

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

The Public Reading of Scripture as Integral for Biblical Development

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

by

Raymond Campbell

Lynchburg, Virginia

September 2020

Copyright © 2020 by Raymond Campbell  
All Rights Reserved

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

---

Dr. Sorin V. Sabou, Mentor

---

Dr. Robert Wayne Stacy, Reader

## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

Raymond Campbell

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, 2020

Mentor: Dr. Sorin Sabou

The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry project is to show the impact the public reading of Scripture in worship has on spiritually developing the people of God, and by further showing whether public Scripture reading will enhance biblical literacy, spiritual development and a change of perception relating to Scripture's role in worship. Despite the surge of worship practices in the contemporary evangelical church designed to attract people to the worship service, and practices which seek to develop spiritual growth, the actual biblical mandated practice of the public reading of Scripture as one method for developing individuals is negligible in evangelical churches. This project researched and implemented embraces the premise that a return to the public reading of Scripture in worship is primary to the spiritual development of the people of God. The thesis project investigates this hypothesis and provides the results that a return by pastors and church leaders to the practice of the public reading of Scripture in worship will assist members in developing a walk with God which shows spiritual growth and development.

Thesis project topic abstract length: 176 words

Key Words: Public Scripture reading, Biblical literacy, worship, spiritual development

## Dedication

To the King of kings, who has given His Scripture as a revelation of Himself to His people, may He be glorified through His Bible.

To my wife, Angela, my helper, and my encourager for the past 35 years. You have helped me succeed, believed in me and steadily endured life's hardships with me as a biblical example of a Godly and supportive spouse.

To my son, Raymond Matthew, and his wife Lacey, you have been an inspiration and I thank you that during this project you have given me two wonderful grandchildren I am thankful for. Evelyn and Kason, may you grow up to love the Word of God and hide its words in your heart.

To my son, Michael David, thank you for your initial prodding of me to return to school and finish this degree and for your continued encouragement through this journey. You set the wheels in motion!

To my parents, Ray and Nancy Campbell, thank you for my upbringing and your support.

To Dr. Sabou, thank you for volunteering to take me into your mentorship for this project. I thank you for your work.

## Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Ministry Context</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Ministerial Instability.....	3
Family Authority.....	3
Lack of Biblical Development.....	4
<b>Problem Presented</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Purpose Statement</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Basic Assumptions</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Definitions</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Limitations</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Delimitations</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Thesis Statement</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Scripture Reading in Contemporary Practice.....	19
Scripture Reading as God’s Voice.....	22
Scripture Reading as God’s Activity.....	24
Scripture Reading as Historical Participation.....	26
Scripture as Revelation of Jesus.....	28
Scripture as Worship Necessity.....	30
<b>Theological Foundations</b> .....	<b>32</b>
Importance of Scripture Reading.....	32
Isaiah 55:11.....	35
II Timothy 3:16.....	37
Old Testament Public Scripture Reading.....	40
Joshua 8:34-35.....	40
Nehemiah 8.....	42
II Kings 22:11.....	44
New Testament Public Scripture Reading.....	45
Luke 4:16.....	47
Colossians 4:16; I Thessalonians 5:27; I Timothy 4:13.....	48
Revelation 1:3.....	49
<b>Theoretical Foundations</b> .....	<b>50</b>
Affirming Existing Research.....	50
Existing Practices.....	53
Expanding Existing Theory.....	54
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....	<b>56</b>
<b>Intervention Design</b> .....	<b>56</b>
Project Overview Outline.....	56
Purpose and Objectives.....	61
Project Process.....	63
Participants and Demographics.....	64
Reading Group and Control Listening Group.....	69

Pre and Post Survey.....	74
Importance of Testing Procedure.....	77
<b>Implementation of Intervention Design.....</b>	<b>77</b>
Data Triangulation.....	78
Summary.....	80
<b>Chapter 4: Results.....</b>	<b>81</b>
Articulation of Research Goals.....	81
Examination of Survey Results.....	87
Reading Group Survey Data.....	89
Listening Control Group Survey Data.....	92
Reading and Listening Control Group Joint Survey Data.....	95
Post Project Results Analysis.....	100
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>104</b>
Project Purpose and Overview.....	104
Personal Review of Findings.....	106
Results in View of Review of Literature.....	111
Recommendations.....	113
Summary.....	115
Bibliography.....	118
Appendix A: IRB Approval.....	123
Appendix B: Mount Pleasant Permission Request Letter.....	124
Appendix C: Church Permission Consent Letter.....	125
Appendix D: Individual Consent Letter.....	126
Appendix E: Pre and Post Survey Questionnaire.....	127

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

That God desires to lead His people is usually clear to Christians. That the leading of God is often heard through the public reading of Scripture is often unclear. A church which seeks the leading of God in the life of the congregation but neglects or rejects the corporate reading of Scripture as one of the means for discovering His leading, must look again to the biblical model and its emphasis on the public reading of Scripture.

The reader may be tempted to ask, “why is the corporate reading of Scripture so important?” Smith views it as essential to the development of the individual and corporate biblical worldview which he believes lacking in many congregations today. He writes, “Developing a biblical worldview is a lifelong process of discipleship. It begins when you decide God’s Word, not the larger world, nor the evangelical subculture, nor even standards of respectability, will be your guide for how you see the world. . .we are called to see things “God’s way”-- that is from a biblical worldview perspective.”<sup>1</sup> The corporate reading of Scripture is a primary way of addressing not only a lack of discipleship and biblical knowledge, but for establishing the foundation for understanding God’s direction and desire for His church. Mark Maddix understands Smith’s concern and addresses this neglect of guidance from the public reading of Scripture when he writes, “It is ironic that some Christians who view Scripture as primary and authoritative for faith and practice do not practice regular reading of Scripture in worship.”<sup>2</sup> He elaborates further, “The Scriptures were written for the purpose of presenting us

---

<sup>1</sup>Fred Smith, *Developing a Biblical Worldview: Seeing Things God’s Way* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 114.

<sup>2</sup>Mark A. Maddix, “Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church,” *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 1: 40.



with God's Word, and the purpose of spiritual reading is allowing ourselves to be addressed by God's Word."<sup>3</sup>

The public reading of both the Old and New Testament becomes integral for the church's primary means of experiencing direction and spiritual growth from God. However, if the church neglects the Word of God in worship, the church neglects hearing from God. When the church ceases to hear from God, the church ceases to grow as the body of Christ no longer finding direction and discovering the blessings of God found in His Scripture. The result is, as Smith argues, a drift into man centered doctrine and activity far removed from the biblical examples found in Scripture.

### **Ministry Context**

The local congregation of Mount Pleasant Church serviced by this project is an independent congregation having separated within the last fifteen years from a theologically liberal denomination. They placed little relevancy on Scripture as a means of directing, blessing, and growing a biblical worldview within the congregation.

Examining the pastoral and denominational emphasis in the years leading to the split of the congregation from the denomination there was a theological trend toward church worship practice centering on social justice theory, cultural relativism, and related church politics. This drift reveals three characteristics noticeable in the local church setting. These characteristics define the local ministry setting and take the form of ministerial instability, family stability, and lack of biblical development.

---

<sup>3</sup>Maddix, "Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church," 37.

## Ministerial Instability

Prior to the church's separation from the denomination, there was a forty-year period where the church suffered from ministerial instability. The congregation experienced ministers who came and went frequently, often giving little attention to the spiritual development of the church. This ministerial instability from pastors and interim pastors contributed to the inconsistency of worship practice, especially in relationship to Scripture. An example of this ministerial instability is one interim minister stayed for many years but lived several hours away from the church field. This interim was only present for the worship hour on Sunday morning and was a direct contributor to many of the non-biblical emphases common in the worship service today. Overall, this ministerial instability over the forty-year period contributed to the congregation's acceptance of many non-biblical practices which influenced subsequent worship practices embracing cultural relativism.

## Family Authority

The Mount Pleasant congregation is rural and composed of a two-family historical lineage identity. As the ministerial leadership became weaker and less visible, the family leadership became prominent within the congregation to provide social and church stability through the authority of the prominent families. The lack of an on-the-field ministry presence resulted in subgroups forming and taking control of various elements of church practice, including authority over the elements of the worship service.

The most noticeable result from the lack of ministerial leadership and eventual family control was a worship service migrating toward extended opportunities for social interaction between the families. Since fellowship opportunities like meals after worship, or weekly events were seldom practiced due to the demands farming placed upon rural family life, the result was

an extended fellowship and dialogue period between families during the worship hour. For many of these families assembled for worship, it became easy to adopt Sunday morning as the primary opportunity for socialization each week. The unintentional result of this extended worship socialization and dialogue was a worship hour extending into longer periods each week. To address this extended hour, the family leaders emboldened by the lack of ministerial leadership removed elements of Scripture reading, implemented the use of multiple songs, and demanded shortened sermons.

The extended period of dialogue during worship takes place during the portion of worship called prayer and praise. While socialization is a necessary part of worship for this rural community, the unintended result over the years has been two-fold. The first result is gossip often masquerades as prayer requests. Members discuss personal health issues, family health issues, issues affecting family, and issues relating to extended families within the church. Often, these conversations fail to take into consideration the sensitivity of personal information presented. As this prayer and praise portion of worship progresses each week the stories and need to tell the stories or share information gathered during the week increases. The second unintended result is fifteen to twenty minutes of the worship hour is taken up in non-biblical spiritual development.

#### Lack of Biblical Development

A long-term negative impact of ministerial instability and family control has been a lack of biblical development. Since biblical leadership became infrequent during this forty-year period, opportunities for spiritual development of members became more infrequent. The theological liberalism and infrequency of pastor tenure resulted in little emphasis by these ministers to develop the marks of what is considered strong biblical elements of worship such as

prayer, Scripture, and discipleship. The result of a lack of biblical development has contributed to the congregation's practiced history of indifference toward biblical elements such as Scripture reading during worship.

This indifference is shown by the congregation's view that the first twenty minutes of worship are the "most enthusiastic or desired" element of the worship hour. Again, the result of this over the past forty-years is the biblical elements of worship including prayer, multiple songs, testimony, and Scripture readings have been cut from the order of worship to allow for this ongoing extended worship socializing. Subsequently, biblical literacy and the authority of the Word of God for the life of the congregation has suffered.

Since social dialogue is a historical ritual of worship, the prayer and praise time consumes the first fifteen to twenty minutes of the service. The importance of this historical element of worship is revealed by the result of earlier attempts from leadership to quell and cut back on this extended period of dialogue. Earlier attempts to quell or establish guidelines for the sharing of information during worship was met with displeasure and verbal animosity.

Recently, the two-family heritage and control of the worship in this congregation has been impacted by new people joining the church. The new people are energetic and bring a new dimension of hunger for the Word of God, but they show frustration at the lack of a perceived spiritual emphasis in worship. New members, while valuing the importance of prayer requests and praise have become troubled by what they view as a worship emphasis which focuses on gossip and lack of privacy. The new members place a greater degree of value on spiritual development and satisfying their hunger for Scripture over and against the historical approach which places an emphasis on socialization in worship.

The demand for a renewed spiritual focus and practice of biblical development within the congregation necessitates a fresh look at the worship format as it relates to rebuilding the missing foundational elements. For this project, the goal is the reimplementation and practice of the public reading of Scripture during the worship service. The reimplementation of the public reading of Scripture in worship is the foundational objective for the thesis project and for a hoped outcome of a personal and corporate spiritual renewal and biblical development of the church. The reimplementation of Scripture will be the primary method for developing a more biblical instructive element of worship.

### **Problem Presented**

The problem this project seeks to address is the intentional absence of the public reading of Scripture in the worship service. By reincorporating Scripture reading the project will subsequently address biblical literacy and spiritual growth development coming from that reading. For over forty years, Scripture reading in the worship service has been absent, and this absence has significantly impacted biblical authority and literacy within the local congregation. As noted, the absence of the public Scripture reading results from an active history of purging worship practices deemed unessential which hinder social interaction during worship.

Two significant and problematic developments resulting from the absence of Scripture reading in worship have presented themselves as spiritual problems. First, the authority of Scripture for the foundation, authority and direction of the congregation has been mitigated by making Scripture subservient to the whims of popular opinion. Second, the absence of Scripture in worship has led to a biblical illiteracy impacting spiritual development, discipleship and experiencing God.

Contemporary literature affirms the church's current problem with biblical authority, biblical illiteracy, and lack of experiencing God as directly resulting from the absence of Scripture reading during worship. This absence in turn reflects the very low estimation of Scripture itself within this evangelical community. "To believe in the authority of the Bible is to believe that God has spoken to us through it in a way that must shape and determine our actions and beliefs."<sup>4</sup>

The negative effect of these developments on worship elevates traditions centered on social activity as necessary components of worship. The author would describe this as, "feeding the beast." The congregation needs more time for social activities and traditions which have become necessary in their understanding of worship, so they abandon Scripture. As they abandon Scripture that time is given to developing more non-biblical activity in worship. Daniel Block succinctly addresses this problem when he writes, "at best, the Scriptures are read piecemeal and impatiently. . .for our voice and our interpretation have become more important than the sacred Word of God. At worst, determining to be contemporary and relevant, we do not open the Scriptures at all, dismissing the practice as a fossil without vitality and usefulness."<sup>5</sup>

The problem presented is clear, a spiritual anemia and biblical apathy plague the Mount Pleasant Church community and this results from many decades of a scriptural absence from the worship service. The problem needs addressing, and the public reading of Scripture, God's active

---

<sup>4</sup>Nathan Lovell, "Reflections on the Evangelical Challenge of Reading Scripture in Culturally Diverse Contexts," *St. Mark's Review* 240, (July), 2017: 95.

<sup>5</sup>Daniel Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 190.

voice is the solution. As Fred Smith says, “seeing things God’s way will require serious attention to what the Bible says.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry study is to reimplement the biblical model of public Scripture reading into the worship service engaging and moving the congregation toward a measurable outcome of spiritual growth and biblical literacy, personally and corporately.

This project will identify male and female adult participants who will give themselves to participation in this project through the reading of biblical texts during the worship service of the Mount Pleasant Congregation and by restoring this key biblical element of worship. Moreover, by their participation, the desired outcome of this project is the spiritual rebuilding of this congregation through the corporate reading of Scripture. This project and subsequent rebuilding will prove a measurable degree of spiritual change in the perception of the Old and New Testament and its role in worship among members.

The project’s purpose is to show whether the public Scripture reading will enhance biblical literacy, spiritual development, and a change of perception relating to Scripture’s role in worship. Spiritual foundation cracks brought about by the absence of the Word of God are clear in this ministry context and Scripture will address this issue so the congregation can be a viable witness for Christ. The Bible and relevant literature reveal the public reading of Scripture is necessary for the spiritual teaching and health of the congregation, and this knowledge and health does not come from a mere assent to the importance of God’s Word, but by the actual practice of reading Scripture as an intentional worship practice.

---

<sup>6</sup>Smith, *Developing a Biblical Worldview*, 41.

The project's purpose is to examine whether the public reading of Scripture presented and treated as a primary component of worship will lead the worshipper in experiencing and growing in an interaction with God. McLean, Bird and Lucado emphasize that public Scripture reading "adds spiritual nourishment and intensifies the worship experience. . . as the Word is being read, the people are struck with conviction, their hearts are touched, and their emotions are engaged with the words they are hearing."<sup>7</sup> Measured spiritual transformation and biblical literacy will only occur when the church once again becomes engaged in the active participation of the public reading of Scripture. Only by implementing a direct and focused public reading of God's Word in worship will biblical literacy become a possibility, or as Brian Russell says, "It is necessary to understand the grand story narrated in the Christian Scriptures. . . this is the beginning of realignment with God."<sup>8</sup>

The project's purpose will show Scripture reading addressing the authority of the Word of God for the spiritual direction of the congregation. Since the absence of public Scripture reading has contributed to the decline of the spiritual knowledge of the people, the subsequent result is a lack of submission to the authority of Scripture within congregational life. Presently, the local faith community does not align in practice with God in His historical and theological perspective concerning the importance of obedience to His Word. This reveals the faith community does not comprehend the Scripture's teaching of God's desire for how His church is to worship and to be obedient.

---

<sup>7</sup>Max McLean, Warren Bird, and Max Lucado, *Unleashing the Word: Rediscovering the Public Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 41.

<sup>8</sup>Brian D. Russell, *(re)Aligning with God: Reading Scripture for Church and World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 107.



Therefore, this project is necessary as the beginning step for modeling the biblical example of public Scripture reading as God’s communication of special revelation to His people; discovering His voice and His revealed splendor and majesty in worship; rebuilding a foundation for living the redemptive narrative from Genesis to Revelation and implementing biblical discipleship, learned and exercised throughout this realignment with God’s revealed desire. Dennis Johnson summarizes this saying, “at our point in the history of redemption, however, listening to special revelation is listening to the Scriptures.”<sup>9</sup>

The purpose of this project for the congregation is clear, and Maddix says, “Scripture is encountered through the worship service. It is the Bible, read and preached and received, that calls the Christian community together to worship. When we are gathered around Scripture, it becomes the heart of Christian worship.”<sup>10</sup> The tangible benefits for the congregation by a return to public Scripture reading is obvious in the truth revealed by Storer who writes, “Christ is both subject and object of Scripture, the one who unifies the covenant of promise (Old Testament) and the covenant of fulfillment (New Testament), and the one who mediates himself to the church by means of Scripture.”<sup>11</sup> This brings the local congregation into fellowship with God and with one another through the reading of God’s Word. Learning God’s Word, obedience to God’s Word and fellowship with God and each other are restored and the degree of restoration will be measured by a return to the public reading of Scripture in the worship service.

---

<sup>9</sup>Dennis Johnson, “Between Two Wor(l)Ds: Worldview and Observation in the Use of General Revelation to Interpret Scripture and Vice Versa,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41, no. 1 (1998): 76.

<sup>10</sup>Maddix, “Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church,” 40.

<sup>11</sup>Kevin Storer, *Reading Scripture to Hear God: Kevin Vanhoozer and Henri De Lubac on God’s Use of Scripture in the Economy of Redemption* (Cambridge: James Clarke Company, Limited, 2015), 73.

## **Basic Assumptions**

The project facilitator views Scripture as the beginning and end of God's revelation to His church. Isaiah 55:10-11 affirms the value God places upon His word, and the absence of a Scripture focus equates to the absence of a focus on God's revelation to His church. The facilitator affirms Scripture as a primary source during the worship service for guiding participants in the deeper discovery and understanding of God and His desire for the church.

While the proclamation of the Word of God is essential, the background review of literature and the words of Scripture itself are clear concerning the importance of a designated time given to the reading of God's Word with the intention of listening to God speak and learning the biblical narrative. Therefore, a simple Scripture as the text prior to a message does not sufficiently address the multiple issues experienced within this participating congregation. Therefore, a focused Scripture reading will be practiced by the church.

On the human level, taking part in this project is essential to the project's success. Participation is multi-dimensional, it involves encouragement by the facilitator to the individuals to read and become familiar with the passage, and the individuals to become comfortable in the act of public reading. By taking part in this project, the readers help strengthen their own outlook concerning Scripture and are active in measuring and resetting the spiritual direction of the congregation.

The ultimate assumption is a return to the public reading of Scripture in worship will cause a change of direction individually and corporately toward a Scripture focused worship. Biblical literacy, a biblical emphasis, and biblical authority, will become commonplace in the church, resetting the direction away from a cultural relativism.

## Definitions

In approaching this project, certain terms require clarification rather than an assumption. Although, many of the terms are simplistic in definition, clarifying the understanding of them before the application of the project in the local church setting is necessary.

Using the term Scripture reading, or public Scripture reading in this research will refer to the model of reading the Old and New Testament Christian Scriptures aloud at a designated point in the worship context. Michael Graves writes, “The first allusions to the public reading of ‘Scripture’ are found in the biblical materials themselves. In Deuteronomy 31:10-13, Moses commands the priests and elders of Israel to read ‘this law’ before the people every seven years. This prescription probably served as the foundation for the public reading of the ‘book of the covenant’ described in 2 Kgs 23:1-3.”<sup>12</sup> He provides further insight into the development and understanding of the public reading of Scripture in worship when he writes, “Yet, it is clear from the Rabbis’ adoption of a fixed reading cycle that they intended to make the public reading of Scripture into a liturgical event.”<sup>13</sup> He closes this definition of Scripture reading with, “A Scripture reading ceremony probably developed in the post-exilic period in conjunction with the synagogue, and was well established by the first century AD, as witnessed by Philo, Josephus, and the NT (e.g. Luke 4:16-21; Acts 13:15-16, 15:21).”<sup>14</sup>

Biblical authority is the term to describe the use of Scripture as the primary source for spiritual direction and application of the Word in the church. Keathley affirms this when he

---

<sup>12</sup>Michael P. Graves, “The Public Reading of Scripture in Early Judaism,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 3 (2007): 469.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 484.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 485.

writes, “Although proposed sources of authority may have legitimacy in various areas of life, underlying all of them must be the one unchanging yet dynamically relevant authority, namely, the Word of God.”<sup>15</sup> Lovell says, “To believe in the authority of the Bible is to believe that God has spoken to us through it in a way that must shape and determine our actions and beliefs.”<sup>16</sup>

Biblical illiteracy and literacy are used in this project as a means of addressing an understanding and application of the overarching comprehensive grand narrative of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Peterson writes in affirmation, “Israel’s relationship with God was not to be at the level of the mysterious and irrational. They were to enjoy a personal and moral fellowship with the one who gave his ‘ten’ words or commandments as an integral part of the whole experience of his coming to them.”<sup>17</sup> This is important to biblical literacy as Russell writes “We need to help persons who have grown up inside the church to recapture the missional vibrancy and confidence of the apostolic church of the first four centuries by introducing them to the biblical story.”<sup>18</sup> The goal of the project is biblical literacy as people hear the biblical story again and absorb the Word in worship, they will move from knowing about the Scripture to knowing the Scripture.

A reader is the term used for a member of the project who has volunteered to take part in the reading of Scripture during worship. This reader presents a human voice not as a vague entity, but as one who participates in the historical role of God’s revelation to his church. “When Scripture reading is done well, it adds spiritual nourishment intensifies the worship

---

<sup>15</sup>Kenneth Keathley, James T. Draper Jr., *Biblical Authority: The Critical Issue for the Body of Christ* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2001), 8.

<sup>16</sup>Lovell, “Reflections on the Evangelical Challenge of Reading Scripture,” 95.

<sup>17</sup>David G. Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 29.

<sup>18</sup>Russell, *(re)Aligning with God: Reading Scripture for Church and World*, pxiii.

experience. . .as the Word is being read, the people are struck with conviction, their hearts are touched, and their emotions are engaged with the words they are hearing.”<sup>19</sup> “Evangelicals must recover a participatory model of Scripture reading. . .We too ‘figure’ in the story. . .We have been transferred into the story of Jesus Christ, emplotted into his narrative, drafted into the drama of redemption.”<sup>20</sup>

The term, membership as used in the context of this project describes those of the congregation who not only unite for worship but who participate as a Scripture reader in this project. Russell defines a member in this participation context when he says, “God’s people are a community. There is no biblical understanding of the solitary Christ follower. We are made for one another.”<sup>21</sup> Smith emphasizes this unique membership in the participation of Scripture reading when he writes, “Reading the Bible together is important because the Bible was intended originally to be heard in groups, and it was intended to be understood and applied by groups.”<sup>22</sup>

The worship service or the worship hour describes the gathering of the church, “The time of informal singing led quite naturally to the reading of a few verses from Scripture and a challenge to draw near to God with repentance and faith.”<sup>23</sup> The current worship gathering of the project location contains the elements of welcome, extended socialization, a praise song, the collection of offerings, a hymn, a choir special and the preaching of a selected text.

---

<sup>19</sup>McLean, Bird, and Lucado, *Unleashing the Word: Rediscovering the Public Reading of Scripture*, 41.

<sup>20</sup>Kevin Storer, *Reading Scripture to Hear God*, 94.

<sup>21</sup>Russell, *(re)Aligning with God: Reading Scripture for Church and World*, 109.

<sup>22</sup>Smith, *Developing a Biblical Worldview*, 108.

<sup>23</sup>David G. Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, 299.

## **Limitations**

The most significant consideration is members of the congregation understanding the importance of the project as a key component or necessity of worship. The success in overcoming this imposed limitation by the congregation is the implementation of the Scripture reading without the outright or perceived elimination of the socialization the congregation finds important.

An additional consideration stemming from the addition of Scripture and continuation of the social period is the worship service length of time and how to facilitate placement of the Old and New Testament readings which do not hinder the flow of worship or further extend the worship hour.

The boundaries of this research project begin with the limitation that this is a “focused” project engaging the individuals within this local church for evaluation of the effect Scripture reading has on the spiritual development of this congregation’s spiritual life. The project will not move beyond this congregation for evaluation or input, since the project is unique to this group and other congregations may not wrestle with extended socialization during worship. Therefore, this project defines the previously used term “focused” as the intentional reading of passages by one group within this congregation, which will measure Scripture’s role in rebuilding biblical literacy and biblical authority within this congregation.

As a stated goal, the project is the biblical literacy and spiritual authority of Scripture in the congregation’s life, not the elimination of other worship forms. The current non-biblical practices which hinder spiritual development will gradually fade as biblical literacy becomes a primary fruit of Scripture reading.

## **Delimitations**

The first delimitation placed on this project is a reading group comprised of ten recent and long-term church members and attendees of both sexes, between the ages of eighteen to eighty who will be Scripture readers. Prior to the beginning of the project this group will be surveyed anonymously on their biblical literacy, and their understanding of the importance of Scripture reading in worship and for biblical authority. During their period of survey, the facilitator will address this group on the expectations of the project, and how to read the Scriptures in worship. Upon completion of the project period this group will be re-surveyed to measure their degree of increased spiritual understanding of Scripture in worship and its impact on their biblical literacy.

A second delimitation placed on this project is an intentional built-in control listening group which represents the congregation, not actively taking part in the reading. The purpose of the control listening group is to prevent flawed research by countering the argument that the measuring of the focus group alone, would automatically show an increased biblical literacy from the group reading the Scripture aloud in worship, without a countering of that measurement by a listening group. Therefore, while the first group will engage as participants with the Scripture reading in worship, the second group becomes a necessary listening group for this research measurement. This control listening group comprises the same grouping of ten different participants of recent and long-term church members and attendees between the ages of eighteen and eighty, who will take the same survey pre and post testing to measure biblical literacy. These individuals will reflect the anticipated spiritual growth of the congregation who listen to the Scripture being read. Following the project, a comparison of the results pre and post outcome between the reading group and the control listening group will take place.

A third delimitation placed on the project is this action research will be for a five-week period of Sunday worship services. Ultimately, this amount of time will measure not only the impact of Scripture reading on the participants who read, but on the congregation (showed by the control listening group) revealing the degree of biblical literacy from Scripture reading itself. The five-week period presents the opportunity for all participants in the control group to read Scripture.

### **Thesis Statement**

The reintroduction of the public reading of Scripture in the worship service promotes increased biblical literacy and submission to Scripture for the spiritual life and direction of the congregation.

Furthermore, this thesis project research should show by the reintroduction of Scripture reading how the absence of the public reading of Scripture in worship has contributed to the decline of individual and corporate biblical development within Mount Pleasant Church. Subsequently, a return to a public reading of Scripture will contribute to the congregation's development of a biblical worldview and marked spiritual growth.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Conceptual Framework**

Chapter two establishes the conceptual framework for the project. In this chapter, exploration of the relevant literature is evaluated under the Literature Review. The topic of Scripture is a broad subject encompassing the whole sweeping narrative of God's redemptive work in Christ. The parameters of this research must focus on the relevant literature pertaining to the public reading of Scripture in worship. The Literature Review will interweave the information gleaned from the research study into an analysis relevant to the project's perspective. This Review of Literature research is gathered, evaluated, and presented under six prominent themes deriving from the relevant literature.

The project's theological foundation presents various Scriptures which test and affirm the biblical practice of the reading of God's Word as being important for the worship of the church, and for hearing and relating to God. This theological foundation of relevant biblical passages provides the project's scriptural authority for the reading and use of the Old and New Testament Scripture in Mount Pleasant's worship service. Thus, this theological evaluation of relevant Scripture is foundational for the application of the public reading of Scripture in the worship service benefitting the congregation and analysis of the ministry project.

The theoretical portion of this chapter will reveal it is not the intention of this project to plow new ground and examine new theories. Existing theory presented in the review of literature will show the results of what the authors and the theological background affirms.

## **Literature Review**

### Scripture Reading in Contemporary Practice

At the heart of the contemporary evangelical church's identity is the status of Scripture and what role it will play in worship, personal discipleship, and direction for the church. Brian Russell, Mark Maddix, Kenneth Keathley, and James Draper, Jr. speak in unison concerning the lack of Scripture use in the contemporary evangelical church and subsequent biblical illiteracy resulting from the lack of Scripture used by the church. These authors present a two-fold picture that many evangelicals in the contemporary church are biblically illiterate, and they lack a relevant application or understanding of the necessity of Scripture in worship and subsequently remove Scripture from the worship experience. This impacts the biblical worldview of the contemporary Christian church and its ability to live the Great Commission.

Concerning this point, the review of literature reveals multiple authors affirm this perspective on biblical illiteracy, that not only is the absence of Scripture a contributor to biblical illiteracy and failure to understand what the Bible teaches, but the absence of Scripture makes biblical illiteracy a contributor to the continued failure of making Scripture applicable to church life. The result is the church does not and cannot live fully as God expects His people to live, since the people draw no direction or application from the Scripture, and subsequently cannot fulfill the biblical mandate to evangelize the world and make disciples. Russell illustrates as an example what the authors say when he writes a two-fold truth saying if even the people in the United States don't know or haven't heard John 3:16, what Scriptural truth can we assume they

know?<sup>24</sup> He develops this further by saying it is through Scripture we must help persons who have grown up inside the church to recapture the biblical story.<sup>25</sup>

These authors agree biblical illiteracy and the removal of Scripture from worship by evangelicals not only negates the biblical mandate but impacts church growth, individual discipleship, and the exercising of biblical authority within the church. Mark Maddix writes that one of Christianity's chief tenants is a belief the Bible is inspired and therefore authoritative for Christian worship. He notes that contemporary Christians are quick to affirm the authority of the Bible, and while affirming the Bible there is an actual marked decline in the practice of Bible reading and Scripture usage in worship and for subsequent discipleship.<sup>26</sup> So, while evangelicals assent to Scripture for the Christian life and for worship, Scripture is, in reality, not used in the contemporary church. Block, drawing from the Old Testament provides an understanding of this downward spiral in the contemporary church by showing the upward progression the Nation of Israel was to have concerning the Word of God. He says that Moses emphasized the key to a lasting spiritual life is obedience; the key to obedience is a reverent awe before YHWH; and the key to a reverent awe is hearing the Torah.<sup>27</sup>

Graves and Ward are in unity with these authors concerning biblical illiteracy and lack of Scripture usage plaguing the contemporary church, however they extend this biblical illiteracy resulting from the church's failure to understand scriptural relevancy for the Christian life. Grudem affirms this by saying in summarization that if we want to hear the Lord speaking to His

---

<sup>24</sup>Russell, *(re)Aligning with God: Reading Scripture for Church and World*, pxi.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pxiii.

<sup>26</sup>Maddix, "Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church," 34.

<sup>27</sup>Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*, 180.

church then the church must give attention to the authoritative words of the Bible. He says this and then affirms the Bible by saying Scripture must be the only foundation and guide for all that happens in the life of the church, and must be central to all that happens in preaching and public worship.<sup>28</sup> Ward continues this thought by saying Scripture read is a verbal revelation from God and is necessary if humanity is to enter into a saving knowledge of God.<sup>29</sup>

To these authors, biblical literacy and biblical relevancy in the contemporary church means Scripture may serve multiple functions within the church, but Scripture cannot be an unnecessary element which the contemporary church decides to discard or deem unessential for its existence. When Scripture reading and relevancy is missing from the church, the biblical worldview of the church is undermined. Smith makes the claim along with these authors saying that discipleship and a biblical worldview is a lengthy process and the Bible must be the guide for how the church sees and interacts with the culture. He says the church must learn to see things God's way and from God's perspective which can only happen from a biblical worldview.<sup>30</sup>

Ultimately, these authors are in unison as they seek to drive home the necessity of Scripture's relevancy for private and corporate church experience today by emphasizing an approach to Scripture use in worship as presented and taught by the Bible itself. While the literature surrounding the subject of Scripture relevancy in the contemporary church is varied, it agrees to the necessity of Scripture's prominent role and placement within the worship of the

---

<sup>28</sup>Wayne Grudem, John C. Collins, and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Understanding Scripture: An Overview of the Bible's Origin, Reliability, and Meaning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 11.

<sup>29</sup>Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture As the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 101.

<sup>30</sup>Smith, *Developing A Biblical Worldview*, 114.

church if the church is to grow in biblical literacy, understanding, and relevant application for living out the truths of God.

Daniel Block summarizes the unfortunate situation of many churches today concerning the diminished role of Scripture in worship by indicating that many evangelical churches have reduced or eliminated the reading of Scripture in worship.<sup>31</sup> This brings the subject back to the problem facing the contemporary church, and that is, a church which fails to use Scripture in worship continues a pattern of biblical illiteracy impacting the ability of its members to fully understand what God expects of His people.

#### Scripture Reading as God's Voice

A prominent theme woven throughout these books and journals is the public Scripture reading as the active voice of God to His church. A two-fold idea develops from this theme: the church understands through Scripture reading God's desires; the church understands through Scripture reading God's revelations.

Through Scripture, God speaks His desires and His intentions to individuals and the church. This theme presented by the authors means the beginning point for understanding the importance of Scripture in worship is that, its use for worship is directed by God. Smith begins this argument by strongly emphasizing that Scripture is the primary means for understanding what God desires for humankind.<sup>32</sup> Wilhoit and Howard affirm this by saying the Scripture is God's record in dealing with humans.<sup>33</sup> Peterson actively concurs emphasizing how God reveals

---

<sup>31</sup>Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*, 170.

<sup>32</sup>Smith, *Developing A Biblical Worldview*, 6.

<sup>33</sup>James C. Wilhoit, and Evan B. Howard, *Discovering Lectio Divina: Bringing Scripture into Ordinary Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 30.

Himself, conveying His desires concerning the church's approach to worship, and how humans do not get to determine an application or relevancy for Scripture contrary to God's revelation through Scripture.<sup>34</sup> These authors say God speaks to the church and the Scripture is His way of speaking. The church which takes it upon itself to abandon the use of Scripture in its worship of God is abandoning its ability to hear from God.

The authors Grudem, Collins, and Schreiner, in their work affirm the active revelation of God in Scripture showing the church must seek to accept and apply His revelation for Scripture's use in individual and church development.<sup>35</sup> God's primary desire is the revelation of his Son through the reading of Scripture. Storer, Ward and Bates draw these arguments toward Jesus Christ as being the foundational reason for God's desire to reveal Himself to the church, through the Scripture reading in worship. Bates says the revelation of God to the church, Jesus's death and His resurrection, have brought the Scriptures to a fulfilling climax of what God desires to reveal to His church.<sup>36</sup>

The authors reveal Scripture is God's voice and His primary means of speaking to His people. A church which neglects or negates the reading of the Scripture in worship negates and ignores hearing a revelation from God. Subsequently, the worship of God becomes hypocritical as the church focuses on hearing from self rather than from God's Word. Smith goes on to describe this as a rebellion against God which rises from our own sense of a false autonomy

---

<sup>34</sup>David G. Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 19.

<sup>35</sup>Grudem, Collins, and Schreiner, *Understanding Scripture*, pxii.

<sup>36</sup>Matthew Bates, *Salvation By Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 39.

which in turn brings about the idea of being our own “lord,” which in turn causes the church to behave in self-centered ways.<sup>37</sup>

### Scripture as God’s Activity

The literature review presents the theme of God’s activity with his people in Scripture. This theme shows God’s activity with humans and their relationship with each other as being brought to a fuller development from what God says through Scripture. The authors Smith, Russell, Maddix, Storer, Wilhoit, Peterson, Ward, Bates and Block all affirm this by saying Scripture reading in worship becomes the primary source for affecting positive ministry and spiritual growth between God and his people, and the people of God with each other.

The authors further concur in the importance of human relationship with God as foundational for the church, and the church develops this relationship to a great degree by the reading of Scripture in the public context. Brian Russell embraces this idea of current and generational relationships and encourages the faithfulness of each subsequent generation to a life of faithful obedience in listening to God’s Word.<sup>38</sup>

An overriding issue presented by the authors Smith, Russell, Maddix, Storer, Wilhoit and Peterson, Ward and Block is the rampant individualism that has developed from a lack of Scripture reading in the local faith community. Russell illustrates this by saying individualism contributes to a loss of the corporate mission and unity, demonstrated in the churches established by Paul throughout the Mediterranean. Scripture should inform not only the relationship to God, but the relationship within the Christian community and the world.<sup>39</sup> While not directly speaking

---

<sup>37</sup>Smith, *Developing A Biblical Worldview*, 43.

<sup>38</sup>Russell, *(Re)Aligning with God: Reading Scripture for Church and World*, 49.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 92.

to an intentional agreement with these authors, Sproul, calls attention to the earlier suggestion of biblical illiteracy indirectly stems from individualism in the contemporary church; then addresses how the contemporary church's return to Scripture reading will impact these author's arguments by directing the reader to consider the importance of frequent Scripture reading allowing God to penetrate the heart.<sup>40</sup>

Lovell and Storer continue to develop and build on Sproul's point emphasizing the church's necessity of establishing a corporate relationship through the corporate hearing of the Word, and for seeing corporate unity in its context of God's revelation through Scripture to his people as a group. Wilhoit explains this as Scripture, which is now used individually once began as a group revelation.<sup>41</sup> Peterson, addressing the group revelation idea affirms an importance to relating to God as the family of God through Scripture.<sup>42</sup> Block delves deeper into these themes concurring with these authors, but he digresses slightly from their concern of individualism being detrimental. He argues individualism is fine in the form of a spiritual individualism developed by a strong emphasis on individual spiritual growth from the practice of Scripture teaching within the corporate church.<sup>43</sup> In moving slightly away from Wilhoit and Peterson on individualism, Block is not disagreeing with their assessment that individualism can be negative, but he is actually affirming their point by saying that spiritual individualism is fine since it actually develops from a strong corporate worship experience which is centered on the reading of the Scripture which promotes strong spiritual development.

---

<sup>40</sup>R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 20.

<sup>41</sup>Wilhoit and Howard, *Discovering Lectio Divina: Bringing Scripture into Ordinary Life*, 23.

<sup>42</sup>Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, 251.

<sup>43</sup>Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*, 190.



However, in their overarching point of view, the authors reveal that the absence of Scripture reading in the local congregation contributes to an individualism contrary to the original reception of Scripture teaching and application in the corporate setting of worship. The relation of Christians to God and to each other is strengthened in the Scripture and even when individualism is acceptable as a part of spiritual growth, this spiritual individualism should not be gleaned apart from the corporate experience of Scripture reading in the group environment.

### Scripture Reading as Historical Participation

While the review of literature presents the lack of Scripture reading in worship as affecting the church's ability to hear God's voice and impacting the ability of individuals to relate to God and each other, the consensus by the authors is that a historical look at the biblical history and participation in the public Scripture reading is imperative for returning the church back into a right relationship with God. Therefore, they say the solution is that the church must regularly hear from God, and the primary means of hearing from God is through the biblical model of the corporate reading of the Scripture.

The authors Graves and Ward, Samples and Jung, all emphasize the various historical examples of how the church has emphasized Scripture reading in the worship context to engage the current culture and how this is missing today. Block, above most of the authors provides biblical examples of public reading and then shows how the contemporary church has drastically reduced or eliminated the practice all together affecting the engagement of culture. He hits hard by reminding the church that corporate worship involves an audience with God, and worship engages the church's response to God's revelation, so the church must ensure this two way

direction of divine communication continues through hearing the word.<sup>44</sup> Sproul again hits on this and says Scripture reading is not to be practiced casually or infrequently.<sup>45</sup>

This historical theme presented in these works is important because the authors reveal the public reading of Scripture has been a means used by the Holy Spirit to point people through their participation in the reading of Scripture, to God's redemptive plan in Jesus Christ for the church. Smith writes that the Word of God was originally meant to be read and heard in groups,<sup>46</sup> and McLean, Bird and Lucado, say that ultimately lives will be changed just as the original hearers' lives were changed by the hearing of the Word of God.<sup>47</sup> These writers say biblical history demonstrates the public reading and hearing of Scripture ultimately intensifies the worship experience and becomes a catalyst for the Holy Spirit's work in the church. Again, these writers are in accord as to the scriptural background for public Scripture reading, as they affirm public reading is commanded for worship and personal spiritual development.

A summation of this theme is ultimately the hearing of Scripture is used by the Holy Spirit and is the primary means God uses to reveal His redemptive plan for His church in Jesus Christ. The author, Samples, affirms this by reminding that the historical context of Scripture reading provided both Jews and Christians a challenging, uplifting instruction, which meets the deepest level of the human's soul.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup>Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*, 169.

<sup>45</sup>Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 20.

<sup>46</sup>Smith, *Developing A Biblical Worldview*, 108.

<sup>47</sup>McLean, Bird, and Lucado, *Unleashing the Word*, 20.

<sup>48</sup>Kenneth Richard Samples, *A World of Difference: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 108.

## Scripture as Revelation of Jesus Christ

The themes of these previous categories presented through the research deal with various practices and aspects of the church as relating to Scripture but may raise questions about the necessity of Scripture reading in worship. Questions may be asked about the necessity of Scripture reading if the practice merely focuses on Scripture as the historical example or as a means of the relationship practice between corporate members. Examples of these questions might be, “what if the Scripture isn’t read in worship?” “Doesn’t the church by its existence already understand and practice unity?” “Has not the church already shown by its love for God that it is determined to do worship in a manner that affirms and expresses its relationship to God, that is, making God known through its corporate activities?” Ward, Bates and Storer would remind the church not to proceed so quickly with an answer or an assumption to these questions.

Pertaining to these questions it is not man, and it is not the church, but Storer says it is Christ who is the ultimate subject and object of Scripture, and He is the one who brings the promises and practices of the Old Testament to fulfillment in the New Testament, and He is the one who shows or mediates Himself to the church by Scripture.<sup>49</sup> The point he makes is any question or presumed answer or activity focused on man and man’s self-dependency, apart from God’s revelation about Jesus in Scripture, is incomplete or ineffective because it does not incorporate what God wishes to say through Scripture about Jesus to the church.

The authors promote an understanding that when the church comes together, it’s not just for unity and expressing that Jesus exists, but it’s also for hearing the fullness of God’s revelation of a Savior, found only in the reading and hearing of Scripture. Again, Storer clarifies that Jesus Christ brings about the unity of Scripture and the practice of the church because He is

---

<sup>49</sup>Storer, *Reading Scripture to Hear God*, 73.

the endpoint and fullness of Scripture.<sup>50</sup> The church relates everything to Him as the sole object, making Him essential for the full development of all worship and all activity. Ward affirms Storer and describes this as Jesus Christ coming to fulfill all the Old Testament's Covenant promises, and as the fulfilment of all the Old Testament had been planning.<sup>51</sup> Ward doesn't stop with the Old Testament but provides the understanding that in the New Testament, Paul draws the closest link between the church being founded on Christ and founded on the words Christ spoke through the apostles, as set down in their writings saying you cannot have one without the other.<sup>52</sup> Nailing the door closed to the idea that it is possible to conduct services in a man-centered way void of Scripture he writes, the fact remains that our only access to Christ and His words is through the content of the Bible.<sup>53</sup>

Continuing to address the possible questions, the authors point the church to Jesus Christ. Bates ties the authors together in affirming the fact that the church must hear the Scripture and not rely on assumption alone for assurance they are honoring God and His plan for the church. He writes that the Scripture message is the story of Jesus' life, death for sins, resurrection, and installation as King, and that story only makes sense in the wider framework of the stories of Israel and creation.<sup>54</sup> He is arguing here for the church to hear the whole word of God as the means for fully honoring and understanding God's gift of Jesus. The authors agree that the church cannot honor or understand Jesus and God's revelation fully apart from the Scripture.

---

<sup>50</sup>Storer, *Reading Scripture to Hear God*, 28.

<sup>51</sup>Ward, *Words of Life*, 37.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>54</sup>Bates, *Salvation By Allegiance Alone*, 30.

Bates makes a final observation on this point of Jesus as the revelation of God to the church when he writes that, “Jesus’s death for our sins and His resurrection on the third day have brought the Scriptures to a fulfilling climax.”<sup>55</sup>

The authors claim that Jesus, as the object of Scripture, means the church in all its practices must honor the Scripture as the starting and ending point for discovering this One revealed and worshipped by the church. Scripture is God’s communication to the church about His Son who fulfills God’s revelation. Scripture then becomes God’s speaking action to the church about His Son, and God uses the Scripture to teach the church about this redemptive plan through His Son. So, the authors agree that Scripture is the action of God revealing His redemptive plan through Jesus; Jesus renews the church and Jesus is the object of the church. Ultimately, the authors say Scripture is God’s communication to us, not our communication about God.

#### Scripture as Worship Necessity

Examining the whole of the literature reviewed to this point shows an agreement on the historical presentation and the necessity and goal of Scripture reading as being the means God uses for speaking to His corporate people, impacting their relationship with Him and with each other through Jesus Christ. The background literature develops these themes of Scripture being God’s active speech to the church and individuals. The church’s identity is tied to God and God reveals how the church is to relate to Him through Jesus Christ, and how the church is to relate to each other through Scripture, and how the practice of Scripture reading is to be conducted if worship, proclamation, and salvation, is to be understood in its fullness by the church.

---

<sup>55</sup>Bates, *Salvation By Allegiance Alone*, 39.

While some authors lean heavier toward the development of the historical theme of Scripture as God’s revelation and the practice of that revelation, others apply more importance to the group receiving this revelation as the ultimate authority for all church activity. However, all agree in theory to the impact of public reading as essential in overcoming the biblical illiteracy and individualism common to the contemporary church.

The authors are unanimous in their desire to present the public reading of Scripture as the primary means of making the church effective in teaching, witnessing, and evangelizing. Maddix tells the reader that the Scripture is encountered when the church gathers for worship, and the Bible, read and preached and received is what calls the Christian community together to worship. He says that when the church is gathered around Scripture, the Scripture becomes the heart of Christian worship.<sup>56</sup>

Keathley warns the church of a danger that may not be evident as the church gathers, and the danger is the displacing of the Word of God to the periphery of the worship service.<sup>57</sup> McLean summarizes these authors by reminding the church when God is listened to, through the reading of His Word and the Word is lifted up in worship, then the believer as an individual and as a corporate group come away from the sacred text inspired and changed and emboldened in the Christian walk.<sup>58</sup>

While the literature review strongly emphasizes the history and importance of a return to the biblical model of public Scripture reading in worship, there is a gap concerning the statistical results presented by the authors. While it may be implied or assumed from the reading of these

---

<sup>56</sup>Maddix, “Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church,” 40.

<sup>57</sup>Keathley, and Draper Jr., *Biblical Authority*, 69.

<sup>58</sup>McLean, Bird, and Lucado, *Unleashing the Word*, 41.

authors that God will bless the church which honors His Word, the writings do not offer a case study of succinct results. The authors do make the strong, practical and historical argument for the public reading of Scripture as important in developing or restoring the church's worldview, enhancing a corporate relationship with God and others, revealing Jesus Christ, and strengthening the church's return to spiritual discipleship and outreach. However, no author says, "we practiced this, and these are our results." Again, these points of gain gleaned from these authors are merely argued as the results a church or individual can hope to achieve by a return to this practice.

A church's return to the practices advocated by Scripture and as presented and discussed by the authors, will provide a foundation, a new direction, and positive change for the church, but the gap in literature asks, what exactly is out there that shows this change? The authors present a biblical history and case for implementing the return to Scripture reading in worship for the development of the church, and the Bible provides the theological foundation and authority for a return to the reading of Scripture in worship. However, the results of these must be contextualized to the local church.

## **Theological Foundation**

### **Importance of Scripture Reading**

This portion of the research project begins with setting a foundation for a theological understanding of the Old and New Testament passages, and exhortations concerning the importance and need for the public reading of Scripture. The intent of this examination and research is not to show or provide examples of every Old Testament or New Testament instance of the public Scripture reading, nor to provide an in-depth study on Scripture's power to transform lives resulting from that reading. The intention is to set a brief theological foundation

for understanding the emphasis and direction of the project as it relates to the importance behind the need of the public reading of Scripture in local church worship. Block describes this emphasis as foundational for worship, “If true worship involves reverential human acts of submission and homage before the divine Sovereign in response to his gracious revelation of himself, then how does he reveal himself. . . knowledge of God comes through the written record of past revelation.”<sup>59</sup> Therefore, an examination of some of the more prominent Scriptures examining the Old and New Testament examples of activity surrounding the exhortation to the public reading of Scripture will be examined.

The Scripture itself must show and provide for the understanding of God’s position concerning the use and reading of the Scripture and for the application of His revelation of Himself to His church as being foundational for all the church attempts for God. The church does not have the authority apart from God’s revelation from His Word to determine whether the Word is acceptable for worship, or whether it is not. Again, Block says, “Since the Scriptures represent the normative means by which God reveals Himself, and since they are the only sure foundation of belief and practice acceptable to Him, the reading and instruction of the Scriptures must be given the highest place in worship.”<sup>60</sup> Has the contemporary church strayed from the biblical practices and requirements revealed in Scripture? This becomes the overarching question the theological background seeks to show and answer.

This project could utilize many passages to demonstrate the importance of Scripture and the necessity of looking to the Scriptures for direction. Jesus Himself told the Pharisees, “you search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear

---

<sup>59</sup>Block, *For the Glory of God*, 169.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 189.



witness about me.”<sup>61</sup> Bates summarizes Jesus’ teaching on the foundation of Scripture for all truth relating to God as, “. . . this scriptural correlation is part and parcel of the gospel itself, the meaning of the gospel is both informed and constrained by the larger biblical story.”<sup>62</sup> Jesus told the Pharisees to search the Scripture, attesting to the fact the Scriptures testify of Jesus, who is the ultimate revelation of God and which implied the eternal life they sought was available in Him. Ward says, “Jesus himself treated the Jewish Scriptures, our Old Testament, as themselves words from God.”<sup>63</sup> He further writes, “God relates himself to words both spoken and written.”<sup>64</sup> However, focused passages zeroing in on the importance of the Word of God itself and several examples of both Old and New Testament practices concerning the reading of the Word in the context of worship will be evaluated.

The intention of the theological foundation seeks to provide examples of how the reading of all Scripture, therefore, becomes foundational for the spiritual growth of the church and for experiencing the gospel message of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Bates again emphasizes this point saying, “The good news, on the other hand, is that when we participate in worship of the one true God, the result is that we become increasingly sensate and insightful—we see, hear, smell, and touch the God-crafted reality of the created order, and we correctly recognize that it points to truths about God’s very self.”<sup>65</sup> Jesus, in telling the Pharisees to search the Scriptures revealed and they will find that the Scriptures point to Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s revelation of

---

<sup>61</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are from the *English Standard Version (ESV)* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

<sup>62</sup>Bates, *Salvation By Allegiance Alone*, 40.

<sup>63</sup>Ward, *Words of Life*, 11.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>65</sup>Bates, *Salvation By Allegiance Alone*, 155.

Himself; His promise that the Son is also the promised access to the worship of God; and these two combine into the Scriptural foundational relationship with God for individuals and the church.

In considering the importance of a scriptural context for the reading of Scripture in the church, two passages are given as foundational passages on which to show the importance of looking to Scripture and for seeing the need of the public reading of Scripture as the starting point for the establishment of a solid scriptural literacy in the church. One passage from the Old Testament summarizes the emphasis God places on His Scripture and one passage from the New Testament reveals this same emphasis and the impact of the Scripture for the individual and subsequently, the church.

#### Isaiah 55:11

In the first consideration, the prophet Isaiah speaks to an exiled people concerning the promises contained in God's Word and to the fruit this Word would produce in those who will believe, "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return unto me empty, void, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Not only does Isaiah remind the people that God views His Word as significant and accomplishing a task every time the church reads it, but in this Word, God promotes a promise in 11-12 to the ones embracing God's Word. "There is also maintained that the promise stands because 'Yahweh's mouth has spoken it.'"<sup>66</sup> The Word of God is significant; it comes from God and reveals God. From this promise the church can imply that the passage also promises that when scattered among the hearers through a public reading, God will accomplish a definite

---

<sup>66</sup>Klaus Baltzer, *Epilogue: 55:11:1-13 Festival of the Pilgrimage to the Holy City*, Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary, ed. Peter Machinist, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 183.

mission from His Word. Trent Butler writes, “If you agree to the conditions, Isaiah declared, here’s the project. God’s people will escape their exile and go out in a glorious procession. Joy and peace will fill their hearts.”<sup>67</sup> The nation, just like the contemporary church, needs to hear the Gospel message of redemption found in the Scripture, for it is as Watts says, “a promise of satisfaction, joy, peace, and prosperity.”<sup>68</sup>

The intention behind Isaiah 55:11 as being a foundational passage promoting the public reading of Scripture in worship is that Scripture speaks God’s direct revelation from God to the people of God. God says the people can trust His Scripture as the good news of His revelation about salvation through every reading of His given Word. This Scripture passage in Isaiah 55:11 speaks to the fulfillment of God’s promises to deliver His people from sinful captivity and to provide joy to the heart of believers through an understanding and revelation of completed promises which are only found in Scripture. Ward writes, “God speaking is also an integral part of God acting to save. Thus, in biblical language and theology, God speaking and God acting are often one and the same thing.”<sup>69</sup> Ward also says, “The authority of Scripture is dependent entirely on the authority of God, and comes about only because of what God has chosen to do in the way he authored Scripture, and because of what he continues to do in presenting himself to us through Scripture as a God we can know and trust.”<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup>Trent C. Butler and Max Anders, *Isaiah*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2002), 315.

<sup>68</sup>John D. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, vol. 25, Revised Edition, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Bruce Metzger (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2015), 822.

<sup>69</sup>Ward, *Words of Life*, 26.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 128.

Trent Butler summarizes this promise of God to reveal His good news to His people in Isaiah 55:11 as, “God planned salvation for his people. He sent his prophetic word to announce this salvation. The people must decide to climb out of the depth of despair to join the journey of joy along the wilderness way and to be a witness for the world to the glory of God.”<sup>71</sup> This glory is revealed in the word of Scripture read, heard, and attested to by the people of God.

#### II Timothy 3:16

In the second foundational example, Paul’s admonition to believers in II Timothy 3:16 is that “all Scripture is breathed out by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” As this verse applies to the theological foundation for the project, the importance of Scripture is explained by Scripture and the impact of Scripture on the believer and the church is revealed by Scripture. Smith says, “The Bible gives us insight into God’s way of seeing things.”<sup>72</sup>

God used Paul’s previous Judaic teaching and his involvement in the church to emphasize a need for the church to see Jesus as the fulfillment of promised Old Testament Scripture. Scripture, since it reveals Jesus, must become foundational to the church. Mounce writes, “it is God’s word, it is therefore profitable.”<sup>73</sup> Block would remind the contemporary church that it was during this period “Believers in Jerusalem were devoted to fellowship, breaking bread, prayer, and the apostle’s teaching. The last element probably involved systematic reading and interpretation of Scripture.”<sup>74</sup> Paul would have been familiar with what

---

<sup>71</sup>Butler and Anders, *Isaiah*, 315.

<sup>72</sup>Smith, *Developing A Biblical Worldview*, 6.

<sup>73</sup>William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary, eds. David A. Hubbard and Bruce M. Metzger (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2000), 565.

<sup>74</sup>Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*, 187.

was happening in this young church and would have understood the importance of having Scripture read and taught, as foundational for things attempted for God and for learning about the Scripture's revelation of Jesus as the promised Messiah. Block illustrates what could have been in Paul's mind resulting from his upbringing in the religious teachings of Judaism when he writes, "In Deuteronomy 31:9-13 Moses explicitly charges the Levites to read his Torah before all Israel—men, women, children, aliens—every seventh year at the Festival of Booths. Hearing the Torah should inspire reverent awe toward YHWH, which would yield obedience to his will and result in long life in the land."<sup>75</sup> Paul saw these young churches before him, and he emphasized the power and necessity of the Scripture as the primary key to developing this growing church. Mounce would describe this as, "Scripture is necessary for the training of truly virtuous Christians."<sup>76</sup>

Paul's emphasis on the foundational dimension of Scripture in the passage of II Timothy 3:16 not only grows from his own background of training in the Scripture, and from seeing the young church's need for growth, but Ward ties these ideas together by saying, "The public reading and preaching of Scripture should give those who hear it both a structure and some tools that will enable their private reading of Scripture to be faithful to Scripture, without distorting it."<sup>77</sup> Paul, led by the Spirit, writes that Scripture must be the church's primary tool and method of development, but also the church's spiritual profit will ultimately derive from this scriptural emphasis.

---

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 176.

<sup>76</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570.

<sup>77</sup>Ward, *Words of Life*, 172.

II Timothy 3:16 therefore teaches the church that its growth and spiritual development are rooted in the Scripture. John Barton informs this by saying, “Scripture, presumably including the law, is given unequivocal approval. . .the usefulness of all Scripture arises from the fact that it is divinely inspired.”<sup>78</sup> In considering this verse as foundational for understanding the importance of the public reading of Scripture in worship, Knute Larson says, “We neglect the Scriptures at our own peril. Through them we gain the ability to serve God and others. The Scriptures not only point the way; through the mysterious union of God’s Word and faith, they give us the ability to serve.”<sup>79</sup>

Since Paul’s passage becomes a reminder of all the Scripture accomplishes in the church and in the life of the believer: teaching, rebuking, correcting, training in righteousness, the implication is this Scripture should be actively read and promoted in the context of worship. In his Abstract to his writing on Paul’s use of Scripture, Sungkook Jung writes, “Paul was also concerned with persuading his audience through effective communication of the gospel. Inevitably this concern led Paul to contextualize the Jewish Scriptures for his Gentile audience.”<sup>80</sup> And Russell writes to affirm this saying, “The letters of Paul. . .represent messages written to discrete communities of faith across the Mediterranean world. . .they are concerned primarily with shaping communities of God’s people into outposts for the advancement of the gospel.”<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup>John Barton, *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1230.

<sup>79</sup>Knute Larson and Max Anders, *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2000), 307.

<sup>80</sup>Sungkook Jung, “Paul’s Missional Use of Scripture: A Redefined Approach with Special Reference to 2 Cor 3,” Order No. 3470420, (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 2010), Abstract.

<sup>81</sup>Russell, *(Re)Aligning with God*, 92.

## Old Testament Public Scripture Reading

Having presented the two foundational passages for the necessity of the reading of Scripture to understand the revelation of God and His promise of Jesus, and for the instruction of the church in its development, the emphasis is now placed on the Old Testament relevant passages presenting examples of the public reading of Scripture in worship. The project's thesis idea is that a return to Scripture in worship is essential for rebuilding biblical literacy and in overcoming contemporary indifference to God's Word. This is as Russell says an important goal for "Each new generation must learn to practice faithfulness as part of its life with God regardless of the actions of the previous generation."<sup>82</sup>

The Old Testament provides several examples of public Scripture reading and its impact on the people. While Exodus 24 may be considered the first example of the reading of the Scripture in the public context, and while Moses commanded that the law be read every seven years, three specific Old Testament passages serve as foundational examples of Scripture reading effecting change in the people's spiritual direction. These passages all emphasize a spiritual renewal available to God's church when Scripture is returned to a place of prominence in the life of God's people gathered to worship or to hear directly from Him.

### Joshua 8:34-35

Joshua gathered the people together and commanded the Scripture read in the hearing of all the people of the land. This reading and this hearing pointed directly to a time of renewal, and to a time of emphasizing the promises God had made to Moses. Hess writes, "The role of the

---

<sup>82</sup>Russell, *(Re)Aligning with God*, 49.

Mosaic instruction had its source in the Lord God.”<sup>83</sup> It was a time for this generation to hear again the Scripture and to affirm the blessings and the curses for the people of God as they relate to him and obey him according to his revelation in Scripture. “Not only is the entire corpus of material to be written down for Israel, it is to be read to them.”<sup>84</sup> The idea presented here is the positive effect the hearing, affirming, and obeying of the read Word of God has on the people. “The community must know the entire law and must be reminded of it and pledge themselves to observe all of it. Why? Because to be the people of God means to be an obedient people, following the divinely-given lifestyle.”<sup>85</sup>

Graves affirms this gathering of the people together and their spiritual renewal from the reading of Scripture as important for the current generation of Joshua’s day and time and as foundational for the gathering and practice of the church gathering and hearing the Scripture revelation of God in our day and time. He emphasizes the importance of what Joshua is doing when he says, “Clearly, during the OT period serious religious significance was already being placed on the public reading of the ‘Law.’ These accounts were extremely influential as models for the later development of formal Scripture reading ceremonies.”<sup>86</sup>

This passage in Joshua and this statement by Graves is significant, for they reveal the importance for what is being practiced throughout the Old Testament and later in the New Testament, and for the practice of the public reading of Scripture in the contemporary church. Kenneth Gangel says in his commentary on Joshua that, “The law was read for the whole

---

<sup>83</sup>Richard S. Hess, *Joshua*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 190.

<sup>84</sup>Trent C. Butler, *Joshua 1-12*, vol. 7a, Word Biblical Commentary Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 92.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>86</sup>Michael P. Graves, “The Public Reading of Scripture in Early Judaism,” 469.



assembly of Israel. The word assembly in Hebrew (kahal) takes the New Testament word ekklesia, that becomes the New Testament word for church. . .this public reading of Scripture, so sadly neglected in the modern church of the twenty-first century, forms a basic foundation throughout the Scripture.”<sup>87</sup> Joshua is an example of the gathering of the people of God together and hearing the Word of God read for the instruction and spiritual development of that people and for the development of the people of today.

### Nehemiah 8

The author, Graves, writes that in Nehemiah the reading of the word of Scripture has followed the lead of Joshua in the assembly of the people together for the reading and hearing of the Scripture, but it has developed into a more formal tone, “The public reading in Nehemiah, on the other hand, has clear ceremonial components, such as the standing, the blessing, and the explanation.”<sup>88</sup>

In Nehemiah 8, the people have returned from exile and Ezra the priest shows the people the necessity of hearing the spoken Word of God as part of the identity of the people’s worship of God, who has delivered them from captivity and allowed them to return to their homeland. The people gathered and they read the Word to the people. “Ezra was boldly proclaiming that the Torah was for all people.”<sup>89</sup> This public reading lasted from morning until noon. The Scripture says the people worshipped God, reacted to the Scripture, and repented because of hearing the Word. Larson writes, “the day was sacred to God. Throughout the Old Testament, days set aside

---

<sup>87</sup>Kenneth O. Gangel, and Max Anders, *Joshua* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2002),146.

<sup>88</sup>Michael P. Graves, “The Public Reading of Scripture in Early Judaism,” 469.

<sup>89</sup>H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, vol. 16, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 289.

to commemorate God's grace and kindness were intended as joyful celebrations. It was a day for rejoicing in God's mercy and goodness. . ."<sup>90</sup>

The picture presented here in this passage is there is an importance to the hearing, affirming, and obeying the read Word of God as an assembled congregation. After years of exile, the people needed to understand they needed to hear from God, and as the assembled group of God's people, the importance of reading and hearing God's Word had not diminished. Larson further develops this occasion's importance by saying, "Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. A raised platform allowed the people to see and hear Ezra better. Also, having the law read from above, the people reinforced its authority and importance."<sup>91</sup> This formal event of public Scripture reading emphasized in the book of Nehemiah was performed in a manner to elicit joy and to affirm the importance of the reading of the Scripture in the congregation of the people. Breneman says, "The respect the people had for 'the book' came not because they considered it an object of veneration but because it was their word from God who deserved their praise and worship."<sup>92</sup>

Wayne Grudem draws on the experience of the people of Israel in Nehemiah and applies this idea in application to the reading of Scripture in the context of worship today when he writes, "The Bible's use in preaching and public worship should be in such a way as to result in a Christ-exalting service of the Word."<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup>Knute Larson, and Max Anders, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2005), 218.

<sup>91</sup>Larson and Anders, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 217.

<sup>92</sup>Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, vol. 10, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1993), 8.

<sup>93</sup>Grudem, Collins, and Schreiner, *Understanding Scripture*, 14.

## II Kings 22:11

The story of Josiah is one of the more familiar passages which emphasize the importance of the Scripture and how the reading of the Scripture impacts the people of God. Hobbs says, “An underlying theme of the chapter is the relationship of the king to the word of Yahweh.”<sup>94</sup> Sweeney explains this passage as, “Second Kings 22:11 relates Josiah’s distress on hearing the words of the Torah Scroll.”<sup>95</sup> The Scripture presents this passage as a primary example of how the Word of God can change a life and why the reading of God’s Word is imperative for a change in direction for the church, especially after an extended period of scriptural absence in worship.

During the temple renovation, the Book of the Law was discovered which was lost, and king Josiah commands a reading of the Scripture and he hears again this absent Word of God. The result of this public reading and listening to the Scripture is a deep spiritual conviction. Inrig writes, “It is hard to imagine such an important scroll being lost, until it is remembered that the pagan worship of Manasseh and Amon would have had no use for such a book, since it condemned all they were doing. It had first been ignored, then neglected and finally lost (or perhaps even hidden by someone wanting to preserve it).”<sup>96</sup> This is a reminder of the landscape in the subject church today. The church has sought to remove, hide, and replace the public reading of Scripture which calls into question all man-centered activity.

The Book of the Law is publicly read, and the result is a revival. “The Word of God has innate power and is self-authenticating. The message of God’s Word penetrated immediately and

---

<sup>94</sup>T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, vol. 13, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 326.

<sup>95</sup>Mervin A. Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 439.

<sup>96</sup>Gary Inrig, and Max Anders, *1 & 2 Kings* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 346.

deeply into the heart of Josiah.”<sup>97</sup> Again, after a many year absence of hearing the Word of God, the primary idea presented here is that the listening and hearing of God’s Word can lead to a renewal of the people. “The goal of the Bible is the conversion of its readers and hearers.”<sup>98</sup> And Russell applies this to the church today by saying, “We read the gospels not to learn facts about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus but so we become disciples true to the name (i.e., we become men and women whose way of life manifests the deep magic of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.”<sup>99</sup>

Finally, Grudem summarizes the Old Testament example of Josiah and the necessity of an emphasis on Scripture for the contemporary church when he says, “If we want to hear our Creator and Lord speaking to us, we must continually give attention to the authoritative words of the Bible. This means that the Bible must be the only true foundation and constant guide for all that we do in the life of the church, and the Bible must be central to all that happens in preaching and public worship.”<sup>100</sup>

#### New Testament Public Scripture Reading

The New Testament provides examples which are foundational for the church’s practice of reading Scripture in worship as application of what is expressed in the Old Testament. In a time when many in the contemporary church have purged the reading of Scripture from worship, Jesus’ example, Paul’s command and God’s promise should be mentioned considering the overall biblical example of Scripture reading in worship.

---

<sup>97</sup>Inrig and Anders, 1 & 2 Kings, 346.

<sup>98</sup>Russell, *(Re)Aligning with God*, 108.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 74.

<sup>100</sup>Grudem, Collins, and Schreiner, *Understanding Scripture*, 11.

Moving into the New Testament examples, Mark Maddix has a lot to say about the necessity of Scripture reading for the contemporary church. “Central to Christianity is the belief that the Bible is inspired and authoritative for Christian faith and practice. Even though Christians affirm the authority of the Bible, there is a decline in Bible reading and Scripture usage in worship and discipleship.”<sup>101</sup> Again, the emphasis is on the necessity of a public reading of Scripture as foundational for the worship and spiritual building up of the body of Christ. Without a hearing of Scripture in the worship context the church no longer identifies with the Old and New Testament heritage and practice of those who have preceded them, subsequently, the promises and revelation of God are no longer heard and applied, resulting in a spiritual loss of focus and direction for the worship of the church.

Maddix, elaborating on the spiritual need for the contemporary church to return to an examination of New Testament Scripture and the practice of Scripture reading, he highlights the contemporary church’s drift away from what the New Testament says when he writes, “American Christians voice their assertion of the authority of the Bible, in recent years the use of the Bible has declined in the church and in its formative practices such as worship and discipleship.”<sup>102</sup> And, “As we read the Bible, we experience God through our reading. This formative approach to interpretation is much closer to the early church’s view of Scripture as transformative and formative.”<sup>103</sup> The New Testament examples of public Scripture reading are drawn from the Old Testament practice of Scripture reading, and the Old and New Testament practice becomes the application for the contemporary church.

---

<sup>101</sup>Maddix, “Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church,” 34.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 35.

## Luke 4:16

This verse is a demonstration of the Old Testament practice of Scripture reading being applied and demonstrated by Jesus. Cole writes, “The God revealed in Scripture gathers his people around his Word. Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue.”<sup>104</sup> Garland says, “Jesus consciously embarks on fulfilling the Scripture.”<sup>105</sup> The passage says Jesus went to the synagogue on the sabbath as was his custom and he stood up to read. He read the scroll of the prophet to those in attendance. This reading provides a direct example of the importance of the contemporary church continuing a worship function practiced by Jesus.

Trent Butler describes the process of what took place in this passage by providing a contemporary example for the church. “He followed his family’s normal habit and went to the synagogue worship. . .Next, they prayed, heard a passage read from the Pentateuch or Torah, then a passage from the prophets, a sermon, and a final priestly blessing. Jesus was given the honor of reading the scroll and then preaching.”<sup>106</sup> Russell, affirming the church’s need to realign itself to the practice of Scripture writes, “Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom is a call to (re)align one’s thoughts, actions and direction with the arrival of the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>107</sup> Jesus has provided a pattern of action for the contemporary church, and that is an example of the reading from the Scripture in the church community’s faith and practice.

---

<sup>104</sup>Graham A. Cole, and D. A Carson, *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016), 472.

<sup>105</sup>David E. Garland and Chilton E. Arnold, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 189.

<sup>106</sup>Trent C. Butler, and Max Anders, *Luke* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2000), 63.

<sup>107</sup>Russell, *(Re)Aligning with God*, 6.

Colossians 4:16; I Thessalonians 5:27; I Timothy 4:13

These passages are grouped together as they provide a similar exhortation from Paul to have his letters read aloud to the church's assembled body. He directs one body, the Colossians in 4:16 to hear his letter and then to pass that letter on to another body for public reading. "Paul sends a letter and greetings not only to Colosse, but also to Laodicea. The church in each city was to read its letter and then share it with the church in its sister city."<sup>108</sup>

Concerning I Timothy 4:13, Knute Larson, addressing Paul's words to Timothy that he specifically give attention to the reading of Scripture says, "Paul told Timothy to give his energies to the public reading of Scripture."<sup>109</sup> William Mounce affirms this about Paul's words to Timothy by saying, "the focus of his attention as he ministers to the Ephesian church should be Scripture, its public reading, the exhortation for the people to follow its teaching, and the doctrinal exposition of its meaning."<sup>110</sup> Clearly, Paul desired that the church practice the Old Testament example of the public reading of the Scripture. Larson develops this saying, "The public reading of God's Word prepares our minds and hearts for the preaching or teaching which follows. . . as the church reads and affirms what God has declared, the Spirit is freed to instruct, convict, and guide."<sup>111</sup>

In I Thessalonians 5:27, Paul took a stronger approach concerning his letters and Scripture. Larson notes this as, "Paul put these believers under oath, and he did so before the Lord. He was binding them to have this letter read to all the brothers. This letter was not simply

---

<sup>108</sup>Max Anders, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1999), 347-348.

<sup>109</sup>Larson and Anders, *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 207.

<sup>110</sup>Mounce, Hubbard, and Metzger, ed., *Pastoral Epistles*, 260.

<sup>111</sup>Knute Larson, Max Anders, *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 208.

to be circulated, but to be read aloud when the Thessalonians gathered for worship.”<sup>112</sup> Smith affirms this in the contemporary context when he writes, “Reading the Bible together is important because the Bible was intended originally to be heard in groups, and it was intended to be understood and applied by groups.”<sup>113</sup>

### Revelation 1:3

Of significance to the theological foundation of establishing a practice for the reading of Scripture in worship is the voice of God promising a blessing upon the reading of his word. “This verse also makes it evident that the author intended, even designed, his composition to be read aloud before Christian congregations assembled for worship.”<sup>114</sup> While the passage was specifically addressed to John in the context of the seven churches mentioned in the book of Revelation, there is the inferred promise to all churches of God’s blessing for the reading of His Word. Patterson writes, “Here the author is claiming that this ‘revelation (from) Jesus Christ’ is a direct word from God, and unveiling of his plan and purposes.”<sup>115</sup>

In Revelation 1:3, the verse identifies three important divisions of the promise given which are applicable for the reading of Scripture in worship. John records the promise for those who read the Word, for those who hear the Word, and for those who obey the Word. Easley, in his commentary on Revelation writes, “Three activities are recommended: to read, to hear, and to take to heart. The setting implied is a local congregation. In a time of little literacy, on oral

---

<sup>112</sup>Knute Larson, Max Anders, *I&II Thessalonians, I&II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 7.

<sup>113</sup>Smith, *Developing A Biblical Worldview*, 108.

<sup>114</sup>David Aune and David Hubbard, *Revelation 1-5*, vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 23.

<sup>115</sup>Paige Patterson, *Revelation*, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture Vol. 39. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 46.



reader (he who reads) addressed many listeners (those who hear it). Both reader and hearers are to obey (take to heart what is written).”<sup>116</sup>

These examples given are brief, but they model God’s expectation for His church regarding the importance of His Word. These passages show time and again, the absence of the Word of God is detrimental to the community and a return to the reading of the Scripture brings seasons of renewal. The passages demonstrate the importance of God’s Word and the blessings which accompany the reading of the Word. The contemporary church risks much when the Scripture is absent from the worship gathering. Smith concludes with, “We will see how faith is relevant not only for eternity but for life every day, and we will be encouraged to find, in Scripture, the content for our faith that will make it practical and livable.”<sup>117</sup>

### **Theoretical Foundation**

#### Affirming Existing Research

The theoretical foundation for the research of this project derives from previous research examined in the literature review, which validates the public reading of Scripture as God speaking to His people and is an imperative to the church’s worship of God. The literature review on this thesis topic is extensive and serves as an affirmation, explanation, and demonstration of the importance of Scripture on the spiritual life and health of the people of God. The works presented by the authors show the necessity of the Old and New Testament practice of Scripture reading and provides an open door for further examination of the strengths of existing theory and sets the theoretical foundation for this project.

---

<sup>116</sup>Kendall H. Easley and Max Anders, *Revelation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1998), 13.

<sup>117</sup>Smith, *Developing A Biblical Worldview*, 58.

However, the intention of this project is not to plow new ground by examining new or unrelated theories, but to take the existing theory further, showing the result of what it affirms in the review of literature and in the theological background. Therefore, the intent of this research is to reveal and prove or disprove in a local setting, the results of the primary theory that the reimplementation of Scripture reading within the congregation subsequently proves that spiritual literacy is affected by the presence or absence of Scripture.

The foundational concepts established by the research which will undergird, direct, and inform this project are three-fold, and each affirm Scripture as God's ultimate revelation to His church. First, the theoretical foundation will view Scripture as God's voice and necessary for the church's worship and experience of God. The foundation for the public reading of Scripture as the project crumbles when God is not viewed as the author and authority for Scripture and Scripture reading in worship. Dennis Johnson writes, "At our point in the history of redemption, however, listening to special revelation is listening to the Scriptures, for God's last word was spoken in these last days in the Son and confirmed to us by those who heard him (Heb 1:1-4; 2:1-4)."<sup>118</sup> And, Kevin Storer says, "Scripture does not simply recount action; it is part of the action. . .it contributes to the realization of God's purposes for the world. . .Scripture is thus a collection of statements—and promises, commands, warnings, and so on—all on their respective missions."<sup>119</sup>

Second, the principle foundational theoretical practice guiding this project, promotes Scripture reading as necessary for the spiritual development of the church and individuals in the church. Research has revealed the absence of Scripture contributes to a cycle of self-dependence

---

<sup>118</sup>Johnson, "Between Two Wor(l)Ds, 76.

<sup>119</sup>Storer, *Reading Scripture to Hear God*, 69.

and negation of God's Word for spiritual growth among members of the church. Smith writes concerning this problem of self-dependence, self-centeredness, and subsequent need to test our lives as individuals in the worship community considering the Scripture, "Christians are driven by a desire to be trendy rather than to be faithful to the gospel. . .the desire may be rooted in self-centeredness more than in evangelism or spiritual formation."<sup>120</sup> McLean speaking to this foundational principle of Scripture as necessary for the spiritual development of individuals and the church says, "We want to experience God's transformation, but that won't happen until people experience the Word with all its power."<sup>121</sup> The foundation for the project rests on the authority of Scripture to spiritually develop and unify the people of God in the Word of God.

Third, the principle foundational theoretical practice guiding this project promotes Scripture reading as necessary for the church, to find its salvation in the scriptural revelation of Jesus Christ to the church. The principle guiding this research project is the church, which does not practice the public reading of Scripture, is depriving itself of the full hearing of God's revelation of salvation available in Jesus Christ. Ward explains this, "Jesus Christ comes as the fulfilment of all the Old Testament's covenant promises. In particular, as the Word-made-flesh he comes as the fulfilment as everything the 'Word of God' in the Old Testament had been planning."<sup>122</sup> Storer further develops this principle when he affirms, "Christ is both subject and object of Scripture, the one who unifies the covenant of promise (Old Testament) and the covenant of fulfillment (New Testament), and the one who mediates himself to the church by

---

<sup>120</sup>Smith, *Developing A Biblical Worldview*, 44.

<sup>121</sup>McLean, Bird, and Lucado, *Unleashing the Word*, 20.

<sup>122</sup>Ward, *Words of Life*, 37.

means of Scripture.”<sup>123</sup> Without a defined attempt to hear and understand Scripture by the church, a comprehensive understanding of God’s purpose for sending Jesus is negated.

### Existing Practice

Research affirms the theories promoted but seldom address the practice of reading. The principle which is clear is that among independent denominations such as Mount Pleasant, and in many other contemporary churches, Scripture reading is seldom practiced or is practiced piecemeal. In many mainline denominations, the public Scripture reading is still practiced through various forms of lectionary readings.

These churches view the lectionary as a primary means of addressing the absence of Scripture common to some churches. Mark Maddix writes, “Reading Scripture in worship becomes an interpretative act and opportunity for congregants to experience God. Regular reading of Scripture and preaching from the lectionary can allow congregants to encounter the whole Bible.”<sup>124</sup> Chris Knights describes the lectionary as, “The lectionary is, “a very helpful cycle of readings, which seems to cover a larger amount of Scripture. . .and in a more systematic way.”<sup>125</sup> However, he writes that for many of these services, “there is also a danger of ‘overkill’—of there being so much Scripture read in one act of worship that it actually becomes counterproductive.”<sup>126</sup>

The negative application of his point to Mount Pleasant goes back to the need to remove those items which prohibit extensive time in the worship service for social interaction. So, while

---

<sup>123</sup>Storer, *Reading Scripture to Hear God*, 73.

<sup>124</sup>Maddix, “Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church,” 41.

<sup>125</sup>Chris Knights, “How Well is the Revised Common Lectionary Standing the Test of Time?” *The Expositor Times* 130, no. 7 (2019): 306.

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, 308.

too much Scripture may be counterproductive, even a little Scripture is better than none and the congregation will learn that not every reading will address every activity within the service, “Of course, there is nothing wrong with scripture being read in worship. . .so the preacher does not need to seek to force all the readings to have a consistent message that they can then declare in the sermon.”<sup>127</sup>

The foundational emphasis for this project has shown the intent of this research is to reveal and prove or disprove in a local setting, the results of the primary theory that the reimplementation of Scripture reading within the congregation subsequently proves that spiritual literacy is affected by the presence or absence of Scripture. The practice of a form of lectionary readings in the future, may prove to be a catalyst for the reclaiming of the permanent public reading of Scripture in worship and for the spiritual development of the church by the regular and prescribed lectionary readings.

#### Expanding Existing Theory

The Bible is foundational for demonstrating the results of Scripture reading upon the congregation, and the literature research affirms the practice of Scripture reading as being a biblical expectation. However, the current research does not sufficiently show the result that a return to public Scripture reading has on a congregation.

The application of practice in this project is not new but its intent is to demonstrate the theory that a return to the Old and New Testament pattern of Scripture reading, is not only foundational to the church’s spiritual identity with God but is necessary for the biblical development and literacy of its members. Therefore, the primary intent is to provide an

---

<sup>127</sup>Knights, “How Well is the Revised Common Lectionary,” 308.

examination and a demonstration of the result the public Scripture reading has on a congregation's spiritual development literacy.

The authors build upon the Old and New Testament premise that if Scripture reading happens, then spiritual literacy will happen. The project wishes to apply this principle in the local setting to examine the result of this theory.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The Methodology portion of this thesis project covers the intervention design and the intervention methods, which guide this project in the purpose of aligning and reflecting the thesis, and the theological and theoretical foundations established in chapter two. The intervention design and implementation of the project for the public reading of Scripture in worship, directly result from the perceived congregational need established in chapter one, the literature review and the theological background foundation and direction established in chapter two, and the available congregational participant resources discussed in chapter three.

The thesis project goal evaluated and examined in this chapter through the methodology for the implementing of the public reading of Scripture in worship, will seek to culminate in chapter four with an examination of the results, which might lead to a renewed congregational understanding of the importance of the reading of the Word of God during worship. The project's methodology established in this chapter includes the intervention design plan for this project along with the implementation of the intervention design.

### **Intervention Design**

#### **Project Overview Outline**

The following section is an introductory overview of the process of the project to the congregation as envisioned by the facilitator of the thesis project. The facilitator believes the project intervention is necessary in the Mount Pleasant congregation to address the absence of Scripture in worship, subsequently impacting biblical development and the use of the Bible for providing spiritual direction to the congregation. With this view in mind, the facilitator believes the phases and processes which follow are necessary for understanding and addressing the

intervention steps necessary for an evaluation of the absence of Scripture's role in the congregation.

First phase: The project will begin with a public announcement on a chosen Sunday morning on the basics of the project and its implementation for worship. This public announcement is important because a history of negative results from flyers and announcements reveal these are ineffective for soliciting participants from the congregation. The congregation relates best to one-on-one interaction and public pulpit communication. Therefore, the facilitator will promote the project details and solicit participants from the pulpit.

Second phase: The facilitator will explain the project, the required reading and control listening groups roles, and solicit willing participants two weeks prior to the actual start of the project. This public information will cover the required number and ages of participants for both groups, the length of time and the projects beginning and end date, the survey required of each participant, and the project expectation concerning commitment of readers and listeners. Following the announcements and the solicitation of volunteers, the persons desiring to take part will sign up with the facilitator immediately following the worship service, or by phone during the week.

Third phase: When all participants have been selected, a Sunday afternoon meeting time one week prior to the start of the reading of Scripture in worship will be scheduled for the surveying of both the reading group and the control listening group. Surveys will be given to all volunteers at this designated time and will last until all individuals complete their test.

Fourth phase: At the time of testing, each participant will be given a numbered survey held by an appointed member from one group who will distribute and collect surveys for the volunteers, thus keeping the facilitator from identifying surveys. This individual volunteer will



be a willing participant who will work in the pre and post phase of survey gathering. This individual ensures all participants are recorded, and a number assigned to them and to their pre and post survey. The facilitator will not view this roster held by the volunteer, and the volunteer will immediately turn over surveys to the facilitator while maintaining control of the number roster which matches names to surveys by numbers. Each of the twenty group participants will receive a number on their survey and this number will be matched to their name by the group volunteer. The surveys are viewed only by the facilitator and not by the designated secretary of the group. Therefore, twenty participants will be tested, and their anonymity respected by both the facilitator and the volunteer survey distributor and collector.

Fifth phase: Prior to the first meeting of participant volunteers, the facilitator will have evaluated the present order of worship and will find an appropriate location in the order of worship for implementing the Old and New Testament Scripture reading. This pre-meeting evaluation of worship order is important to have planned ahead as question #11 on the survey asks, "How would you feel about an extended time (10 minutes) in worship for the public reading of the Old and New Testament Scripture?" The possibility of having extra time in worship may be an initial concern to some individuals, or the perception of having an item removed from worship to allow for this extra time may be a genuine concern for the long-term members of this congregation. The ability to offer to the questioner information about how the worship process will change and what they can expect will offer assurance to the group that this project is not something new, which should be rejected.

Sixth phase: The meeting of volunteers will provide participants with the necessary background to understand the theological background and importance of Scripture reading in worship for the project purpose by going over the outline of the project. During this time, the

reading group will receive their assigned Scripture and Sunday reading schedule. In addition, since readers will know assigned days in advance, if a change is necessary then the assigned days among members can be easily switched, while still maintaining an opportunity for all reading group members to read in worship.

Seventh phase: Five consecutive Sundays will be the length of the project's implementation for research purpose in the worship service. This amount of time affords an ample opportunity for implementing Scripture reading, to make a marked and measurable change in the dynamic of worship and in the spiritual lives of individuals.

Eighth phase: The importance of smooth flow during worship will be practiced. Readers will sit at the front of the congregation on their assigned week, affording quick movement to the pulpit without creating further time delay by waiting on participants to move from the pews to the front stage. The reader will stand in the pulpit at their assigned point and name the book, chapter and verse or verses to be read. The readers will use no other words or phrases prior to or after the reading.

Ninth phase: At the end of the designated period of action after the fifth Sunday reading, participants from both groups will be resurveyed in the same anonymous manner to measure any change. The measured statistical change indicated by the results of the pre and post survey will determine the degree of growth which occurred in both groups; if growth only occurred in the reading group resulting from their active participation in the public reading of Scripture; if there was no measurable growth from either group or even if there was a measurable decline in either group pre to post survey. This second survey given to the participants will take place on a Sunday afternoon in the fellowship hall of the Mount Pleasant Church after the last reading week.

Tenth phase: The survey results will be measured by a T-test and the results of the two groups compared. Pre survey and post survey will measure the results of each group to the group itself, and a comparison growth measured against each group to evaluate the growth or decline of the whole. Since a measured growth through the hearing of Scripture is what is being determined, the listening control group is necessary for ensuring an accurate assessment of growth from hearing Scripture and not just a bias coming from the active reading group's participation in Scripture reading.

Eleventh phase: Following the completion of the project steps, duration and the reception of the surveys, the name log and assigned numbers of participants will be destroyed. The surveys will be secured, ensuring anonymity is preserved. The data from pre and post survey will be evaluated, and the result of the project analyzed and discussed in chapter four. Since the project relies on the measured results of the pre and post survey statistical information, and the project will incorporate no recorded or interviewed persons, the need for an after-project brief with the participants is deemed necessary to gather part of data triangulation. Stringer describes this as necessary because this debriefing, "may also provide people with opportunities to deal with emotions and feelings that might cloud their vision, hinder their memories, or color their interpretations of events. Debriefing focuses on the feelings and responses of the participant rather than the information participants have provided."<sup>128</sup>

While the project goal is to address the absence of Scripture in the Mount Pleasant congregation, the project will also answer the question that the gap in literature review indicated. An answer to the question of what happens when the reading of Scripture is implemented, and the results are given will be examined.

---

<sup>128</sup>Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE 2014), 93.

## Purpose and Objectives

The intervention design purpose for this project is the primary application and active engagement of Mount Pleasant Church individual volunteers to address the problem of a lack of biblical development in the congregation by taking part in public Scripture reading during the worship service, as presented in the project overview.

The objective is fulfilled in the public reading of Scripture during worship to enhance and create within the congregation the fulfilment of the phases and processes for establishing a foundation of biblical spirituality in the local congregation; to be rooted in the Scripture as explained and examined in the problem, purpose, theological foundation and literature review sections of this paper and outlined in the project overview outline. In the words of Mark Maddix, “A biblical spirituality represents a transformative process of personal and communal engagement with the biblical text. For people with a limited knowledge of the Bible, reading and studying the Bible in the context of an intimate group gives opportunities for learning and Christian growth.”<sup>129</sup> The necessity of this transformative process for the congregation is further affirmed when he writes that it is the historical practice of the church to use the Scripture for the biblical intervention in the life of the congregation, “As we read the Bible, we experience God through our reading. This formative approach to interpretation is much closer to the early church’s view of Scripture as transformative and formative.”<sup>130</sup>

The attempt of this intervention design by the facilitator is a focused and quantitative approach engaging twenty individual participants within this local church. Their participation involves Scripture reading, observation of Scripture through listening, and pre and post project

---

<sup>129</sup>Maddix, “Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church.” 68.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 35.

surveys for the evaluation and understanding of the past and current perception of the effect Scripture reading has on the spiritual development and biblical literacy of the church by the reading group. However, a qualitative research affirmation derives from the control listening group who subsequently provides the qualitative dimension of research by their listening and input. Therefore, this is a project designed to measure the full potential of Scripture reading in the congregation for overcoming the problem statement posed in chapter one, which is perceived to derive from the absence of Scripture reading in worship.

Again, while the facilitator will analyze prominent quantitative and minimal qualitative data, this remains a primarily focused and quantitative approach. The research method utilized for this project will be a simple action research, which is described by Michael Patton as a method of solving a problem in an organization by utilizing people in the organization to understand the problem and participate in the solution.<sup>131</sup>

Another important consideration is the facilitator's role in this local congregation and in the research. The role of the facilitator in this action research project is rooted in what Ernest T. Stringer describes as an importance of the project facilitator becoming a part of the community, serving as a co-participant in the ongoing process of gathering and interpreting data.<sup>132</sup> This is imperative for the specific approach necessary to conduct the project among the members of this congregation and to evaluate the subsequent data in light of the demographics of this congregation's participants and history. The facilitator is not only pastor of the local congregation guiding the members spiritually, but the facilitator is a leader in the congregation's attempt to discover and work through a biblical method for overcoming the stated problem.

---

<sup>131</sup>Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE 2002), 185.

<sup>132</sup>Stringer, *Action Research*, 63.

Since the facilitator is the pastor of the congregation and is designated as the spiritual leader, a two-fold ethical consideration must be noted at this point. First, the ethical consideration is noted that while the pastor is the facilitator of this research project and the spiritual leader of the congregation, the pastor holds no authority over members of the congregation to mandate or enforce participation in the project. The deacons of Mount Pleasant Church, along with the congregation, hold authority over members. Members are free to choose to participate with no fear of retaliation for not participating. While the facilitator is the pastor of the congregation and a normal pastoral desire is for spiritual growth to take place in the congregation, the pastor, as facilitator, brings no bias to the study. Second, ethical consideration is given to the project and the results, in that no steps have been taken to tilt the results of the study in favor of demonstrated growth following the project's completion. As a researcher in this project, the facilitator desires an accurate assessment of the effect Scripture has on the congregation.

### Project Process

In delineating the project overview and the purpose and objectives of this project, the intervention process is presented and discussed fully in this portion of the chapter. The intervention project process is the detailed steps of moving the project of the Scripture reading in worship as integral for spiritual development outline, into the actual detailed project phase. Four key categories are developed as necessary and inclusive of the overarching steps necessary to conduct the project as briefly presented in the project overview. The facilitator believes these steps contained in these four categories are necessary for implementing the project successfully within this congregation. These categories are listed and then detailed fully in subsequent paragraphs to show and serve as the fulfillment of the project outline. Within each of these four

categories are listed the various processes identifying the broad scope of necessary steps, requirements, resources, scheduling, and logistics of the project as required in the methodology of chapter three.

These categories focus on the initial project overview order of events from beginning to end. First, an overview of participants and demographics of this project are presented. This category also identifies the steps of permission, identification, and demographic of participants within the church along with the start and stop period of the project. Second, the formation of the reading and control listening groups necessary for the execution, completion and evaluation of the data received from this project. This category also identifies the role of participants in the actual reading and listening of Scripture during the worship and the selection of Scripture and the Bible translation chosen for the public worship reading. Third, the pre and post survey given to group participants and an explanation for the project's survey questions, along with the recording and storage of survey results are presented. Fourth, the survey testing method to be used to determine pre and post results are discussed. Following these four categories, the chapter will conclude with the planned implementation of the intervention design discussing data triangulation, data collection, and analyzation for measuring increased or decreased biblical development from the public reading of Scripture.

#### Participants and Demographics

At the beginning of the project, the facilitator found a meaningful quote from Stringer about the need for the facilitator to understand the participants and demographics surrounding the project, "As researchers commence preparatory work, they should artfully position themselves so that they do not threaten the social space of the people with whom they will be working. . .Research facilitators also cannot afford to be associated too closely with any one of

the stake holding groups in the setting.”<sup>133</sup> This quote is important for the researcher in this setting of participants and demographics as it teaches three things about the implementation of the upcoming project with the participants. The first lesson is not to threaten the social space of the people with whom the researcher will be working. This is important because the reading group and listening control group project field is a large social space, driven by the history of each participant’s view of worship and whether that worship is entirely Bible based or whether that worship can be rooted in dialogue. Second, the necessity of the facilitator showing no designs on any territory held by members of these groups. This is important because chapter one has documented the past indicators of negativity toward leadership who have threatened the removal of the social dialogue, which some in the group consider important for community worship and identity. Third, it is important for the facilitator to be mindful of new people who do not share the historical value of dialogue for worship and may be perceived by long term members as threatening to the rituals, territory, and identity of the older group. The facilitator cannot contribute to an atmosphere where it is perceived the newer members are being used to overturn the older member’s familiar worship territory. The work that begins with the participants and their demographic must incorporate these ideas in conjunction with the new group and old group input, with the ultimate outcome being the benefit of all members of the church.

The facilitator received IRB approval to begin conducting the project on April 15, 2020.<sup>134</sup> Using a provided IRB template, the facilitator requested permission of Mount Pleasant

---

<sup>133</sup>Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 83.

<sup>134</sup>See Appendix A for IRB Approval.



Church to conduct research with members of the Mount Pleasant congregation.<sup>135</sup> Continuing to follow the IRB template, the facilitator received permission from the deacons of Mount Pleasant Church to move forward in the research project with the Mount Pleasant congregation.<sup>136</sup> A copy of the participant consent letter was given to each of the participants assisting in this project.<sup>137</sup>

The actual project period of application will be eight weeks. The first two weeks involve soliciting volunteers verbally from the pulpit of the Mount Pleasant worship service. The third week involves the division of volunteers into the reading group and control listening group and giving the pre-project survey on May 17<sup>th</sup> prior to the first planned public reading of Scripture beginning on the fourth week.<sup>138</sup> The fourth through eighth week will be the actual implementation of the project in worship through the public reading of Scripture. At the completion of the eighth week, the post project survey will be given to participants who will reassemble in the fellowship hall of the Mount Pleasant Church on Sunday June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

The project solicitation of volunteers began on time, but the actual solicitation announcement request met with an initial hurdle after receiving IRB and church approval. COVID-19 prevented the corporate assembly of worship from March 15<sup>th</sup> to May 10<sup>th</sup>. During this period, the project's two-week window for the solicitation of volunteers by pulpit announcement was to have taken place during two of the closed Sundays. Since these notices were to begin two weeks before the project survey date of May 17<sup>th</sup>, a solution for the public solicitation of participants became necessary. To overcome this initial setback during the period

---

<sup>135</sup>See Appendix B for Mount Pleasant Church permission request letter.

<sup>136</sup>See Appendix C for Mount Pleasant Church permission letter.

<sup>137</sup>See Appendix D for participant consent letter.

<sup>138</sup>See Appendix E for pre and post survey questions.

of isolation, the facilitator began daily recorded devotions and online Sunday worship services. Utilizing these recorded devotions and online Sunday worship services, the facilitator made announcements about the project and a request for participants to engage with the project upon resumption of the weekly in person church service. Through the recorded devotions and online worship announcements, the twenty participants necessary for the conducting and completion of this project responded and volunteered. In addition to these twenty necessary participants, four reserve participants volunteered to be used in the event of a regular participant dropping out of the project. These four reserve participants are surveyed and given the same background information as the regular participants, however, if they are not utilized in replacing a regular participant, their surveys will not be used in the final statistical measurements.

The project meeting began on Sunday May 17<sup>th</sup> with the assembly, explanation of project, survey and assignment of groups and Scriptures in the fellowship hall of the Mount Pleasant Church. The location was chosen for its access to tables necessary for survey taking and for the ability of the facilitator to speak to all participants simultaneously, making it easier for explaining the project and dividing the participants into their preferred reading or listening groups. The required resources for implementing the project in the field of application are minimal. Provided copies of the survey to each participant and a pen is all that is required for supplies.

With twenty participants identified, the volunteers divided into two groups of ten participants each, which reflect the age, diversity, and membership dynamics of the congregation. Unintentionally, the participants volunteering were ten males and ten females. Participants ranged in age from eighteen to eighty. At this meeting, details of the project were explained to the volunteers in a purposive manner by the facilitator. Stringer writes about the

group buying into the project, “action research, therefore, ultimately focuses on events that are meaningful for stakeholders. . .In doing so, each participant’s taken-for-granted cultural viewpoint is challenged and modified so that new systems of meaning emerge that can be incorporated. . .”<sup>139</sup>

The imperative by the facilitator in the presentation of the project to the volunteers is to reveal to the participants the reality that the research project is not some ivory tower endeavor by the facilitator, which will be done in isolation and apart from what the participants bring to the project in view of their values from which they operate their faith community of Mount Pleasant. The facilitator approaches the research with this group by taking into consideration their deep-seated political, cultural habits, traditions, and experiences if they are to cooperate and understand the significance of the project. Follow through after the project’s completion is important to address scripturally and with the support of the congregation, the major issue of the lack of Scripture in worship, and overemphasis of the socializing portion of worship. While understanding their cultural and traditional background and need for socialization, the research and participation explanation period with the groups brought them to a place of excitement at taking part in valuing Scripture, as that which will enhance their biblical literacy and possibly change the church’s spiritual direction.

During the meeting, volunteers were asked if they preferred reading Scripture in worship, or if they preferred listening to Scripture read in worship. Seventeen volunteers expressed an outright preference and were placed in the group of their choice. The facilitator then placed the three undecided volunteers in one group or the other, helping to maintain and reflect a balanced mixture of men and women and long-term and short-term membership within the congregation.

---

<sup>139</sup>Stringer, *Action Research*, 55.

The facilitator instructed the four standby volunteers to prepare to stand in for any individual from either group, should the primary participant drop out of the research.

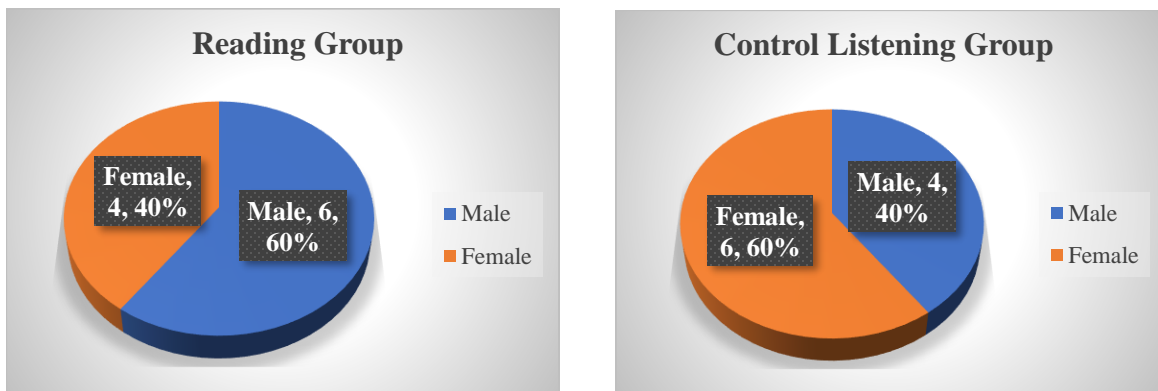
### Reading Group and Control Listening Group

At the heart of the project's application within the congregation and the subsequent evaluation of the data post project are key roles of the purpose of the reading group, the role of the control listening group, and the Scripture and Bible translation chosen for the reading. Since developing a biblical worldview and biblical literacy within a congregation is a lengthy process, the facilitator must gauge biblical literacy growth or non-growth during a brief period through the information gathered from the roles of these two groups, stated in their pre and post project surveys, ensuring by the Bible translation that an understanding of Scripture both read and heard was clearly presented.

The facilitator believes a key to a more complete and balanced understanding of the outcome of data rests in presentation of the division of the two groups, both by sex and short and long-term membership. This division of sex and membership is reflected in two charts.

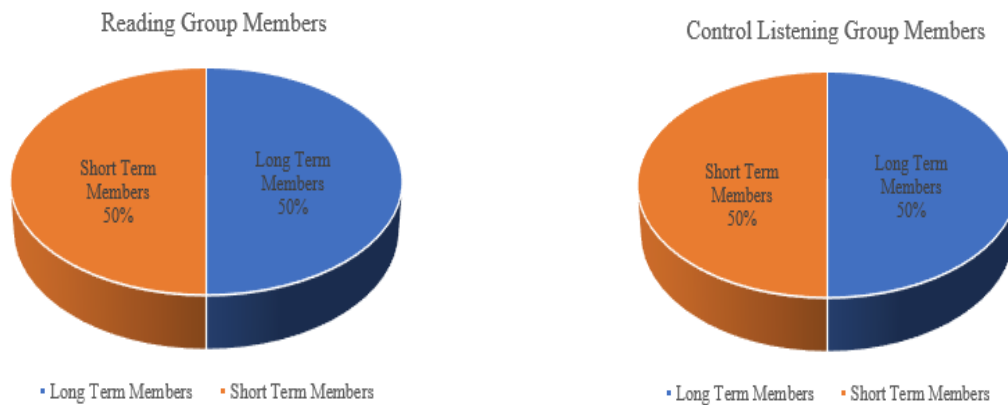
First, the reading group and the control listening group charts (Figure 1), provide the numerical balance between male and female participants within the reading and listening control group for this project.

(Figure 1)



Second, since part of the initial description of the problem centered on the desire of new members to reflect a more biblical element of worship, rather than the historical conversation in worship, it is important for the survey results to show the project’s balance in the diversity of long and short-term membership mixture for this project. The following chart (Figure 2), reflects the balance between what is considered long-term church membership (fifteen years or more) and short-term membership (14 years or less) attendance at Mount Pleasant Church. The length of years was chosen because in the context of personal insight from this rural North Carolina faith community, any person under 15 years of membership is considered and approached as a “new member.”

(Figure 2)



Group one is designated as the reading group. The reading group comprises the ten volunteer participants who will publicly read pre-selected Scripture in the worship service. Each of these individual participants have an assigned Scripture, and an assigned Sunday for their reading. The reading group represents the normal practice of reading the Scripture in worship and is responsible for the actual engagement of the project with the congregation. This group

also represents the potential future permanent implementation of the project in the Mount Pleasant worship services, by their willingness and demonstration of how a return to the public Scripture reading in worship looks and works.

Group two is designated as the control listening group. As previously indicated, a listening control group is necessary to offset and prevent flawed research by triangulating the data and countering the argument that the measuring of the reading group alone, would automatically show an increased biblical literacy resulting from the reading of Scripture aloud in worship without a countering of that measurement by a secondary measurement of those who listen.

Group two is a control listening group of ten individuals who represent the general listeners in the congregation assembled on any given Sunday morning. This group comprises the same number of ten participants, mirroring group one in age and membership dynamics as documented in the image (Figure 2). This control listening group will take the same survey before and after the project as the reading group but will not take part in the actual public reading of Scripture. This control listening group understands the importance of their position and have dedicated themselves to attending worship every week for the purpose of hearing the Scriptures presented in the worship service.

The intention of this project is not to prove a greater spiritual growth with group one because they read the Scripture, but to discern the total spiritual growth and understanding of Scripture reading in worship by the measurement of both groups. This is reflected in the necessity of having the control listening group for this project. The survey of the control listening group should reveal a similar pre and post understanding of Scripture on the congregation, to the same degree as the reading group. Both groups should reflect a similar initial understanding of

Scripture's role in worship in their pre project survey. While individuals taking part in the public reading may show a slightly larger growth post project based on the actual practice of public reading and hearing of Scripture, the intention is to show actual outcome through T-testing the unbiased outcome of either increased or decreased growth post project.

The Scriptures chosen for the public reading during this five-week period will be the Scriptures identified in the theological section as the foundation Scripture necessary for the project. These Scriptures are presented as the actual assigned passages for the reading group:

Week One: Old Testament reading, Isaiah 55:7-11. New Testament reading, 2 Timothy 3:15.

Week Two: Old Testament reading, Joshua 8:33-35. New Testament reading, Luke 4:16-20.

Week Three: Old Testament reading, Nehemiah 8:1-8. New Testament reading, Colossians 4:16.

Week Four: Old Testament reading, Nehemiah 8:9-17. New Testament reading, 2 Timothy 4:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:27.

Week Five: Old Testament reading, 2 Kings 22:8-13. New Testament reading, Revelation 1:1-3.

The purpose of using these Scriptures for the public reading is three-fold. First, they show how Scripture reading produces various forms of spiritual growth in either individuals or congregations, as demonstrated by Nehemiah and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings. Second, these Scriptures from the Old and New Testaments teach the worshipper the historical necessity of public Scripture reading for the hearing and obedience to God, as recorded in Joshua 8 and Luke 4. Third, the participants should, post project, desire and reflect a subsequent biblical understanding of the role, development, importance, and desire to return to the reading of Scripture in worship, as reflected again in Nehemiah and Paul's New Testament passages. Revelation 1 affirms the

overarching necessity of Scripture and, “The return. . .to the authority of Scriptures should be the first step of a commitment to change.”<sup>140</sup>

At the assembly of the reading group and the control listening group, a simple message was given concerning the importance of the reading and listening closely to these Scriptures in worship. “We listen through the words of people to the voice of God. And because it is the Word of God, we must listen to these human words with profound care.”<sup>141</sup> Indicated in the first chapter was the idea that the socialization time during worship had become the primary focus and reason for gathering. The importance of the groups receiving the message of the importance of listening to the Scripture as the voice of God is important to addressing this issue. “God chooses to use words as a fundamental means of relating to us, we must presume, because the kind of relationship he chooses to establish cannot be established without them.”<sup>142</sup>

Since the surveying of biblical literacy and authority within the church is important, the facilitator went over assigned Scripture with each volunteer, helping the reader to understand what was being read, providing help with biblical names and encouragement to practice the reading of Scripture with an emphasis on articulation and projection. The importance and necessity of this brief emphasis comes from what Max McLean writes, “The words of Scripture are powerful and life-changing, breaking through to the hearts of those who are ready to receive it.”<sup>143</sup> He further emphasizes the importance of reading the Scripture well, “When God is affirmed and magnified through the sacred text and other vibrant expressions of faith, I come

---

<sup>140</sup>Keathley and Draper Jr., *Biblical Authority*, 86.

<sup>141</sup>Wihoit and Howard, *Discovering Lectio Divina*, 31.

<sup>142</sup>Ward, *Words of Life*, 31.

<sup>143</sup>McLean, Bird, Lucado, *Unleashing the Word*, 22.



away inspired and changed. . .when God is magnified through sacred text, I am emboldened in my daily walk to serve him.”<sup>144</sup>

The facilitator believes it is imperative for this project to reflect as much clarity and unanimity as possible for consistent results to be achieved. To that end the reading of all Scripture by the reading group will be undertaken with two thoughts in mind. First, all Scripture will be read from the English Standard Version (ESV). The English Standard Version is an easy-to-understand translation keeping within the parameters of this congregation’s broad swath of Bible translations, falling between those of the KJV only crowd, to those who read only The Message paraphrase. Second, the public readings in worship will consist of the reading of Scripture only during the worship by the readers. Readers have been instructed to approach the pulpit, announce the Scripture, and read only the Scripture. The readers were instructed to not interject into the reading their personal opinion or interpretation of their assigned Scripture, nor are they to add any additional comments such as this is a favorite verse or how this Scripture has affected them during some point in their life. These comments may shade the perception of Scripture reading in worship and affect the potential outcome.

#### Pre and Post Survey

As previously indicated, prior to the reading of Scripture in worship, both groups received a copy of the survey<sup>145</sup> to take anonymously at the appointed time. The pre project survey was given to the reading and control listening group on May 17<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 in the Mount Pleasant Church fellowship hall. This same survey given at the start of the project will be given

---

<sup>144</sup>McLean, Bird, Lucado, *Unleashing the Word*, 41.

<sup>145</sup>See Appendix E for a copy of the survey.

again post project and is designed to measure pre and post project understanding of the role of Scripture reading in the congregation from both groups.

Before the testing began, the facilitator became mindful of, and operated the testing under the premise that the facilitator must be mindful not to direct, or guide the people as walking statistics, but as a people in the local body of Christ. The volunteers come to the project not as a statistic, technique, or procedure, but with the desire of being a supportive element of the project to enhance the church body. The people agree to the project, feeling the importance of living out the common goal of church growth. They are not nameless faces the facilitator may manipulate, but they are people who have their own “collective vision” and it is imperative to facilitate that vision in relation to the project goal.

The facilitator designed the questions to the survey with this truth in mind and will conduct the same survey at the beginning and end of the project on all volunteers. It is understood that the survey questions are simply designed to gauge biblical understanding and literacy, not to manipulate people or outcomes.

The survey given to both groups contains twenty questions which the facilitator designed to gauge the participant’s current biblical literacy, their understanding of the importance of Scripture reading in worship, and their understanding of biblical authority within the context of this congregation. This will help the facilitator to understand and research the impact Scripture reading has on the congregation considering their history, perception, and role they place on Scripture by the answers provided.

The questions in the survey are designed to be answered by the participants in view of what they currently believe about the role of Scripture in worship and from what they have understood or been taught through the years. Many of these questions begin with, “do you

believe?” This is an important part of the process for the participants owning into the project itself. When participants can respond to a survey from their perspective, then a fuller insight by the facilitator can be gleaned. The survey is designed to be answered on a scale of 1-5 with (1) being “the least or not important” and (5) being “the most or very important.” Feelings of uncertainty would fall under (3) “as uncertain, unimportant or indifferent.” The numbers (2) and (4) would subsequently fall between number (3) in importance.

The survey’s twenty questions are designed to be given and evaluate both the pre and post project understanding of participants regarding the role of Scripture in worship, by providing the facilitator with a measurable pre and post foundation for evaluating whether the problem noted in chapter one can be rectified.

The survey is multi-dimensional by the questions asked of participants as the questions gauge past, present, and future practices in worship and participants current understanding and views regarding the role of Scripture in the worship service. These questions also provide insight into the spiritual direction, health, and role of Scripture to direct the congregation. Specifically, however, this survey emphasizes a direct focus goal concerning Scripture reading in worship. Too often, information gathered may present additional types of issues which are not relevant to the narrowed focus necessary to gauge the project’s foundation starting and ending point. For instance, part of the problem statement in chapter one dealt with the desire of many older members to tell their stories in worship. The potential for non-relevant information gathered from some surveys, while interesting, may lead to an overwhelmed problem identification and the clouding of perspective, pertaining to the “narrowed focus” necessary for the project information.

A focused approach from the surveys relating to Mount Pleasant Church is possible for the process of this project. The testing results of people who volunteer can be evaluated through the pre and post survey, with conclusions drawn by the T-testing of measurable answers given in surveys both pre and post project.

#### Importance of Testing Procedure

Since the public reading of Scripture portion of the project will last five weeks, it is imperative the pre-survey be given to the participants prior to implementing the actual reading plan in worship. The post survey must take place immediately after the five-week period of reading. The necessity of the pre and post survey taking place immediately before and after the five-week phase of the project is important to the total process. Since the initial announcement was made and subsequent meeting held, the participants have moved into a “buy in” of the project. This momentum must be maintained not only for continued project involvement, but for the actual remembrance of the project experience by the reading and listening groups. A prolonged gap between surveys and project participation by participants might contribute to a dampening of participation or forgetting of the insight and experiences gleaned during the five weeks.

#### **Implementation of Intervention Design**

With the intervention design discussed, implementing the intervention design will address two necessary steps before the examination of results, displayed and discussed in chapter four. The first step for the implementing of the intervention design is an examination of the data triangulation used to approach an interpretation of the project data. The second step is the evaluation of the survey data analyzation through the T-testing methods.

## Data Triangulation

Stringer writes, “the credibility of a study is enhanced when multiple sources of information are incorporated.”<sup>146</sup> The intention of this portion of the project is to highlight the process in which a fuller perspective of information gathered from the multiple sources chosen for this project affirm data triangulation and promulgate understanding of the results. The data triangulation intent of this project does not operate off an assumption that one method of data used in this project is weaker than another, such as an assumption the post project debriefing is of less value than gauging the information gleaned from the results of T=testing. The intention of the methods used for data triangulation is to ensure the project is comprehensive.

Data triangulation is described as the way of making sense of the experiences of everyday life,<sup>147</sup> which in this case is making sense of the shared experiences of the congregational data acquired pre, during and post project. According to Sensing, the purpose of the data triangulation in this project is achieving a fuller and more complete understanding of the outcome from the multiple data collections acquired in this project in view of the single project outcome.<sup>148</sup>

First, the data triangulation used in this project focuses on quantitative data which can be analyzed from the answers and simple statistical results received from persons taking the pre and post survey. Second, qualitative data may be mined from the total project experiences gained by persons bringing their unique membership background and perspective to the project pre-survey, post-survey, and the after-project meeting. This will subsequently incorporate the data value of

---

<sup>146</sup>Stringer, *Action Research*, 93.

<sup>147</sup>Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Thesis*, 72.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 72

the larger group of members, the facilitator's observation, and the interpretation of data in view of the new members and long-term members observations and responses. This is as Sensing indicates, a cross-checking and determining of values from multiple participants and sources and then the comparing and contrasting of this data for a full and balanced study as possible.<sup>149</sup> Third, data triangulation is achieved in the statistical numbers gleaned from the survey which measure pre and post survey and increased and decreased measurement of data measured by T-testing, both groups using a two tailed with paired and unpaired data.

Since the sequence of events require pre and post testing with a post project briefing, both groups will take the survey of twenty questions before and after the project phase is complete and the results will be measured by a standard two tailed T-test. The two tailed T-test is chosen as the simplest and most effective way of measuring the various statistical outcomes of this focused project survey. The T-test will serve as the thesis testing tool to affirm significant increased biblical development, or to highlight insignificant growth between groups or within the same group pre and post survey.

The process for the testing of the reading and listening groups will be multi-dimensional, with each group statistically measured to itself and then to the other group by the pre and post survey results. The chosen process for the evaluation of the statistical data is to measure the pre-survey results of each group. Group one will take the pre-survey and the results determined by a two tailed, unpaired T-test. The process will repeat with the post survey. Group two will take the pre-survey and the results determined by a two tailed, unpaired T-test. The process will repeat with the post survey. Therefore, this testing is the chosen method to evaluate the statistical information of each of these four tests, using an unpaired one tailed T-test to measure the

---

<sup>149</sup>Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72.

difference between pre and post survey growth and to understand the dimension of growth that did or did not take place. To further enhance the complexity of the statistical data acquired, both groups, the reading and the listening control group will be compared to each other and analyzed by a paired two tailed t-test to measure any significant growth difference between group one and group two, or whether no growth or no noticeable growth of the combined volunteers of the project took place.

### Summary

Following the method of outline presented for the execution of the project, the details of the project, and the measuring of the multi-dimensional measurement of the statistical outcome of the project, it is believed that a comprehensive picture of the impact of the Scripture reading in the worship as integral for biblical development can be properly evaluated in chapter four.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

Chapter four analyzes the particular findings of the statistical data gathered during the five-week research project surrounding the public reading of Scripture, practiced in the worship service of Mount Pleasant Christian Church from May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020. While the overall project period was more comprehensive requiring a focus on the distribution of IRB permissions, information distribution within the congregation and steps required for the actual enacting of the project, only the five weeks of actual project participation and activity will be utilized in the analysis of results. The project analysis and evaluation examined during these five weeks will work within the comprehensive guidelines established in the previous research: background problem, purpose, and thesis statement goals from chapter one; theological and theoretical processes of chapter two and the parameters of practice from chapter three.

#### Articulation of Research Goals

Before analyzing the data received from the surveys and the after-project meeting, an explanation of the research goals which formulated the development of the survey questions is necessary and must be explained to understand how growth is determined post survey, and to answer the problem presented and thesis statement. The explanation of the survey objectives which follow, establishes a baseline on which survey questions were developed to measure pre and post survey growth among participants of the research project at Mount Pleasant Church. These research survey goals and subsequent questions incorporate and constitute how the title and thesis project goal of biblical development will be analyzed and determined through these survey results. The following section seeks to establish the foundation for understanding the survey goals underlying and impacting the project before any results are examined.



The project title and thesis, centers on the premise that the reading of Scripture in worship is integral for the biblical development of individuals and the congregation, and biblical development will increase by the reading of Scripture in worship. As noted, the foundation for analyzing this biblical development statement rests in the project's overarching research survey goals incorporated by and into the survey questions. The intention of this chapter is not to analyze the results of all twenty questions individually in order to show biblical growth or decline, but to show how the four research survey goals are absorbed into the survey and formulate the questions asked, subsequently providing a foundation for showing and determining success or non-success of the project outcome. The project's statistical results for biblical development measured by the two groups can therefore be successfully evaluated without an exhaustive look at each question. Therefore, in determining whether biblical development is successful, the following four goals need to be articulated and understood as being foundational to the project's survey questions and for subsequently understanding survey results and conclusion.

The first goal used to develop the survey and determine the results of chapter four asks, "will there be an increase post survey in biblical awareness from hearing the Scripture read aloud in worship?" "Awareness," in this instance, is the implication of whether the hearer is now, after hearing Scripture read in worship, able to see a greater awareness of how public Scripture reading is integral to their spiritual development. This biblical awareness is foundational to interpreting the success of the project and whether the listener heard a broad range of Scripture from Old and New Testament passages, to have helped him or her answer the post survey in a way that measures if biblical development took place. Part of the problem noted in the earlier chapters of this project was that members did not see Scripture as instrumental in contributing to

their spiritual development, but rather it hindered the social interaction taking place in worship. This goal is summarized in the words of Smith who describes this as, “We will see how faith is relevant not only for eternity but for life every day, and we will be encouraged to find, in Scripture, the content for our faith that will make it practical and livable.”<sup>150</sup>

The second goal used to develop the survey and to determine the results of chapter four asks, “will there be an increase post survey in a desire for biblical teaching resulting from the reading of Scripture in worship?” “Biblical teaching” in this context is allowing the Scripture to direct a member’s relationship to God, the church, and in an interaction with the lost. The goal of this survey and outcome is to evaluate whether a foundation is now laid post project for determining from participants whether they now believe to a greater degree, that God desires to speak to His people through Scripture and that He desires his people to grow in their understanding of Him. The participants of Mount Pleasant Church have long neglected the reading of Scripture in worship because their desire has been for socialization and hearing from each other during worship. The post project survey will reveal if these listeners heard enough from the passages read in worship to demonstrate they have learned how Scripture impacts their biblical growth development and relationship with God, and whether this has been greatly enhanced by the practice of reading Scripture in worship. Samples articulates this well when he says, “The infinite God condescends and makes himself known propositionally (in words and statements that people understand) for the very purpose of salvation. This propositional revelation is special—that is, given to a special people (Israel first, then the church) at special times and places.”<sup>151</sup>

---

<sup>150</sup>Smith, *Developing A Biblical Worldview*, 58.

<sup>151</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 110.

The third goal used to develop the survey and determine the results of chapter four asks, “will there be an increase post survey in a desire for biblical authority in the church resulting from the reading of Scripture in worship?” The term of “biblical authority” in this context determines if there is now an increase in the desire for individuals and the church to submit to the authority of Scripture in worship and follow spiritual direction. In the problem statement of chapter one, Mount Pleasant does not have a recent history of receiving spiritual or authoritative direction from Scripture. The church has relied on family authority for all matters pertaining to the church and the church’s direction for polity practice and worship. The Bible has not been the primary tool for discovering what God desires for His people. In explaining this goal, Keathley provides two interesting insights, “Although proposed sources of authority may have legitimacy in various areas of life, underlying all of them must be the one unchanging yet dynamically relevant authority, namely, the Word of God.”<sup>152</sup> And, “Just as the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture logically leads to a belief in its authority, even so the doctrine of the authority of the Bible necessitates the confidence that the Scriptures are sufficient.”<sup>153</sup>

The fourth goal used to develop the survey and determine the results of chapter four asks, “will there be an increase post survey in a pronounced desire for biblical worship resulting from the reading of Scripture in worship? The “desire for biblical worship” has been central to this project’s original development. As noted earlier, the argument for a more biblical worship by leaders in the church and newer members has been met by older church members negatively. Again, the view from past indicators has been a negative reaction and verbal animosity directed toward all activity that would be perceived as taking away from socialization during worship. In

---

<sup>152</sup>Keathley, Draper Jr., *Biblical Authority*, 8.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

addition, the required extra time necessary for Scripture reading has been frowned upon in the past as a negative hindrance because it will exceed the allotted worship hour. Therefore, the goal of biblical oriented worship in this context is to measure post project the public Scripture reading; analyze if there is now an increase in the desire for individuals and the church to utilize Scripture as a primary practice in worship guiding the whole of worship. The goal of this biblical worship is illustrated in what Wilhoit says, “Liturgical exposure to Scripture, singing Scripture, meditation of Scripture, study of Scripture—these all have their place and their functions. Each must be employed to serve and to contribute to others.”<sup>154</sup> Again, Maddix rightly says, “In the same way, the interrelationship between worship and the Scriptures is evident today as Scripture is preached, read, and experienced in worship. It is through worship, as the community of faith gathers, that Scripture comes to life.”<sup>155</sup>

With these goals articulated as foundational for developing the survey and interpreting the results of the project, one further thought drives the manner of the interpretation of survey results. As noted in chapter three and affecting the approach of chapter four, the facilitator’s overarching concern in these research goals has been ultimately gauging whether the project will become a permanent part of the life of Mount Pleasant Christian church practice. Therefore, this chapter will approach the analysis of data from the perspective that the project not become just a statistical analysis of numerical figures, but an analyzation which understands the ramifications of results on the people of the church assisting in the project becoming a part of their spiritual identity if the research goals noted are to be effective. Stringer writes, “The heart of action research is not the techniques and procedures that guide action but the sense of unity that holds

---

<sup>154</sup>Wilhoit and Howard, *Discovering Lectio Divina*, 68.

<sup>155</sup>Mark A. Maddix, “Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church.” 40.

people to a collective vision of their world and inspires them to work together for the common good.”<sup>156</sup> This is significant because it speaks to the heart of the facilitator’s goal for the project relating to the spiritual development of the congregation as a people of God, seeking to hear the voice of God in the Scripture.

The facilitator’s attempt in conducting the surveys has been to ensure a willful mindset of not directing or guiding the people as walking statistics hoping to achieve the desired outcome, but as a people in the local body of Christ who happen to need the hearing of Scripture in worship. With this overarching view in mind, the facilitator has witnessed in the project’s totality the people themselves coming to the project not as a statistic, technique or procedure, but as people who desire being a supportive element of the project to enhance the church body. The people who have taken the surveys agree to the project and have conveyed through their words and actions the importance of living out the common goal of church growth and spiritual function. They have appreciated not being a nameless face the facilitator has manipulated, but they appreciate being received as people who have their own “collective vision” and they have hoped to facilitate that vision in relation to the project goal.

With the articulation of the goals, which are foundational to the development of the survey questions explained, how the research questions address the problem and thesis statement, and the facilitator’s approach to interpretation surrounding participants, the chapter will answer by statistical evidence whether the outcome of the proposed thesis hypothesis, that the public reading of Scripture in worship increases biblical development.

---

<sup>156</sup>Stringer, *Action Research*, 173.

## Examination of Survey Results

As noted in chapter three, a twenty question survey and a T-test<sup>157</sup> is necessary for the determination of the results of the project and for analyzing the data received from the pre and post testing of the reading and listening groups. Again, the two groups are the reading group and the control listening group; both groups have taken the same survey and the results pre and post survey are examined.

The scientific method for analyzing the overall project survey results will be the T-test, with each group statistically measured to itself both pre and post survey and the outcome of each group measured to the other group for a final evaluation. This chosen process and the T-test for the evaluation of the statistical data is the simplest and most easily facilitated method to prevent outcome bias and demonstrate scientifically, if a growth of participants has taken place over the five-week period and if that growth is statistically reliable or the product of chance. T-testing and graphs for this project showing growth or non-growth are done on the Microsoft Excel program.

Again, in summary, group one, which is the reading group took the pre and post survey with the results documented and shown by a two tailed, paired T-test. Group two, which is the listening control group took the pre and post survey with the results documented and shown by a two tailed, paired T-test. Both groups were then calculated against each other by a two tailed,

---

<sup>157</sup>The T-test measures, compares, determines, and helps understand the significant differences which exist between groups of data. The T-test can measure the averages and standard deviations between two related (paired) or two non-related (unpaired) groups of data. Data is accumulated and averaged together from paired or unpaired group data and a p-value is determined. The baseline number of .05 is used in multiple ways to determine the reliability, accuracy, or measured differences of data outcome from the p-value. Numeric outcomes over and under the .05% determine the reliability, or probability of the p-value data outcome. In a paired t-test, the p-value (probability value) of under .05% indicates a null hypothesis of no measurable or no significant difference in the data outcome meaning there is a greater factor of reliability in the data comparison. In the unpaired t-test between two unrelated groups the .05% can be used to determine if there is a significant disadvantage between the starting and ending point of two groups. Nicole Gleichmann, "Paired vs Unpaired T-Test: Differences, Assumptions and Hypotheses," accessed July 21, 2020, <http://www.technologynetworks.com/informatics/articles/paired-vs-unpaired-t-test-differences-assumptions-and-hypotheses-330826>.

unpaired T-test to measure and determine the combined volunteer's depth of growth that did or did not take place post project.

Before proceeding further, a deeper explanation concerning the use of T-testing and why it is the method chosen for the group results is necessary for the evaluation of outcome. This T-testing is the method chosen as it scientifically measures an outcome or difference between two groups and provides a p-value (probability value), which shows through a simple numerical percentage the reliability of the outcome and mathematical difference within the same group (paired) or between a dissimilar group (unpaired). The p-value statistical percentage measurement is used in this project to determine the reliability of the reading group and listening control group to itself and then to the other group, to determine through statistical probability whether the outcome of the percentage increase or decrease in survey data is reliable and not a result of chance. The T-test and p-value will show the scientific validity that the result of the project growth or decrease in growth has the statistical reliability to defend the outcome of the results that follow. In addition, the T-test will scientifically measure by p-value (probability value) the reading group outcome against the listening control group outcome, to help evaluate and prove or disprove the claim made that the reading group results will be significantly higher because the participants read the Scripture in worship, or to affirm that the growth or non-growth is similar between two dissimilar groups. This verifies the importance of having the measured data of the control listening group who did not read Scripture against the reading group, as affirmation of the project's ultimate research reliability.

In the following sections, the T-test data is provided, broken down, and examined under three named sections. Section one is the reading group along with their statistical breakdown.

Section two is the control listening group along with their statistical breakdown. Section three is the reading and listening control group data paired with their total statistical breakdown.

#### Reading Group Survey Data

The reading group took the pre and post survey and the following data table (figure 3), publishes the results of the ten participants and establishes a T-testing p-value (probability value) of reliability. The scores of each participant for the pre survey are listed and the scores for the post survey are listed according to their original assigned number. For example, as originally indicated in chapter three, each participant's number remains the same in both the pre and post survey testing.

The participants scores, if normally added together arrive at a pre-survey score of 78.9% and a post survey score increasing to an 87.3%. However, these simple percentage increases are not a reliable method for ultimately measuring and determining the true indicator, or the reliability of growth. However, the combination of the two survey results with the T-testing, reveal a p-value (probability value) of 0.020619 that an increase took place:



(Figure 3)

	Readers Pre-survey	Readers Post-survey
1	90	96
2	80	85
3	80	87
4	68	96
5	76	85
6	78	80
7	83	85
8	78	79
9	86	87
10	70	93
mean	78.9	87.3
	t test (paired) two tail, 1	
p=	0.020619	

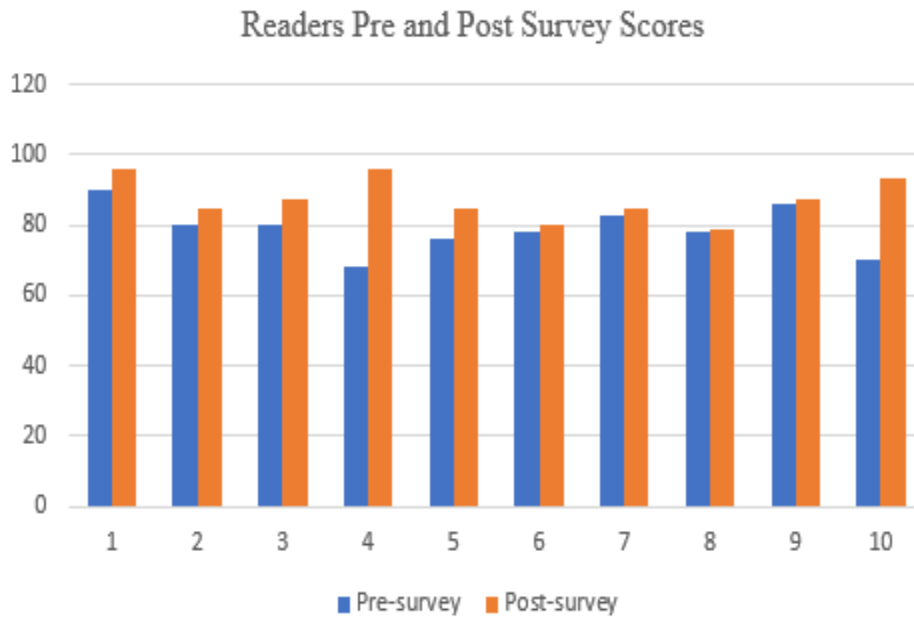
According to the standard T-testing measurement used to determine the reliability of growth in a paired test this p-value is under .05,<sup>158</sup> which indicates there is a much higher probability the survey's documented growth outcome is reliable and means the reading group shows a 98% probability that their numeric increase post survey, is scientifically trustworthy with only a 2% possibility the increased growth result is merely a product of chance. This means there is significant reliability to this measured data increase in the survey scores of the reading group from pre to post survey. This p-value score establishes the combined paired results of the survey and are reliable for the documentation of growth and are not the product of chance. This is essential for the measuring of this score against the control listening group score to determine the total project measurable growth or decline.

---

<sup>158</sup>In a paired t-test, the p-value (probability value) of under .05% indicates a null hypothesis of no measurable or no significant difference in the data outcome, meaning there is a greater factor of reliability in the data comparison. Nicole Gleichmann, "Paired vs Unpaired T-Test: Differences, Assumptions and Hypotheses."

The following chart (figure 4) visually represents the increase by each reading group participant pre and post survey. This is significant for not only showing growth, but to show through a graph that the participants truly reflected a careful reading of the survey questions post project. The results show a consistent and an even growth, not the extreme increases whereby the argument could be made that respondents answered the post survey at a higher number just to complete the survey. A simple percentage increase calculator indicates that these two percentage scores combined come out to a 10.6% increase in biblical growth and understanding of the importance of Scripture reading in worship from pre to post survey.

(Figure 4)



In summary, the reading group has a demonstrated growth documented by these scores with a scientific p-value probability of approximately 98% accuracy. This documented increase in the survey scores mean the four goals established as foundational for this research project has been met by the readers participating in this project. This is a positive step in the direction of which Smith writes, “Developing a biblical worldview is a lifelong process of discipleship. It begins when you decide God’s Word, not the larger world, nor the evangelical subculture, nor

even standards of respectability, will be your guide for how you see the world. . .we are called to see things “God’s way”-- that is from a biblical worldview perspective.”<sup>159</sup>

#### Listening Control Group Survey Data

The control listening group took the pre and post survey and the following data table (figure 5) publishes the results of the ten participants and establishes a T-testing p-value (probability value) of reliability. The scores for the control listening group pre survey are listed and the scores for the post survey are listed. As originally indicated in chapter three, each participant’s number remains the same in both the pre and post survey testing.

The listening control group participants scores, if normally added together arrive at a pre survey score of 82.4% and a post survey score increasing to an 88.8%. However, as indicated with the previous reading group, these simple percentage increases are not a reliable method for ultimately measuring the true indicator or reliability of growth. However, the combination of the two survey results with the paired T-testing reveal a p-value (probability value) of 0.014497 that an increase took place:

---

<sup>159</sup>Smith, *Developing A Biblical Worldview*, 114.

(Figure 5)

	Listeners Pre-survey	Listeners Post-survey
1	75	84
2	87	84
3	89	95
4	82	88
5	96	96
6	70	87
7	76	81
8	81	88
9	88	88
10	80	97
mean	82.4	88.8
t test (paired) two tail, 1		
p=	0.014497	

This p-value is under .05<sup>160</sup> which indicates a much higher probability the survey's documented growth outcome is reliable and means the listening group shows an even higher probability that their numeric increase post survey, is scientifically trustworthy with only a 1% possibility the increased result is merely a product of chance. This means there is a 99% reliability to the measured data increase in the survey scores of the control listening group from pre to post survey. This p-value score establishes the paired results of the pre and post survey as reliable for the documentation of growth and that this documented growth is reliable and not the product of chance. This is essential for the measuring of this score against the reading group score to determine a reliable growth or decline.

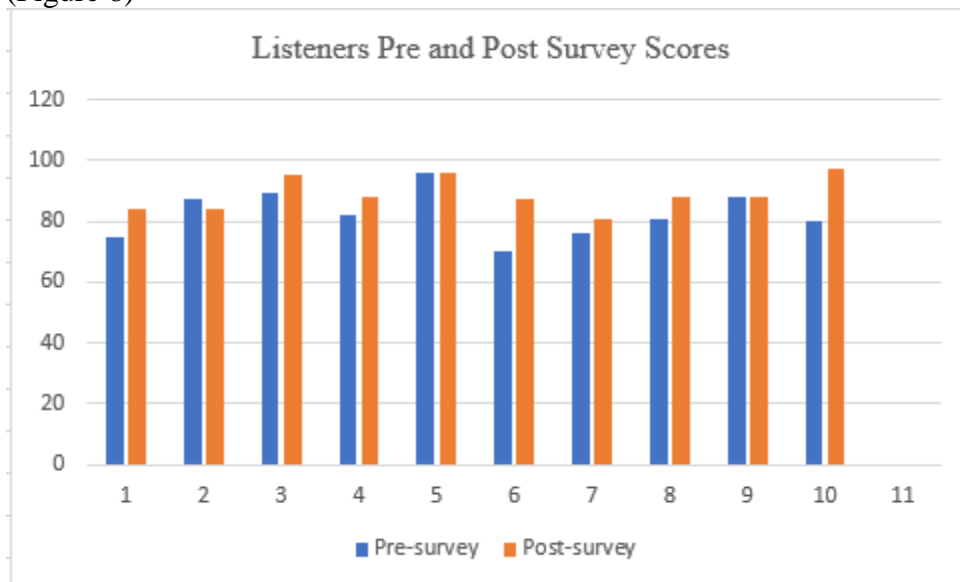
The following chart (figure 6) visually represents the increase or decrease by each participant pre and post survey. As with the reading group, this is significant to show that the

---

<sup>160</sup>In a paired t-test, the p-value (probability value) of under .05% indicates a null hypothesis of no measurable or no significant difference in the data outcome, meaning there is a greater factor of reliability in the data comparison. Nicole Gleichmann, "Paired vs Unpaired T-Test: Differences, Assumptions and Hypotheses."

participants truly reflected a desire to carefully read through the survey and ponder the survey questions post project. As with the reading group, the results of the control listening group show consistent and even growth, not the extreme increases whereby the argument could be made respondents answered at a higher number just to complete the survey. A simple percentage increase calculator indicates that these two percentage scores combine to yield a 7.8% increase from pre to post survey.

(Figure 6)



In summary, the listening group has a demonstrated growth documented by these scores with a scientific p-value probability of approximately 99% accuracy that the score increase is not the product of chance. This documented increase in the survey scores mean for this group, the four goals established as foundational for this research project has been met by listeners participating in the project. Max McLean affirms, “The words of Scripture are powerful and life-changing, breaking through to the hearts of those who are ready to receive it.”<sup>161</sup>

<sup>161</sup>McLean, Bird, Lucado, *Unleashing the Word*, 22.

## Reading and Control Listening Groups Joint Survey Data

In this section, the goal is not to determine if there is significant growth pre and post survey, as that has been established by the measuring of each group to itself, but rather the intent in this section is to determine whether there is a reliable starting point and similar measurement of growth between two dissimilar groups, in order to document that a similar pattern of growth took place. Also, to negate the argument of an increase growth advantage of the reading group over the control listening group and disprove that one group had a starting advantage over the other group.

Determining the ultimate measured outcome of the project from these two groups requires the examination and comparison of the combined pre and post survey scores from these two distinct and dissimilar reading and control listening groups. However, since these two groups provide a diverse type of experience (reading and listening), a significant outcome could be anticipated such as the reading group ultimately scoring higher since they read Scripture in worship. Therefore, the use of an unpaired two tailed T-test for the evaluation of post survey data is necessary to determine whether there is a reliability to the measured greater or lesser growth from one group to the other, or if there is a disadvantaged starting point between groups.

It is important to understand in the examination of the combined survey results between groups, the reading group survey score cannot be reliably compared to the control listening group survey score in the normal combination of statistical numbers, as these are unsimilar data groupings. The reading group is one distinct group participating in reading of Scripture and the control listening group is another distinct group only listening to Scripture. However, a comparison between these two distinct groupings must be made before the survey can be used to determine the post project outcome. The only way to accurately assess this outcome is through

the unpaired two tailed T-test, which measures two dissimilar statistical groupings to determine similar or dissimilar growth increases.

Combined pre-survey results: In (figure 7) the reading group and the listening group, pre-survey scores are given and using the unpaired two tailed T-test between these two diverse groups, the measurement of statistical reliability between the growth of these two groups can be determined. While the control listening group pre-survey scores are higher than the reading group, this is not an adequate means for assessing if this score is a reliable indicator of a greater degree of measured growth over the reading group, to offset final results. The combination of the two dissimilar groups pre-survey results using the unpaired T-testing reveals a p-value (probability value) of 0.292932. This p-value reading is necessary for the accurate determination of the pre-survey score of both groups measured against the post survey score of both groups, to provide the accurate measurement of the starting and ending point for determining if there is similar growth between dissimilar groups.

The main goal or intention in measuring these two groups (figure 7), is not to show actual growth again within each group, but to establish whether one group statistically started with a significantly greater advantage, or statistically grew beyond the other group, thereby discrediting the potential for assessing a measured growth outcome between the two groups.

(Figure 7)

	Readers Pre-survey	Listeners Pre-survey
1	90	75
2	80	87
3	80	89
4	68	82
5	76	96
6	78	70
7	83	76
8	78	81
9	86	88
10	70	80
mean	78.9	82.4
T Test (unpaired) two tailed, 2		
p=	0.292932	

Looking at the two pre-survey results of these unpaired groupings, again, the tendency would be to proclaim the pre-survey control listening group started with a much higher score than the reading group. This argument would be true if these were paired groupings. However, this is an unpaired grouping of dissimilar activities and the p-value of 0.29 is higher than .05,<sup>162</sup> which indicates that there is a statistical insufficient amount of evidence to conclude or prove that the reading group started at a higher advantage than the control listening group. In summary, what this means is there is insufficient evidence from these two unpaired groupings to conclude that a higher growth starting point exists with the control listening group pre-survey. Both groups started similar with an insignificant numerical difference. meaning both groups are statistically

---

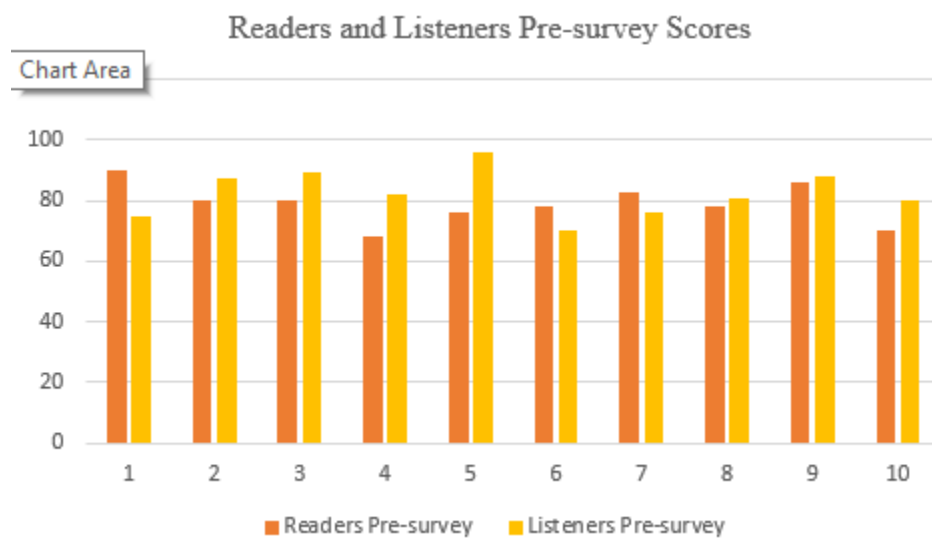
<sup>162</sup>In the unpaired t-test between two unrelated groups the .05% is used to determine if there is a significant disadvantage between the starting and ending point of two groups. Nicole Gleichmann, "Paired vs Unpaired T-Test: Differences, Assumptions and Hypotheses."



similar in their starting point. This is important for the eventual comparison and evaluation of whether either group scored significantly higher than the other post project.

In (Figure 8) a visual picture of the pre-survey scores of each participant from the reading group is provided against the pre-survey scores of each participant from the control listening group. This visual represents the starting proximity of scores between the two groups with the listening participants showing only that slight visual increase in starting scores, but this increase is statistically insignificant to conclude a significant disadvantage in starting growth.

(Figure 8)



Combined post survey results: In (figure 9) the reading group and the listening group post survey scores are given. Using the unpaired two tailed T-test between these two diverse groups, the measurement of statistical reliability between the growth of these two groups can be determined. While the control listening group post survey scores are slightly higher than the reading group, this is not an adequate means for assessing a greater difference in a measured starting point. The combination of the two dissimilar groups post survey results using the unpaired T-testing reveals a p-value (probability value) of 0.565804. This p-value is necessary

for the accurate determination of the post survey score to provide an accurate measurement of the starting point for determining growth or non-growth between two dissimilar groups, or to determine if one group started with a greater score, making it difficult to compare outcomes. Again, the main intention in measuring these two groups is not to show the actual growth within each group, but to establish whether one group statistically started with a significantly greater advantage, or statistically grew beyond the other group, thereby discrediting the potential for assessing a measured growth outcome between the two groups.

(Figure 9)

	Readers Post-survey	Listeners Post-survey
1	96	84
2	85	84
3	87	95
4	96	88
5	85	96
6	80	87
7	85	81
8	79	88
9	87	88
10	93	97
mean	87.3	88.8
T Test (unpaired) two tailed, 2		
p=	0.565804	

Looking at the two post survey results of the unpaired groupings, the tendency would be to determine the post survey control listening group scored slightly higher than the reading group post survey. This would be true if these were paired groupings. However, again, this is an unpaired grouping and the p-value of 0.29 is higher than .05,<sup>163</sup> which indicates that there is

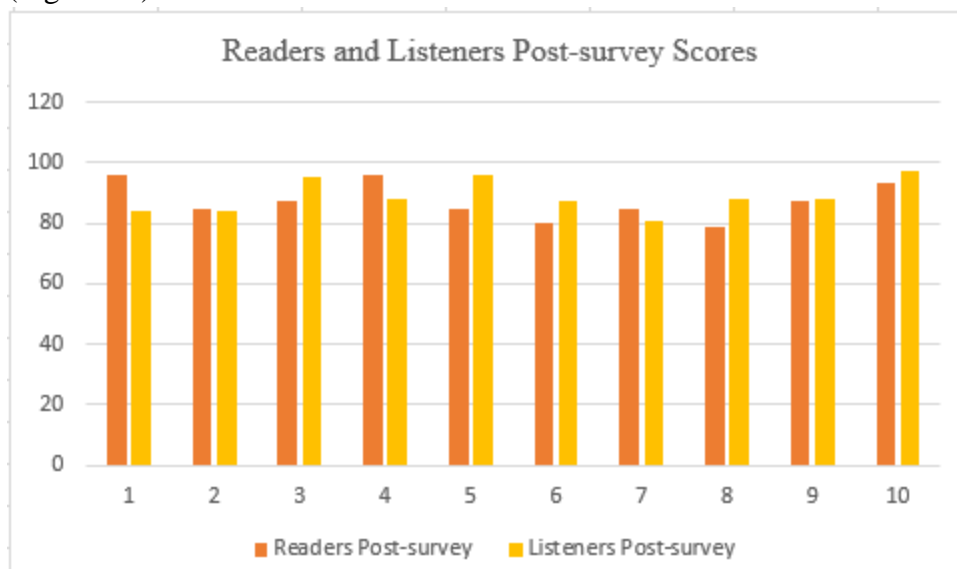
---

<sup>163</sup> In the unpaired t-test between two unrelated groups the .05% is used to determine if there is a significant disadvantage between the starting and ending point of two groups. Nicole Gleichmann, "Paired vs Unpaired T-Test: Differences, Assumptions and Hypotheses."

statistical insufficient evidence to conclude or prove that the control listening group ended higher or learned more than the reading group. In summary, this data reveals there is insufficient evidence from these two unpaired groupings to conclude that a higher ending point of measurement exists in the control listening group post survey. This is important for comparison and evaluation as it shows both groups ended statistically similar with an insignificant numerical difference, which means both groups are similar in both their starting and ending point.

In (Figure 10) a visual picture of the post survey scores of each participant from the reading group is provided against the post survey scores of each participant from the control listening group. This visual represents the ending proximity of scores between the two groups, with the listening participants visually showing only a slight increase in starting scores, but this increase is insignificant for determining a disadvantage between ending growth.

(Figure 10)



### Post Project Results Analysis

Based on the pre and post survey scores of both the reading group and the control listening group, the thesis project can be deemed successful in increasing spiritual development by the survey results showing an overall reliable statistical growth of between 7%-10% from

beginning of project to the ending of the project. While this number may not indicate a large numerical increase, the increase is substantial enough to say Mount Pleasant is on the path of re-aligning themselves with Scripture. This realignment and assessment is in line with what Brian Russell writes, “The nation had no problem in recognizing the LORD as a god, but such recognition is not the same as full allegiance to the LORD.”<sup>164</sup> Mount Pleasant has never had problems acknowledging the God of the Bible, but they have had issues with allegiance to His Scripture and this is the statistical increase necessary to document a successful project.

The successful outcome incorporates through the survey questions, the four-fold project growth goals, meaning the participants demonstrated through pre-survey results, post survey results, the survey measurement between dissimilar groups, and the post project verbal assessment, that the public reading of Scripture in worship produces spiritual growth. This determination of the project success can be summarized and shown in four ways.

First, the pre and post survey scores of the reading group show that the readers of Scripture spiritually grew from their pre-survey understanding of Scripture’s role in worship and biblical development, to a post survey score of approximately 10.6% with a 98% reliability in the testing validity. This is enough increase in growth to show that the reading of Scripture in worship influenced the readers in the four foundational goals and affirms positive spiritual growth potential from the reading of Scripture in worship for the congregation.

Second, the pre and post survey scores of the control listening group show that the listeners of Scripture (representing the congregation), spiritually grew from their pre-survey understanding of Scripture’s role in worship and biblical development to a post survey score of approximately 7.8% with a 99% reliability in the testing validity. This is enough increase in

---

<sup>164</sup>Russell, (*re*)*Aligning with God*, 64.

growth to show that the reading of Scripture in worship influenced the control listening group in the four foundational goals, to affirm positive potential spiritual growth potential by the listening to Scripture read in worship for the congregation.

Third, positive spiritual and biblical growth is assessed in the validity of the survey results between the two groups. Both groups demonstrated spiritual and biblical growth in the four areas showing how the thesis statement is achieved. In addition, the T-testing measurement of both groups pre and post survey, show that both groups started and ended in a similar growth pattern with no significant deviation of one group over the other, subsequently rendering invalid the argument that the reading group would score above the control listening group.

Fourth, following the post survey, participants were given the opportunity to express their input and engage with the project. Participant's insight, perception, and excitement was gauged by the facilitator and comments could not be written down to respect anonymity. However, the summation of the participant's comments positively cemented the project's implementation into the long-term practice and ultimate systematic change within the congregation. This is an affirmation of what Stringer writes, "Unless research participants take systematic steps to incorporate changed procedures into the ongoing life of the organization, changes are likely to be short-lived and have little impact."<sup>165</sup>

This post project group assessment is significant in affirming the positive outcome of the project because it afforded this facilitator the opportunity to hear two things: First, the project's goal was clearly defined in the minds of the participants and the project evoked a strong positive reaction that both participants and congregants have since noticed. This reaction points toward a spiritual change, biblical development, and understanding of the connectivity and authority of

---

<sup>165</sup>Stringer, *Action Research*. 187.

Scripture heard through the public reading of Scripture in worship. Second, the participants demonstrated both in survey outcome and in conversation that they have embraced the public reading of Scripture as a part of their worship identity, with many listeners desiring to now become readers of Scripture in worship.

In summary, the four guiding research questions studied in the project survey asked, “will there be an increase post survey in biblical awareness from hearing the Scripture read aloud in worship?” “Will there be an increase post survey in a desire for biblical teaching resulting from the reading of Scripture in worship?” “Will there be an increase post survey in a desire for biblical authority in the church resulting from the reading of Scripture in worship?” “Will there be an increase post survey in a pronounced desire for biblical worship resulting from the reading of Scripture in worship? The answer from the pre and post survey results and notes from the post project analysis is, “yes.” The public reading of Scripture in worship is integral for a congregation’s spiritual and biblical development. The results will counter what Smith writes about churches today who have removed Scripture, “Christians are driven by a desire to be trendy rather than to be faithful to the gospel. . .”<sup>166</sup>

---

<sup>166</sup>Smith, *Developing a Biblical Worldview*, 44.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusion**

#### Project Purpose and Overview

The congregation of Mount Pleasant Church serviced by this project, is an independent congregation with a history of placing little relevancy on Scripture as a primary means of directing the congregation, blessing the membership, and growing in spiritual and biblical development to affect the surrounding community with the good news of God's Word.

The motivation for the thesis project began when the facilitator realized the congregational emphasis in recent years was a drift toward worship centering on socialization and conversation, as members sought to make "my story relevant" to the worship assembly. As reviewed in chapter one, this "socialization" drift brought about a strong history of conversation and socialization resulting in actual biblical practices, such as Scripture reading being crowded out and eventually removed from worship resulting in church instability and lack of biblical development among members.

The problem this thesis project addressed was the intentional absence and reinstitution of the public reading of Scripture in the worship service. The facilitator believes and has been encouraged through the theological background and review of literature, that the reintroduction of Scripture reading in the worship service resulting from the thesis project, would subsequently address the subjects of biblical literacy and spiritual growth development issues within the congregation.

Prior to the beginning of the project, the public reading of Scripture had been absent for over forty years and this absence impacted the biblical authority and literacy within the local congregation, making the congregation nothing more than a weekly community center gathering.

As noted in the problem statement, the absence of the public Scripture reading directly resulted from the intentional practice of purging worship practices deemed unessential, which hindered social gathering and interaction during the worship hour.

The project facilitator indicated early in the research the discovery of two significant and problematic developments within the congregation, which resulted from the absence of Scripture in worship. First, Scripture was not established in the congregation as foundational for the authority and primary direction provider for the congregation. The Scripture was subservient to the whims of popular opinion from those gathered for the worship hour. Second, the absence of Scripture in worship led to a biblical illiteracy, impacting the congregation's spiritual development, discipleship, and ability to experience God.

The purpose then of the thesis study was to examine the impact a reimplementation of the biblical model of public Scripture reading into the worship service would have upon the congregation, with a hope they would move toward a measurable outcome of spiritual growth and biblical literacy, both personally and corporately.

The project identified willing male and female adult participants who gave themselves to participation in this project by the reading of biblical texts during the worship service and through the intentional listening of the Scripture read in worship. The joint goal of these participants was to spiritually rebuild this congregation through the intentional return to the practice of corporate Scripture reading, as a permanent practice in the worship service to promote increased biblical literacy and submission to Scripture, for the spiritual life and future direction of the congregation.

This thesis project research has shown by the positive project results of chapter four that the prolonged absence of Scripture reading in worship had contributed to the decline of



individual and corporate biblical development within Mount Pleasant Church. Subsequently, this is shown in the survey results showing an increase in biblical understanding resulting from a return to a public reading of Scripture. Ultimately, the project has contributed to the increased development of the congregation's biblical worldview and marked spiritual growth. Therefore, this project reflects a practical return to the biblical model of God's communication with His church, and His church's response to Him through the hearing of the Word of God.

The chapter concludes the project by answering the "so what" question of the project by providing a synthesis of not only the review of literature pertaining to the project outcome, but how the congregation developed a more biblical trajectory; increased desire for the Word of God; a desire for the continuation of Scripture read in worship, and a desire for the Bible to be the primary source for knowing about God and submitting to the authority of God for worship and spiritual direction.

The chapter comprehensively shows how the Scripture emphasizes a primacy over other human functions or programs brought into worship and can override these emphases. Again, the project has provided insight into the fact that the reading of Scripture in worship is not only expected, but the supporting results cannot be ignored by the contemporary church. Scripture for the contemporary worshipper cannot be relegated to a non-existent place by a church which claims to live by the Scripture.

#### Personal Review of Findings

For the facilitator, two specific insights of learning developed from this project. These learning insights both center on the change of approach and practice by the congregation, following the implementation and subsequent completion of the thesis project. These insights

were noticed in the marked actions of the congregation and by God in their expressed desire to continue Scripture reading in the worship service.

The first insight gleaned from this project surrounds the post-project amiable desire by the congregation to continue doing Scripture reading each Sunday for the worship service and how God moved in the congregation's life to accomplish this change of desire. The facilitator was initially motivated for the project by a love of the Bible and the perspective that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, given directly from God to the people of God and felt the people, by their history, were not really interested in knowing more of the Bible. Additionally, the facilitator desired to shepherd the people of God directly by a scriptural emphasis but felt the initial resistance from members of the congregation to the addition of Scripture reading in worship. The facilitator was concerned the people of this congregation were saying they wanted to be the people of God and do the things of God and yet, they did not want the Scripture to be read as part of worship to learn about God, resulting in a weak faith. An interesting quote was provided by R. C. Sproul which affirmed what the facilitator felt at the beginning of the project implementation, "Modern historians are calling the twentieth century the post-Christian era. The influence of the church has been greatly eroded in our culture. That means the influence of Christian people has been weak."<sup>167</sup>

Moving forward with implementing this project, the facilitator initially saw biblically weak and oftentimes illiterate understandings of the Word of God cropping up, directing the people's decisions, and preventing the church from fulfilling her mission. However, as the project implementation began, the reading of Scripture changed the people, not only in the way indicated by the results of chapter four but following the project, the facilitator began witnessing

---

<sup>167</sup>R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 125.

how God was at work changing the heart of His people in their understanding of Scripture's role in worship. The theological background and results of chapter four of this project has shown this to be factual, however, the facilitator was not prepared to see the dynamic change happen so quickly. Upon the completion of the project, the facilitator noticed that the Word of God was doing in the congregation the very thing the Scripture promised.

In the theological examination of Isaiah 55:11, the facilitator noted that this Scripture speaks to the fulfillment of God's promises to deliver His people from sinful captivity and to provide joy to the heart of believers through their understanding of His revelation, by seeing and understanding the promises found in Scripture. The people of God are now growing just like the Old Testament examples of Josiah and Nehemiah. The congregation now desires each week to hear more of the Scripture and practice what Paul discussed in Timothy and Colossians, to have the Scripture read aloud in the church.

The result of this first truth is that this project provided not only a change in spiritual direction, but the facilitator has noticed a change in spiritual motivation toward the reading of Scripture in worship. The people of Mount Pleasant church are amiable to the continued practice of Scripture reading in worship. This expresses what Russell says about how each new generation must learn to practice faithfulness as part of its life with God regardless of the actions of the past.<sup>168</sup>

The second insight gleaned from this project is the people who have exhibited an excitement toward the reimplementation of the reading of Scripture in worship, have now overflowed to the other members of the congregation drawing non-project participants into the continuation of what the project began. This was an unexpected outcome. Initially, the project

---

<sup>168</sup>Russell, *(re)Aligning with God*, 49.

was met with some negativity and expressions of refusal. Examples being, “I am not reading Scripture!” “I am not participating in that project.” However, post project, the subsequent excitement bordered on such a contagious attitude, many started expressing sentences such as, “why haven’t we done this before?” “Can I read Scripture too?” The facilitator was surprised at how many who had originally spoken against the project, now suddenly desired to participate in the project.

Originally, the facilitator expected the people to initially participate and then there would be a struggle to continue the practice of reading each week post-project. However, those participating in the project spread the excitement to non-participants, and the congregation was renewed and became excited and joyful; like the people in Nehemiah hearing, affirming, and obeying the read Word of God as an assembled congregation. This shows how the larger congregation was impacted by the results of the Scripture reading during the initial five-week project.

The desire now shown by many in the congregation to participate and to affirm gladness over how the Scripture is being read in the congregation, is an experience like the one noted in the Nehemiah passage. After years of exile, the people began to understand they needed to hear from God, and the event of public Scripture reading elicited a newly discovered joy and affirmed to the people the importance of the reading of Scripture in worship. Bates summarizes this by saying, “The good news, on the other hand, is that when we participate in worship of the one true God, the result is that we become increasingly sensate and insightful—we see, hear, smell, and touch the God-crafted reality of the created order, and we correctly recognize that it points to truths about God’s very self.”<sup>169</sup>

---

<sup>169</sup>Bates, *Salvation By Allegiance Alone*, 155.

Finally, the two learning experiences have given rise to some questions for the larger evangelical community. These questions address the current Scripture reading practice in the American evangelical community and should be asked by pastors and congregations, which do not practice Scripture reading in worship. These questions are, “does the congregation itself truly understand the impact of Scripture reading for the congregation?” This congregation of Mount Pleasant did not. Second, “if the congregation does not understand the importance of Scripture reading, are the religious leaders directing them toward a return to Scripture reading?” “Do religious leaders have a desire for Scripture in worship, or are their own agendas keeping them from implementing the reading of Scripture in worship?”

These are questions which have naturally followed the post-project discovery shown by the excitement of the people themselves. This is a very important consideration the project has raised, do the leaders of the church just assume the people do not want Scripture? Are leaders just seeking to implement their own programs designed to build their own kingdom? Following the outcome of the project, truthfully answering the questions and seeing how God worked in the congregation, the final question now posed to leaders is “will the public reading of Scripture in worship help the congregation follow God, or will it counter the direction the leader wishes to go? Because, as the project has shown that if Scripture reading increases a congregation’s spiritual development and increases their desire to know the Scripture as integral for their biblical development, then the conclusion for not implementing Scripture is that it works against the man-centered focus of the pastor or congregations.

Storer causes the leader and congregations to wrestle with these questions and truth when he writes, that the use of Scripture is God’s self-mediation to the church and becomes the central

theological presupposition from which all methodological considerations must proceed.<sup>170</sup>

Lovell further states that “furthermore, the church is formed by the Word of God, and therefore does not interpret the Word of God. Rather, God stands sovereignly over his church in self-revelation, and interprets himself to us through his Word.”<sup>171</sup> Maddix also summarizes this truth saying, “A biblical spirituality represents a transformative process of personal and communal engagement with the biblical text. For people with a limited knowledge of the Bible, reading and studying the Bible in the context of an intimate group gives opportunities for learning and Christian growth.”<sup>172</sup>

### Results in View of Review of Literature

The primary summation of the review of literature shows that the public reading of Scripture is integral for a congregation’s spiritual development and biblical understanding, and that this reading is often not practiced by the people who claim to be the “people of the book.” The cumulative research by the authors supporting this statement and their approach shows the lack of Scripture used in the contemporary evangelical church is not just a localized phenomenon, but a fact which pervades the whole of the contemporary church. This fact contributes to a biblical stereotype of evangelical illiteracy and paints the two-fold picture of the contemporary church as biblically illiterate and lacking a relevant understanding and application of Scripture to their lives.

This biblical illiteracy impacts the biblical worldview of the contemporary Christian church and its ability to live the Great Commission. However, the application of the project as an

---

<sup>170</sup>Storer, *Reading Scripture to Hear God*, viii.

<sup>171</sup>Lovell, “Reflections on the Evangelical Challenge of Reading Scripture,” 95.

<sup>172</sup>Maddix, “Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church,” 34.

extension of what the review of literature has shown is that an increase in biblical and spiritual development is possible for the congregation, which practices the public reading of Scripture in the worship service.

The review of literature in chapter two has shown the authors are in concurrence that Scripture reading is a biblical mandate and that Scripture is the primary way for the church to develop a relationship with God. Again, they are placing the onus for their statements on the public Scripture reading as the qualifier for a congregation to know the voice of God and to receive this spiritual and biblical development. As noted however, the current research has not provided a review of results for the biblical development of a congregation, which practices or returns to public Scripture. The outcome of this project affirms the review of literature that God has called His people to hear from Him through Scripture and that a primary means of hearing from Him is the public reading of Scripture. This congregational listening to God through the public reading of Scripture can and has generated a positive percentage of growth to the congregation, which practices what the research affirms and the Bible commands.

The initial review of literature question raised the point that the authors present a biblical history and case for implementing the return of the church to the practice of Scripture reading in worship for the development of the church. They provide insight that the Bible provides the theological foundation and authority for the reading of Scripture in worship. However, the results of these must be contextualized to the local church. The contextualization of the project and facilitator's research in the local congregation is summarized in this way: the culmination of the project results in view of the review of literature, shows the reading of Scripture builds and affirms the research, that the biblical reading of Scripture provides the spiritual growth and development the congregation of God needs.

The research and expression of participants concerning the long term and permanent application of the public reading of the Old and New Testament Scripture in worship, is not only foundational to Mount Pleasant's spiritual identity with God but is proven to be not just as a body of research, but a positive demonstration of Scripture as integral for the biblical development and literacy of its members.

### Recommendations

The recommendations surround one very simple premise: the public reading of Scripture has been shown to be integral for the biblical development of the people of God. The simplest recommendation is that the church of Jesus Christ return to a public reading of the Scripture in the weekly assembly of worship. The church which practices the public reading of Scripture is affirming God's own Word as authoritative and practicing the Bible's declaration of what the people of God experienced, when they followed the biblical design. The project closes with two practical recommendations, and these are recommendations for practice and recommendations for research.

Recommendations for practice include the vocal reading of Scripture, not just in worship but in family worship and Sunday School. One of the discoveries from the project was how the congregation serviced by the project failed to see the Bible as a continuous narrative. Many times, the facilitator heard people saying post-project, "I didn't know that was in the Bible." The problem is the church has not heard the Bible read in worship, Sunday School, or in family worship; Scripture becomes non-relevant to actual application. Truly, a problem plaguing the contemporary church is that members even fail to read the Scripture privately. The result is that churches, Sunday School, and family worship are often guilty of unintentionally presenting the



Scriptures as just snippets of cute stories woven together. The idea becomes, if there is a cute story that fits the narrative then read it, but if not, then the Scripture is non-relevant.

The practice of Old and New Testament readings in Sunday School and as a family unit should counter this practice and create within early childhood, spiritual development and comprehensive understanding of how to apply Bible truth to direct and lead the individual in his or her lifelong spiritual growth and Christian worldview. “The lack of appreciation for worldview-thinking negatively impacts doctrinal literacy, apologetic understanding, evangelistic fervor, and the living of a God honoring life.”<sup>173</sup>

The second recommendation for practice is for the church to consider one of three options for developing a comprehensive reading plan for worship. The first option is the use of the Revised Common Lectionary for finding comprehensive reading passages each week. Often, the facilitator heard people saying they were afraid to read because they feared the long biblical names found in Scripture. The Revised Common Lectionary can assist with providing a comprehensive development for the church surrounding relevant passages, often providing alternative readings to avoid difficult names. In addition, the lectionary helps the church hear a preponderance of Scripture read in a cyclical manner. Post-project, the facilitator has started using the Revised Common Lectionary as a simple method of continuing to implement Old Testament and New Testament Scripture reading for the congregation. The project facilitator believes the lectionary helps prevent Scripture use redundancy by covering the Bible as a cohesive big picture revelation of God in a cyclical manner. A second option would be a comprehensive book reading. The minister could take one Old Testament book and one New Testament book and divide the passages up in small, readable portions. The facilitator believes

---

<sup>173</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 15.

an advantage of this would be the development of a comprehensive understanding of the book being read and its place in the Old Testament and New Testament. The third option would be for the minister each week to provide to the readers a relevant Old Testament and a New Testament Scripture which correlates with the chosen Scripture passage. The minister would refer only to the passage instead of reading it again in the message. The advantage of this would be a comprehensive understanding of how Scripture can work together to reveal and explain how God's plan works from the Old Testament through New Testament. All three plans have advantages: reading the Bible in a three-year span for the big picture of Scripture; reading individual books for a comprehensive understanding of that book; Scripture read in context to the preaching, revealing how Old and New Testament Scripture works together in God's plan.

Recommendations for further research from this project include a more advanced research study into the measured spiritual growth of the church, by the yearly measurement of the public reading of Scripture during the three-year course of the reading of the Revised Common Lectionary. This would include a big picture three-year measurement of a control group followed by an analysis of the degree of growth from starting to ending. While this thesis project measured a five-week period and documented a 7%-10% growth, the research would show what this growth percentage would look like each year, with conclusions after the three-year period showing the results of the practice of hearing from the Word of God.

### Summary

The conclusion of this project has answered the "so what" by revealing the results of the project as a positive spiritual action, filling the gap in literature and giving a specific project result of how the Mount Pleasant congregation has now, post-project, developed a more biblical narrative; an increased desire for the Word of God; a desire for the continuation of Scripture read

in worship; and a desire for the Bible to be the primary source for knowing about God and submitting to the authority of God for worship and life direction. This is as Maddix writes, “American Christian’s voice their assertion of the authority of the Bible, in recent years the use of the Bible has declined in the church and in its formative practices such as worship and discipleship.”<sup>174</sup>

The project has revealed an emphasis in the local congregation on biblical development through Scripture’s primacy over other functions or programs in worship and offsets the decline previously experienced. The resulting synopsis is that Scripture cannot be relegated to a non-existent function in a church, which claims to live by the Scripture. The revealed outcome is a challenge to the church to reimplement Scripture reading as a necessary part of congregational worship. This is well affirmed by Samples who writes, “Jews and Christians throughout the centuries have concurred that no matter how many times it’s read, Scripture continues to uplift, challenge, instruct and convict at the deepest levels of the human mind and soul.”<sup>175</sup>

The congregation of Mount Pleasant Christian Church provided both the effect the absence of Scripture reading has on a congregation and the spiritual result of reimplementing Scripture in worship. As originally noted in the theoretical foundation for the project, the intent of this research project was to reveal and prove or disprove in a local church setting, the results of the primary theory that the reimplementation of Scripture reading within the congregation will subsequently prove that spiritual literacy is affected by the presence or absence of Scripture. The project conclusion is that spiritual literacy is affected by both the presence and absence of Scripture in worship.

---

<sup>174</sup>Maddix, “Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church,” 34-35.

<sup>175</sup>Samples, *A World of Difference*, 108.

The presenting problem has been addressed by this project. The project has been affirmed by an increase in biblical development post-project. The congregational focus has returned to the primacy of Scripture reading in worship. Therefore, the congregation is ready to affirm as Grudem says, “All sixty-six books of Bible constitute the book of the Christian church. And the church, both as a whole and in the life of its members, must always be seen to be the people of the book.”<sup>176</sup>

---

<sup>176</sup>Grudem, Collins, and Schreiner, *Understanding Scripture*, 3.

## Bibliography

- Allert, Craig, D. *A High View of Scripture?: The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Anders, Max. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians*. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1999.
- Aune, David, and David Hubbard. *Revelation 1-5*. Vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997.
- Baltzer, Klaus, *Epilogue: 55:11:1-13: Festival of the Pilgrimage to the Holy City*. Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary. Edited by Peter Machinist. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2001.
- Bartholomew, Craig, G., and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.
- Barton, John. *The Oxford Bible Commentary*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Bates, Matthew. *Salvation By Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.
- Beeke, Joel, R. *How Should Teens Read the Bible?* Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014.
- Beeke, Joel, R. *The Beauty and Glory of the Word of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016.
- Belt, Henk van den. *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008.
- Berkley, James, D. *Leadership Handbook of Preaching and Worship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992.
- Bielo, James, S. *The Social Life of Scriptures: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Biblicism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009.
- Block, Daniel I. *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010.
- Boda, Mark J. *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.
- Bovell, Carlos, R. *Inerrancy and the Spiritual Formation of Younger Evangelicals*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007.
- Breneman, Mervin. *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. Vol. 10, The New American Commentary. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1993.

- Briggs, Richard, S. *Reading the Bible Wisely: An Introduction to Taking Scripture Seriously. Revised Edition*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishing, 2011.
- Brown, Jeannine, K. *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Butler, Trent, C. *Joshua 1-12*. Vol. 7a, Word Biblical Commentaries, Second Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- Butler, Trent, C., and Max Anders. *Luke*. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2000.
- Butler, Trent C. *Isaiah*. Vol. 15, Holman Old Testament Commentary. Edited by Max Anders. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2002.
- Carson, D. A., ed. *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016.
- Chatfield, Graeme, R. *Balthasar Hubmaier and the Clarity of Scripture: A Critical Reformation Issue*. Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & CO, 2013.
- Dorani, Daniel M. *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2001.
- Earl, Douglas S. *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian Scripture*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017.
- Easley, Kendall H., and Max Anders. *Revelation*. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1998.
- Evans, Craig A., and Daniel Zacharias. *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon*. New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2009.
- Gangel, Kenneth O. *Joshua*. Holman Old Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2002.
- Geisler, Norman L., and William C. Roach. *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012.
- Gleichmann, Nicole. "Paired vs Unpaired T-Test: Differences, Assumptions and Hypotheses." February (2019): <http://www.technologynetworks>.
- Gorman, Michael J. *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015.
- Graves, Michael P. "The Public Reading of Scripture in Early Judaism." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 3 (2007): 467–87.
- Grudem, Wayne, John C. Collins, and Thomas R. Schreiner. *Understanding Scripture: An Overview of the Bible's Origin, Reliability, and Meaning*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Hendricks, Howard G., and William D. Hendricks. *Living By the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007.

- Hess, Richard, S. *Joshua*. Vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996.
- Hobbs, T. R. *II Kings*. Word Biblical Commentaries. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985.
- Hubbard, David A. *Pastoral Epistles*. Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 46. Edited by Bruce M. Metzger. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2000.
- Inrig, Gary, and Max Anders. *I & II Kings*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2003.
- Johnson, Dennis E. "Between Two Wor(l)Ds: Worldview and Observation in the Use of General Revelation to Interpret Scripture, and Vice Versa." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41, no. 1 (1998): 69–84.
- Jones, Scott, J. *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995.
- Jung, Sungkook. "Paul's Missional Use of Scripture: A Redefined Approach with Special Reference to 2 Cor 3." Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 2010.
- Keathley, Kenneth, and James T. Draper Jr. *Biblical Authority: The Critical Issue for the Body of Christ*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2001.
- Kelsey, David, H. *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999.
- Klink III, Edward W., and Darian R. Lockett. *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Knights, Chris. "How Well Is the Revised Common Lectionary Standing the Test of Time?" *The Expository Times* 130, no. 7 (2019): 305–311.  
<http://ext.sagepub.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/>.
- Knute Larson. *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*. Vol. 9. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2000.
- Larson, Knute, Kathy Dahlen, and Max Anders. *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. Holman Old Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2005.
- Lincoln, Andrew, T., and Angus Paddison. *Christology and Scripture: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2008.
- Lovell, Nathan. "Reflections on the Evangelical Challenge of Reading Scripture in Culturally Diverse Contexts." *St Mark's Review* 240, no. July (2017): 93–107.
- Maddix, Mark A. "Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church." *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 1 (2018): 34–42.
- McDowell, Josh. *God-Breathed: The Undeniable Power and Reliability of Scripture*. Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing Inc., 2015.
- McKnight, Scot. *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.

- McLean, Max, Warren Bird, and Max Lucado. *Unleashing the Word: Rediscovering the Public Reading of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019.
- Miguélez, Laura, C., Vincent Bacote, and Dennis Okholm L. *Evangelicals Scripture: Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.
- Mounce, William D. *Pastoral Epistles*. Vol. 25, Word Biblical Commentary. General editors, David A. Hubbard and Bruce M. Metzger. (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2000), 565.
- Moyise, Steve. *Paul and Scripture*. London, UK: SPCK, 2010.
- Myers, Alicia, D. *Characterizing Jesus: A Rhetorical Analysis on the Fourth Gospel's Use of Scripture in Its Presentation of Jesus*. New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2012.
- Paauw, Glenn R. *Saving the Bible from Ourselves: Learning to Read and Live the Bible Well*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016.
- Patterson, Paige. *Revelation*. Vol. 39. The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2012.
- Patton, Michael, Quinn, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2002.
- Peterson, David G. *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- Russell, Brian D. *(Re)Aligning with God: Reading Scripture for Church and World*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015.
- Samples, Kenneth Richard. *A World of Difference: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *The King In His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.
- Smith, Fred C. *Developing a Biblical Worldview: Seeing Things God's Way*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015.
- Speck, Ryan, and Ryan McGraw M. *How Can I Remember and Practice the Bible?* Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Books, 2016.
- Sproul, R.C. *Knowing Scripture*. Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977.
- Starling, David, I. *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship: How the Bible Shapes Our Interpretive Habits and Practices*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.
- Storer, Kevin. *Reading Scripture to Hear God: Kevin Vanhoozer and Henri de Lubac on God's Use of Scripture in the Economy of Redemption*. Cambridge: James Clarke Company Limited, 2015.
- Stringer, Ernest, T. *Action Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014.



- Sweeney, Marvin, A. *1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- Treier, Daniel, J. *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Van Aarde, Timothy A., and Li-M Lygunda. "A Fruitful Missional Exegesis for a Missional Hermeneutic and Missiology." *In Die Skriflig* 51, no. 2 (2017).
- Ward, Timothy. *Words of Life: Scripture As the Living and Active Word of God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009.
- Watts, John D. W. *Isaiah 34-66*. Vol. 25, Revised Edition, Word Biblical Commentary. Edited by Bruce M. Metzger. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, Harper Collins Christian Publishing, 2005.
- Webster, John. *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Westerholm, Stephen, and Martin Westerholm. *Reading Sacred Scripture: Voices from the History of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016.
- Wilhoit, James C., and Evan B. Howard. *Discovering Lectio Divina: Bringing Scripture into Ordinary Life*. Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2006.
- Williamson, H. G. M. *Ezra-Nehemiah*. Vol. 16, Word Biblical Commentaries. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985.

APPENDIX A

**IRB Approval**

**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 15, 2020

Raymond Campbell  
Sorin Sabou

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY19-20-112 The Public Reading of Scripture in Worship as Integral for Biblical Development

Dear Raymond Campbell, Sorin Sabou:

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

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

(2) Category 2 (i). 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).

(1) 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 modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

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

## APPENDIX B

### **Mount Pleasant Permission Request Letter**

February 4, 2020

Mount Pleasant Christian Church  
4460 Lobelia Road  
Vass, North Carolina, 28394

Dear Mount Pleasant Christian Church,

As a graduate student in the John R. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my research is, The Public Reading of Scripture in Worship as Integral for Biblical Literacy, and the purpose of my research is to gauge the effect the public reading of Scripture has on the biblical development of congregants.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at Mount Pleasant Christian Church and to recruit participants for my research from the congregation of Mount Pleasant Christian Church.

Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time. Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Raymond Campbell  
Pastor, Mount Pleasant Christian Church

APPENDIX C

**Church Permission Consent Letter**

**Mount Pleasant Christian Church**

4460 Lobelia Road, Vass, NC 28394

*“In the Heart of our Community for the Hearts of all People”*

Phone: 910-724-3352

Email: [mtppcpastor@outlook.com](mailto:mtppcpastor@outlook.com)

---

February 4, 2020

Raymond Campbell  
239 Yorkshire Drive  
Cameron, North Carolina, 28326

Dear Raymond Campbell,

After careful review of your research proposal entitled, The Public Reading of Scripture in Worship as Integral for Biblical Literacy, we have decided to grant you permission to access our membership and invite them to participate in your study and conduct your study at Mount Pleasant Christian Church.

Sincerely,

Art Hill  
Chairman of Deacons  
Mount Pleasant Christian Church

## APPENDIX D

### Copy of Individual Consent Letter

February 4, 2020

Dear,

As a Doctor of Ministry student in the John R. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my research is to gauge the effect the public reading of Scripture during the worship service has on the biblical development of congregants, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be between 18 and 80 years of age and attend worship at Mount Pleasant Christian Church. Participants, if willing, will be asked to divide into two groups with both groups being asked to take a pre and a post project survey. The survey will gauge participant's biblical understanding of Scripture's role in worship and the spiritual growth from the use of Scripture in worship.

The first group will participate in the reading of Scripture during worship and the second group will not read. The pre and post survey testing will last approximately one hour (combined), and the total project from beginning to end will last six weeks. Participation survey results will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

In order to participate, please contact me at [910-724-3352](tel:910-724-3352) / [rcampbell1@liberty.edu](mailto:rcampbell1@liberty.edu).

A consent document is attached to this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the survey testing.

Sincerely,

Raymond Campbell  
Pastor, Mount Pleasant Christian Church  
910-724-3352 / [rcampbell1@liberty.edu](mailto:rcampbell1@liberty.edu)

APPENDIX E

**Pre and Post Survey Questionnaire**

The following survey is designed to gauge your perception of the public reading of Old and New Testament Scripture in the worship service. The questions are designed to help the facilitator understand and research the history, perception, value and effect of Scripture reading on the congregation.

Please answer the questions honestly as honestly as you can. Do not answer the questions in the way you think the researcher wants you to respond. You will remain anonymous; the researcher will not be able to link your answers to your identity, so you are able to answer freely.

The questions are designed to be answered on a scale of 1-5, with (1) being the “least, or not important” and (5) being the “most, or very important.” Number (3) would mean “uncertain, unimportant or indifferent.” Numbers 2 and 4 would be above or below (3) in importance.

1. I believe the public reading of the Old and New Testament Scripture is central to the worship service of Mount Pleasant Church?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

2. I believe the public reading of the Old and New Testament Scripture in worship at Mount Pleasant has played a key role in my worship experience?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

3. I believe the public reading of the Old and New Testament Scripture in worship at Mount Pleasant has played a key role in my spiritual development?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

4. I think the Bible *teaches* there is to be a reading of Old and New Testament Scriptures in the worship service every week?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

5. Do you think the Bible *commands* there be a reading of Old and New Testament Scriptures in the worship service every week?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

6. Do you think the reading of the sermon text in worship is enough Scripture for the church?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

7. Do you believe there can be personal spiritual growth gained from the public reading of the Old and New Testament Scripture in worship?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

8. Do you believe there can be congregational spiritual growth gained from the public reading of the Old and New Testament Scripture in worship?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

9. Do you hold the perception that the public reading of the Old and New Testament Scripture in worship is something that only liturgical (i.e. churches that use robes, candles, kneeling, etc.) practice?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

10. How do you personally feel about an intentional return to the public reading of the Old and New Testament Scripture in worship?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

11. How would you feel about an extended time (5-10 minutes) in worship for the public reading of the Old and New Testament Scripture?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

12. I have received biblical teaching on the importance or non-importance of the reading of Scripture in worship which could affect my understanding of Scripture's role in worship?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

13. Do you think biblical teaching on the role of the public reading of Scripture has been neglected in the church?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

14. If you believe there is neglect, do you think the neglect has contributed to a spiritual decline in biblical understanding?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

15. Do you feel the public reading and listening to Old and New Testament Scripture can be a means for teaching other people the Bible and creating biblical understanding?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

16. To what degree do you feel the public reading of Scripture strengthens your personal understanding of the Bible?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

17. To what degree do you feel the public reading of Scripture will contribute to your desire to engage in more Bible reading both public and private?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

18. To what degree do you feel the public reading of Scripture will strengthen your understanding of the Bible as authoritative for matters of personal faith and Christian living?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

19. To what degree do you feel the public reading of Scripture will strengthen the church's understanding of the Bible as authoritative for matters of faith and Christian living?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

20. Do you think a return to the public reading of Old and New Testament Scripture in worship will dramatically alter the congregation's perception of the Bible as authoritative for matters of faith and Christian living?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

End of Survey