

Liberty University

**Increase the Attendance of The Parish Health Ministry by Ten Percent at The Greater
Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

Department of Christian Leadership and Church Ministries

by

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Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The church is not responsible for the dietary behavior of its congregants, but the mission of the church is to make disciples that will go into the nation to profess the word of God. The mission to serve God with efficacy and stamina will become a difficult task for many Christians if they are not healthy. In the Bible Jesus makes it undeniably clear the importance of taking care of the body. This is an important issue for pastors as well as for believers.

This thesis project will help believers remember that the health of their bodies is an important part of their faith. Medical religious scholars point out that the health of Christians is worse than the health of the secular public. Modifying the dietary lifestyle of Christians requires the teachings of the pastor and church leaders, because it can help create healthier disciples. The faith of a believer should reveal a discipline lifestyle. And this lifestyle should be the representation of healthiness.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation with all of my love to my wonderful maternal grandmother and grandfather who raised me as their daughter. Their sacrifice blessed me with a healthy and successful life. They will always live in my heart as my loving parents who taught me the importance of education, and to keep God first in my life. Thank you, grandma, and thank you grandpa, I love you. I only pray that I have made you proud.

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Abbreviations

DMIN *Doctor of Ministry*
LURSOD *Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity*

Chapter 1: Introduction - Ministry Context

The love of God's concern for the body is taught throughout the Bible. Teaching Christians how to love and respect their bodies has to become one of the churches purpose. Making disciples has always been one of the church's mission, but Christians must also learn that honoring their bodies by living healthier is also a testament to their faith. Learning how to keep the body healthy benefits the believer in serving God with stamina and longevity. As an active member of the parish health ministry of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York, located in Queens, New York, it is with pleasure that the ministry enlighten Christians with valuable health knowledge that will enhance the lives of Christians. The Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York is a beautiful church that is undeniably full of the Holy Spirit and led by two of God's chosen shepherds, Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake and his wife, co-pastor, Reverend Dr. Elaine Collins-Flake. The Cathedral has a congregation of twenty-three thousand members, fifty-three plus ministries, three Sunday worship services, Sunday school service, women and men Bible studies, church-wide Bible study, Saturday morning corporate prayer worship, Old Testament bible study, a mid-week hour of power service, and a Sunday streaming faith media.

The Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York is located in southeast Queens. The congregation is primarily from the neighborhood of Jamaica, Queens, which is a middle-class, predominately African-American neighborhood. According to the New York State Comptroller's office, economic data for Jamaica, Queens, the area is mostly residential and had the most foreclosures from 2008 to 2010. During this time, a third of the residents in Jamaica faced severe rent hardship, devoting most of their total income to paying rent. The population growth of Jamaica, Queens now stands at 251,000, making it the second most populated neighborhood in New York City. The neighborhood has a large concentration of faith-based institutions. There

are more than twenty churches in downtown Jamaica, which also includes the Greater Allen AME Cathedral of New York.¹

The majority of the congregation resides in the neighborhood of Jamaica, Queens, where there are small and large grocery stores, as well as fast-food restaurants. The New York State Comptroller's office reported, "The accommodation and food services sector in Jamaica accounted for 4,400 jobs since 2011, adding that food services were responsible for 3,500 of these jobs, with nearly half concentrated in fast-food establishments; (Fast-food jobs grew by 21% between 2011 and 2015)." ² The educational level for the neighborhood has improved significantly. The share of residents aged 25 or older with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by six percentage points between 2005 and 2014 to reach 22%.³

Although two health-conscious pastors lead the church, there is a discernible concern for the health of many church congregants. This concern is primarily based on the prevalence of preventable diseases, such as overweight and hypertension. The pastor and co-pastor's care for the health of the congregants is demonstrated through the healthy foods that the church serves on Sundays and the foods that are served for the community outreach. The parish health ministry is one of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral's ministries that lends its health knowledge to the entire congregation of the church as well as the surrounding community in order to teach and guide all Christians on the importance of how to live a much healthier life to serve God with spiritual vitality. The parish health ministry hosts numerous health seminars, health fairs, and

¹ Office of the New York State Comptroller, *An Economic Snapshot of the Greater Jamaica Area*, accessed, September 2016, 2. www.osc.state.ny.us/osdc/rpt6-2017.pdf#search=%20Jamaica%2C%20Queens

² Office of the New York State Comptroller, *An Economic Snapshot*, 5.

³ *Ibid.*, 6.

health services that benefit the promotion and edification of how to live healthy lives. These services benefit the church as well as the surrounding community.

As a board-certified nutritionist, it is a privilege to teach and motivate Christians on the significance of exercising faithful discipline in their diet in order to honor God with a healthy body. There is a possibility that leading Christians towards a healthier life will provide them with the mental and spiritual agility needed for them to remember that their bodies are made in the image of God. It is necessary for Christians to be educated on the importance of living healthy by reiterating that their bodies are temples where the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor 6:19 [NIV]). Increasing the enrollment of members in the parish health ministry will provide the church and the community with essential assets of health education, and motivation that will inspire others with increase faith to take optimal care of their health, because participants who believe that they can change their health will also increase their faith to serve God fearlessly.

Problem Presented

This problem addressed how to increase the attendance of the parish health ministry by 10% at the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York. Greater Allen is a massive church with a huge heart that embraces all people who walk through their doors in search of God's guidance. It is necessary for the ministry to continuously meet, greet, and recruit those people who are in search of God's help, including informing them on how to care for their health. Although the doors are open in the church to all who want to enter, there are so many Christians in the church who have visible health issues and are either consciously or unconsciously overlooking them. It is imperative that Christians are taught that there is a spiritual duality in exercising faithfulness for Jesus Christ and exercising a healthy disciplinary life that glorifies God.

There are multiple benefits to becoming a member of the parish health ministry. To begin with, Christians will witness an increase in their overall health because of the various health seminars given by professional health practitioners. Each new parish health member will be able to share their health knowledge with their families and friends; thus, extending the overall health of their families and friends.

The parish health ministry administers various health seminars on preventable diseases such as diabetes mellitus, obesity, heart disease, and high blood pressure, and health seminars that specialize on the edification of nutritional science and food nourishment. The ministry offers twelve-week classes on specific health issues and distributes certifications for participants who completed the course. The ministry and the church also work together to administer monthly blood pressure exams, with an emphasis on how to achieve and maintain a healthy blood pressure.

The ministry clearly and concisely teaches Christians that, as disciples of Christ, the Holy Spirit resides in them and that God expects discipline, even in their diet. The researcher created a recruitment event called "Each One Bring One." The researcher then asked each of the parish health ministry members for their assistance in the recruiting of new members. Each ministry member asked a friend, a family member, or congregant to attend the parish health ministry monthly meeting, which was combined with a new members recruitment health presentation and a healthy lunch buffet. The participants were greeted with uplifting gospel music, as well as a banner that read, "Is your temple healthy"? "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself" (1 Cor 6:15 [NIV])? The scripture written on the banner was designed to excite the participants into reexamining the health of their bodies, which was given to them through Jesus' redemptive work. The significance of the banner also reminded the participants that their

bodies belong to Christ where the Holy Spirit dwells. For the healthy lunch buffet, the researcher reintroduced traditional recipes, but with healthier options. Each food option was deliberately chosen to point out the convenient of time preparation, cost effectiveness and that foods full of nutrients and low calories can also be tasty and nutritious. The members of the ministry provided a sign-in roster for the participants to sign their name, address, and phone number. The researcher distributed survey and questionnaire forms to be completed by the participants and returned to the researcher for future data analysis. There was a PowerPoint health presentation that highlighted the importance of eating for optimal health. The three areas of health that the researcher concentrated on was based on how Christians should eat versus how they are eating, what Christians should eat in order to obtain and maintain a healthy body, and lastly, understanding the effects that healthy foods versus unhealthy food will have on the body.

It is the policy of the church that all ministry members first join the church. Recruiting church members, as well as non-members to join the ministry, will have a dual effect, because each participant will have to join the church before joining the ministry, thus increasing church membership, as well as expanding the membership for the parish health ministry. The church has various ministries, but the parish health ministry is a ministry that educates the church as well as the community on how to live spiritually and nutritionally healthy, and how each can be an asset for serving God effectively. The ministry teaches that spiritual discipline and nutritional discipline both have a correlation in the life of the Christian. The ministry implements spiritual based nutritional programs that reference God in its teachings. In the life of a Christian, faith is the common denominator that bridges spiritual discipline, (trusting God) and nutritional discipline, (living healthy for God).

Purpose Statement

The problem this project addressed was how to increase the membership of the parish health ministry of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York by 10%. Expanding the membership of the parish health ministry will have a profound effect on how many Christians will benefit from the teachings of how to live nutritionally healthy and with the fortification of the Holy Spirit. The reason the researcher confronted the problem of low attendance for the parish health ministry is because there are many church members that would benefit from learning how to obtain and maintain a healthier lifestyle.

Recruiting church members for the ministry will be advantageous, because it will also influence the health of the community. It is ideal to take Jesus' recruitment approach of meeting people exactly where they are in life to encourage them with the confidence to pursue a healthier lifestyle. Christians have to be reminded that there is no prerequisite to beginning a new and healthy life for themselves, except to take one day at a time.

It is evident that the pastors of the church exercise an unwavering approach on the importance of health. The pastors authorize every nutritional and health event that the ministry implements monthly. Consequently, there is a large percentage of church members who would benefit from the parish health ministry's teachings on the duality of Christian nutrition. However, the ministry's low attendance does not reflect the percentage of believers who would benefit from the unlimited professional health services provided by the parish health ministry.

The parish health ministry is comprised of church members who only meet once a month for two and a half hours immediately after the last worship service on the second Sunday. The majority of the members of the ministry are licensed health care practitioners. The ministry is led by an assistant reverend and a ministry leader. Each member volunteers their services in the

areas of fund-raising for the church, health fairs for the community, setting up blood pressure stations for the needs of the congregation, and conducting various health and medical seminars, which include guest physician speakers. The parish health ministry has also implemented a faith base nutritional program, called Sister-Talk, that addresses various health issues and teaches how to resolve them, as well as a mental health program that teaches the importance of multiple spectrums of mental health.

The researcher would like to focus on significant incentives that motivate and encourage the people in the church who want to learn the importance of how to live as a healthy disciple of Christ. It is necessary as a board-certified nutritionist, and a disciple of God, to show and tell Christians that they do not have to surrender to illnesses, especially preventable diseases, such as obesity, diabetes mellitus, and high blood pressure. Teaching Christians how to save their own lives for themselves as well as to serve God with the fortitude of a healthy mind, body, and soul is not only a blessing, but it is what God expects.

Basic Assumptions

This project addressed the problem that there were not enough people joining the parish health ministry at the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York. There are two specific reasons why this is presented as a crucial problem in the church. The first reason is that the pastors of the church are genuinely health-oriented visionaries and have given ample approval to have health ministries in the church to educate people. The second reason is that Christians are faithfully praising God in the church but are lacking that same faith and spiritual discipline when it comes to the needs of their body and health.

The truth of the matter is that Christians may be assuming if they are living faithfully for God by worshipping Him, praising Him, and serving Him in various ministries, that their dietary behavior and dietary habits are also seen as living faithfully for God. However, God expects the life of the Christian to resemble unwavering faith and discipline in every area of the Christian life, including their diet and the health of their body. Another reason Christians may find nothing wrong with the way that they view the health of their bodies and the lack of nutrients in their food is because of their association with other Christians who also exercise the same dietary behavior.

It may be advantageous for the church to make announcements for upcoming health events. Announcing health events would be an asset to the church as well as for the parish health ministry because it would increase the ministry's attendance and the church's membership, thereby recruiting family members who will benefit from nutritional health education. Recruiting an entire family will not only improve the health of the family, but it will also affect extended family members and friends. The parish health ministry's teachings will undoubtedly lead to a healthier life for Christians that will lead to having a greater kingdom impact in the world as Christians reflect God's glory in their lives.

Increasing the ministry benefits new members because they will learn that the ministry teaches and preaches on health and God. New members will recognize that many of their beliefs concerning their health were based on fear, self-doubt, self-denial, and guilt. The ministry is committed to dispelling all of these myths by reassuring people that God wants them to live in their best health.

As a board-certified nutritionist, it is crucial to address the various health issues that each participant may believe concerning preventable diseases and nutrition. It is the commitment

of the parish health ministry to design multiple health venues for the spiritual, theological, and nutritional edification of congregants and the community.

Promoting the benefits of improving your health by creating a personal relationship with Jesus Christ will persuade believers to inquire and or to join the parish health ministry with the presupposition of an increase in their health and their spiritual stamina.

Definitions

There must be a clear correlation between implementing a spiritual, nutritional project for believers and how each believer will apply the health information with the discipline of theology. Words such as obedience, patience, temptation, self-love, and transformation were incorporated in this research project in the discussion of how the interrelationship of faith and discipline are inevitable in obtaining and maintaining a healthy body. Biblical scriptures will reflect the importance of living a life based on the Gospel. As Paul taught the Corinthians, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31 [NIV]). It is imperative that Christians live a life that glorifies God, even in their diet. The truth is it is inconsistent for Christians to worship, praise, and pray to God, asking for His blessings in every area of their life except regarding discipline in relation to their diet. Placing emphasis on the divine characterizations of God through the study of theological spirituality will remind believers that God is their creator who expects believers to live a life that worships Him, "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24 [NIV]). Exercising unwavering faith will help lead Christians to a life of discipline.

Exercising self-discipline and self-love in their everyday diet are both acts that will help Christians overcome the enemy’s temptations in their lives. There is an essential need for the

teaching of nutritional science. Nutritional science will lend a different approach on the way that believers view food and the health that it provides. The truth of the matter is that health education should be taught to believers for them to understand their bodies. Health education is vital for all people in that it establishes a base for everyone to make informed health decisions for their own life. Educating Christians about their immediate health, and how they can maintain it, or how they can improve it, will also be a blessing for their families as well as their friends.

Limitations

There are multiple limitations that can hinder the implementation of a research project. Each deficiency was carefully considered, as the researcher prepared for uncertainties. The major limitation that would contend with this thesis project would be an unexpected delay of the pastor's approval and permission to begin the project. A denial from the pastors to begin the start of the research project would undeniably prolong it.

Another problem that would be an obstacle for the implementation of the project would be if the church didn't provide adequate space to accommodate the participants and the ministry members. A major constraint on the research project would be if ministry members refused to participate in recruiting new members. The recruitment event is called "Each one, bring one," so that each ministry member would invite a guest. The participants have to be at least 18 years old, and they must be a member of the church in order to join the parish health ministry.

Another limitation relates to how many participants will attend the project or if the participants agree to complete the survey and questionnaire forms. There is the probability that the participants will not answer each of the survey and questionnaire questions honestly. There is also the possibility that many of the participants will not participate in the health presentation.

Inclement weather also poses a significant problem because it would decrease the number of participants attending the Sunday worship services, thereby reducing the probability of guests. Because the research project will be conducted after the last Sunday worship service, there is the possibility that the research project will have a time limit.

Delimitations

The researcher conducted the research project on a Sunday after the last worship service. Administering the research project on a Sunday would be most appropriate because there is the possibility that more participants would take part in participating. The parish health ministry president assisted in recording the names, addresses, and phone numbers of participants. The researcher controlled what questions were asked on the survey form, and what questions should be asked on the questionnaire form. The researcher also controlled the time allocated for completing the survey and questionnaire forms, the time needed to enjoy the lunch buffet, and the time required for presenting the health presentation. The researcher also had a specific room size to accommodate the total number of participants, which also included the ministry members, a personal computer, and a projector to give the health presentation. The food choice for the lunch buffet was selected and delivered by the researcher. The health presentation was created entirely by the researcher and taught by the researcher. The researcher had control over the length of time necessary to deliver the message of how to live and eat healthier.

Thesis Statement

There is a nutritional and theological duality in the health of a believer, because they know that taking care of the body means to take care of the temple. This project has helped Christians to identify that the significance of truly being one with the Holy Spirit is to maintain

the health of their body, which is the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor 6:19).

Christians should live their lives with a spirit that chases after Jesus Christ to show the world that they are true disciples of Christ. The life of a Christian should not yield in the face of adversity or fear, but instead look to God for desired strength and discipline in every area of their life. In other words, their lives must imitate the life of Jesus. A life of discipline, obedience, and faith, that does not waver when confronted with temptations. Jesus taught all believers how to overcome temptation for "hunger," (Matt 4:3 [NIV]); for "insecurity," (Matt 4:6 [NIV]); and for "faith," (Matt 4:8 [NIV]). This thesis will prove that the essence of living faithfully is also viewed in the disciplined lifestyle of a believer's diet.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

The parish health ministry of the Greater Allen is a ministry that educates. The ministry guides believers to live a life that clarify the biblical truth of what Paul meant when he said, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body" (1 Cor. 6:19 [NIV]). Paul is teaching Christians that to revere your body shows the world that you are a disciple of Christ who lives with discipline and love for self as well as for God. The problem is that there is a health ministry in the church with an attendance that does not reflect the thousands of active church members who would undoubtedly benefit from learning the importance of how to live a healthier life for themselves as well as for their families and friends.

Bodyweight is one of the most visual health issues. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults aged 18 years and older were overweight. Of these, over 650 million adults were obese.⁴ Christians today must be reminded that there is a correlation between physical and spiritual health. Gary Thomas writes, "True Christian faith is a profoundly transformational experience in which every part of our being is marked by God's change and energized by His presence."⁵ God does not make mistakes. He has placed everything in and on the earth for human beings to enjoy a long life. There are multiple books in the Bible that speak of various types of foods that Christians should acknowledge provides the necessary nutrients to obtain and maintain a healthy body. The book of Genesis

⁴ World Health Organization, *Obesity, and Overweight*, accessed March, 3, 2020, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight>.

⁵ Gary Thomas, *Every Body Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Kindle, 2545.

reminds Christians that, "God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it" (Gen 1:29 [NIV]). The emphasis of "every tree" points out the significance of fruits and vegetables for optimal health of Christians. In the book of Ezekiel, God specifically directs Ezekiel to eat bread, "Take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt; put them in a storage jar and use them to make bread for yourself" (Ezek 4:9 [NIV]). Foods such as wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt are foods that are highly nutritious for the health of the body, because of their protein and fiber contents. The Bible points out how meat was also viewed as a healthy diet. In the book of Exodus God answered the Israelites complaint with quail, when He said, "At twilight, you will eat meat, and in the morning, you will be filled with bread" (Exod 16:12 [NIV]). The truth is God's concern is for believers to remember that He provides the food, and by keeping Him first even in their dietary behaviors, faithfulness and discipline will lead them to a life of optimal health. Living a life to maintain optimal health requires the fortification of the Holy Spirit; therefore, Christians must remember to eat healthily means not to eat man-made foods that are filled with unhealthy ingredients, but God made foods filled with nutrients.

God's provisions for man to eat and live in ideal health are plentiful. Still, various health statistics have identified that Americans are eating themselves into repeated medical visits, hospital stays, and early graves. The *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* points out that there is strong epidemiologic evidence that high intakes of fruit and vegetables are associated with less coronary heart disease and cancer morbidity.⁶

⁶ Peter Marckman, Arne Astrup, *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, "Fatty diets are unhealthy-even those based on monounsaturated," 72, no. 3 (September 2000), 853-854, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/72.3.853a>.

There are various health studies that show the high rate of mortalities based on preventable diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes mellitus, and obesity. These diseases are called preventable, because they are more than likely caused by a continuum of eating foods that are high in sodium (salt), which will cause hypertension (high blood pressure), and foods high in saturated fats, and sugar that will undeniably cause obesity which will lead to diabetes mellitus. The *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* states that “A healthy eating pattern reduced risks of diabetes and major coronary events.”⁷ This pattern of eating consists of foods such as whole grains, whole wheat, oats, fruits, vegetables, good fats, lean protein and fiber foods. Reducing the risk of diabetes mellitus and cardiovascular disease will save many lives.

Today in the United States, diabetes mellitus, a multifaceted disease, is an epidemic, and childhood obesity is soaring. Out of the ten leading causes of deaths in the U.S., six of them are preventable. Whitney and Rolfes point out that of the ten leading causes of death in the United States, heart disease, cancers, strokes, and diabetes mellitus all have relationships with diet.⁸ Christians live by the Fruit of the Spirit, and they are also viewed as people who have a disciplined spirit; therefore, their life should not be justified as a lifestyle that reveals a lack of self-discipline regarding their diet. God is concerned with both the physical and spiritual well-being of His followers. John expresses this when he writes to Gaius, "Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul" (3 John 1:2). Maintaining a healthy body is the catalyst for serving God with steadfast longevity.

⁷ Eric J. Brunner, Annhild Mosdol, Daniel R. Witte, Pekka Martikainen, Mai Stafford, *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, “*Dietary Patterns and 15-y risks of major coronary events, diabetes, and mortality*,” 87, no. 5 (May 2008): 1414-1421, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/87.5.1414>.

⁸ Eleanor Noss Whitney and Sharon Rady Rolfes, *Understanding Nutrition, 9th ed.* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Group, 2002), 19.

Literature Review

In the book, *Every Body Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul*, by Gary Thomas, the author addresses multiple factors related to how an undisciplined life is the catalyst of sin, and how sin is derived from a known or unknown weakness that summons the power from the believer. For instance, he points out how, "Taking off the shackles of laziness, overeating, and the physical debilitation brought about by ignoring our physical fitness can set our souls on a course of pursuing God with a renewed vigor, earnestness and delight."⁹

In keeping with the book's title, Thomas writes, "Christians who don't take their health seriously don't take their mission seriously. It is because of the ability of God to work powerfully in the life of a sinner that everybody *does* matter."¹⁰ It is the word of God that will motivate Christians into understanding and accepting that discipline is the regimen that is necessary for developing a faith that will honor God with a healthy body. In actuality there is an equivalent correlation in the interrelationship of faith and discipline. Discipline can be viewed as the catalyst in a faithful life. The book of Hebrew points out how "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness" (v. 11) "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Heb 12:10-12 [NIV]).

Thomas applies the "Word of God" to help uncover the hidden issues that are plaguing the mind and soul of believers. Thomas emphasizes that the body as God's gift should be maintained with a heart of gratitude. He points out, "To be fully alive, fully human, fully the people God created us to be, we have to care for our bodies, discipline them, and make them our

⁹ Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 216.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 134.

servants in our service to God."¹¹ He systematically reveals the believer's weakness and exposes it as a sinful act. In accordance with this ideology, Thomas makes it clear that "Sin can lead us to become overweight, but being overweight is not, in and of itself, a sin."¹²

Many Christians might not recognize that they are contending with the weaknesses of gluttony and laziness, and how it can affect their faithfulness to God. The Bible said Paul denounces the life of gluttony to the Philippians when he said, "Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame (Phil 3:19 [NIV]). The book of Colossians said, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward" (Col 3:23-24).

Whitney, and Rolfes, the authors of the book *Understanding Nutrition*, emphasize the importance of eating to live an optimal life. The authors point out how the diet of the twenty-first century for Americans have increased their waistline by the way that they view food. There is no doubt that food brings family, friends, pleasure and nutrients, and it must also bring a discipline on how to eat healthy. John writes how God views discipline to be equivalent to faithfulness when he said, "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent" (Rev 3:19 [NIV]). Whitney and Rolfes write, "Each day's food choice may benefit or harm your health only a little, but when these choices are repeated over years, the rewards or consequences become major, because carelessness about food choices from youth can be a major contributor to many of today's prevalent chronic diseases of later life, including heart disease and cancer."¹³

¹¹ Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 209.

¹² *Ibid*, 754.

¹³ Whitney and Rolfes, *Understanding Nutrition*, 2.

Whitney and Rolfes report that eating healthy varies by demographics, ethnicities, religious beliefs, and financials. Many of these factors are also applied to many Christians and their families, because Christians are made to be a unique people, not like everyone else. The Bible said, "For Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut 7:6-9 [KJV]). The life of a Christian should thus reflect spiritual discipline and faithfulness that will undeniably represent the significance of a healthy body.

In the book, *Honoring the Temple of God: A Christian Health Perspective*, Bob McCauley makes it clear that he is not a physician, or has any knowledge in the health field; instead his expertise comes from reading, talking with others about health, and following the "Word of God." He writes, "I have learned to put my faith in God only and the great health He graces us with when we follow His rules and honor the temple He has blessed us with."¹⁴ McCauley uses scriptures to teach, analyze, and provide examples of Christians living a healthier lifestyle. He stresses honoring the temple of God and emphasizes that the body is made in God's image, by using scriptures such as, "Therefore honor God with your bodies" (1 Cor 6:20 [NIV]), and "For we are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor 6: 16 [NIV]). McCauley also compares the diet and life span of the Old Testament prophets to the longevity of life in the modern-day. He points out that Adam lived 930 years; Seth lived 912 years; Abraham lived 175 years; Isaac lived 180 years, and Jacob lived 146 years."¹⁵

McCauley points out that it takes tremendous discipline to put the right foods into our bodies. That is why we must rely on more than just discipline; we must ask for God's assistance

¹⁴ Bob McCauley, *Honoring the Temple of God: A Christian Health Perspective* (Lansing, MI: SE, Inc, 2008), 9.

¹⁵ McCauley, *Honoring the Temple of God*, 86.

in giving us the strength to resist and the courage to change.¹⁶ If Christians were true to themselves, they would take an inventory of their medical and nutritional health, recognizing that their health is the cornerstone of serving God with vitality. Nutritional science cannot be denied. There is no doubt that a gluttonous lifestyle will lead to an unhealthy body, and possibly a shortened lifespan. The Bible states, “A man reaps what he sows, and the one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (Gal 6:7-8 [NIV]).

McCauley unselfishly convey the significance of how to live healthy by pointing out to Christians that working on having good health is related to having a discipline relationship with God, respecting the body as the temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells, exercising emotional stability, and utilizing the science of nutritional medicine to help keep the body healthy. McCauley effectively bridges the ideology of psychology with theology when he writes, “The body we see in the mirror should not be regarded merely as a thing of beauty or loathing, because what we are looking at is not only our body but God's temple.”¹⁷ The author goes on to say, “When we are healthy, and your health is rooted in God's law, you have a physical foundation that a meaningful spiritual life can be built upon.”¹⁸

In the book *Alive! A Physician's Biblical and Scientific Guide to Nutrition*, Scott Stoll, focuses on health crises in America as well as in the church. The author points out the staggeringly high rates of obesity in today's churches, which includes church leaders. Stoll writes, “In a review of obesity in world religions, evangelicals are dramatically heavier than any

¹⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

other world religion. One of the lead researchers, from Purdue University, Ken Ferraro was quoted saying, “America is facing a crisis of health and obesity, but an even greater crisis, one that is not discussed in the news or in our pulpits, is occurring in the chairs and pews of evangelical churches across the nation and around the world.”¹⁹

Stoll presents obesity statistics for today’s churches that confirms how today’s Christians have neglected but justified their faithfulness as disciples of Christ. Stoll is a devoted disciple of Jesus, and his book clearly and concisely defines the essence of gluttony from the undisciplined life of a Christian. Stoll’s perspective on managing gluttony for church members is that Christians should first give their lives to God, or develop a closer relationship with Him by thanking His Son Jesus for the gift of Salvation, and honor Him with their bodies.

There is no doubt that Christians will not be able to go into the nations and spread the gospel (Matt 28:19 [NIV]), as God has commanded them to do if they have illnesses and or disabilities. If the church does not fulfill its responsibility of teaching biblical principles as it is stated, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it” (Luke 11:28 [NIV]); and faith, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (Jas 1:2-4 [NIV]), there will be a shortage of believers to spread the gospel because most believers will be compromised by their health; therefore, diminishing their work for the Lord. The church is the necessary authority for believers to begin their walk with Jesus. Scazzero writes, “Unhealthy leaders lack, for example, awareness of their feelings, their weaknesses, and limits, how their

¹⁹ Scott Stoll, *Alive! A Physician’s Biblical and Scientific Guide to Nutrition* (Bedford, TX: Creative Enterprises, 2011), 427.

past impacts their present, and how others experience them.”²⁰ The true mission of the church is to make disciples.

This book is unique because Stoll challenges the readers to follow a forty-day change in their diet, which will also lead to a spiritual transformation. Challenging Christians to change their diets may help to encourage to take an interest in joining the church's health ministries to improve their health for themselves and for God. As a Christian, Stoll clarifies the significance of transformation by demonstrating an expansive view of the exact effects that transformation will have on the mind, body, and spirit of a believer.

In the dissertation, *Healthy life healthy living, changing attitudes toward Christianity and Diet*, author and Pastor Michael Roberts makes the important point that modifying the behavior of how Christians view their diet will result in transformational thinking, that will also lead the church congregation to become more missional.²¹ If church leadership led its congregation to consciously exercise the biblical principle that the body is where the Holy Spirit dwells, there would be a significant increase in how the congregation views their behavior in accordance with their health. They may gain a new perspective on valuing their health and participate in joining the parish health ministry in the church. Roberts points out, “There is a correlation between dietary or food consumption and how we honor God in our physical bodies.”²² This is a fact and the Bible makes it clear by stating, “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh” (Rom 13:14 [NIV]).

²⁰ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 25.

²¹ Michael Roberts, “Healthy Life Healthy Living: Changing Attitudes toward Christianity and Diet” (PhD diss., Eastern University, 2016), 55.

²² Roberts, “*Healthy Life Healthy Living*,” 14.

In his dissertation, Roberts compares national studies from decades past to today's studies and points out the statistics on obesity, overweight and preventable diseases. The truth of the matter is that Christians have to pay more attention to the foods that they are consuming when they go out to eat as well as eating at home. It is the responsibility of the government to list an intelligible nutritional information on the labels of all foods. Still, it is the responsibility of Christians to be aware of what substance they are consuming. Christians have to become more vigilant about their health. Many churches provide meals for the congregants and communities, but as a responsible Christian, it is wise to remember that the pastor does not confront the food manufacturers who add addictive ingredients to the foods, thereby causing consumers to overeat foods with little to no nutrients.

Another critical health issue that Roberts does not address is the fact that decades ago, the size of a bottle of soda or a hamburger was much smaller than it is today. Foods were served by their serving sizes and not supersized as they so often are for the twenty-first century. Roberts' objective is to transform attitudes toward foods and modify behavior toward a healthy dietary lifestyle. Still, Christians must also receive education about what is in their diets, because everything that is consumed will have an effect on the health of the body.

There is no doubt that Christians are Christ's ambassadors, and their lives must consciously resemble a life of spiritual and theological transformation. Christians must discern the difference between healthy and unhealthy decisions so that they are not allowing themselves to be intimidated by food and permitting Satan to tempt them into justifying their undisciplined dietary behavior. Christians are the world's leaders for Christ, and non-believers must see Christ when they see a Christian; therefore, Christians must exercise exceptional discipline. The Bible makes this clear by stating, "Whether you eat drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of

God” (1 Cor 10:31 [NIV]). In other words, Christians must bring their entire life under the lordship of God.

In this doctoral dissertation, *Creating and Sustaining a Health and Wellness and Wellness Ministry within the Local Church*, Gary John Moritz focuses on how the church is not teaching and exercising the biblical principles regarding gluttony and its effects that it can have on the health of Christians. Moritz points out that pastors have conveniently dismissed the apparent health of themselves. The author writes how “the sin of obesity is almost accepted as normal in churches. This, as a result, is a form of worldliness.”²³

Moritz argues that more pastors should teach about health and that they should also care for themselves as they care for others. There is no doubt that gluttony has become a way of life in the twenty-first century, but the sin of gluttony in the church is being overlooked. Gluttony in the church is an issue that can be taught and preached about, especially in churches that have a health ministry to correct this behavior. The Bible is the true antidote for any overindulgence. The Bible tells us, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom 12:2[NIV]). It is essential for the church to preach the word that gluttony is a sin. Christians need to know that taking good care of their body is also an act of serving and pleasing God. Moritz points out that, “Every pastor wants to glorify God and have an impact on people. However, this will not happen if pastors are not practicing good health and have the outward, wearable sin of gluttony in front of their congregations and community. This will affect both spiritual and physical health.”²⁴

²³ Gary John Moritz, “Creating and Sustaining a Health and Wellness and Wellness Ministry within the Local Church” (PhD Dissertation, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 6.

²⁴ Ibid.

William R. Cutrer addresses the issue of wellness for the church in the article, *A Call to a Wellness Lifestyle: Some Practical Suggestions*. Cutrer makes it abundantly clear how God has trusted Christians to take the proper care of their bodies by giving Christians the gift of humanity. Cutrer addresses important health factors for Christians to implement daily as disciples of Christ. The author's method is to use biblical principles to represent the theological aspects of maintaining a healthy temple. Cutrer writes, "To create a wellness lifestyle is to accept responsibility for the choices we make and to continue to grow and learn how to better care for this magnificent, Christ-like, human body we have been given."²⁵

This journal article displays a clear emphasis on the mind (the Bible), the body (nutrition), and the Spirit (Theology). Cutrer places importance on the daily number of calories eaten versus the total amount of calories that are consumed through daily activities. This is a useful formula to use to maintain healthy body weight. The author designed accessible methods, "(4 x 30 x comfortable x large) for Christians to obtain and maintain a healthier body. His formula consists of 4 days a week, 30 represents 30 minutes at a time, comfortable refers to the intensity of the activity, and large refers to involving large muscles in any fitness program."²⁶ The words *overweight* and *obesity* have become common in everyday household conversation in today's society. There are multiple television commercials on any given channel every 15 minutes advertising a weight loss program and how to purchase gym equipment. The reality is that many believers have not acknowledged that they are not living in their best health. Health education provides knowledge, but self-motivation is also necessary to become active in one's own life. The collaboration of health education with self-motivation will help to provide

²⁵ William R. Cutrer, "A Call to a Wellness Lifestyle: Some Practical Suggestions," *SBJT* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 59.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

believers with necessary nutritional information and an heightened incentive for a healthier diet. Statistics prove how obesity and overweight rates have an impact on all ages.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that in 2017–2018, the age adjusted prevalence of obesity among U.S. adults was 42.4%. The prevalence was 40.0% among younger adults aged 20-39, 44.8% among middle-aged adults aged 40-59, and 42.8% among older adults aged 60 and over.²⁷

Cutrer points out that for Christians, “Our relationship with God should supersede attention to our physical wellbeing.”²⁸ Specifically, the life of a Christian must reflect absolute self-control and unconditional love for Jesus Christ that can be seen by others. The Bible reminds Christians, “If Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness” (Rom 8:10 [NIV]). In other words, the body of the believer is renewed with righteousness from the Spirit of God. In the words of Dobson, “We must not give ourselves to lifestyles that are characterized by the flesh, for we no longer owe allegiance to it! If we continually serve the flesh our life is characterized by a state of death.”²⁹

In the journal article, “*Pastoral Psychology*,” the authors, Moore, Brooks, and King, clearly and concisely point out how obesity is playing a significant role in the lives of Christians, and in the church. They point out, “while obesity has been found to negatively impact church members, there has not been a substantial discussion about the meaning of obesity within the

²⁷ Craig M. Hales, M.D., Margaret D. Carroll, M.S.P.H., Cheryl D. Fryar, M.S.P.H., and Cynthia L. Ogden, Ph.D., “*Prevalence of Obesity and Severe Obesity Among Adults: United States, 2017-2018*,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention NCHS Data Brief, No. 360, accessed February 2020, [Cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db360.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db360.htm).

²⁸ Cutrer, “*A Call to a Wellness Lifestyle*,” 5.

²⁹ Edward G. Dobson, Charles L. Feinberg, Edward E. Hindson, Woodrow Michael Kroll, and Harold L. Willmington, *Bible Commentary, King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2005), 1423.

church.”³⁰ Consequently, their objective was based on researching the essence of obesity concerning the health of Christians and church leaders. The authors point out how various scriptures address the sin of gluttony, but the pastors of the church lack teaching and preaching the sin of gluttony, and how to defeat it. This article shines light on the seriousness of obesity in the church. Still, it does not answer the question why are there so many Christians and pastors that are overweight, and what is the remedy to resolve this problem.

In her dissertation, Nancy N. Manister points out how church leaders are not calling attention to obesity and weight problems within the church. The author makes it clear how, “Clergy are important community leaders who have the potential to positively influence community health by including health topics in sermons, modeling positive health behaviors, and planning and advancing community health programs.”³¹ Manister goes on to say that, “while clergy are good role models for some positive health behaviors such as seat belt use and not smoking or binge drinking, they are poor role models for healthy weight and physical activity levels because 75% of church leaders casually admitted that they were overweight or obese.”³² The author draws a correlation between numerous stressors and diet, and how these two factors will undoubtedly develop the health disorder of obesity. Manister points out that although the results of diet and stress are the same, in particular unwanted body weight, there are significant differences in how stress and diet relate to family, marital status, and gender.

³⁰ Darren D. Moore, Jada E. Brooks, and Ericka N. King, “Pastoral Psychology,” *The Journal of the Meaning of Obesity in the Church* 66, No. 1 (February 2017): 45.

³¹ Nancy N. Manister, “Role Stress, Eating Behaviors, and Obesity in Clergy” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2012), 1.

³² *Ibid.*

In the book *Let Food be Your Medicine*, the author Don Colbert, a medical doctor writes about how eating a healthier diet and living a healthier life can prevent or delay a life of diet related illnesses, like diabetes mellitus, obesity and hypertension. Colbert explains what is important to eat and what should not be eaten in order to live the optimal healthy life that God has given His followers. He emphasizes how “You get to choose,” by pointing out that each time you make a food choice, it’s either a choice that leads to life or one that leads to death.”³³

In the book *The Daniel Plan: 40 Days to a Healthier Life*, the authors Rick D. Warren and Daniel Amen point out that the importance of living a healthier lifestyle begins with learning the power of prayer, the power of faith, the power of letting God’s Spirit refocus your thoughts, and the power of fellowship and community.³⁴ The Bible said, “With God all things are possible” (Luke 1:37 [NIV]). The power of prayer is a necessary reinforcement that will help Christians remember that they need to keep God first in their life. The truth is choosing to live healthier is intentional and it requires spiritual discipline, faith and self-love. Warren and Amen use biblical passages to fortify their message and methods for believers to exercise lasting change in their health. Their belief is that “You assess your current health and then dedicate your body to God. You ask God’s help. You expect God to empower you to be consistent, claiming the promise of (Phil 1:6 [NIV]), “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it onto completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”³⁵ The title of the book reiterates the

³³ Don Colbert, “*Let Food Be Your Medicine: Dietary Changes Proven to Prevent or Reverse Disease*” (Franklin TN: Worthy Publishing Group, 2016), 226.

³⁴ Rick D. Warren and Daniel Amen, *The Daniel Plan: 40 Days to a Healthier Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

courage and faith that Daniel shown in the Bible, and the imperious faith that Warren and Amen stress to encourage believers to denounce the unhealthiness of obesity.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults aged 18 years and older were overweight. Of these, over 650 million adults were obese.”³⁶ Christians today must be reminded that there is a correlation between physical and spiritual health. Gary Thomas writes, “True Christian faith is a profoundly transformational experience in which every part of our being is marked by God's change and energized by His presence.”³⁷ God does not make mistakes. He has placed everything in and on the Earth for human beings to live a long life. The book of Genesis reminds Christians that, “God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it” (Gen 1:29 [NIV]). God's provisions for man to eat and live in optimal health are plentiful. Still, various health statistics have identified that Americans are eating their selves into repeated medical visits, hospital stays, and premature deaths.

The *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* points out that there is strong epidemiologic evidence that high intakes of fruit and vegetables are associated with less coronary heart disease and cancer morbidity.³⁸ There are various health studies that show the high-rate of mortalities based on preventable diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes mellitus, and obesity.

Today in the United States, Diabetes Mellitus, a multi-factored disease, is an epidemic, and childhood obesity is disgracefully soaring. Out of the ten leading causes of deaths in the

³⁶ World Health Organization, *Obesity, and Overweight*.

³⁷ Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 2545.

³⁸ Peter Marckman, and Arne Astrup, “*Fatty Diets are Unhealthy-Even Those Based on Monounsaturated.*” *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 72, no. 3 (September 2000): 853-854. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/72.3.853a>.

U.S., six of them are preventable.³⁹ This literature review highlights the importance of eating and living in optimal health. The titles of the books were all self-explanatory, *Honoring the Temple of God; Transforming your Life; Healthy life, Healthy Living*; and *Everybody Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul*, to name a few. Each book teaches, analyzes, and clarifies the essential factors that Christians have to exercise in their life to change their lifestyle. The truth of the matter is, there is absolutely no excuse for Christians to become and or remain in an unhealthy and undisciplined lifestyle because of God.

Theological Foundation

The biblical principles that serve as the foundation of the thesis project are discipline, temptation; obedience, faith, trust, patience, respecting the body, and praise. The argument will be based on how Christians and the church must recognize and accept that the significance of worshipping God with their best health will be the catalyst of serving God much more effectively. Each biblical principle used will highlight how the word of God can successfully change the habits of an unhealthy lifestyle. Scholarly resources will support the researching subject.

Commentaries from professional Christian doctors will be used to teach anatomy science and nutritional science of the body and the many health issues that can or will arise in a body that is overweight or obese. Scholarly commentaries will be used to extend on their knowledge or debate others. Biblical and theological principles will enhance the study through the edification of the word of God.

³⁹ Whitney and Rolfes, *Understanding Nutrition*, 19.

Discipline

It is essential that Christians acknowledge the hardships of an unhealthy diet. The Bible reiterates God's view on life, health, and the honoring of the body. Paul places emphasis on how God views the body when he teaches the Corinthians, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Cor 6:19 [NIV]). This verse is saying that “Not only is the local church a temple of the Holy Spirit, but the individual believer's body itself also is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which they have of God.”⁴⁰ Paul is reiterating to the Corinthians that you all as the church together make up the body of Jesus Christ. It is clear that “Paul is not telling them that they can become more spiritual by receiving the Holy Spirit. The fact is, they have already received the Holy Spirit because He dwells within them.”⁴¹ Paul enlightens the Christians in the Corinthian church to the fact that Jesus’ death freed them from sin and rendered them a new body that houses the Holy Spirit. He is teaching the Corinthians to honor the body that was given to them through the substitution death of Jesus Christ.

It might sound preposterous when Christians say that they love God but clearly forsake the body that God has given them. This type of behavior can be viewed as a lack of faith and a lack of self-discipline. Christians must show their faith through their lifestyle. As ambassadors for Christ, the Holy Spirit should dwell in a temple that is presentable to God.

⁴⁰ Edward G. Dobson, Charles L. Feinberg, Edward E. Hindson, Woodrow Michael Kroll, and Harold L. Willmington, *Bible Commentary, King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2005), 1471.

⁴¹ Dobson et al., *Bible Commentary*, 1471.

It is imperative for people see Jesus in the body of the church. In other words, “use your bodies in order that other men may see that you belong to God.”⁴² Christians who honor their bodies collectively represent the church as the temple of God. The characteristics of a healthy church are evident in the characteristics of Christians who live a healthy lifestyle. There is no doubt that “It is a blessing and a fact that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit that has two sides. One that He is Ours, the other, that we are His.”⁴³ Christians should feel joyful and privileged to praise a living God who has tasted death, left the grave behind, and gave the gift to glorify Him in their bodies.

There are many Christians who view their dietary habits and their health as a justifiable lifestyle. They become accustomed to the foods in their neighborhoods and traditional foods with families and friends. The reality is Christians have to acknowledge that an unhealthy diet will eventually lead to the antithesis of honoring God with a healthy body. Thomas points out, “To be fully alive, fully human, fully the people God created us to be, we have to care for our bodies, discipline them, and make them our servants in our service to God.”⁴⁴

Patience

In the life of a Christian, there will be many problems with which to contend. Some problems will be small, and others will feel like they are insurmountable, but it is vital for Christians to remember to pray, endure patience, and trust in God. Many of the stressors that Christians are living with are hampering their health with diseases like obesity and hypertension. Believers must learn how to achieve balance in their life, because it would result in a noticeable

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 209.

decline in stress and an increase in their health. The Bible teaches how exercising patience is a clear representation of faith. Paul makes this clear when he says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Phil 4:6 [NIV]). It is absolutely necessary that Christians who are unhealthy because of poor dietary practices remain faithful, praying for discipline in everything that they do as they transform their behavior to a healthier diet and lifestyle. The truth is poor health judgments lead to an unhealthy lifestyle, but applying spiritual patience and trust in God will restore a healthy diet, body, and lifestyle. Galatians 6:9 says, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

Obedience

The Bible tells us, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt 6:33[NIV]). This scripture illustrates obedience by pointing out how Jesus comes first in everything in the Christian's life. As a Christian, obedience is compelling evidence that you are a devoted follower of Christ. This biblical passage is a reminder to Christians that whatever they do, or whatever might go wrong in their life, God should be their first thought. Every aspect of a Christian's life, including the way that they view food, should follow Matthew’s teaching to “seek ye first the Kingdom of God” (Matt 6:33 [KJV]). Deuteronomy 5:33 states, “Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.” There is only one way that a believer can remain steadfast in their obedient lifestyle to themselves as well as to God, and that is to seek the face of God through continuous praying, and the church. There is no doubt that God is the standard that the believer seeks to

reach. Peter references the standards for Christians when he said, “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy because I am holy’” (1 Pet 1:14-17 [NIV]). There is no doubt that a church that advocates healthiness is needed so that Christians not only hear the word but also witness the word in the lives of healthy Christians, as well as church leaders. Pastoral leadership must lead their congregation by example.

It is simply unconscionable for church leadership to preach the word of God, and not fully live it physically and theologically. The church teaches and preaches about many sins, but the sin of gluttony, which clearly goes against God because it defies the body that was given freely to believers through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, is unacceptable. It is necessary Christians apply this discipline in everything that they do in their everyday life.

For Christians to conform to a life that embodies complete obedience it is necessary that they put on the full armor of God as Paul taught the Ephesians, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world; therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground” (Eph 6:11-14 [NIV]).

Teaching about gluttony in the church will remind Christians of the importance of living and maintaining a healthy lifestyle in order to serve God with spiritual stamina. John F. MacArthur writes, “What the pastor and elders are to be is the model for all Christians. And the principles that are true of leaders in the church are also good principles for every Christian in any position of leadership to apply.”⁴⁵ The Bible places gluttony with the sins of laziness and drunkenness to show how one sin can become many. Church leaders must teach the serious

⁴⁵ John MacArthur, *The Book on Leadership* (Nashville, TNN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2004), 161.

harmful health repercussions of gluttony, laziness, and drunkenness. It is written, “Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags” (Prov 23:20-21 [NIV]).

Temptation

Exposure to temptation is a part of life, especially in today's world of power, money, and selfishness. Jesus provides the ultimate lessons on how to resist temptation when He is confronted with Satan, who attempts to tempt Him with bread (Matt 4:2-4); scripture (v.6), and kingdoms of the world (v.8-10). This passage presents how to defeat temptation in a fast-paced world where everything is sinfully enticing. It is clear that “The victory in each aspect of the temptation is related to Jesus' use of Scriptures: It is written, Jesus quotes, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Deut 8:3 [NIV]).⁴⁶ Jesus is teaching that His strength is derived from His obedience to God.

Although Jesus is hungry, He makes it clear that obeying God is much more than bread alone. This message highlights Jesus' humanity for all Christians to emulate. However, Jesus uses the word of God to overcome the tempter; He is undeniably teaching that He is the One who empowers His followers to overcome temptation. It is easy for Christians to fall into temptation because of the multitude of temptations in the world today. But, it is a known fact for believers that to live for God means not to live for the world. The Bible proclaims, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin” (Heb 4:15 [NIV]). In today's churches, more than ever, it is imperative that church leaders denounce sinful behavior in all of

⁴⁶ Dobson et al., *Bible Commentary*, 156.

its forms, and promote spiritual conversion, with the desire to chase after God. The author Gene A. Getz said it this way, through faithfulness and prayer, it is possible for a church, regardless of the persecution and worldly influences surrounding it, to “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).⁴⁷

Faith

A healthy life requires faith and action. The word of God tells us, “For as the body apart from the Spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead” (Jas 2:26 [NKJV]). A faithful life must encompass every activity of the believer. This would also include exercising moderation in their dietary behavior. The Bible says, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourself” (Jas 1:22 [NKJV]). It is only by faith that believers are saved. Paul teaches the Romans the quintessence of faith when he says, “That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved” (Rom 10:9-10 [NIV]). An impervious faith for God will propel the necessary inspiration to live healthier. Trusting in the word of God commands unwavering faith. Faith can be defined this way, “It is the affirmative response to God's will and Word. Man possesses faith when He takes God at His Word. One does not need to see something to believe it. Faith is the acceptance of something merely because God has said it.”⁴⁸ The faith of Jesus Christ should propel Christians into a life that reflects their faith in everything that they do. The word *substance* in this passage is used first to exemplify what faith undoubtedly provides, and the word *evidence* is used to represent the power of what faith will reveal. It is impossible for a believer to say they have faith,

⁴⁷ Gene A. Getz, *The Measure of a Healthy Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 93.

⁴⁸ Dobson et al., *Bible Commentary*, 1703.

and still find it hard to demonstrate it when it comes to managing their body and their health with an unwavering confidence in themselves and with God. Cutrer makes it clear when he says, “Wellness is a proactive choice to create a lifestyle that enables an individual to live fully—integrating spirit, mind, and body—for a life of meaning and purpose.”⁴⁹

If Christians truly believe, "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1-2), they must also believe that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:14 [NKJV]). The reward of having good health is a combination of both faith and works.

Self-Love

There is no greater love than the love that God has for His followers. It is crucial for Christians to acknowledge and accept the monumental love of God. Accepting God's love teaches Christians how to love and, more importantly, how to love themselves. If Christians believe, "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9 [NIV]); then they possess a self-love. The Bible tells us that, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16 [NIV]). This scripture is the epitome of the gospel, as it displays the love of God shown in action; the source of love—which is God; the extent of love—the world; the sacrifice of love—He gave His only begotten Son, and the results of love—whosoever believeth in him should not perish.”⁵⁰ This biblical passage reveals God’s gift of eternal life to all

⁴⁹ Cutrer, *A Call to a Wellness Lifestyle*, 59.

⁵⁰ Dobson et al., *Bible Commentary*, 1302.

believers. God's love should be used as an example to show the world how to love one another, as well as themselves.

Self-love is about the love a person has for themselves, how they view their life, and that view is seen by the world through their lifestyle. Christians who say that they love themselves but neglect the health of their bodies might be lacking self-love. Living a life of faith pleases God, but the Bible says, "A person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone" (Jas 3:24 [NIV]). The truth of the matter is self-love must be taught in the church where Christians can be free to admit how and why they began eating unhealthily. Perhaps the real culprit would be to lose the stressors that led to the emotional eating. Although the Bible is the true antidote for emotional stressors, Christians should hear the "Word" spoken in the church which would help them to begin a healthier lifestyle. The Bible said, "So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17 [NKJV]).

It is the responsibility of the church leader to shepherd Christians with the full desire to teach the gospel with the heart of God. Don N. Howell Jr. writes, "God is calling people to himself, and to community with others under his rule, and bringing them into conformity to his holiness so that they can declare his excellencies and bring others out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet2:9 [NIV]).⁵¹ The author Peter Scazzero said it this way, "If we hope to transform the world with the good news of Jesus, we must begin by embarking on a personal journey, one that will lead us through a deep, beneath-the-surface transformation in our own lives."⁵²

⁵¹ Don N. Howell, Jr., *A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publisher, 2003), 3.

⁵² Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 22.

Transformation

The Bible said, “I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:1 [NIV]). This biblical passage clearly and concisely points to the actions a Christian must take in their daily walk with God. God is concerned with the life and health of Christians. Paul expresses this when he said, “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:10 [NIV]). There are numerous reasons why so many Christians live unhealthy lives. Many Christians' diets are dictated by their cultures and traditions. In other words, there are family food traditions that are difficult to change; therefore, it justifies Christians from adopting a diet that would be healthier. In Romans 12:1, Paul is teaching Christian's exactly what God expects from them as a believer. This passage indisputably teaches how Christians must present themselves to God. Paul is saying, “The Lord God wants the sacrifice of believers' living bodies because it is a holy and acceptable sacrifice unto God. When the sacrifice of ourselves to God is holy, it is inherently acceptable to God and well-pleasing to Him, because the sacrifice of ourselves to God is our reasonable service.”⁵³ All Christians must acknowledge that their bodies are living sacrifices to God, and this recognition may be the deciding factor that will transform their diets.

Paul is not only speaking about the body; he addresses the behavior as well when he says, “And be not conformed to this world” (Rom 12:2 [NIV]). This statement is a reminder to Christians that although they live in the world, they should not think like the world. If Christians are praying before they eat, then they should be thinking about God and discipling themselves at

⁵³ Dobson et al., *Bible Commentary*, 1439.

each meal. Matthew 4:1-11 distinctly teaches believers that the essence of resisting temptation is to quote scriptures.

Food is meant to be pleasurable, but food that have high calories, sugar, fat and sodium should be eaten in moderation, especially foods that are from fast-food restaurants. There are fast-food restaurants in every neighborhood, and many of them provide home delivery. It is ideal that many restaurants list calories on the menu for each of their food items. What is equally important for Christians to know about the food they are eating is that food that have over 2,000 calories will add a pound to their weight. Although many restaurants add the calories of each food item on their menu, they do not have a nutritional panel that will list the sodium, fat, and sugar contents of the food. Showing a nutritional panel on every food item would be helpful for many believers who are concern about their health. There are fast-food restaurants that list a complete nutrition panel for their menus.

Ortberg writes,

Temptation promises that we can be free to gratify our appetites as much as we want. Temptation promises freedom, but it makes us a slave. Real freedom is not the external freedom to gratify every appetite; it is the internal freedom not to be enslaved by our appetites, to have a place to stand so that we are not mastered by them. For we are something more than a stomach, a mouth, and a pair of eyes.⁵⁴

Paul teaches Christians not to let their lives be governed by the thought patterns and dictates of this evil world system, which invites the question of how Christians can prevent it. A question that Christians who are conditioned to a particular lifestyle would also ask. Paul's answer is, “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2 [KJV]).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ John Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 140.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Theoretical Foundations

Health studies on the lifestyle of Christians have explored various health factors that have been proven to promote overweight and or obesity. This analysis of the health of Christians will reveal why there is currently a high rate of Christians in the church, including church leaders, who have fallen victim to the demands of life's stresses. As a result of their lifestyle, they have experienced preventable illnesses such as, obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes mellitus.

Inspiring Christians to be inspired about improving their health would have a significant effect on the statistics regarding unhealthy Christians. It would be advantageous for their mind, body, and soul for believers to want to learn what would improve their overall health.

Living unhealthy has become a worldwide issue. Scott Stoll points out how obesity rates have skyrocketed in America and are rising at epidemic rates. The latest statistics revealed that 68% of all Americans are either overweight or obese and by 2020 about 81% of men and 68% of women will be overweight or obese according to the Government Foresight study update.⁵⁶

Peter Scazzero points out the significance of emotionally unhealthy church leaders who tend to be unaware of what is going on inside them. Ignoring emotion-related messages their body may send, such as fatigue, stress-induced illness, weight gain, ulcers headaches, or depression.”⁵⁷

Followers of Jesus Christ should be ambassadors who exemplify a healthy life and not a life that surrenders to the temptations of the world. Stoll writes, “Christians today as a whole are in worse shape than the average American! The church followers of Jesus Christ are more

⁵⁶ Stoll, *Alive!*, 397.

⁵⁷ Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 27.

unhealthy, overweight, and obese than the general American population.”⁵⁸ Stoll argues that Christians should be the example of good health, but he does not consider the high level of stress most church leaders experience or that some church leaders lead a sedentary lifestyle. Either one of these factors will lead to an unhealthy life.

In 2008, Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Jason Byassee collected data that enabled them to compare the health of United Methodist clergy to that of a similar group of North Carolinians who were not clergy and they found that the obesity rate for clergy was 39.7%, compared to 29.4% of similar North Carolinians.⁵⁹ More recently, using 2014 data for both clergy and North Carolinians, Proeschold-Bell and Byassee found that this obesity disparity still exists: 41.4% of clergy were obese versus 29.3% of comparable North Carolinians.⁶⁰ The authors are placing emphasis on southern culture. They point out the differences in how Southerners cook, what they eat, and the restaurants that they patronize. The focus is on the people in the south, including clergy and Christians, who have become like those who are around them. However, high rates of obesity do not come only from eating, but also from an excessive amount of stress. The causes of obesity are more complex than just eating high-calorie foods, high-fat foods, and not exerting any physical exercise. Proeschold-Bell and Byassee write “If you've ever been stressed and reached for carbs and dessert, there's a biological reason. Under stress, your body secretes more glucocorticoid hormone, which leads you to want to eat more carbs and energy-dense food.”⁶¹ Stoll makes it clear when he says, “overweight and obese bodies are merely visible symptoms of

⁵⁸ Ibid, 427.

⁵⁹ Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Jason Byassee, *Faithful and Fractured: Responding to the Clergy Health Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 79.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 22

an entrenched and deeper-rooted problem-dangerous dietary and lifestyle habits.”⁶² Christians believe that they are blessed, but their lifestyles sometimes reflect a lack of faith, which can be seen through their diets. Ortberg writes, “Blessed are you, not because you can have every desire fulfilled, but because you are not your desires. Blessed are you because what you ache for is to be loved by and connected to God, and now Jesus says that love, that life, that connection is yours if you want it through him.”⁶³

In her dissertation, Nancy Manister points out that Carroll, McMillan, Price, and James (2001) reported that 75% of pastoral leaders (77.2% Protestant) described themselves as overweight or obese. Clergy’s appraisal of stress may activate a variety of responses to stress.⁶⁴ She goes on to say, “As clergy have been identified as obese and stressed, there are unmet needs related to their health waiting to be identified, and great potential exists for improvement in clergy health.”⁶⁵

Stoll points out what obesity in the world looks like for various religions: “Baptist 30%; Pentecostal 22%; Methodist 19%; Catholic 17%; Mormons 3%; Jewish 1%; and Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist 0.7%.”⁶⁶ Proeschold-Bell and Byassee add clarity when they write about other religious denominations that have also seen similar trends in their health. They report above-average rates of obesity for “clergy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, higher obesity rates for African-American clergy in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, and a combined

⁶² Stoll, *Alive!*, 443.

⁶³ Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 141.

⁶⁴ Manister, *Role Stress, Eating Behaviors, and Obesity in Clergy*, 1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁶ Stoll, *Alive!*, 453.

sample of Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, Church of Christ, and Catholic clergy in the United States.⁶⁷

Clearly, there are churches that have health ministries for their congregants, but a healthy church should be represented by a healthy pastor. The health ministries that churches are exercising must first begin with health conscious pastors and church leaders in order for the ministries to be effective. Proeschold-Bell and Byassee said it this way, “The high rate of obesity among clergy is taking a toll on— and truly fracturing— their physical health.”⁶⁸

Proeschold-Bell and Byassee points out how there is a distinct difference in the health of middle to older age Christian women opposed to the same age category of Christian men. They observed that the difference in percentage rates is especially pronounced for people between the ages of 55 and 64, including female clergy in this age bracket have particularly high rates of diabetes (10.9% vs. 5.2%), joint disease (47.6% vs. 39%), and obesity (43.5% vs. 24.6%).⁶⁹ The authors emphasize how male clergy from the same age bracket have an increased rate of angina (9.5% vs. 4.8%) and a much higher rate of obesity (43.7% vs. 29.5%).⁷⁰

In their studies, Proeschold-Bell and Byassee discovered, “one mortality study found that white and black male clergy ages sixteen to sixty, during the years 1982– 92, were more likely than other male Americans in white-collar professions to die of ischemic heart disease (i.e., reduced blood supply to the heart, usually felt as angina).”⁷¹ Stoll points out how Christians who

⁶⁷ Proeschold-Bell and Byassee, *Faithful and Fractured*, 81.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

are unhealthy begin to lose their health; they become focused on their own lives, pain, diseases, and sufferings, which leaves them less able to focus on the needs around them.⁷²

Proeschold-Bell and Byassee write how stress effects the food cravings of pastors when they said, “eating so-called comfort foods actually does work temporarily, at least by stimulating the pleasure centers in your brain and making you feel better.”⁷³ The authors go on to say, “Physical health and stress are connected, they are inextricably linked in that strengthening one improves the other.”⁷⁴

These studies do show that a bad diet, lack of exercise, and stress are the common causes of becoming obese and unhealthy. They are, without doubt, factors that will promote becoming obese, but the culprit seems to be stress, as well as a bad diet. This is proven by the fact that the rates of obesity and heart disease are much higher for clergy, including all genders and ethnicities, than for everyone else. Pastors must thus become the example that is needed to show Christians how to live a healthier life. Teaching the Word is necessary but living the Word is an added asset because Christians of the twenty-first century are fighting against multiple types of temptations. Many of these temptations are creating harmful diseases.

Proeschold-Bell and Byassee points out how “obesity is a significant problem, not just in and of itself. We should also note that it causes and complicates a variety of chronic diseases, including diabetes, arthritis, asthma, joint disease, angina (chest pain), heart disease, and hypertension.”⁷⁵

⁷² Stoll, *Alive!*, 453.

⁷³ Proeschold-Bell and Byassee, *Faithful and Fractured* , 82.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷⁵ Proeschold-Bell and Byassee, *Faithful and Fractured*, 81.

The Bible clearly and repetitiously speak about God's concern for the body of His believers. Pastors are the shepherds needed in leading Christians to acknowledge the word of God and to follow the Word of God. There must be a correlation in preaching the Word of God as well as living the Word of God for pastors and for believers. It is necessary for church leaders to reiterate to believers the message that John conveys to Christians, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly" (John 10:10 [KJV]). God's concern for Christians is to fully accept Him into their lives with relentless faith and discipline. Pastors and church leaders have the opportunity to encourage believers to fully accept God into their lives, which would undeniably summon transformational thinking on how they view their life. Transformational thinking will ultimately help to transform the way Christians perceive food or perceive their personal issues that summons them to eating unhealthy.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this project is to address the seriousness of the high percentage of Christians in the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral who are visibly unhealthy but have not joined the parish health ministry where they will learn how to live in better health. This project intends to increase the attendance of the parish health ministry by 10%. The congregation at the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral is enormous. There is no question that the church is filled with the Spirit of God that embraces all people who walk through its doors in search of God's Holy Spirit. It is necessary for the parish health ministry to continuously meet, greet, and recruit those people who are in search of following the Word of God in every area of their lives. The parish health ministry is a ministry that educates the members of the church, as well as the community, regarding how to live a spiritual and nutritional healthy life, and how it can be an asset for serving God effectively. There is no doubt that serving God faithfully requires spiritual discipline. The ministry teaches that spiritual discipline and nutritional discipline both have an undeniable correlation in the Christian's life. The discipline is derived from the Word of God.

The truth is that out of thousands of congregants in the church the parish health ministry total membership is less than fifty. Unhealthy Christians must see their health as a problem. It is impossible to help people if they do not believe anything is wrong with them. Educating Christians on the benefits of how living healthy and eating healthy will change the way that they view their lives, their health, and their diet. Being overweight is one of the most visual, but overlooked, health concerns for many Christians. The church must be the representation of a healthy body because it is the representation of Jesus. The life of a Christian should also represent a healthy body. As Paul reminds believers, "You will brought at a price, you are not your own. So, honor God with your body" (1 Cor 6:20 [NIV]). There are too many believers who

are allowing the fast pace of today's world to dictate what they should eat and how they should eat. Christians are succumbing to dietary temptations and forgetting or failing to take care of the body Jesus' substitutional death rendered freely to them.

There is no honor in chasing after foods that will eventually cause the body harm, by placing it in danger, because of an undisciplined spirit resulting from a dual mentality of serving God and serving man (the world). Ortberg writes,

Temptation is painful to us because when we give in, it doesn't hurt us from the outside; it hurts from the inside. Temptation tries to get our appetites and will to override our deepest values. The temptation will strike where we are most vulnerable, but life in the flow of the Spirit is about more than avoiding temptation. Temptation will also come to us where we most need to grow. Each temptation I face offers a step in the direction of the me I want to be.⁷⁶

Christians must recognize the many forms of temptation and how it will disguise itself in the form of food. It is written, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it" (1 Cor 10:13 [NIV]).

There are many issues that are plaguing the health of the world's population, and all of these diseases are seen in the church. For example, diabetes mellitus, heart disease, and obesity are all diet-related diseases. Diabetes mellitus is a multi-factored disease that has become a serious worldwide epidemic affecting people in all walks of life. Stoll points out, "diabetes mellitus increased 61% between 1991 and 2001, while heart disease is the number one cause of death in America, with 1.5% million people yearly experiencing a heart attack, 1 billion people worldwide are overweight, and 300 million are obese."⁷⁷ The World Health Organization states,

⁷⁶ Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 138.

⁷⁷ Stoll, *Alive!*, 1227.

“Childhood obesity is one of the most serious global public health challenges of the 21st century, affecting every country in the world.” In just 40 years, the number of school-age children and adolescents with obesity has risen more than ten-fold, from 11 million to 124 million (2016 estimates). In addition, an estimated 216 million were classified as overweight but not obese in 2016.⁷⁸ The world's health epidemics have also reached the church. The truth is that Jesus Christ is the body of the church, and followers of Christ must recognize that they are the manifestation and not the metaphorical body of Christ. Christians are succumbing to the world's health problems because they are either forgetting or failing to take care of a body that was rendered to them through the substitutional death of Jesus. Christians have to be reminded that there is no prize in chasing after foods that will eventually cause sickness in the body. Ortberg points out that when our soul is dissatisfied, sin begins to look tempting. That is why it is important to notice the level of soul satisfaction in our life.⁷⁹ He goes on to say that, “We become vulnerable to temptation when we are dissatisfied with our lives. The deeper our dissatisfaction, the deeper our vulnerability, because we were made for soul satisfaction, and if we do not find soul satisfaction in God, we will look for it somewhere else.”⁸⁰

Scott Stoll places his focus on the health of the church and how it has become a clear representation of the world's health. He writes, “Many Christians today look to the world for guidance on the best dietary plan and have neglected to return to God's Word for His wisdom and guidance.”⁸¹ In his book, Stoll makes it clear that there is an immediate need for Christians

⁷⁸ The World Health Organization, *Taking Action on Childhood Obesity*, accessed (2018): 1, WHO-NMH-PND-ECHO-18.1-eng.pdf?ua=1, <https://www.who.int/end-childhood-obesity/publications/taking-action-childhood-obesity-report/en/>

⁷⁹ Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 141.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Stoll, *Alive!*, 852.

to begin monitoring their health to reduce the staggeringly high percentage rate of being overweight and obese. The author points out how the word obesity has become prevalent among world religions, with an emphasis on Christian evangelicals who dominate in this area.

Stoll makes it clear when he said, “America is facing a crisis of health and obesity, but an even greater crisis, one that is not discussed in the news or in our pulpits, is occurring in the chairs and pews of evangelical churches across the nation and around the world.”⁸² There is no doubt that the statistics on obesity for today's churches represent the conscious neglect that Christians willingly exercise, while justifying their faithfulness as disciples of Christ. Placing emphasis on the health of the clergy of the church versus the health of the residents of North Carolina, Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Jason Byassee compared the data from the clergy to the residents and found that the obesity rate for the church clergy was 39.7%, in comparison to the residents that showed 29.4%.⁸³

It is worrisome to witness how Christians who worship and serve God faithfully, who live their lives with the fortification of the Holy Spirit, have allowed themselves to become weakened by the temptations of foods that will surely destroy their body. As Christians there will be times when following God’s perspective on how to keep the body healthy will be overlooked, because of the need to justify a selfish desire. McCauley points out that, “it takes tremendous discipline to always put the right foods into our bodies, and that is why we must rely on more than just discipline, we must ask for God’s assistance in giving us the strength to resist and the courage to change.”⁸⁴ In the Bible Jesus speaks about the body and the health of the body

⁸² Stoll, *Alive!*, 427.

⁸³ Proeschold-Bell and Byassee, *Faithful and Fractured*, 79.

⁸⁴ Bob McCauley, *Honoring the Temple of God: A Christian Health Perspective* (Lansing, MI: SE, Inc, 2008), 13.

repetitiously. His desire is for believers to follow the Word of God, and to learn how to honor their bodies with their best health.

Research Design and Methods

Purpose

To increase the attendance of the parish health ministry by 10%.

Goal

To increase the attendance of the parish health ministry by teaching Christians how to live healthier to have a greater kingdom impact that will reflect God's glory in their lives.

Objective

The objectives of the studies were to encourage participants to reevaluate their dietary habits by highlighting how to eat to obtain and maintain a healthier body, which would help to transform their cognitive behavior of eating unhealthily.

Intervention

The purpose of this study was to increase the attendance of the parish health ministry, which will undoubtedly improve the health of God's followers, thereby increasing the health of the church. This problem was addressed with the assistance of members from the parish health ministry. As the researcher and a member of the ministry it was important to reach out to the president of the parish health ministry and asked if the members could assist me with recruiting new members for the parish health ministry in a recruitment event called "Each One, Bring One." The president of the ministry called an emergency meeting, and the members agreed to assist with the research project. The members of the parish health ministry each invested their

time. They reached out to family members and friends who were interested in their health, interested in joining the health ministry, and who was a member of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral.

Method

The methodology of the research project was to expose the guests to the existence and mission of the parish health ministry. The parish health ministry guests attended the parish health ministry monthly meeting, which was combined with the researcher's project to increase the attendance of the parish health ministry by 10%. The "Each One, Bring One," campaign, which was coordinated as an invitation for members to join the parish health ministry, proved to be very successful. The parish health ministry has a total of thirty-five members on the roster, and close to half of the ministry's members attended the event with an additional twelve guests.

Combining the monthly meeting with the research project provided the guests with an understanding of why health ministries are needed in the church, as well as how the parish health ministry operates throughout the year. The guests were told that to participate in this program involved minimal risk. The president of the parish health ministry received approval from the pastor to conduct the meeting and the research project on the second Sunday of November. The church has a total of three floors, and the room that was approved was located on the lower floor. There are numerous rooms on the lower level of the church where all of the church ministries congregate for monthly events. The room that was approved was double the average size of a monthly meeting room to accommodate an expected large group of people, tables, chairs, and electronic equipment. The room was full to capacity. The parish health ministry provided a sign-in sheet for the invited guests.

The approved room was authorized to be utilized from 1:30 PM until 4:00 PM. The room was sufficient for the ministry's members and their guests, as some guests were accompanied by their children. The ministry's members who were in attendance are all professionals; there were medical doctors, nurses, as well as administrative medical personnel, social workers, and nutritionists.

The researcher placed a gold and purple banner on the wall that read, "Is your temple healthy"? "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself" (1 Cor 6:15 [NIV]). The message was deliberately chosen as a teachable moment, as well as an inspiring one. The colors purple and gold were chosen because they are the colors of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral. The banner was created to add significant emphasis to the fact that "the body is not only for the Lord (v.13), but they belong to Him by virtue of His redemptive work, and because they are united with Him. This union pertains not only to the soul but also to the body" (1 Cor 6:15-16 [NIV]).⁸⁵ Teaching Christians that there is a correlation between a disciplined life and a faithful life, will certainly enhance how they view the health of their body and their unwavering faith to God. The intention was to emphasize that the body is where the Holy Spirit dwells, and as followers of Christ, Christians must glorify God in their bodies. In the words of Paul, "Christians must use their bodies in order that other men may see that they belong to God" (1 Cor 6:20 [NIV]).⁸⁶

It was pleasing to see Christians taking a positive approach to their health by attending the monthly meeting and recruitment. Gary Thomas points out how "Christians who don't take

⁸⁵ Dobson et al., *Bible Commentary*, 1439.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1471.

their health seriously don't take their mission seriously."⁸⁷ The author makes the point that an undisciplined life results in a life of sin, and sin will undoubtedly obliterate the faith of a Christian.

There may be many Christians who need an initiator in their life who will help guide them in a positive direction. For instance, Thomas recognition of Christians who do accept a positive direction of change will admit how, "Taking off the shackles of laziness, overeating, and the physical debilitation brought about by ignoring our physical fitness can set our souls on a course of pursuing God with a renewed vigor, earnestness and delight."⁸⁸ The twelve guests who accepted the request to participate in a health presentation research project, combined with a monthly ministry meeting, justified the proposition that people are reachable, available, and willing to learn.

The president of the parish health ministry began the meeting by introducing herself to the guests and their companions as well as thanking them for attending the parish health monthly meeting and the recruitment celebration for the researcher's project. The president opened the event with a prayer, asking everyone to stand and join hands. The president then explained to the guests that this particular meeting would not be the typical monthly meeting, because it would have two parts. For the first half of the meeting, the researcher who is also a member of the parish health ministry would conduct a research project that included completing a survey, a questionnaire, and watching a PowerPoint presentation on healthy eating. The president explained that after the presentation was completed she would continue with the parish health monthly meeting, explaining the agenda of the parish health ministry's current events, the old

⁸⁷ Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 134.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 216.

business, the new business, and the updates. The president will conclude the meeting by asking everyone to join hands for prayer.

After the president's introduction to the class, she introduced the researcher to the participants as a member of the ministry and a doctoral candidate completing a thesis on how to increase the attendance of the parish health ministry by 10% at the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral. The researcher explained that the project consisted of three parts, completing a survey form, completing a questionnaire form, and giving a PowerPoint presentation on healthy eating. The researcher distributed the recruitment and consent forms and explained that they were not to be signed, because they were anonymous.

Completing the survey form and the questionnaire form was significant for the parish health ministry because it will undoubtedly lead the ministry to identify the most impactfully devastating health issues that are affecting families, the congregation, and communities. Both the questionnaire and the survey forms had seven questions each that related to the participant's faith, lifestyle, diet, and present health. The data analysis derived from the answers of the survey and questionnaire forms would help create compelling and essential health seminars for the ministry to conduct for the church and the community. Seminars that relate to the lifestyle of Christians.

Once the researcher explained the contexts of the recruitment event the participants interacted with one another to enjoy the lunch buffet, gospel music and completed the survey and questionnaire forms. The participants as well as the ministry members, enjoyed the delicious and nutritious buffet that introduced a variety of healthy foods.

The food menu for the buffet was created intentionally for two reasons, the church was in the middle of a three-week fast, and a healthy food buffet was appropriate for the recruitment

event. The researcher noticed that the participants was surprised by the different food choices, and the great taste of the food. What was most surprising is that the participants enjoyed the food of the buffet without the normal added condiments of salt, sugar, and fat. As a nutritionist it is necessary to point out that healthy foods do not have to be costly, tasteless, or difficult to prepare, and they are conveniently found in any grocery store. The researcher purposely introduced the participants to foods that were not processed or laden with high sodium and sugar. Foods with high sugar, fat and sodium should be eaten in moderation. Stoll points out how today's studies estimate that the average person spends approximately 90% of his or her household food budget on processed foods and animal products."⁸⁹ He goes on to say that these processed foods are loaded with "Additives such as high-fructose corn syrup, refined flours, salt, trans fats, preservatives, color dyes, and flavor enhancers which have all been shown to have detrimental effects on every system in your body."⁹⁰

The participants all agreed that they would highly consider adding the foods of the buffet to their shopping list. Reiterating that food is supposed to be healthy and pleasurable encouraged the participants to inquire about nutrients of various foods, and ingredients. The researcher emphasized that learning to eat for optimal health in order to serve God with steadfast stamina is one of the health discussions that the parish health ministry deem vital. The guests commented on the relevancy of the survey and questionnaire questions. The survey and questionnaire were designed to be subjective, to summon a cognitive response regarding the participants' dietary habits as well as their emotional behavior.

⁸⁹ Stoll, *Alive!*, 1044.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

The PowerPoint presentation was highlighted with the essential guidelines for eating and living a healthy life. The researcher began the presentation by comparing unhealthy dietary behaviors of many Christians in contrast to foods that are nourishing to the body, because they supply nutrients that will strengthen the health of the entire body. Healthy nutrients will inarguably add the reassurance of stamina to the body. As a nutritionist, it was necessary to create a presentation that taught about the substance of the foods Christians were eating in comparison to the foods that are absolutely necessary to live healthily. The presentation employed an optimistic approach because it taught the guests that different healthy food options appealed to their palate. The guests showed an overwhelming interest in the foods that they have been consuming during the lunch buffet and learned what each substance could do for the health of their bodies.

There are many Christians who did not know what the body needs nutritionally to lose weight, keep the heart healthy, or to defeat the epidemic of diet-related diseases. Unequivocally, Christians want to be healthy, and they trust the church teachings on health, because they are faithful to God. The presentation helped the participants conceive that it is possible for them to lead a healthy lifestyle. In the discussion of nutrition, the researcher pointed out the importance of how fruits, vegetables, good fats, water, protein, and fiber sustains the health of the body.

Marckman and Astrup points out that there is strong epidemiologic evidence that high intakes of fruit and vegetables are associated with less coronary heart disease and cancer morbidity.⁹¹ Fruits and vegetables are gifts given by God for optimal health. The Bible tells us that God said, “Let the land produce vegetation seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed” (Gen 1:11 [NIV]). The antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals found in fruits

⁹¹ Marckman and Astrup, “*Fatty Diets are Unhealthy*,” 854.

and vegetables have medicinal properties to heal the body. The CDC declares that eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet can help protect against several severe and costly chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes mellitus (type 2), some cancers, and obesity. Overall, fruits and vegetables also provide essential vitamins and minerals that help the human body work as it should and fight off disease.⁹² While these nutritional facts concerning fruits and vegetables are indisputably true, there are factual truths regarding the condition of how some fruits and vegetables are sold.

The truth is that there have been many fruits and vegetables re-called because of food poisoning such as salmonella, listeria, and E. coli. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) clearly states that in recent years, the United States has had several large outbreaks of illness caused by contaminated fruits and vegetables—including spinach, cantaloupe, tomatoes, and lettuce.⁹³ Purchasing fresh produce is a concern, because many lower income demographics are labeled as food deserts. The disparities that effect specific communities and ethnicities are also seen in the areas of healthy food availability throughout the country. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports “Commonly referred to as “food deserts,” these regions of the country often feature large proportions of households with low incomes, inadequate access to transportation, and a limited number of food retailers providing fresh produce and healthy groceries for affordable prices.”⁹⁴ In other words, the health and the diet of

⁹² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Strategies to Prevent Obesity and other Chronic Diseases: The CDC Guide to Strategies to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables*. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011, 3. <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/strategies-fruits-and-vegetables.pdf>

⁹³ U.S. Food and Drug Administration, *7-Tips-cleaning Fruits, Vegetables: Fresh Produce can become Contaminated in Many Ways, but Following these Simple Steps can help Protect You and Your Family from Foodborne Illness*. (June 10 ,2018). www.Fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/7-tips-cleaning-fruits-vegetables.

⁹⁴ Michele Ver Ploes, Paula Dutko, and Tracey Farrigan, *Characteristics and Influential Factors of Food Deserts*, ERR-140, United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, (August 2012):1.

many communities are based on socioeconomic, because their access to obtain affordable and healthy food can be limited by their income and their mode of transportation. The prevalent of food deserts throughout the country is concerning. According to a USDA 2009 report, “In the United States there are 23.5 million people live in low-income areas that are further than 1 mile from a large grocery store or supermarket, and that 11.5 million of these people have low incomes themselves.”⁹⁵ There is no doubt there may be more than one factor that may be preventing believers to live and eat healthier.

Besides healthy foods, it was vital to acknowledged how indispensable water is for maintaining optimal health for the human body. I compared it to sugary beverages that have literally nothing healthy to give to the body. Batmanghelidij makes the point that fluids that contain caffeine and alcohol dehydrate us and cannot replace the water needs of the human body.⁹⁶ I first pointed out that nothing lives without water, and then explained the essential properties of water and how it enhances the body by preventing the clogging of arteries in the heart and brain. how it helps reduce stress, and heart attacks and strokes. Water also help in reducing anxiety, depression, restoring normal sleep rhythms, and it is the best lubricating laxative to prevent constipation.⁹⁷

The focus of the presentation was to set the tone that the life of a Christian involves the virtues of faith and discipline. Living an undisciplined life by eating unhealthily will lead to an unhealthy body, and an unhealthy body does not reflect the life of a Christian, because a faithful

⁹⁵ U.S. Food and Drug Administration, *7-Tips-cleaning Fruits, Vegetables: Fresh Produce can become Contaminated in Many Ways, but Following these Simple Steps can help Protect You and Your Family from Foodborne Illness*. (June 10 ,2018). www.Fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/7-tips-cleaning-fruits-vegetables.

⁹⁶ F. Batmanghelidij, *You're Not Sick, You're Thirsty! Water for Health, for Healing, for Life* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 2003), 85.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

Christian is disciplined. Paul made this clear when he said, “He must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined” (Tit 1:8 [NIV]). This can only be done by the work of the Holy Spirit. Reaching each participant with a new perspective that the righteousness of a believer’s life is visible through their spiritual as well as their physical transformation was vital.

Moritz points out the seriousness of teaching and exercising biblical principles that teach about gluttony and the effects that it can have on the health of Christians. He writes that pastors have disregarded their health and the health of their congregation. He points out how “the sin of obesity is almost accepted as normal in churches. This, as a result, is a form of worldliness.”⁹⁸ Although, biblical and nutritional education are both valued as essential factors in helping Christians transform the way in which they view how to eat for optimal health. The truth is only the Holy Spirit can guide and strengthen all Christians to be better stewards in living the word of God.

Dietary habits are most often grounded in emotional and or psychological issues, making it difficult to recognize that the food choices that are desired are emotionally controlled. Although Christians display a strong faith in God, there are some that sometimes lack a strong belief in themselves. There are a variety of issues that might plague a Christian's faith. However, continuing to live by the Word of God, and, “Putting on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground” (v.16); “Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” (v.17); “and “The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:13-17) are the remedies to self-doubts. Stoll said it this way, “The secular culture, created and infused by Satan, entices us with alluring

⁹⁸ Moritz, “*Creating and Sustaining a Health and Wellness*,” 6.

ideas of personal pleasure, the pursuit of happiness, and comfort at the expense of our relationship with the Lord, our health, and our service.”⁹⁹ Paul specifically clarifies to Christians, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom 12:2 [NIV]). In addition to the countless issues that summons emotional eating, food industries are adding ingredients to the food that evidently cause cravings.

Christians today are faced with multiple forms of temptations when it comes to eating healthy. The food industry’s advertisements are to entice patrons, but Christians have a defense to temptation called the Bible. The Bible declares, “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Cor 10:13-14 [NIV]). Thomas writes, “What makes the battle against overeating and obesity so difficult is that companies have a financial interest in finding the perfect combination of taste, ease of eating, meltdown of the food, and what researchers call “the early hit” (the immediate sensation you get when the food enters your mouth).”¹⁰⁰ He goes on to say, “All of this means that good health will require us to confront and resist the physical, spiritual, and cultural enticements that war against us.”¹⁰¹

God wants His followers to live in optimal health. He does not want Christians to destroy their health by making poor choices. However, as Stoll points out, obesity rates have skyrocketed in America and are rising at epidemic rates. The latest statistics revealed that 68% of all

⁹⁹ Stoll, *Alive!*, 756.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 645.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 674.

Americans are either overweight or obese and by 2020 about 81% of men and 68% of women will be overweight or obese according to the Government Foresight study update.¹⁰²

I explained that the basic dietary rules are what to eat, how to eat, and understanding what you are eating. And, to become obese is not difficult if you do not know the calories and fat contents of the food you are eating. Although the body requires protein, fat, and carbohydrates to function optimally, there is a clear distinction between salmon and a cheeseburger, or a loaded baked potato opposed to a sweet potato. I enthusiastically announced to the class that it only takes 3500 calories to equal one pound, and most of the food entrées in a restaurant are practically serving 35 calories in one sitting, excluding the dessert. It is without question that the life of a Christian must resemble their faith, which is apparent through their daily discipline, spiritually, mentality as well as physically.

I pointed out to the participants that the foods in your grocer's freezer are loaded with sodium (salt). In comparison to earlier decades today's restaurants are serving meals two and a half times the normal serving of foods. There is a conglomerate of chain restaurants that are serving foods and beverages laden with sugar, sodium, and fats. What Roberts's analysis missed is that decades ago, the size of a bottle of soda or a hamburger was much smaller than it is today. Foods were not supersized. Decades ago, going to a fast-food restaurant was considered a treat, but today, people are eating their three daily meals of breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the fast-food restaurants. Christians should desire to live in their best health; therefore, Christians need to be educated on the foods that they are consuming and foods that they are not consuming.

The presentation addressed many diseases that are on the rise in today's society but are preventable by consuming a healthy diet. There are many factors that contribute to obesity, and

¹⁰² Stoll, *Alive!*, 397.

educating Christians on how to take notice of how each element can change their health before it becomes too late will be advantageous. Health factors that play a part in controlling weight gain and weight loss and yet are missed and or neglected are family cultures and traditions, stress, emotional eating, (psychological issues), finances, knowledge, convenience, and demographics.

I enlighten the attendees with up-to-date data on how Christians need to recognize factors that will have a negative effect on their health, by distinguishing which foods are highly healthy versus foods with limited nutrients. Health education is an essential factor in the struggle to regain and maintain excellent health.

There are still too many Christians who do not fully comprehend how to read nutritional labels that list the full nutrients and ingredients on each food product. Scott Stoll writes, “Packed within the processed foods are hidden toxins, such as pesticides, plastic residue, and heavy metals. Food today is not really "food" but rather a chemistry experiment to produce delicious, preserved products that fill the stomach yet starve the cells.”¹⁰³ Teaching the attendees what to look for on the food nutrition panel and how to interpret the ingredients is an asset. As a health care practitioner teaching the medicinal benefits of food and its advantageous properties that it give for stamina, weight loss, and longevity will inarguably serve as an asset.

The truth is diets are an essential part of every individual's life and measuring how and what to eat for one group of people can be entirely different for another group of people. There is no one ethnicity or demographic for Christians. In 2008, Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Jason Byassee collected data that enabled them to compare the health of United Methodist clergy to that of a similar group of North Carolinians who were not clergy and they found that the obesity

¹⁰³ Stoll, *Alive!*, 1053.

rate for clergy was 39.7%, compared to 29.4% of similar North Carolinians.¹⁰⁴ The authors point out the obesity rate based on the foods and the culture of the south.

Many of the attendees in the class have relatives in the south, or they have relocated to New York from the south. Their dietary habits may be derived from their southern ancestry, and they might find it difficult to abandon their southern recipes. Cultural diets and traditional practices for food are the major parts of a Christians' lifestyles that they would rather compromise than to abandon, but teaching that each food that we eat will either contribute to a healthier body or an unhealthier body will unquestionably promote a healthier diet and lifestyle.

There is no doubt that demographics play an important role in how and what Christians eat, but God was the focus of the presentation. The participants were remarkably surprised to hear the researcher suggest to pray for discipline before eating or drinking. Teaching believers that nothing should have more power than faith, regardless of the size of the problem is a necessary spiritual incentive for Christians in their desire for better health.

Stoll points out what obesity in the world looks like for various religions: “Baptist 30%; Pentecostal 22%; Methodist 19%; Catholic 17%; Mormons 3%; Jewish 1%; and Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist 0.7%.”¹⁰⁵ Proeschold Bell and Byassee point out a 2002 survey of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America found above-average rates of obesity for clergy. Higher obesity rates have been found for African-American clergy in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and a combined sample of Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, Church of Christ, and Catholic clergy in the United States.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Proeschold-Bell and Byassee, *Faithful and Fractured* , 79.

¹⁰⁵ Stoll, *Alive!*, 453.

¹⁰⁶ Proeschold-Bell and Byassee, *Faithful and Fractured* , 81.

There is no doubt that stress plays a significant role in unhealthiness. Many Christians overwhelm themselves with multiple duties and responsibilities in the church and in their personal lives. Stress is the culprit for the growing statistics of overweight, obese church leaders, and pastors. Christians must adhere to the health of their bodies before their doctors diagnosed them with a disease that could have been prevented.

Unhealthiness can disguise itself in many different forms. Manister revealed how the effects of stress can promote undesirable health issues for church leaders and how it should be discussed in the church. It would be beneficial for church leaders to teach how stress can impact the diet of a Christian. Manister points out why it would be expected that obesity rates would be high in clergy who had high role stress and restrained eating behavior, and who are coping through the use of emotional and/or restrained eating behavior.¹⁰⁷ Manister is pointing out how the correlation between stress and diet, will unquestionably develop into an unhealthy body.

Educating Christians would teach believers how to identify the symptoms of stress and immediately remedy it with leaning on God, and adjusting their diet with appropriate nutritional habits. Thomas writes, “How we treat our bodies is a question of stewardship even before it is a question of health, comfort, enjoyment, or pleasure.”¹⁰⁸

The presentation established a spiritual connection between God and the believers, because it reiterated that the body is a gift from God in which His Holy Spirit dwells. Reiterating the significance of the body, is a strong reminder that Christians must periodically take an inventory of their life and renew their mind with the Words of God that said, “The Lord is my

¹⁰⁷ Nancy N. Manister, “Role Stress, Eating Behaviors, and Obesity in Clergy” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2012) 33.

¹⁰⁸ Gary Thomas, *Everybody Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 419.

shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul" (Ps 23:1-2 [KJV]); "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28 [KJV]).

The banner that read, "Is your temple healthy?"; "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself" (1 Cor 6:15) also encouraged the participants that God's desire is for them to live healthily. It was my intention to place the banner directly in front of the room so that the participants would see it as they entered. The biblical scripture written on the banner was written to heighten the faith of the participants. It was my hope that their primary feeling would be to acknowledge the significance of how God views the body and how God loves them. The words on the banner were also meant to emphasize that "The Lord is my light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid" (Ps 27:1 [NIV]).

The PowerPoint presentation was designed to be understood clearly and concisely so that the message would not defeat the purpose. Writing the presentation in a simplistic style encouraged the participants to participate in a question and answer session. As a researcher and a nutritionist, I was enthusiastic about the participants' questions. Placing emphasis on fruits, vegetables and whole grains and the benefits that are derived from each food added an intense curiosity of the participants. Many of the participants inquiries stemmed from how to read nutrition labels that are placed on all food, to how to make a low sodium salad dressing. The participants seem to be surprised to learn that there is a term called "preventable diseases." It was noteworthy to point out that diseases such as diabetes mellitus (type 2), obesity and hypertension were preventable according to dietary behavior. The presentation highlighted many reasons Christians find themselves living and eating unhealthily. It offered a simple approach to show

how Christians can alter their diet with nutrients that are necessary for keeping their body empowered with a healthy mind, body, and soul.

The presentation was a complete success. I asked the guests their opinions and their concerns regarding the agendum of the parish health ministry. Many of them responded with overwhelming amazement about the educational programs and the health seminars that the parish health ministry present monthly. Twelve guests attended the meeting, and four joined the parish health ministry. The incentive was to increase the ministry by 10%, but the four new members increased the attendance by 11.4%.

The results of this research study have helped to increase the attendance of the parish health ministry, which will also prove to be an asset to the church, and for the families of the congregation. There is no doubt that the church will benefit from a ministry that promotes and teaches every aspect of how to live healthy because it will help to fortify the minds and spirits of all believers that their bodies are members of Christ (1 Cor 6:15 [NIV]). Stressing this crucial truth to the congregation can only contribute to creating a healthier church. Once the presentation was completed the president of the ministry began the agenda for the parish health ministry.

Implementation

Participants Analysis

The goal for the researcher was to invite the participants into a healthy inspirational recruitment celebration. The participants were all inspired and motivated with the anticipation of learning something new about their health. The health presentation, the healthy buffet, and the banner were essential elements of the project. There was a direct spiritual and nutritional

connection when the guests entered the room with inspiring gospel music playing and reading the banner that was placed directly in front of the entrance and enjoying a healthy lunch buffet.

Each of the twelve invited members of the parish health ministry participated in completing and handing-in the surveys and questionnaire forms. The participants willingly engaged in asking questions concerning the health topics of the presentation. Many of the participants also wrote notes. The objective of the project was to encourage participants with nutritional knowledge that would offer a new understanding on how to enhance their life with optimal health. The concerns of the participants ranged from understanding nutritional labels, questioning how to eliminate food deserts in their neighborhoods, to how to reduce preventable diseases. The participant's applause after the presentation showed the presentation to be a success. The researcher intended to increase the membership of the parish health ministry. The presentation pointed out the actual benefits of living healthy with a healthy body.

Data Analysis

The goal of this project was to increase the parish health ministry attendance by 10%, and by doing so, helped to encouraged Christians with a healthy dietary transformation. The objective is to remind Christians that their bodies were bought with a price and are the temples where the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor 6:19 [NIV]). Twelve participants participated in the project, and four joined the ministry. The researcher emphasized that there is a significant correlation between faith and disciple. The nutritional information that was taught highlighted the benefits of eating healthy and the consequences of an unhealthy diet. The twelve participants that participated were African-American. There was a diverse group of men and women who range in the ages from eighteen years old to their late sixties; all of the participants were Christians and

members of the church. The analysis of the participants' survey and questionnaire forms illustrated their strengths and weaknesses in their dietary behavior and lifestyles. Every participant agreed that there is a correlation between being a faithful servant of God and a disciplined servant of God, and they treat their bodies as the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells, and lastly, that their diet reflects their faith. Most participants answered that they would like to change their diets, but they find losing weight difficult. What was most concerning is that most participants believed that their daily diets were healthy and that they are exercising and changing dietary habits, even though they eat at a fast-food restaurant more than twice a week. The analysis of this study clearly depicts Christians' faithfulness to God, and that participating in a health ministry will be beneficial in their lives.

The benefits that the participants will receive from this project will be based on multiple areas such as, learning what preventable diseases are, such as diabetes mellitus; heart disease; obesity, and hypertension, and what each will do to the body; learning that these diseases are preventable and can also be reversed. Each of these preventable diseases is prevalent in the African-American communities.

Stoll writes, “The World Health Organization (WHO) report on obesity estimated 1 billion people worldwide are overweight, and 300 million are obese, with more being added to the expanding ranks each year.”¹⁰⁹

The participants will understand that a healthier body equates to a life with no needed medications, a healthy body weight, longevity of life, and body stamina. African Americans are family-oriented and are emotionally connected to family traditions. I believe that the knowledge of this project will encourage all of the participants to revise the way that they view food.

¹⁰⁹ Stoll, *Alive!*, 1227.

Data Collection

For this project, survey and questionnaires forms were used to collect the necessary data. The survey and recruitment forms were all distributed at the beginning of the presentation project and were collected after the presentation. The Liberty University Intuitional Review Board approved the request documents used: recruitment form, consent form, survey form, questionnaire form, and banner. The recruitment form and the consent forms were distributed to every participant to explain in detail the procedures that the researcher will perform.

The forms provided the participants with the necessary information to contact Liberty University and gave the participants the choice to participate or to decline. Sensing writes, “informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study; it provides respect for persons.”¹¹⁰ The survey and questionnaire forms have a total of fifteen questions and purposely reflected the participant's health, dietary habits, and faithfulness. I observed that the data collected from each of the participants' survey and questionnaire forms showed a faithful interrelationship with God.

As the researcher and observer, I used the presentation as an assessment tool, because it allowed me to interact individually with each participant asking specific questions regarding a healthy diet and how they want to reexamine their health and lifestyle. The participants used the health presentation as a guide for how they will view their new dietary behavior. Learning about God and health gave the participants a new perspective on God's view of a healthy lifestyle.

It was ideal to use the participants inquiries on dietary practices as an analytical tool to diagnose how each participant view their bodily health and their dietary behavior.

¹¹⁰ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishing, 2011), 34.

The knowledge question approach was used for analyzing data. I utilized the methodological triangulation for the evaluation of the collected data by using an independent expert. The independent expert was sent the survey and questionnaire forms and submitted her summarized view of the data back to the researcher. The reply of the independent expert was noted as an outsider angle of interpretation. The concept of triangulation was used as a cross-checking secondary tool on the analysis of the project. Sensing points out how triangulations are a way to cross-check your data that provides breadth and depth to your analysis and increases the trustworthiness of your research.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Ibid., 72.

Chapter 4: Results

There is a significant need for health ministries in the church. Increasing the attendance of the parish health ministry by 10% is just the beginning of inspiring Christians to address their health by joining a ministry that will teach and guide them on how to live healthier. There is no doubt that the high rate of preventable diseases that are plaguing the world is also plaguing the health of many Christians and is clearly seen in the church. This research project was selected primarily because of the researcher's visual concern for the health of Christians in the church. Scott Stoll writes, "People live for comfort and pleasure, unaware that the diet and lifestyle they choose each day will directly impact opportunities to serve the Lord, lead their families, and serve others."¹¹² The truth of the matter is Christians must not live a life where faith and discipline become contenders. In other words, the faithfulness of a Christian must also be evident in a disciplined lifestyle. Gary L. Thomas points out, "Our battle is *today*. Because of God's grace, yesterday doesn't count. Because of God's hope, worry about tomorrow is inappropriate. *This moment, this day, this hour*, are we being faithful toward God, honoring him with what we eat and don't eat, and taking care of our bodies accordingly?"¹¹³ Many Christians might not recognize the multifaceted nature of their faith because they adamantly believe God will heal their infirmities. Yet they neglect or lack faith when it comes to honoring their body. Thomas points out that the writer of Ecclesiastes warns of the insatiable aspect of gluttony and excessive eating: "Everyone's toil is for their mouth, yet their appetite is never satisfied" (6:7).¹¹⁴ Stoll said

¹¹² Stoll, *Alive!*, 390.

¹¹³ Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 681.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 725.

it this way, “The church, followers of Jesus Christ, is more unhealthy, overweight, and obese than the general American population.”¹¹⁵

Increasing attendance for the parish health ministry has exceeded the project's goal of 10% to 11.4%. The results of this research project have undeniably pointed out that there is a significant connection between educating Christians about the health of their bodies, combined with the realization that God is concern with the health of their bodies. The importance of increasing the attendance of the ministry is crucial to both the health of the church as well as the health of Christians.

The ministry research project was designed to capture the attention of Christians by inspiring them with the word of God, and with an attainable hope to change the way that they view living faithfully, spiritual discipline, and their dietary lifestyle. The results of this research project was not only measured by the number of church members who joined the ministry, but the results proved that there are many believers who are interested in their health and are prepared to transform the way that they viewed food and the health of their bodies to a healthier lifestyle. The success of the project was made possible by the collaborative effort of the members of the ministry and the researcher. The researcher created a recruitment campaign called “Each One, Bring One,” which involved every parish health ministry member to invite a member of the church, the community, and or family member to come and participate in the research project. The recruitment campaign was successful, because it effectively solicited twelve participants and out of the twelve four participants joined the ministry. Increasing the ministry increases the total of Christians who will advocate the importance of healthy living and healthy bodies.

¹¹⁵ Stoll, *Alive!*, 390.

The increase of the ministry will undeniably increase the collective health of the church.¹¹⁶

The results of the project revealed that there are many Christians who are struggling with their health in various ways, who welcome the idea of joining a health ministry that extended a professional level of teaching on health education. The ministry points out two significant facts, first, living healthy not only honors the body, but it honors God. Secondly, the ministry teaches the realization of their dietary habits by emphasizing an intentional or unintentional behavior of unhealthy eating.

Evaluation of Findings

The Problem

Christians are either neglecting their health or simply do not know how to take care of it. There are many Christians in the church who have underestimated the way that they view their health and are; therefore, living carelessly. The problem is that the attendance of the parish health ministry is usually low in comparison to the vast number of Christians who attend Greater Allen. Christians and their families can benefit from nutritional education and learn how to combat illnesses that can be prevented by obtaining and maintaining healthy bodies.

Intervention

The project's intervention was assembled as a health seminar for the invited participants of the parish health ministry. The participants arrived at 1:45 pm. The members of the parish health ministry volunteered their time to invite church members who were interested in attending

¹¹⁶ Paul emphasizes the importance of the body as he teaches the Corinthians, “Your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost. Not only is the local church a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16), but the individual believer’s body itself also is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which ye have of God. The fact is, they already received the Holy Spirit. He dwells within them. Dobson et al., *Bible Commentary*, 1471.

a recruitment celebration to change their health and to join the parish health ministry. The recruitment celebration was called “Each one, bring one.” The title referred to each ministry member reaching out to invite a guest. The intervention took place in a doubled size classroom to accommodate the invited participants of the parish health ministry as well as the members. The parish health ministry is comprised of a total of thirty-five members. In total, there were twelve invited participants and twelve members of the parish health ministry. The consent and recruitment forms were given to the participants to explain the details of the research project and provide them with the option to decline to participate in the research project. The participants were also told that the survey and the questionnaire forms are entirely anonymous, and the consent and recruitment forms do not have to be signed or returned to the researcher. As a courtesy, I designated the time that would be needed for the participant's expected questions regarding the forms.

The purpose and objective of the project was to increase the parish health ministry attendance by 10%, by means of an intervention that would encourage the invited participants to honor their bodies with healthier lifestyles. The intervention was especially successful because four of the participants, the guests, joined the parish health ministry. Everyone at the event learned something new about their health and was eager to begin applying what they have learned.

The participants were exhilarated to learn about the teachings of the parish health ministry. The intervention included a healthy food buffet and gospel music. Once I distributed the forms, I allotted time for the participants and the ministry members to enjoy the buffet, and the music while completing the survey and questionnaire forms. The participants were told to place the completed survey and questionnaire forms on a table in a designated area. The survey

and questionnaire forms had a collected total of fifteen questions, with multiple selected styles. The questions were based on how participants view their faith in correlation with their health.

The questions that were asked for the questionnaire highlighted the participant's levels of their health and how they view their faith. In other words, these questions were designed to measure how each participant view their dietary behavior with their faithfulness to God. The questions that were asked are:

Questionnaire

1. Would you like to change your health?
2. What areas of your health would you like to improve?
3. What are you doing to improve your health?
4. Which of the following categories best describes your daily diet?
5. Do you find losing weight to be difficult?
6. Do you seek God for discipline?
7. Do you believe nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37)?

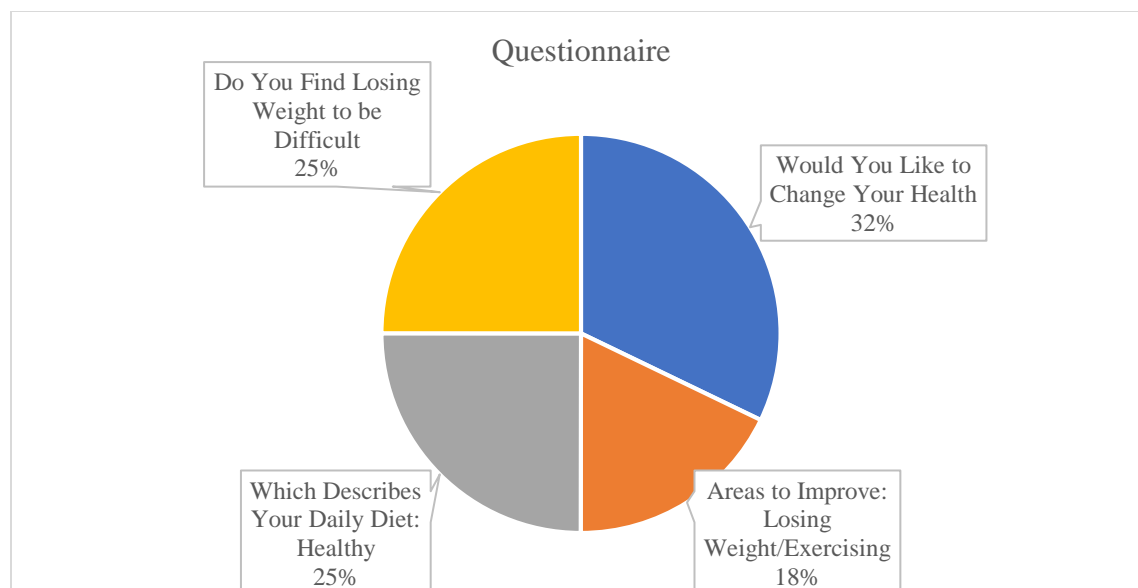


Figure 1 gives an analysis of four of the seven questions that asked participants how they view their overall lifestyle. The first question asked was: “Would you like to change your health?” Thirty-two percent of the participants answered yes, which leads to the next question, which asked, “What areas of your health would you like to improve?” The areas that participants responded to was 41.7% for exercising, 41.7% for losing weight, and 16.6% to improve their blood pressure. Each of these areas are a combination of preventable diseases, such as obesity, heart disease, and hypertension. This is a huge issue because the life of a Christian is rooted in living by the Word of God, and the Word of God teaches discipline. Stoll points out the statistics of obesity in the religions of the world: Baptist 30 %; Pentecostal 22%; Methodist 19%; Catholic 17%; Mormons 3%; Jewish 1%, and Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist 0.7”¹¹⁷ Christians must remember to honor God with their bodies (1 Cor 6:20).

¹¹⁷ Stoll, *Alive!*, 443.

The life of the Christian is the church. Christians may not be equating their health with the church. In 1 Corinthians, Paul is holding a dialogue on pneumatology and ecclesiology when he says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God” (1 Cor 6:19 [NIV]). It is evident that as Christians, the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, but Paul is explicitly saying, do you not know that your body, the church, is the temple of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Christians as the church together make up the body.

The third question which asked participants do they find losing weight to be difficult, 25% agreed that it was challenging to lose weight, but it was encouraging when the researcher asked the question what are they doing to improve their health, there was an overwhelming respond to change their dietary habits, exercise, and lastly follow their doctor's orders. The fourth question asked participants to describe their daily diet. The food categories that they had to choose from were fast foods, fried foods, or restaurants (eating out). The analysis showed that most participants would like to change their diets by 75%, and 25% of the participants answered that they eat a healthy diet daily.

Many Christians must reevaluate their dietary behavior. Weight gain is an individual health issue. There are multiple factors that lead to weight gain. Christians know God but might not know themselves. Stoll writes, “Weight gain, like so many of the degenerative diseases, is the result of genetic susceptibility combined with accumulated environmental influence like food, activity levels, toxins, and stress.”¹¹⁸

Instead of using scales to measure their weight, Christians must measure the problem that is causing the weight. Many Christians are not confronting the issues that significantly affect the

¹¹⁸ Stoll, *Alive!*, 420.

way that they view food. These issues include stress, learned behaviors as a child, lack of nutritional knowledge, demographics, no grocery stores in the neighborhood, financials, inactivity or not exercising, not sleeping, and traditional cultural eating habits. The significance of all these dilemmas signifies that there is evidence of diminished faith in the lives of Christians.

The last two questions asked were faith-based, “Do you seek God for discipline?” And, “Do you believe nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37)?”. Each participant answered yes to both questions of faith. Each participant testified that there is nothing that God cannot do; evidently, their health concerns justify a life of leaning on themselves instead of leaning on God. Christians who are looking for a transformation in their health must come to God in honesty because He knows their weaknesses, and Satan uses their weaknesses, and “sifts them like wheat” (Luke 22:31 [NIV]). The Bible says, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Prov 3:5-6 [NIV]). Each participant agreed that they seek God for discipline.

There is a correlation between faith and discipline. The faith of a Christian is undeniably displayed daily. To seek God for discipline is actively exercising faith; therefore, the diet of many Christians should imitate their unwavering faith by living and obeying God’s command to honor Him by honoring their body (1 Cor 6:19 [NIV]).

Seeking God for discipline, and believing that nothing will be impossible with Him, is evidence of having a personal relationship with God. Food addiction is real, but for followers of Christ who live by the Word of God, and not by the world of man, it should be denounced.

1 Peter 2:9 said, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful life.”

Survey

The questions that were asked for the survey focused on the participants' knowledge of health and their understanding of faith and the body. The questions that were asked are:

1. What is your health level?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, with one being Strongly disagreed and ten being Strongly agreed, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements?
3. What three foods do you eat daily that are healthy?
4. Do you believe that there is a correlation between a faithful servant of God and a disciplined servant of God?
5. Should your diet resemble your faith?
6. Do you treat your body as a temple where the Holy Spirit dwells?
7. Are you reading the nutrition label on your foods? Especially for sodium, sugar, and fats?
8. How many times a week do you exercise, eat fruit, and eat vegetables?

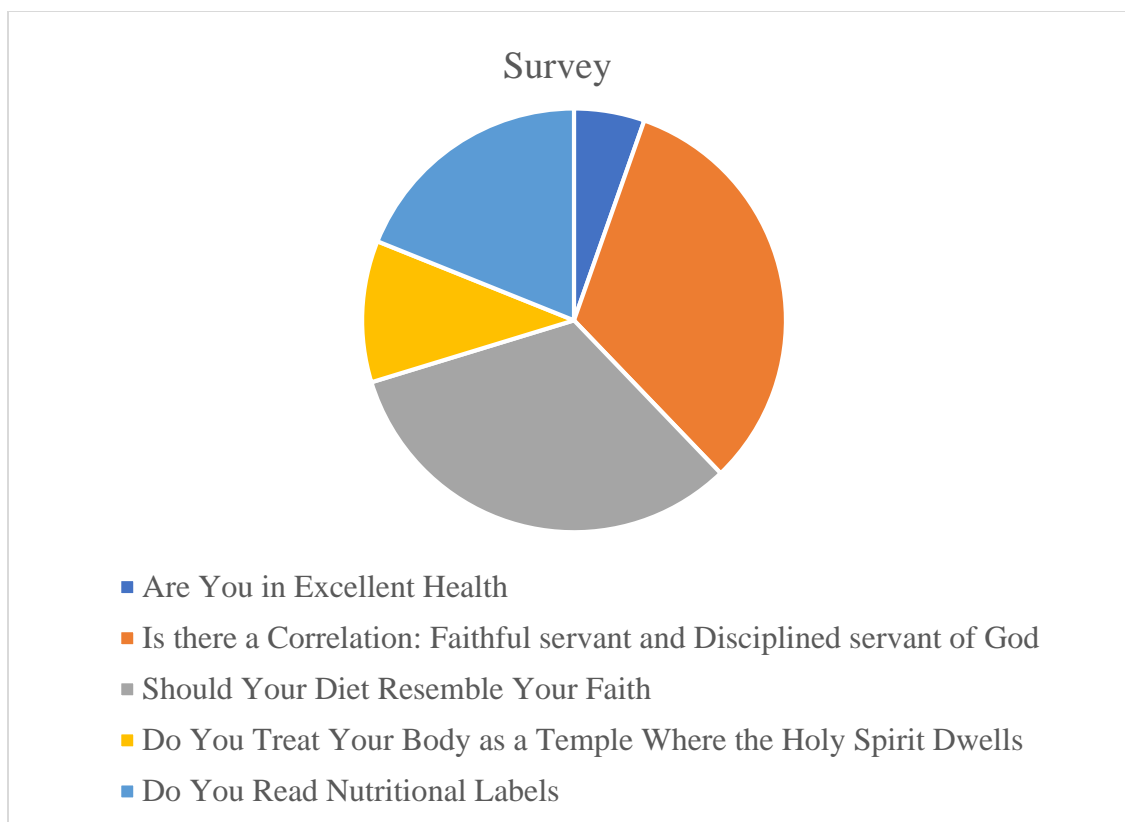


Figure 2 chart gives an analysis of five of the eight questions answered by the participants regarding how they view their health in correlation with their faith. For the first survey question, “Are you in excellent health?”, half of the participants answered that they are in good health, because they are only ten pounds overweight, exercise three times a week, and only have one health issue. Thirty-three percent answered that their health “needs improvement,” because they are overweight or obese, they have health issues, and that they need a health aid to assist them. Only 16.6% answered that they are in excellent health, which means they are not overweight, they exercise five times a week, and they do not have any health issues. The second question asked: “Do you believe that there is a correlation between a faithful servant of God and a disciplined servant of God?” Each participant agreed, the answered showed 100% believe that a faithful servant of God is a disciplined servant of God.

The truth of the matter is a disciplined life must also be seen in the health of a Christian. When it comes to food versus many other areas of an undisciplined life, such as gambling or immoral behavior, Christians may have a disconnect in exercising discipline. It is evident that Christians who repeatedly choose a diet that is not governed by discipline can easily be viewed as those who embrace idolatry because their focus is on their diet and not on God. They have to identify their hunger, which might not be for food. Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35 [NIV]).

Christians must first identify with their weaknesses to recognize that they are being tempted. Matthew wrote how Satan tried three times to tempt Jesus, and each of his temptations failed. The Bible says in Matthew 4:2-11, that the first temptation, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread” (V.3), is the basis for physical need: hunger; the second temptation said, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down” (V.6), represents the basis for emotional need: security; the last temptation, “bow down and worship me” (V.8-11), illustrates the psychological need to be important. Jesus displays His Lordship over Satan through quoting scripture and directly rebukes him when he said the words, “Get thee hence, Satan” (Matt 4:10). Jesus is teaching Christians the power that is in the Word of God, and that it will prevail in any and all circumstances.

The Bible is the antidote for temptation. Paul expresses this in 1 Corinthians 10:13, when he said to the Corinthians, “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” In response to the third question that was asked, “Should your diet resemble your faith?”, All participants agreed

that their diet should resemble their faith. This answer shows that participants are mindful of their diet and would like to improve their health. The body must be viewed as a significant part of having faith in God. Paul expresses this concern when he says, “I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God” (Rom 12:1). Dobson points out Paul’s message on how Christians are to present themselves to God.¹¹⁹

The fourth question asked was “Do you treat your body as a temple where the Holy Spirit dwells?” What seems peculiar about the three answers to this question is that only 33.3% agreed that they treat their body as a temple, 58.3% answered that they usually do, and 8.3% responded seldom. Although all of the participants agreed that their diet resembles their faith, it is surprising that only one-third of them treats their body as a temple. Many of the participants acknowledged that they are aware of the fact that they do not eat healthy all of the time, and that they can do a better job of increasing their health with various forms of extra-curriculum. The last question asked: “Are you reading the nutrition label on your foods? Specifically, for sodium, sugar, and fat.” This question is vital to ask Christians because it teaches them to take notice of what they are digesting into their body. It is a fact they should be aware that before they began to eat anything, they should know what is in their food, particularly if they have any illnesses. Fifty-eight percent of the participants said that they read the nutritional information on the foods, and 41.6% agreed that they do not read the information provided on foods. It is unquestionable that Christians need to become vigilant for the best health of their body. The Bible said, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for

¹¹⁹ That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Paul now deals in greater detail with what it means to present ourselves to God. The Lord God wants the sacrifice of our life, not our death. Consequently, the sacrifice we are to make of our bodies is a living sacrifice. Not only is the presentation of our bodies a living sacrifice, but it is also a holy and acceptable sacrifice. When the sacrifice of ourselves to God is holy, it is inherently acceptable to God and well-pleasing to Him. More than this says the apostle, the sacrifice of ourselves to God is our reasonable service. Dobson et al., *Bible Commentary*, 1439.

someone to devour” (1 Pet 5:8 [NIV]). Christians must remain faithful so that “Satan cannot sift them like wheat” (Luke 22:31 [NIV]).

Both survey and questionnaire questions were created for the participants to focus on their self-discipline, nutritional knowledge, faithfulness, and self-love, with an emphasis on self-transformation. Analyzing the answers to the survey and questionnaire forms showed a clear and concise pattern of the participants' dietary habits and lifestyles. The data analysis is useful for the informing future health seminars for the parish health ministry. It is inarguable that the life of a Christian must reflect a life of discipline. In the words of Scott Stoll, “It is just not right that we, as His followers, His ambassadors to the world, and he redeemed bride of Christ should be more overweight and unhealthy than the secular culture.”¹²⁰

Presentation

The presentation was designed to garner the curiosity of participants who want nutritional knowledge, and those who acknowledge their unhealthy diet and lifestyle but need to be repeatedly encourage. The researcher executed the health presentation through a PowerPoint application with a projector that was monitored by a member of the parish health ministry. Each of the four PowerPoint slides was divided into two sections, with rules that contrasted the subjects: “What to eat versus What we are eating;” “Serving Sizes versus Restaurant servings;” and “What foods *do* for the body versus What foods are *doing* to the body.” The health presentation revealed the advantages and disadvantages of food in relation to the health of the body, and pointed out that everything that is consumed by the body will either defy or defend the health of the body. The presentation was designed to encourage participation from those who attended the event.

¹²⁰ Stoll, *Alive!*, 435.

The first section was titled, first rule: what to eat. The researcher talked about the foods we need to it versus the foods we are eating and how these foods are destroying our health systematically. The Old Testament repeatedly explains how to eat healthily. The book of Daniel 1:12 says, “Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.” Clearly, God was blessing Daniel for exercising discipline by not eating food that was sacrificed to idols. Daniel's life represented the embodiment of faith. His impervious faith is a reminder to trust in God when faced with temptation.

Water was included in the topic of what to eat, because it was important to teach the effects that water, low sodium, good fats, and high fiber will have on the body versus the impact of sugary beverages, high sodium foods, bad fats, and little to no fiber will have on the body. Also, water helps prevents clogging of the arteries in the heart and the brain, and it is the best lubricating laxative, opposed to high sugar beverages that will create insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes mellitus, and or an obese body weight.¹²¹

It was important to point out precisely the total amount of milligram and grams that should be consumed in a day, making it clear that everything should be eaten in moderation. The researcher recommended healthier alternatives for cooking with herbs and spices versus salt, and to eat healthier snacks, and drinking at least eight glasses of water.

The second section which was titled second rule explained how Christians should eat versus how Christians are eating. The researcher stressed that eating breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch, mid-afternoon snack, and dinner is considered a healthy diet if eaten in moderation and, with some form of exercise.

¹²¹ F. Batmanghelidj, *You're Not Sick, You're Thirsty! Water for Health, for Healing, for Life* (New York, NY: Warner Books, Inc., 2003), 33.

The researcher also pointed out how important it is to know the serving size of each food and how overeating will quickly lead to gaining body weight. And, emphasizing that it only takes 3500 calories to gain 1 pound, and how you can easily reach 3500 calories in one sitting if you are eating in a restaurant, because most restaurants serve double the serving size, especially if you are dining at a food buffet. There are numerous restaurants that now list the calories next to the food on the menu. There are popular restaurants like the Cheesecake Factory that add the calories of each food item on their menu, and many of their food items have 1500 calories or more. It is important to note that a 1500 calorie meal, along with a beverage and dessert, will most likely total over 2,000 calories in one sitting. To reiterate, eating one meal in a restaurant is concerning, because the totality of all three meals in a day will undoubtedly surpass 3,500 calories, adding an alarming pound or two in one day.

It is necessary to pay attention to the total amount of calories consumed daily. Learning to read the nutrition panel label on every food product will enhance consumers with a nutritional education of what they are eating. The nutritional label also provides the ingredients of the food content, and this information should also be read with concern.

In the third rule the researcher explained how healthy food such as good fats, salmon, avocado, dark green leafy vegetables, olive oil; and complex carbohydrates, such as legumes, brown rice, whole grains, oats, millet, quinoa, whole-wheat pasta, sweet potatoes; and healthy protein, such as lean meats, fish; and fiber foods, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, undeniably serve to maintain the health of the body. It is important to be careful of foods that are tastier because of their high unhealthy fat content. The high fat content of these foods can cause heart disease, in addition to weight gain especially in the abdominal. Foods that are high in unhealthy fats usually have little to none fiber, which will also contribute to weight gain as well

as poor digestive health. There is no substitute when it comes to eating healthy foods because of their valuable nutrients. For instance, the nutrients in red bell peppers, broccoli, and citrus fruit are loaded with vitamin C.¹²²

The researcher then contrasted the unhealthy food groups with healthy food groups to point out their properties. Foods that have good fats, high fiber, complex carbohydrates, and lean protein will inarguably add health and stamina to the entire body. The Bible talks about herbs in Numbers 11:5; fruits and nuts in Genesis 43:11 and Leviticus 19:19; vegetables/legumes in Ezekiel 4:9; grains in Ezra 6:9; and fish in Matthew 15:36. Whereas foods that are high in unhealthy fats, high in sodium (salt), and high in sugar can be harmful to the body. God is concerned that believers live faithfully and eat healthily. Paul explains to the Romans, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men" (Romans 14:17-19 [NIV]). In the book of Mark, Jesus states, "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")" (Mark 7:18 [NIV]).

A Description of The Conclusions

Participants

The audience of participants were diverse. The ages ranged from eighteen to near seventy years old. There were men and women, and some of the participants had a child accompanying them because the event followed the last Sunday worship service. The participants interacted

¹²² Whitney and Rolfes, *Understanding Nutrition*, 307.

with one another and the parish health ministry members. The atmosphere was professional, gregarious, and full of curiosity. The participants have many questions regarding the health presentation. They eagerly engaged with the researcher's teachings on diet, health, exercise, and faithfulness to God. The participants were not individually interviewed; instead, the inquiries that each participant had throughout the health presentation were the equivalent of an individual interview. Their questions reflected the convenience of traveling to grocery stores that were equipped with the foods they were learning about. They were also concerned with the idea of petitioning their grocery stores to make the necessary changes for specific foods in their neighborhoods. Some participants were disturbed that their community lacked fresh and healthy foods.

Conversation

The participants entered the room full of gospel music, and a banner placed directly on the front wall that read, "Is your temple healthy?" and "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself?" The banner inspired a full conversation of how Christians maintain their health and what God expects of His followers. There was a full lunch buffet of healthy foods. Many of the participants, including the parish health ministry members, complimented the foods. The participants agreed that the health presentation successfully highlighted the importance of their lifestyles. The health presentation was designed to teach, inspire, and remind Christians that their bodies were brought with a price, and they must honor their bodies by honoring God. The participants were conversing with the members of the ministry to inquire about the parish health ministry's next meeting.

Hospitality

The room was decorated with a purple and gold banner that asks the question, “Is your body healthy, Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself” (1 Cor 6:15). The colors of the banner represented the colors of the church. As the researcher, I introduced myself and welcomed the invited participants to the parish health ministry monthly meeting and recruitment celebration for the research project. I explained that my research project entails the banner, the lunch buffet, survey and questionnaire forms, consent letter, recruitment letter, and a health presentation. The researcher also explained in detail the duration of each activity, beginning with inviting the participants to the lunch buffet. The music, the banner, and the buffet were assets to the research project.

The participants were excited to eat food that was healthy and different from their regular diet. The intervention took place immediately after the last Sunday worship. Adding gospel music for the intervention project continued an inspiring feeling.

Evaluations

The subject of health takes on many meanings for everyone, including Christians and non-Christians. Summoning the attention of an individual to monitor or change their health can be, at times, an arduous task. Teaching and reminding Christians that their health must reflect their unwavering faith for Jesus Christ is imperative; therefore, believers need to regain and or maintain a healthy mind, body, and soul. Recruiting participants to participate in learning about their health, and making the decision to actively transform the way that they view their faith and their body, was overwhelmingly successful. The event showed that there are many believers who are interested in their health but may need an extra push to overcome their procrastination.

The analysis of the survey and questionnaire forms revealed that many Christians believed that their diets were healthy. This is why I found it necessary to present a health presentation that showed a clear and concise contrast between good healthy fats and bad, unhealthy fats. Pointing this information out, especially to the younger Christians in the class, can definitely guide them in making better decisions when it comes to keeping their body healthy throughout their life. I found that teaching believers that God is concerned with their health motivated them to change their style of cooking, the way that they grocery shop, and how they eat their meals when dining out in a restaurant.

The banner in the room that read, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself” (1 Cor 6:15), was an added asset for the faithfulness of each believer. Reminding Christians that, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast, for we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:8 [NIV]).

I specifically reiterated three significant points that Christians need to exercise daily, the first was that they should eat the food that God has created; thereby, limiting processed food. God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food” (Gen 1:29 [NIV]). Secondly, I explained that everything that you eat has calories, so do not be fooled by the subtle sensitizing effects of commercials that summons you with foods that are sugar-free and fat-free, because the calories still count towards gaining weight. Lastly, I explained how diseases like hypertension, obesity, and diabetes mellitus are all preventable. In other words, these are diseases that are

resulting from an unhealthy diet and lifestyle. It is a fact that these diseases will contribute to multiple health concerns called syndrome X.

The combination of obesity and insulin resistance, along with elevated cholesterol and hypertension is collectively known as the metabolic syndrome or Syndrome X.¹²³ I believe that the recruitment event was a success because the health presentation gave the participants a new definitive on the way that they view their health, their diet, and their faith.

¹²³ Whitney and Rolfes, *Understanding Nutrition*, 257.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The success of the research project illustrated the importance of health ministries within the church. The project has had a direct impact on the church and the community because the results that were achieved by recruiting new members to the parish health ministry has also shown to have a profound effect on the health of the church. The results proved that implementing a recruitment program throughout the year is absolutely necessary to increase the attendance of the parish health ministry. This project confronted the many issues that prevent Christians from contending with worldly matters that plague their mind, body, and soul, resulting in an unhealthy lifestyle. Through theological and nutritional education, the project reminded Christians that God wants them to intentionally live in their lives by honoring Him with their bodies and deny the conformity of the world.

The resolve of the research project confronted numerous reasons that the participants have not joined the parish health ministry in the past. To begin with many participants denied that they had any health problems, or that following their doctors order was enough. The issues that many of the participants revealed were based on confronting their weaknesses, believing that nothing will help or that it was too late for them to change their health. Many participants did not view themselves as unhealthy, because they admitted that there are so many other Christians, family members, and friends who share the same health as they do. It is an arduous task trying to save the health of a person if they do not believe that they have a health problem. The participants participated in the recruitment for new members because they were individually called to attend an event educating them on their health. The Bible says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom 10:17 [NIV]).

It is imperative that the church talks about the faithfulness of living healthy. Teaching Christians the importance of a healthy body from the pulpit of the church exemplifies that there is a correlation between discipline and faith. The book of Daniel speaks of the epitome of faith, but it also teaches the essence of faith seen through the discipline of a healthy diet.

The King assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the King's table. (v.8) But, Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief officials for permission not to defile himself this way. (v.15) At the end of ten days, they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. (v.16) So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. (Dan 1:5-16 [KJV])

Consequently, if the church preaches on what Christians should eat and how they should take care of their bodies, there is an assurance that many more Christians would invest their time in learning more about their health, and perhaps join ministries that promote healthy living. The significance of this project revealed to many Christians the truth of worship and praise for God includes taking care of the health of their bodies. Here is what I found: there is a lack of men believers joining the ministry. The ministry has to promote the necessary forum for men to feel inspired to want to know more about their health. Entertaining recruitment events that cater to the heart and soul of Christian men is what is necessary. Reaching out to teach believers by motivating them on the importance of the health of their bodies is crucial because it is the cornerstone of serving God steadfastly and with stamina throughout the nations.

The success of the project has supplied the health data needed to help participants who had been combating health issues and food issues. This study was significant because it gave believers the opportunity to take control over their lives and directly change how they feel and think about their health. The participants were honest about the interrelationship between faith and discipline in their lives and how they view both in relation to their dietary behavior. The project successfully placed emphasis on how to retain or maintain a healthy body, as well as

identifying that honoring the body honors God. The truth is God has given Christians the gift of free will. The question Christians should ask themselves is if free will help the in discipling their temple or destroying it.

Interpretations

The results of this research project, in comparison to many similar studies, display a clear difference in that my decision to teach Christians the importance of their health is directly correlated with the understanding that Christians have to remember to keep God first even in their dietary behavior. All Christians are familiar with the biblical passage that says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were brought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19-20[NIV]). The word of God that teaches believers they were brought with a price should place an emphasis on the affirmation of “Do you not know that your bodies are the members of Christ Himself” (1 Cor. 6:15). In other words, the body of a believer belong to Christ, and it should be taken care of with honor.

Most studies point out the results of an unhealthy diet. They do not speak about how to help believers recognize that they need to become their own health vigilantes in discovering what issues are the cause of their unhealthiness. Proeschold-Bell and Byassee, in studies on Christian health and diet, revealed that the effects that stress has on the body, including food cravings, unfortunately summons pastors to an unhealthy diet as well.

Their message is that stress stimulates the pleasure center of the brain, causing Christians to diet on comfort foods.¹²⁴ This statistic is proven based on the fact that the rates of obesity and

¹²⁴ Proeschold-Bell and Byassee, *Faithful and Fractured* , 82.

heart disease are much higher for clergy, including all genders and ethnicities, than it is for everyone else. It is absolutely unquestionable how stress and hard work can hinder the health of the body thus causing a desire to seek comfort, especially in food. But this type of diet will cause a roller coaster effect in the lives of believers. Stoll writes how recent studies of brain activity have shown that sugar, fat, and salt all stimulate the pleasure-seeking pathways in the brain and directly interact with the dopamine receptors, which stimulates feelings of euphoria, excitement, and satisfaction.¹²⁵

Also, Nancy Manister points out in her dissertation how Carroll, McMillan, Price, and James (2001) reported that 75% of pastoral leaders (77.2% Protestant) described themselves as overweight or obese. She points out that clergy's appraisal of stress may activate a variety of responses to stress.¹²⁶ Stoll makes it clear that unhealthy eating for Christians is a symptom of a much bigger problem. He writes, "It is imperative to understand that weight is merely an easily measurable marker of a much larger problem and that some people are more susceptible to weight gain than others, but all are at risk of disease when eating the modern Western diet."¹²⁷

Stoll points out the truth when he said, "As Christians begin to lose their health, they become focused on their own lives, pain, diseases, and sufferings, which leaves them less able to focus on the needs around them. The ability to rise up and go forth, to see and meet the needs around us greatly diminished."¹²⁸ Stoll makes it clear that believers are the stewards of their

¹²⁵ Stoll, *Alive!*, 1577.

¹²⁶ Manister, "Role Stress, Eating Behaviors, and Obesity in Clergy," 1.

¹²⁷ Stoll, *Alive!*, 412.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 453.

bodies, and the goal of the believer's life is to manage everything in the best interest of the owner, Jesus Christ.¹²⁹

Cutrer's approach to teaching believers that to honor their body is to use the Bible, in particular biblical scriptures that point out the clear and concise representation of theology that is needed for maintaining the health of the body, which is the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells. He points out that, "To create a wellness lifestyle is to accept responsibility for the choices we make and to continue to grow and learn how to better care for this magnificent, Christ-like, human body we have been given."¹³⁰ His methodology for Christians is that they consciously pay attention to the total amount of calories that they consume in a day opposed to the total amount of calories that are being expelled through daily activities.

Here is what I found when I served the lunch buffet. The participants enjoyed eating foods that they have never tried before. The conversation about the foods in the buffet demonstrated how the participants were willing to try different foods that were healthy and tasty. My decision to do this was based on proving to the participants how different ingredients and different recipes will add an abundance of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and, equally importantly, reduce the calories of the food. Teaching the participants that they can easily change the way that they view food by changing the recipes to healthier foods encourages them with a new-found feeling of empowerment.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 542.

¹³⁰ William R. Cutrer, "A Call to a Wellness Lifestyle: Some Practical Suggestions," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* SBJT, 13:2 (Summer 2009), 59.

Trustworthiness

Personal Growth

There is no doubt that the faith of a Christian encompasses the health of their body. What I learned through implementing this research project is that there is no compromise in serving God. As a disciple of Christ, I found that the neglect of your health is a clear signal that your faith is also diminishing. 1 Corinthians 6:19 is an adamant reminder to believers to honor their body because it is the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells. Stoll said it this way, “The body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body, and that our bodies should be dedicated to bringing glory to God.”¹³¹ I learned that Paul is specifically saying do you not know that your body, which is the church, is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Here is where Paul combines the body as the church and testifies how Christians as the church together make up the body; therefore, the Christian's lifestyle, including their visible health, must revered the body.

Motivating Christians through the enlightenment of health presentations revealed that in order for believers to have a full transformation in the way that they live their lives regarding their diets and their bodily health, they must first, with unwavering faith, acknowledge that they themselves are the residents of the Holy Spirit. Clearly, it is the Holy Spirit who has to transform the mind, body, and soul, which would also transform the dietary behavior of believers.

I learned that the church must also talk about the seriousness of health and the body as it relates to being faithful to God. Also, it is clear that many church leaders are overweight and battling with this problem. Although use of churches for promoting community health is an effective method for reaching members of the community, this message may be distorted when the clergyperson is obese and/or un-healthy. It gives the message that an un-healthy body is

¹³¹ Stoll, *Alive!*, 695.

acceptable, as long as the mind and spirit are in the right place. Therefore, addressing clergy health may be important for community health."¹³² Praying, living faithfully, reading the word of God, and actively engaging in a health ministry is the beginning of defeating this problem. There are many church leaders who are living unhealthily because of stress. Scazzero said, "Unhealthy leaders engage in more activities than their combined spiritual, physical, and emotional reserves can sustain."¹³³ Scazzero goes on to say that "they ignore emotion-related messages their bodies may send – fatigue, stress-induced illness, weight gain, ulcers, headaches, or depression."¹³⁴ This unhealthiness of church leaders often leads to the neglect of preaching the importance of living holy, which also means to live healthily. Stoll points out that we rarely hear sermons on the subject of health and God's perfect plan for our bodies. The stewardship of the body is a forgotten topic, and Christians are suffering unnecessary diseases because of the "worldly wisdom" of this age."¹³⁵ It is essential for the church to hear and live by the words of God:

If Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness." (v.12) "Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation – but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it." (v.13) "For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Rom 8:10-15 [KJV])

As a nutritionist, a ministry member, and a disciple of Christ, it was necessary to point out that God is first in my life. Keeping God first is a reminder of how to live in optimal health to serve Jesus efficiently. The truth is it is important to speak honestly concerning my health in

¹³² Nancy N. Manister, "Role Stress, Eating Behaviors, and Obesity in Clergy" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2012), 129.

¹³³ Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 27.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Stoll, *Alive!*, 852.

order to be an effective teacher for others. Asking participants their opinions as opposed to assuming their reasons for attending the health forum was highly beneficial. It is my belief not to judge, but to exercise what God has called me to do, which is Christian nutritional motivational speaking. The ministry is the representation of Christian helping Christians. As Christians, we are reminded, “The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7 [NIV]). God is concern with the heart of the believer.

There is no denying that a faithful life combined with discipline will successfully change an unhealthy diet to a healthier lifestyle. For Christians, their fight is not with an unfaithful life, but with a life that cries out for the fortification of Jesus to help them change their life long habits. Sharing the message that honoring the body with healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle proved to be beneficial to believers, because it helped them to view their dietary habits differently. Teaching the participants nutritional knowledge and how to care for their health will undoubtedly extend into their families and friends. The presentation also outlined that how Christians live dictates to the world how they feel about themselves. This health forum was intended to excite the mind, heart, and soul of believers by connecting them to Jesus.

Future Research

The research proved to be successful in many different ways. To begin with, the recruitment event increased the ministry over 10%. The health presentation inspired health inquiries from participants that merit future research in the way that they view food and shop for food and, of course, in their diets. Many participants inquired about the food deserts in their neighborhoods and were interested in the legality of correcting this problem. Their issues were based on the fact that in their neighborhoods, the variety of fresh fruits and products is limited.

Their concerns addressed the grocery stores conveniently located in their neighborhoods. The participants also recognized that there are multiple fast-food restaurants in their communities. Although fast-food chain restaurants have foods like salads and grilled chicken, these foods are mostly processed, and are high in fat, sugar, and sodium. The existence of multiple fast-food restaurants within a particular demographic can add to the epidemic of preventable diseases. Stoll writes that the abundance of processed foods led to an overfed but still nutritionally deficient population that is susceptible to a host of other diet-related diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, autoimmune disease, allergies, and many cancers.¹³⁶ Many of the participants live in the surrounding community of the church. Pointing out the potential for increasing the health of a neighborhood through fresh produce that is locally convenient to shoppers would be ideal for the church.

Here is what I found: a nutritionist teaching participants how to shop for their health would be productive for the members of the ministry, and it would serve many purposes. For instance, I would teach believers which vegetables, fruits, and grains they need to maintain and improve their health. Also, I would be able to explain to the participants what vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients each food provides for optimal health. I would describe the nutritional labels on all the foods; all of the food would be fresh. In addition, I would teach them how to prepare healthy foods that are full of nutrients for each meal, and they would have convenient transportation.

The future of the parish health ministry is that it will continue to serve the members of the church through teaching, motivating, and inspiring church members to collectively join the ministry and follow the Great Commission of Jesus Christ through community service. The

¹³⁶ Stoll, *Alive!*, 896.

health of the church correlates with the health of the surrounding community, which makes the ministry invaluable to both the church and the community. The project's research has successfully achieved recognition regarding how important it is to lead Christians into a healthier life to serve God with stamina. The parish health ministry is a ministry in which Christians help Christians in their pursuit of obtaining and maintaining a healthy body through truthful teaching and motivation. Paul teaches the Ephesians that lying does not personify a character of Jesus, when he says, "Each of you put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor" (Eph 4:25 [NIV]). Paul explains how speaking the truth habitually is the only intelligent and consistent way to deal with our neighbors, or those who are members of the body and of one another.¹³⁷

The research has effectively help change the mindset of how believers view their relationship with God, food, and health. In so doing, it helped in modifying their dietary behavior. The future research for the ministry will be to continue the "Each One Bring One" recruitment campaign for a steady increment of new members each month. There is a future for health ministries in all churches. Teaching and motivating Christians on the fundamental knowledge of how to eat and live healthier should be taught internationally. To "Be imitators of God" (Eph. 5:1 [NIV]), Christians must personify love, self-love, and a love to serve. A life that exhibits discipline is indicative of self-love.

¹³⁷ Dobson et al., *Bible Commentary*, 1573.

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APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 8, 2019

Christine A. Walcott

IRB Exemption 4003.110819: Increase the Attendance of the Parish Health Ministry by Ten Percent at the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York

Dear Christine A. Walcott,

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

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office



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APPENDIX B: Approved Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
11/8/2019 to --
Protocol # 4003.110819

CONSENT FORM

Increase the Attendance of the Parish Health Ministry by Ten Percent at the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York

Christine A. Walcott
Liberty University
School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study of the parish health ministry of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York. This research study is being conducted to increase the attendance of the parish health ministry by ten percent at the Greater Allen Cathedral of New York. You were selected as a possible participant because you are 18 years of age or older, and you are a member of the church. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Christine Walcott, a doctoral candidate from the School of Divinity at Liberty University.

Background Information: I hope to learn that there are many Christians who are health conscious and want to live in optimal health in order to serve God with a steadfast stamina. The participants survey and questionnaire answers will provide the necessary data needed to guide believers to recognize that their bodies are the temples where the Holy Spirit dwells, and there is a spiritual connection between a life that is disciplined in serving God and a life that is disciplined in living healthy for God.

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

1. Complete an anonymous survey form. It will take approximately 15 minutes.
2. Complete an anonymous questionnaire form. It will take approximately 15 minutes.
3. Watch a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the fundamental principles of how to keep the body healthy and strong. It will take approximately 15 minutes.

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

Benefits: The direct benefits to the participants will be increases in health knowledge.

Compensation: Healthy snacks will be served.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. None of the reports published will include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher and the researcher's faculty chair will have access to the records.

- The survey form and the questionnaire form are the only research aspects. The study will be completely anonymous.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
11/8/2019 to --
Protocol # 4003.110819

- The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, and after three years, all records will be deleted.

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

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please do not complete or submit your study materials.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Christine Walcott. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at CWalcott@Liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Fortier, at LeFortier@Liberty.edu.

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

APPENDIX C: Church Approval E-mail

[External] Fw: Parish Health Ministry

Parish Health Ministry <parishhealth@allencathedral.org>

Thu 11/7/2019 9:40 PM

To: Walcott, Christine <cwalcott@liberty.edu>

[EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content.]

The Year of Transformation!!!!

Regards,

Tawanna M. Jones -Wilson

Parish Health Ministry

Leader

The Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of

New York

110-31 Merrick Blvd

Jamaica, NY, 11433

From: Lakeisha Merrick-Pender

Sent: Wednesday, November 6, 2019 5:19 PM

To: Parish Health Ministry

Subject: RE: Parish Health Ministry

Glad you sent this again. I did not see it the first me. Yes, you are all set.

From: Parish Health Ministry

Sent: Monday, November 04, 2019 10:49 PM

To: Lakeisha Merrick-Pender <lakeisha@allencathedral.org>

Subject: Re: Parish Health Ministry

Hello Rev. Lakeisha,

I didn't see the approved Calendar request in the mailbox. Are we ok for B13/14.

APPENDIX D: Questionnaire/Survey Forms

This is an anonymous questionnaire. Answer each question based entirely on your own opinions of how you view your health and what you would like to change. (Circle or write in your answers)

1. **Would you like to change your health?**
Yes or No

2. **What areas of your Health would you like to improve?**
Losing weight
Exercising
Blood Pressure
Diabetes Mellitus
Other _____
All of Above

3. **What are you doing to improve your health?**
Taking health classes
Following doctor's orders
Exercising
Change dietary habits
None of the above
All of the above

4. **Which of the following categories best describes your daily diet?**

A healthy breakfast, lunch and Dinner
Fast foods
Fried foods
Fast throughout the day
Restaurant-(eating out)

5. **Do you find losing weight to be difficult, and, do you seek God for discipline?**

1. _____
2. _____

6. **Do you believe nothing is impossible with God, (Luke 1:37)?**
Yes
Sometimes
No, explain _____

This Is An Anonymous Survey. Please Circle or Write in Your Answers.

What is your health level?

Excellent: (Not Overweight; Exercise 5x's Weekly; No Health Issues)

Good: (10 lbs. Overweight; Exercise 3x's Weekly; Have 1 Health Issue)

Need improvement: (Overweight/Obese; Health Issues; Need Health Aids)

On a scale from 1 to 10, rate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements:

I'm often on a diet _____

I find it hard to stick to a healthy diet _____

I eat fast food more than twice a week _____

I eat healthy foods for my meals _____

I'm not sure what I should eat _____

What three foods do you eat daily that are healthy?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Do you believe that there is a correlation between a faithful servant of God and a discipline servant of God? And if so then, *Should your diet resemble your faith?*

Yes or No

Do you treat your body as a temple where the Holy Spirit dwells?

Often

Usually

Seldom

Are you reading the nutrition label on your foods? Specifically for: sodium, sugar, and fat.

Yes or No

How many times a week do you exercise, eat fruit, eat vegetables?

Exercise _____

Eat fruit _____

Eat vegetables _____

APPENDIX E: PowerPoint Health Presentation For Participants

THE FIRST RULE : WHAT TO EAT

FOODS WE SHOULD EAT

LOW SUGAR: (30G) DAILY

- WATER (8 GLASSES) – UNSWEETENED BEVERAGES

LOW SODIUM FOODS: (1500MG) DAILY

- LOW SODIUM SOUPS (85 MG)
- COOK WITH HERBS
- NO SALT ADDED FOODS
- HEALTHY SNACKS: RAW OR UNSALTED NUTS/SEEDS, BOIL EGG, FRUITS, LOW SUGAR YOGURT, VEGGIE & HUMMUS/GLACOMOLE

FOODS WE ARE EATING

HIGH SUGAR: (OVER 50G) DAILY

- SODAS – JUICES – ICE TEAS – SMOOTHIES - LATTES

HIGH SODIUM FOODS: (OVER 2000 MG) DAILY

- RESTAURANT FOODS/FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS
- COOKING WITH SODIUM/SALT
- SNACKS: Pretzels, Potato Chips, Corn Chips
- SOUPS (600 MG)
- FROZEN FOODS
- SALAD DRESSINGS

THE FIRST RULE: WHAT TO EAT

FOODS WE SHOULD EAT

GOOD FATS: (40-60G) DAILY

- FISH, ADVOCADO, OLIVE OIL, LEAFY GREENS,

FIBER:(25G) DAILY

- FRUITS (3-5), VEGETABLES (4-5), NUTS/SEEDS
- COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES (300G): BROWN RICE, WHOLE GRAINS, OATS, YAMS, SALADS, WHOLE WHEAT PASTA, PEAS & BEANS

FOODS WE ARE EATING

BAD FATS: (OVER 20G) DAILY

- DESSERTS, FRIED FOODS, FATTY MEATS, BUTTER, LARD

LOW TO NO FIBER:

- MEATS, FISH, HIGH SUGAR COLD CEREAL
- SIMPLE CARBOHYDRATES:
- WHITE FOODS: RICE, PASTA, FLOUR, BREAD, POTATOES, PANCAKES, WAFFLES, FRENCH TOAST, CAKE, CANDIES

SECOND RULE: HOW TO EAT

HOW WE SHOULD EAT

SERVING SIZES:

- FOR EVERY MEAL, BEVERAGE AND SNACK
- READ THE NUTRITION PANEL ON ALL FOODS FOR: SODIUM, SUGAR, FAT AND FIBER

EAT 3-5 TIMES DAILY:

- BREAKFAST, MID-MORNING SNACK, LUNCH, AFTERNOON SNACK, DINNER
- TO MAINTAIN GOOD HEALTH
- HEALTHY BODY WEIGHT
- MAINTAIN A HEALTHY BLOOD SUGAR
- A BALANCE MEAL OF NUTRIENTS
- DAILY CALORIES = 2,000 OR LESS

HOW WE ARE EATING

2 ½ TIMES THE SERVING SIZE:

- RESTAURANT SERVINGS
- SUPER SIZING
- ALL YOU CAN EAT BUFFET

SNACKING ALL DAY:

- CONTRIBUTES TO UNHEALTHY WEIGHT GAIN
- WEIGHT GAIN CONTRIBUTES TO PREVENTABLE DISEASES
- ALL FOODS HAVE CALORIES
- 3500 CALORIES = 1 POUND
- TOO MUCH OF ONE FOOD GROUP

THIRD RULE: UNDERSTANDING WHAT WE EAT

WHAT FOODS DO FOR THE BODY

WATER:

- PREVENTS CLOGGING OF ARTERIES IN HEART & BRAIN
- HELPS REDUCE STRESS, ANXIETY, & DEPRESSION
- THE BEST LUBRICATING LAXATIVE

GOOD FATS: (FISH, GREEN SALADS,)

- NEEDED FOR A HEALTHY HEART, BLOOD VESSELS & BRAIN

CARBOHYDRATES: (COMPLEX)

- (FRUITS, VEGETABLES)
- HIGH IN NUTRIENTS, DIGEST SLOWER, SUSTAIN ENERGY

PROTEIN: SALMON-HEALTHY HAIR, MUSCLES, BONES, ENERGY

FIBER: NATURAL LAXATIVE, EAT LESS (FULL FEELING) LEADS TO WEIGHT LOSS, HEALTHY INTESTINES & BOWEL MOVEMENTS

WHAT FOODS ARE DOING TO THE BODY

SUGARY BEVERAGES

- SUGAR CREATES FAT (ESPECIALLY IN STOMACH)
- LEADS TO INSULIN RESISTANCE/DIABETES TYPE 2
- CRAVES MORE SUGAR

BAD FATS: (CAKE, HIGH FATTY MEATS)

CLOG ARTERIES, WEIGHT GAIN, CONTRIBUTES TO DISEASES

CARBOHYDRATES: (SIMPLE) – (HIGH SUGAR, CANDIES)

- LOW NUTRIENTS, DIGEST, WEIGHT GAIN

PROTEIN: CHEESEBURGERS: HIGH FAT, POORER HEALTH

FIBER: FOODS WITH LITTLE TO NO FIBER, EAT MORE OFTEN, CONSTIPATED, UNHEALTHY INTESTINES & BOWELS

APPENDIX F: Health Presentation Banner**IS YOUR TEMPLE HEALTHY?**

“DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOUR BODIES ARE MEMBERS OF CHRIST HIMSELF.”

1 CORINTHIANS 6:15