required antibiotics; six treated versus eighteen non-treated endured pulmonary edema (a medical condition); and zero treated versus twelve non-treated required intubation. These results were reported immediately following the experiment. Such unprecedented findings indicate that coronary care unit patients who received prayerful intervention to the Judeo Christian God found substantial benefit from the intervention, especially when considering the plight of many control group members (Dein & Littlewood).

**The science against prayer.** Many remain unconvinced of a correlational link between prayer and healing. As is the case with countless other topics within the supernatural realm, some researchers point to the placebo effect to account for the debatable cause of the immediate improvements following prayer. Others have labeled prayer and any association with affirmative outcomes as a “positive form of self-fulfilling prophecy” or a consequence of “a subconscious manipulation of appropriate variables” (Breslin & Lewis, 2008, p. 12). Many state that prayer may cue positive emotions, feelings of communal support, and/or an illusory sense and/or state of well-being. William James (1890) claimed religion, and its many resulting practices and beliefs, are *functional* and conducive to mental survival.

**Prerequisites to prayer.** Many believe the suggestion that in order for a desired outcome to come to fruition, a prayer must be accompanied by the asker’s obedience in some form. For example, many advocate faith as a prerequisite to the fulfilling of prayer.

Another view states prayers must be habitual, genuine, optimistic, and an act of submission or accessibility in order to result in a satisfactory outcome. Some see these ingredients as necessary solely because the *prayer* is creating his destiny by dictating his own thoughts and future behaviors during prayer (Breslin & Lewis, 2008). These views correspond partially with the disputes raised against prayer, especially prayer's connection with self-fulfilling prophesy. The fundamental principle behind these claims is that intentionality is vital to the prayer's outcome.

**Benefits of prayer.** To expound upon the prayer-placebo-connection and James's assertion that prayer is merely *functional*, it is helpful to examine how prayer impacts its devotee's general wellbeing. Prayer's wide-ranging influences reach far beyond the temporal and into the intricacies of the lives of its partakers. Prayer's physical manifestations are visible upon observation. The cleansing act of admission introspectively allows for restoration of the self-view and of relations with others. Appreciative and admiring prayers decrease ownership of power (to a healthy degree) and therefore increase feelings of freedom from undue conceit and/or humiliation, and in turn help bring "individuals out of themselves" (Beslin & Lewis, 2008, p. 15). One's motives and evaluation of needs versus wants are filtered through the requesting action of prayer, which often leads to a more focused desiring of what is truly necessitous. Social needs are met by intercessory prayer, as this unselfish pursuit can serve as a modifying force (of a harmful and innately human tendency) in the patrolling of egocentricity. The meditative component of prayer has been shown to lessen the mind/body's anxiety, which in turn, can strengthen the immune system. Related to schema adaptation and

utilization, the action of processing through events, thoughts, and/or emotions could conceivably help one achieve a more consistently rational mental construal of existence. Prayer can even minimize harmful or depressive sentiments in light of the fact that it has been shown to reinforce altruism by enhancing understanding in terms of coming to peace with life's events and seeking wisdom in the midst of them (Breslin & Lewis, 2008).

The scientists that distinguish the action of prayer as a purely cathartic release by simultaneously discrediting its spiritual and supernatural connotations commonly see its *religious* components as harmful. For instance, from a biological standpoint, prayer is seen as debilitating when it leads one to reckon that an uncertain or precarious situation (such as an illness) could feasibly be God's will or the consequence of sin. Another form of this idea states that "prayer becomes a meaningless and impotent ritual if answers to prayer are seen exclusively as a reflection of God's arbitrary and omnipotent will" (as cited in Breslin & Lewis, 2008, p. 17). However, it is important to recognize that even if prayer should be rendered an evasion of responsibility or reality, and an act incapable of independent positive change in accordance to a human standard, it still may result in a productive conclusion when viewing man as a seeker as opposed to possessor of truth. To claim that an improved understanding of the arbitrary and omnipotent will of the (supposed) Creator of the universe is meaningless is to say that truth is of little importance, when it is found outside the sphere of naturalism.

**Rationale**

Though the relationship between religion and psychology has not always been amiable, literature shows that the two are becoming increasingly paired. The atheist Bernard Spilka (1996) remarked, “I assert that the cosmic religious experience is the strongest and the noblest driving force behind scientific research” (p. 1). Religion is a pivotal aspect of the science of human thought and behavior, and the nationwide fascination with spirituality is leading to more open discussion. Perhaps in pursuit of what Jung described to be an endogenous deliverance whereby one is granted the opportunity to unfold out of the self, American pop culture appears to regard Eastern philosophies as preferable to (and more credible than) their Christian counterparts (Buri, 1990). Yet, 76% of Americans still select a Christian self-identification (Meacham, 2009).

Summarizing the religious affiliation or reflections of an entire country is risky. Members from one end of the spectrum say that America is headed toward a Christian revival, while others say the nation is headed toward mirroring Europe’s secularization. One study stated that there are currently twice as many Americans that claim no religious attachment than there were in 1990 (Meacham, 2009). Results from the same survey revealed that those who identified themselves as accepting atheistic or agnostic beliefs numbered 1 million in 1990 then numbered 3.6 million in 2009. Meacham claimed that the number of professing Christians has significantly dwindled in that twenty year window. Post-modernism inarguably opened the door for some honest questioning regarding faith, truth, significance, and tradition over the course of the past few decades.

However, skepticism is a paradoxical stance. Refuting or claiming indifference to the previous generation's religion (or any religion at all) does not imply a disinterest in spiritual matters. Oftentimes, more contemplation of faith-based ideas is necessary in claiming atheism or agnosticism than in declaring one's parents' religion as one's own (which was a likely phenomenon in past generations). In the words of Lord Alfred Tennyson, "[t]here lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds" (as quoted in Lehrer, 2007, p. 36). Could the Western trend of uncertainty toward religious faith be a cry of surrender in the name of frustration/confusion as opposed to what is sometimes labeled total abandonment rooted in repudiation? This is a critical question because the former has only temporal implications, whereas the latter assumes steadfast, and sometimes rebellious, ramifications. It is for these reasons that this study is pertinent to everyone: the disbelieving, accepting, indifferent, and undecided. These cultural trends prompted the research question: does prayer affect God-schemata?

### **Operational Definitions**

The following operational definitions have been formed in order to merge the content in the above literature with the intentions of the present study. The reason for delineating these specific descriptions is to limit the risks of misinterpretation among the participants, so that internal validity of the study can be preserved. For purposes of this study, *God* is the Judeo-Christian God, the creator and ruler of the universe, and holder of the highest position of power (Isaiah 40:21-24). Prayer is the contact with the Judeo-Christian God, as described above, and functions as the communion with, reception of, and interaction with Him. This can be in the form of cognition, meditation,

communication, or inter-personal interaction (Dein & Littlewood, 2008). Schemata (singular-schema) are cerebral configurations of information, mostly experiential in nature, which are comprised of linked or related data. Schemata arbitrate one's encounter with his/her surroundings in terms of their conceptualization and future recall of present happenings (Welburn et. al., 2002). Functionality, in relationship to participants' God-schema, refers to the subjective betterment of participants' grasp of Divine attributes and ways. This is most objectively measure by the SAI subscales: through the *negative* and *positive* nature of the five subscales.

### **Hypotheses**

The first hypothesis of this study is that prayer will have a positive effect on God-schemata. Secondly, if one seeks God's Personhood, in an effort to learn more about His nature, will, and plan for his life, his God-schemata will be altered, and in turn, give that individual a better understanding of life, in general. Thus prayer is hypothesized to result in a more functional God-schema.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The pre-and post-tests were designed exclusively for use among Christian populations (or individuals who are very familiar with Christian semantics). Therefore, a medium-sized evangelical university (in the southeastern United States) provided a convenient sample which should generate considerable external validity among Christian populations due to its denominational-diversity and demographically varied students (College Board, n.d.). A benefit in conducting a prayer study in a (comparatively)

religiously homogenous setting is the student body's inherent understanding of Christian themes or concepts. The school's Baptist affiliation appeals to only a certain fraction of the population, and in turn creates a Biblically-informed student body. This is relevant because the ambiguity of the concept of God is greatly lessened when compared to other scholarly populations. This allowed for a more concise understanding of this study's operational definition of God, which also increases internal validity. The study commenced with thirty students participants, twenty-three of which were female, but nine attrited. All participants were undergraduates between the ages of 18 and 26.

### **Instruments**

**Three-part assessments.** The pre- and post-tests were similar in order that the pre-test would serve as a baseline. Both tests consisted of three parts: of the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI), a God-descriptive section, and an open-ended question. The God-descriptive section asked participants to examine fourteen scripture verses expressing different attributes of God and select the five that they thought to be most telling of or significant to His nature. The selection choices were: All-powerful (1 Chronicles 29:11-13), Creator (Colossians 1:16), Faithful (Deuteronomy 7:9), Father (Romans 8:15-16), Holy (Psalm 99:5), Just (Psalm 45:6), Love (1 John 4:8), Majestic (1 Timothy 6:15-16), Merciful (Ephesians 2:4-5), Patient (2 Peter 3:9), Reviver (Isaiah 57:15), Supreme (Psalm 113:4), and Wise (Proverbs 3:19). The open ended question on the pre-test provided participants the opportunity to describe their conceptions of God. The open-ended question on the post-test asked participants how their view of God had changed during the course of the 40 days.

**Spiritual assessment inventory.** The Spiritual Assessment Inventory focuses on two primary points of inquiry in its attempt to measure development and change among Christian populations: it examines the participant's consciousness of God and the condition of his/her relationship with Him. The questionnaire has five subscales: awareness, realistic acceptance, disappointment, grandiosity, and instability (Hall, & Edwards, 2002). Awareness of God measures one's propensity to experience the presence of and communication with God. The remaining four tap into the developmental maturity of this relationship and its general progression (Hall, Reise, & Haviland, 2007).

The SAI has pioneered an independently-formed, conjectural model by fusing psychological and spiritual development and observing both holistically; it was intended to be a *psychospiritual* development/maturity. The relational maturity construct is labeled the psychological aspect and is secondary to the spiritual component of the assessment: awareness of God (Hall & Edwards, 2002). The SAI uses the object relations theory as a launching pad for investigating spiritual incentives, beliefs, and behaviors. It is important to note that the SAI builds upon secular theory, yet remains an efficient measure when examined next to corresponding, conceivably *religious*, apparatuses. When compared with two comparable assessments (the Spiritual Well-Being Scale and the Intrinsic/Extrinsic-Revised) the SAI was more accurate in forecasting object relations development (Hall et. al., 2007). One of the SAI's goals is to express the widely-held belief that one's relationship with (and self-perceived conceptualization of this relationship) the Divine is indicative of the individual's overall emotional/relational development; the two are said to correlate significantly. Another unique feature of the

SAI, and one that separates it from corresponding measures, is its design for clinical application as made possible by its solid psychometric construction.

## **Procedure**

### **Recruitment**

The first step in the experimental process was contacting the author of the SAI (correspondence shown in Appendix A). Next, IRB approval was granted and a contract was formed. Then participants were sought via two advertisements, the first of which is shown in Appendix A. The university's psychology webpage was used to promote the study with a description of requirements and the researcher's contact information.

Immediately following the start of the semester, an in-class presentation was given to an introductory psychology class (of several hundred students) in order to request participation. Both announcements offered psychology activity credits (a requirement in nearly all psychology courses) in exchange for student participation. This is a comparatively small incentive when considering the time and level of commitment given by volunteering participants.

### **Data Collection**

When volunteering individuals responded to either advertisement they received an email regarding a meeting time in which they were issued the consent form, pre-assessment, instructions, brief prayer tutorial (Appendix B, C, D, E, F) and a prayer notepad/journal in order to record the date, prayer type, and any other desired material. There was a two-week period of these initial meetings. This time frame was set so that participants' 40 days would conclude before Thanksgiving break. The prayer tutorial was

a synopsis version of the prayer types mentioned in the literature review (ritualistic, petitionary, colloquial, meditative, and contemplative). This provided participants with a means of classifying their specific prayers thereby objectifying future analysis.

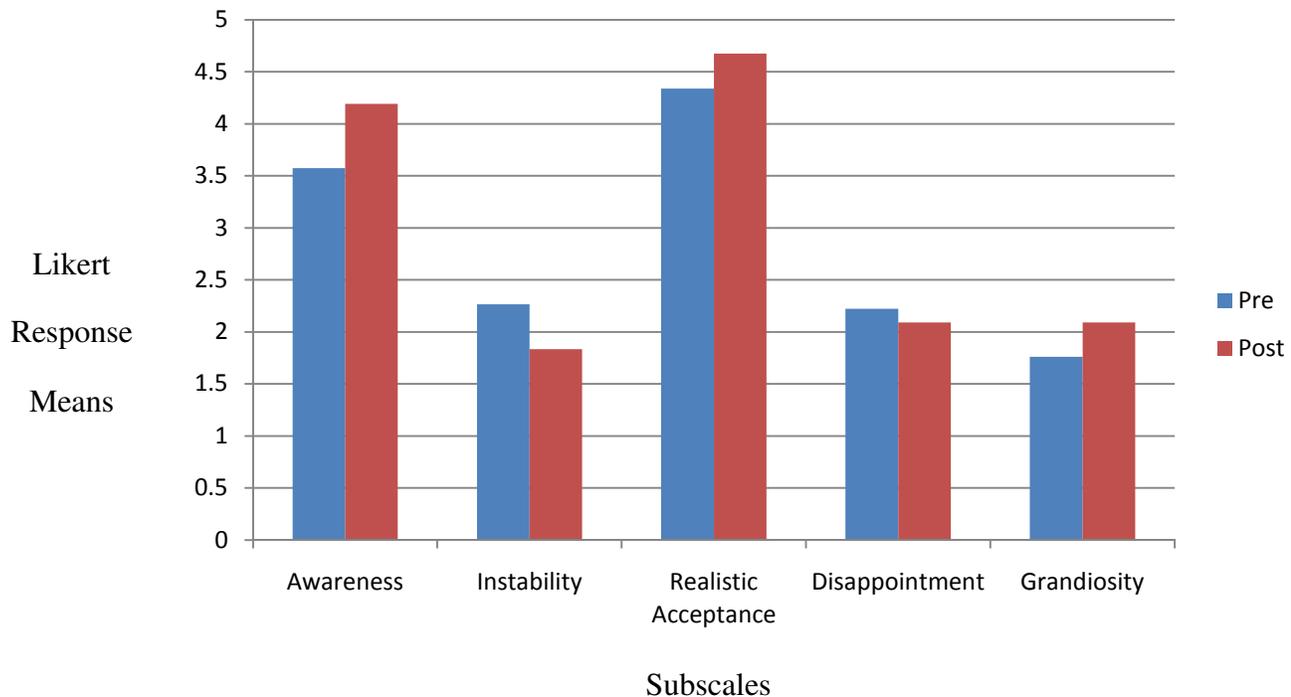
## Results

### Psychospiritual Analysis

It was hypothesized that prayer would have a positive impact on participants' conceptualization of God, specifically that prayer would increase item means on those positive subscales (Awareness and Realistic Acceptance) and decrease item means on those negative subscales (Grandiosity, Disappointment, and Instability). However, Grandiosity remains a complex subscale and a high score is not necessarily indicative of an overly narcissistic *psychospiritual* state (this will be examined later). It was also hypothesized that prayer would result in a more functional God-schema, which implied the possible shifting (from pre- to post-test) in the selection of the five God-attributes. The quantitative analysis existed in two parts: the SAI subscales were evaluated through a paired sample t-test and the God-attributes were tallied and averaged. The last question, of both the pre- and post-test, was analyzed qualitatively. These open-ended questions, which prompted participants to elaborate on their respective God-concepts, were coded.

Paired sample t-tests revealed statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-tests on the basis of all but one of the SAI's five subscales (Awareness:  $t(15) = -4.390, p < .001$ ; Instability:  $t(15) = 2.649, p = .009$ ; Realistic Acceptance:  $t(10) = -1.866, p = .046$ ; Disappointment:  $t(15) = 1.051, n.s., p$  is greater than .05; Grandiosity:  $t(18) = -2.887, p = .005$ ). **Figure 1** illustrates the subscale changes between the pre- and post-test.

All but one of the hypotheses were supported. Means on the Grandiosity subscale, which was originally presumed to imply a negative connotation within the context of spiritual and psychological maturity, increased after the forty day period of prayer.



**Figure 1.** SAI Subscale ]

### God Schemata

The intent of the pre- and post-test was not to gather generalizations regarding participants' conceptualizations of God; rather it was to measure the change that occurred during (or as a result of) the prayer time. Each participant averaged 1.8 changes (from the pre- to post-test) in his/her selection of God-attributes. Two significant findings emerged regarding the All-powerful selection. All-powerful was both the most unstable and the most commonly selected attribute (15 participants chose this selection in either the pre- or the post-test). Eleven (of the fifteen) participants showed change around this attribute

as well. Change, in this context, implies a difference between the pre- and post-test involving the variable (All-powerful). Thus, eleven participants either initially chose the attribute then did not include it in the post-test or they did not choose it initially and decided to do so on the post-test.

### **Open-ended Questions**

The third sections (of both the pre- and post-test) prompted participants to expound upon their God-views without the limitations caused by predetermined selections (multiple choice or likert scale options). The pre-test's open-ended question was supplementary and prompted participants to give a broader and more elaborate picture of their view of God. Seven participants used this section to name additional attributes of God, ones that were not listed as options in the previous section. Four participants used the term *everything* (in the context of God's omniscience, omnipresence, and significance as the author of Christianity) to describe their picture of an indescribable and infinite God. The post-test's open-ended question was the more significant of the two subjective and personalized free response sections. Participants were asked to delineate how their view of God had changed over the course of (or resulting from) the forty days of prayer. Participants spoke of personal maturation, the development of the daily prayer time, or a combination of the two. Personal maturation was described in terms of a progression in the participant's relationship with God, an increased understanding of His nature, new insight(s), or a greater awareness of the spiritual realm; seven participants detailed this sort of change. Participants who used the open-ended section to describe prayer development told of the sequence of routine, how

prayer became a more valued pursuit, or how the length and/or frequency of prayer time increased as the forty days progressed; four participants accounted for this sort of change. Six participants recalled personal growth while simultaneously reflecting on the development of the prayer time. Most of these six participants explained that prayer had a significant effect on the individual's attitudinal functioning. Therefore prayer was seen as a tool used to obtain a desired outlook.

Post-test responses to the open-ended question provided three trends concerning distinct changes in God-concept. Nine participants pointed to God's nonhuman and divine attributes when describing how their views of God had transformed during the prayer time. Six respondents indicated a greater awareness or understanding of God's will, two participants claimed an increased desire to maintain a worshipful and awe-filled response to God, and two others mentioned the infinite qualities of God as those which became more apparent as a result of the prayer time.

## **Discussion**

### **Limitations of this Study**

The self-report assessment (pre- and post-test) was bound by several confines. The SAI may skew its findings on certain ends of construct spectrums. The authors even expressed concern with their finding that some of the subscales appeared to give inaccurate representation to certain extreme responses (high or low responses) and suggested that some items were either too simple or too complex for the participants (Hall & Edwards, 2002). To improve upon their 1996 version, Hall and Edwards revised the Grandiosity subscale, and an improved Cronbach's coefficient alpha on the seven-

item scale resulted ( $\alpha = 0.73$ ). However, there appears to be continued complication with this subscale. The Bell Object Relations Inventory's Egocentricity subscale showed to be positively correlated with the Grandiosity subscale,  $r = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Likewise, those correlations between Grandiosity and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory's subscales (Exhibitionism, Exploitativeness, and Authority) were higher than those of the SAI's other four subscales. However, there seems to be duality within the Grandiosity subscale. Hall and Edwards implied that a higher score on the Grandiosity subscale may be indicative of some pathology; however, the extent to which this is true remains unclear. The authors stated that there is a significantly positive relationship between the Awareness (a *positive* indication of psychospiritual maturity) and Instability (a negative indicator) and Grandiosity. There seem to be two mutually exclusive constructs within the Grandiosity subscale, the first of which is seen in Item number thirteen. The prompt for the item is: "God recognizes that I am more spiritual than most people." This item is characteristic of several of the subscale's questions and is not at all representative of grandiosity, but of one's self-view. For example, if an individual answered five to this question, out of the self-realization that he/she is naturally a more philosophical or spiritual thinker, his/her answer does not imply an inflated opinion of him/herself, or even egotism. This would imply that he/she has characteristic patterns of thought and that an all-knowing God is aware of such a trait. On the other hand, Item twenty is more representative of the intended nature of the subscale; it considers the extent to which the individual presumes God views his/her needs in relation to the needs of others. Thus, the

seemingly dichotomous nature of Grandiosity may account for why a *negative* subscale's means increased after the forty days of prayer.

In addition to the possibility of statistical misrepresentation, the experimental setup was subject to error. Campus-wide events, holidays, and the inevitable maturation among freshmen (most participants were in their first semester of college) may have spurred some of the findings, but were not accounted for as the study did not have a control group. There was also a lack of *experimental* controls. The location of prayer (the prayer chapel) and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer were the only procedural constants. In order to accommodate student participants, few restrictions were given. Varying start and end dates may have swayed findings, as well. All participants finished prayer time by Thanksgiving Break. However, stress levels were arguably higher for those who finished several weeks later, as they were deeper into the semester/school work than those who concluded earlier.

### **Implications**

The intent of the study was not to analyze prayer itself (in terms of type or its effect on circumstance) but rather to examine how interaction between God and man affects the lesser being's *understanding* of the divine and infinite Being. Man was made in the image of God, yet is not a co-author of truth. As man seeks the Source of truth, his incompleteness lessens while he simultaneously grasps a fuller (albeit still grossly unfinished) view of the Inventor. Evidence of this *shedding of incompleteness* was found in the results of this study. This occurred across two broad variables: participant's understanding of both the man-God relationship and God's distinct Personhood.

As described previously, the SAI is a measure of *psychospiritual* development, with relational maturity being the psychological aspect and awareness of God being the spiritual component (Hall & Edwards, 2002). Although the two constructs are intertwined, results indicate that participants experienced an improved relationship with and awareness of God (following the prayer time). Thomas Merton (1969) claimed that “true contemplation is not a psychological trick but a theological grace” (p. xx). Thus, this study intended to measure a participant’s contemplation of God, specifically to capture those revelations of God’s nature that are rooted in biblical description (the attributes were all justified by the scriptural references cited previously). Although the SAI is rooted in Christian themes, it is not derived from a scriptural context, but rather a human delineation of what constitutes spiritual and relational maturity (the *psychological* component). Merton’s assertion is important because he insinuated that the means through which God reveals Himself to man (and the contents of such revelation) are more important than human measures of spiritual knowledge/maturity and man’s estimation of how to obtain this maturation. Of the five SAI variables, Awareness of God increased most. This is significant because this is the *spiritual* construct, while the remaining four are the relational (and therefore *psychological*) constructs. These results mirror Merton’s idea of a correct contemplation of God.

The second section of the assessment, wherein individuals selected the five attributes (of God) that were most conducive to their own picture of Him, showed that the description of God as All-Powerful was the most prevalent selection. While those attributes that were commonly chosen (to portray God’s image) are important, the

quantifying of overlooked attributes is telling, as well. Because God is unchanging and wholly perfect, the thirteen attributes were arguably equally valid, while still incomplete, in terms of their ability to describe a complete God. *Just* was not selected in the pre-test and was selected only once in the post-test. *Supreme* was also bypassed in the pre-test but selected twice in the post-test. *Reviver* was selected once during the pre-test and was selected three times in the post-test.

The open-ended section revealed similar trends to those provided by the SAI, but this section also showed that participants named specific growth and changes in their views of both God and prayer. Proximity was a dominant theme of these responses. Fourteen participants spoke of experiencing nearness to God, His desire for a relationship with His *children*, and/or an increased desire (on behalf of the participant) to pursue interaction with God. Participants used the open-ended section (of the post-test) to explain how their *relationship* with God had evolved over the forty days, instead of how their *view* of Him had altered.

### **Future Research**

An individual's change in God-view (as judged by the alterations shown in the God-attribute section of the questionnaire) should be related to three SAI subscales: Awareness, Realistic Acceptance, and Instability. Further analysis may indicate correlations between specific attributes and a participant's placement on any of the subscale's continuums. For example, should a participant have a greater number of changes in God-attributes (greater than the average of 1.8), a noticeable disparity between the pre- and post-test Instability subscale score should be observed.

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Appendix A

Permission Correspondence with the author:

Hi Jen,

Yes, that is fine. Hope it goes well.

Take care,

Todd

On Apr 26, 2010, at 7:27 AM, Healey, Jennifer Jan wrote:

Hello Dr. Hall-

I intend to conduct a 40-day prayer experiment here at Liberty University. Do I have your permission to use the SAI, of course, under the condition that I cite you and your work pertaining to the instrument? Thanks so much,

Jen Healey

<Attach0.html>

Todd W. Hall, Ph.D.

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## Appendix B

**CONSENT FORM**

Hallowed Be Thy Name: Prayer's Effect on God-Schemata

Jen Healey

Liberty University

Psychology Academic Department

You are invited to be in a research study involving prayer's effect on one's conceptualization of God. You are receiving this information because a) you have responded to the advertisement or b) you responded to the classroom explanation/request for participation. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Jen Healey, Psychology Department, Liberty University

**Background Information**

The intent of this research is to examine the effect of prayer on God-schemata. In other words, the experiment will assess how people's conceptualization of God changes after an intensified 40-day period of prayer.

**Procedures**

Subjects will be required to complete a pre- and post-test before and after the forty day period of prayer. All subjects will gather daily at the same venue (the prayer chapel) and pray (independently) at a convenient time for them. Experimental participants will sign in on a daily log.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study**

The most anticipated outcome of this study is the value it will add to the participant's faith. Because all participants share the prominent motive to experience prayer in a meaningful way (there is minor academic incentive as well), they already have an interest and belief in prayer. Therefore, by providing them a scheduled prayer time (creating accountability) and access to the results of the pre and post-test (which will convey how their views of God have changed during the course of the study), subjects will hopefully

gain insight into the value, importance, and experience of prayer. The participants can take such gains with them throughout life.

Though unlikely, subjects may experience minor discomfort during/after the assessment. Therefore, subjects may see a need to process thoughts, feelings, uncertainties, etc. with a trusted individual during/after the assessment period. Multiple venues and individuals offering help in such areas are available on campus. Among many options, help is accessible from the student care and student leadership offices, as well as from individual student leaders.

### **Confidentiality:**

Pre- and post-tests will be kept confidential and anonymous. Numbers, as opposed to names, will be assigned to the individuals so that no one (apart from the participant himself) will have access to who said what. These documents will be stored by the researcher in a locked file cabinet for three years.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision (regardless of the outcome) will not affect your current or future relations with the Liberty. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

### **Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Jen Healey and faculty sponsor Fred Volk. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact them at 1971 University Blvd, 434-592-4035, jjhealey@liberty.edu or fvolk@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 2400, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

***You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.***

### **Statement of Consent:**

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of parent or guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*(If minors are involved)*

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

Jennifer Healey ([jjhealey@liberty.edu](mailto:jjhealey@liberty.edu)) is conducting a study in order to examine the effect of prayer on participants' God schemata (conceptualization/understanding of God). Subjects will be required to complete a pre- and post-test before and after a forty-day period of prayer. Participant involvement in the study will include 15 minutes of daily prayer at the prayer chapel and brief journaling of proceedings. Participants are advised to adhere to the Lord's Prayer for at least a portion of prayer time. However, they are encouraged to pursue God freely. When participants notify Jen of their interest they will receive a response (via email) outlining all that the experiment entails as far as obligations on behalf of the potential participant. This will include an attachment for the informed consent form. Your contributions will be much appreciated!

## Appendix D

**SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT INVENTORY**

Copyright Todd W. Hall, Ph.D. & Keith J. Edwards, Ph.D.

**Instructions**

Please respond to each statement below by writing the number that best represents your experience in the box to the right of the statement. It is best to answer according to what

*really reflects* your experience rather than what you think your experience should be.

Give the answer that comes to mind first. Don't spend too much time thinking about an item. Give the best possible response to each statement even if it does not provide all the information you would like. Try your best to respond to all statements. Your answers will be completely confidential. Some of the statements consist of two parts as shown here:

[2.1] There are times when I feel disappointed with God.

[2.2] When this happens, I still want our relationship to continue.

Your response to 2.2 tells how true statement 2.2 is for you when you have the experience of feeling disappointed with God described in statement 2.1.

**For the following questions please rate your answer as 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5:**

**1-Not at All True**

**2-Slightly True**

**3-Moderately True**

**4-Substantially True**

**5-Very True**

1 I have a sense of how God is working in my life

2.1 There are times when I feel disappointed with God

2.2 When this happens, I still want our relationship to continue

3 God's presence feels very real to me

4 I am afraid that God will give up on me

5 I seem to have a unique ability to influence God through my prayers

6 Listening to God is an essential part of my life

7 I am always in a worshipful mood when I go to church.

8.1 There are times when I feel frustrated with God

8.2 When I feel this way, I still desire to put effort into our relationship

9 I am aware of God prompting me to do things

10 My emotional connection with God is unstable

11 My experiences of God's responses to me impact me greatly

12.1 There are times when I feel irritated at God

12.2 When I feel this way, I am able to come to some sense of resolution in our relationship

13 God recognizes that I am more spiritual than most people

14 I always seek God's guidance for every decision I make

15 I am aware of God's presence in my interactions with other people

16 There are times when I feel that God is punishing me

17 I am aware of God responding to me in a variety of ways

18.1 There are times when I feel angry at God

18.2 When this happens, I still have the sense that God will always be with me

19 I am aware of God attending to me in times of need

20 God understands that my needs are more important than most people's

21 I am aware of God telling me to do something

22 I worry that I will be left out of God's plans

23 My experiences of God's presence impacts me greatly

24 I am always as kind at home as I am at church.

25 I have a sense of the direction in which God is guiding me

26 My relationship with God is an extraordinary one that most people would not understand

27.1 There are times when I feel betrayed by God

27.2 When I feel this way, I put effort into restoring our relationship

28 I am aware of God communicating to me in a variety of ways

29 Manipulating God seems to be the best way to get what I want

30 I am aware of God's presence in times of need

31 From day to day, I sense God being with me

32 I pray for all my friends and relatives every day

33.1 There are times when I feel frustrated by God for not responding to my prayers

33.2 When I feel this way, I am able to talk it through with God

34 I have a sense of God communicating guidance to me

35 When I sin, I tend to withdraw from God

36 I experience an awareness of God speaking to me personally

37 I find my prayers to God are more effective than other people's

38 I am always in the mood to pray.

39 I feel I have to please God or he might reject me

40 I have a strong impression of God's presence

41 There are times when I feel that God is angry at me

42 I am aware of God being very near to me

43 When I sin, I am afraid of what God will do to me

44 When I consult God about decisions in my life, I am aware to my prayers of his direction and help

45 I seem to be more gifted than most people in discerning God's will

46 When I feel God is not protecting me, I tend to feel worthless

47.1 There are times when I feel like God has let me down

47.2 When this happens, my trust in God is not completely broken

## **Part 2**

Below are Bible verses of attributes of God. Please select the five which you see as the most significant to or descriptive of His nature.

### **-Creator:**

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. -Colossians 1:16

### **-All-Powerful:**

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours.

Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom;

you are exalted as head over all.

-1 Chronicles 29:11-13

### **-Majestic**

God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

-1 Timothy 6:15-16

### **-Love**

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

-1 John 4:8

### **-Faithful**

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

-Deuteronomy 7:9

### **-Patient**

He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

-2 Peter 3:9

### **-Just**

Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.

-Psalm 45:6

### **-Holy:**

Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy.

-Psalm 99:5

### **-Supreme**

The LORD is exalted over all the nations,

his glory above the heavens.

-Psalm 113:4

### **-Reviver**

For this is what the high and lofty One says—  
 he who lives forever, whose name is holy:  
 "I live in a high and holy place,  
 but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,  
 to revive the spirit of the lowly  
 and to revive the heart of the contrite.                   -Isaiah 57:15

**-Father**

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

-Romans 8:15-16

**-Merciful:**

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

-Ephesians 2:4-5

**-Incomprehensible:**

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
 neither are your ways my ways,"  
 declares the LORD.                   -Isaiah 55:8

**-Wise**

By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations,  
 by understanding he set the heavens in place.                   -Proverbs 3:19

You may use the following space to provide any further description of your conception of God as you wish (you may use an explanation of some sort or singular, descriptive words):

Thank you!

Note: the post-assessment replaced the above prompt with the following:

You may use the following space to provide a description of your prayer time, how your view of God changed during the course of the 40 days, or anything else you would like to share:

## Appendix E

**Instructions**

“The reason we pray is that we simply cannot help praying.” -William James

1. Before you start, I'll give you the pre-assessment (a questionnaire) and consent form to fill out, when I receive it back from you, your prayer time begins!
2. 15 minutes of daily prayer at the prayer chapel for 40 days
3. Daily journal entry with day #, **date, and reference to the type(s) of prayer used** (as explained in prayer tutorial), as well as any descriptive information you would like to add. You are not confined to the five listed prayer types (if the content of your prayer does not fit one of the categories, you may categorize it to your liking and record that in your journal entry).
4. Use the Lord's Prayer (in part or in full) **daily** (can be read from the back of this card)
5. post-assessment

\*\*\*Any questions-contact Jen Healey at 757-560-3326 or  
jjhealey@liberty.edu\*\*\*

This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Matthew 6:9-13

## Appendix F

**Prayer Tutorial****5 Prayer Types:**

- Ritualistic-referencing a textual source (ex: praying scripture)
- Petitionary-bringing your requests to God (Philippians 4:6)
- Colloquial-posing request of His will/guidance
- Meditative- focused on being in God's presence, recognizing one's bond with Him, and merely contemplating God's existence/ways (Poloma & Pendleton, 1991)
- Contemplative- (similar to meditative-however the following should serve as instructive)

Rules of the Contemplative Prayer (one author's recommendation based on how he approaches contemplative prayer with clients):

1. At the beginning of the prayer we take a minute or two to quiet down and then move in faith to God dwelling in our depths. ( . . . ) We center all our attention and desire on Him.
2. After resting for a bit in the center in faithful love, we take up a single, simple word that expresses our response and begin to let it repeat itself within.
3. Whenever in the course of the prayer we become aware of anything else, we simply gently return to the prayer word. We ignore the thoughts and images offered by the mind ( . . . ). We leave them behind, for we want
  1. immediate contact with God Himself, and not some thought, image or vision of Him.
4. At the end we take several minutes to come out, mentally praying the Lord's Prayer.

“In contemplation one meets the li-ving God.” (Rajski, 2003, p. 182)