LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

The Impact of a Lectio Divina Bible Reading Methodology in the Lives of a Sample of Congregants at Crestview Baptist Church

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

By

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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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Consistent Bible engagement is an indispensable spiritual discipline in the life of growing Christians. Many who profess they are Christian will also unashamedly state that they are too busy or have no time to read the Bible at all. Pastors who take upon the mantle of leadership within the local church must seek ways to be intentional about mobilizing their congregations to engage with Scripture in order to address this alarming trend. This thesis project desires to offer the local church a practical suggestion for getting their congregation to engage with the Bible in addition to times of corporate gathering. This research project will gauge the effectiveness of bringing Lectio Divina as a daily Bible engagement practice into the lives of the adult congregation and measuring the change in an individual’s spiritual growth to address this problem. The desired outcome of this thesis project is to increase the number of adults who have developed a daily habit of engaging with God's Word. The outcome of this project will not be to assess one's overall knowledge of the Bible or to increase biblical literacy. The goal will be to improve the skills needed for adults to confidently engage with God's Words in order to have a daily encounter with the living God. This project includes a daily Bible reading plan, a devotional, and a Bible engagement methodology that will better equip adults for daily Bible reading.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Consistent Bible engagement is an indispensable spiritual discipline in the life of growing Christians. However, research shows in America, that less than twenty percent of the people who profess Jesus as their Lord and Savior will read the Bible from cover to cover in their lifetime. Many who profess they are Christian will also unashamedly state that they are too busy or have no time to read the Bible at all. Pastors who take upon the mantle of leadership within the local church must seek ways to be intentional about mobilizing their congregations to engage with Scripture in order to address this alarming trend. This thesis project desires to offer the local church a solution, a resource, and a practical suggestion for getting their congregation to engage with the Bible in addition to times of corporate gathering. The problem of Bible engagement and biblical literacy in American Christian churches is a reality reflected in Crestview Baptist Church. This Doctor of Ministry Research examined the perceived spiritual impact of Lectio Divina as a method of Bible engagement in a select portion of congregants of Crestview Baptist Church in Georgetown, Texas.

Ministry Context

In 1967 Frist Baptist Church of Georgetown fulfilled its vision to plant another church within their community that grew to be known today as Crestview Baptist Church. Crestview Baptist Church is in the middle of the rapidly growing city of Georgetown, Texas in Williamson

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County. In 2019 Forbes Magazine stated that Williamson County was the fastest-growing county in America with an increased population of 7.94% between 2015 and 2017. An equivalent growth rate of almost 8% has occurred within the congregational membership between 2015 and 2017. Crestview’s average weekly worship attendance for 2018 was 1,158 people in three worship services on a Sunday morning. The average weekly participation in numerous bible study classes on a Sunday morning for 2018 was 811 unique individuals with an age range from 0 – 101 years. The median age of the congregation is approximately 59 years old.

The strategic focus of Crestview Baptist Church is to develop the personal evangelism skills of every follower of Christ. The mission statement is simple, "We are people sharing Jesus." Personal evangelism skills are the spiritual development approach for every individual and the methodology for every ministry area within the church. The foundational spiritual development is for a new believer to attend a personal evangelism training referred to within the congregation as "Good News Evangelism." The goal of "Good News Evangelism" training is to equip individuals with the skills needed to share the gospel with others. During this training, individuals will develop a deeper understanding of the gospel's effect upon their life and develop the skills to articulate their testimony of salvation through Jesus Christ. The base requirement and expectation for all leaders within Crestview are to complete Level 1 and 2 of personal evangelism training within this material that is taught twice per year.

This personal evangelism training focuses on equipping individuals with a better understanding of the Gospel through a study of Scripture and memorization of an evangelism method through which to share the Gospel with others. By relying heavily upon scripture

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memorization and repetition of a gospel presentation, at the end of thirteen weeks, everyone is prepared to navigate a gospel conversation within their daily life. This training is not only theoretical but has a large portion of practical application. Each week includes a time of training in a classroom environment and a time evangelistic visitation during which individuals have the opportunity to observe and practice gospel conversations within our community. Each week teams of three individuals make prearranged visits to homes within the city to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This dual time of instruction and home visits make the framework for the "Good News Evangelism" training.

Personal evangelism skills and personal evangelism practices are of high value among the congregation and pastoral leadership. “Good News Evangelism” has deeply influenced the culture of the church for the last 24 years. This personal evangelism training has become a pastoral expectation of every member of the congregation and is the topic of sermons at least eight weeks each year. Its impact upon church culture has stretch to influence the language in which the congregation speaks to one another. The pastoral leadership of Crestview Baptist Church remains committed to developing disciples through personal evangelism training.

Problem Presented

One of the challenges at Crestview Baptist Church is that a portion of the congregation admires the Bible but does not read the Bible apart from times within the church. Their Bible engagement is limited to two primary events in the life of the church. These two events both occur on Sunday morning in both Corporate Worship and Bible Study classes that occur in-between corporate worship opportunities. These two times of Bible engagement are designed around a master teacher model time of instruction. The master teacher model of teaching consists

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5 Good News Evangelism is a training curriculum that has been developed by Pastor Dan Wooldridge and Pastor Robert Stephens specifically for use at Crestview.
of a teacher or preacher who has prepared a lesson to impart knowledge to others on a specified passage of Scripture. Teachers rely heavily upon a published curriculum to equip them for teaching. This model of instruction is useful in transferring knowledge and appeals to the majority of adults within the congregation. It proves however, to be ineffective in helping individuals develop the personal skills needed to engage with the Bible independently of the master teacher. Therefore, a large portion of the adult congregation at Crestview Baptist Church lacks the skills and daily practices of effectively engaging with the Bible apart from these corporate gatherings.

This lack of Bible engagement skills has generated a level of biblical illiteracy that has begun to hinder the congregation's individual spiritual growth and personal evangelism effectiveness. This problem, in effect, has started to make the church less useful in accomplishing its mission and vision of being "People Sharing Jesus." This void affects our evangelism training through our member's inability to dialogue effectively about the Bible when engaging in an evangelistic conversation. This problem can be observed during our weekly evangelism visits as followers of Christ dialogue with non-followers of Christ and struggle to respond to the questions and needs of individuals based on Scripture. People have begun to rely upon personal experience and worldly wisdom rather than the authority of Scripture to speak evangelistically into one another's lives. Although they have memorized the script, they lack the biblical knowledge to respond to individual needs during an evangelistic visit apart from the trained methodology. The problem this project will address is the daily Bible engagement skills

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among the adult population of Crestview Baptist Church to help the church accomplish its God-given mission to be "People sharing Jesus."

The twelfth-century philosopher Maimonides once stated that if you "give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." The general principle of Maimonides is that you empower people for a lifetime of productivity when you enable them with the skills to acquire independently. Maimonides originally stated this principle in the context of addressing the civil issue of poverty. This general principle, however, may be applied to several issues outside of the context of poverty. Using Maimonides's principle within a training context, the goal of the teacher would be to move beyond the mere transfer of knowledge but to facilitate self-sufficiency for the individual to learn. In a direct relationship with the Bible, the Maimonides principle can be applied through empowering individuals with Bible engagement skills to interpret and apply Bible passages independently of a master teacher. The goal of this project will be to enable individuals with the skills needed to engage with the Bible free of a human master teacher. This project will give individuals the confidence to engage Scripture in a consistent and meaningful approach to produce the life transformation that God desires of His people.

Biblical Prospective on the Problem

One of God's most basic purposes for giving the church the Bible was that His people would read it. God gave the Bible to be read for knowledge in such a way as to inspire a Holy fear of the Lord. The holy fear may motivate both the belief and behavior of His people. As

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8 Ibid., 26.
9 Ibid., 29.
10 See Joshua 1:8
God's people received the first written words of the Bible, He gave them this commanded in Deuteronomy 11:18, "You shall, therefore, lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."\textsuperscript{11} God's desire is for His people to have a daily relationship with His written Word. His written Word was to be constantly meditated upon in their lives. They were to know what God's Word said deep within their soul to influence their daily living. 

God went on to say in Deuteronomy 11:19 that "You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." Following the Babylonian exile, most pious Jews sought to fulfill this command in Deuteronomy with a literal interpretation through the use of the phylacteries and mezuzot.\textsuperscript{12} Eugene Merrill describes this practices as, “a way for the people to remember they were to attach the words of Moses to their hands and foreheads as symbols of their commitment.”\textsuperscript{13} Known as Phylacteries, they were small leather boxes containing four scripture passages Exodus 12:2-10, Exodus 13:11-21, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and Deuteronomy 11:18-21.\textsuperscript{14} They were worn by males on their forehead and left upper arm.\textsuperscript{15} The Mezuzot was a small cylinder containing parchments of Scripture that is affixed on the right-hand doorpost of

\begin{itemize}
  \item Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, Crossway, 2001).
  \item William Cordeiro, \textit{The Divine Mentor: Growing Your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior} (Bloomington: Bethany House 1989), 34.
  \item Henry Willmington, \textit{Willmington’s Bible handbook}, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House), 29.
\end{itemize}
every room in the house. While the Israelites were misguided in applying these commands in such a literal manner, it was clear that they understood God's command for Scripture to have a prominent place in the life of a believer.

God went on in Deuteronomy 11:20-21 to say that "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give them as long as the heavens are above the earth." Once again, God wants His people to know His Word, but He attaches a conditional promise that His Word is profitable for a sustained living under the blessing of God. Peter Craig summarizes God’s command in Deuteronomy 11 by saying that “the main emphasis is still on the requirement of God for his people, upon which the future blessing of God in the conquest and the possession of the promised land would be contingent.”

The biblical concept is one of a conditional relationship. If they are to remain in God's promised land and receive all the benefits as described in the verses mentioned above, then they people must live according to God's Word. God himself establishes the authority of His Word in our lives, but He also attaches a promise of blessing when we are living according to the commands of His Word. Jesus later went on to teach in the New Testament as recorded in John 14:15 “if you love me you will keep my commandments.” Again, in John 14:21 “whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who love me.” A love for God is expressed by obedience to God’s commands. In doing so, God establishes a relationship between His written Word and His people that needs to be reestablished within the church today.

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God’s desired relationship between His people and His Word was one in which it was ever-present upon their hearts, their minds, and their lips as part of their conversations. Children were taught God's Word not only by the church but also by the parents who consistently and conversationally exuded these truths. Children learned God's Word from their parents, who made it a priority in their homes to learn God's Word. The desire to know God's Word was individually motivated by their relationship with God. In his commentary on Deuteronomy, Matthew Henry stated that,

God's Word must be laid upon our hearts, that our thoughts may be daily conversant with them and employed about them, and thereby the whole soul may be brought to abide and act under the influence and impression of them. This immediately follows upon the law of loving God with all your heart; for those that do so will lay up his Word in their hearts both as evidence and effect of that love as a means to preserve and increase it. He that loves God loves his Bible.18

Perhaps the most impactful statement from Henry's quote based on Deuteronomy was the equivalence of love for God with a love for the Bible. If people love God, then they, too, must appreciate a more in-depth knowledge and application of God's Word in their lives. Eugene Merrill in the New American Commentary describes this desire of God’s as “a total commitment of heart and mind.” 19 The problem that this thesis project seeks to address is not the personal desire that an individual has to engage with the Bible. This particular desire is a byproduct of one's relationship with God that comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.20 The real problem is the lack of relational connection that people have with God through the Bible.

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20 See Deuteronomy 8:3
The Bible is a God-given way for people to have a stronger relationship with God if they have the confidence and the skills to engage the Bible with the mindset of seeking God. That's what this thesis project is all about – connecting people with God's story in a way that will lead them to have meaningful daily encounters with God so that their lives may progressively be transformed. Empowering believers with the right skills to engage the Bible will have a positive effect on their relationship with God. It will bring about a life transformation to living like Christ. Today there is a disconnect between God's purpose for his Word and its application to our individual lives.

Purpose Presented

This research project will gauge the effectiveness of bringing Lectio Divina as a daily Bible engagement practice into the lives of the adult congregation and measure the positive or negative change in an individual’s spiritual growth to address this problem. The desired outcome of this thesis project is to increase the number of adults who have developed a daily habit of engaging with God's Word. This project will equip a portion of adults within Crestview Baptist Church with the knowledge and resources required to read the Bible confidently each day. The outcome of this project will not be to assess one's overall knowledge of the Bible or to increase biblical literacy. The goal will be to improve the skills needed for adults to confidently engage with God's Words to have a daily encounter with the living God. This project will include a daily Bible reading plan, a devotional, and a Bible engagement methodology that will better equip adults for daily Bible reading.

Basic Assumptions

The foundation of addressing this problem within the adult congregation of Crestview Baptist Church includes the assumption of the researcher that Lectio Divina is the most effective
means to equip individuals with the skills needed for independent daily Bible engagement. As a result, the research has taken a singular approach from which to address this problem. This assumption will not affect the purpose of this project. Still, the outcome of this project will, therefore, be limited by the success or lack thereof for Lectio Divina's ability to equip individuals with the skills needed to engage with Scripture. This assumption creates a risk for the research to fail to accomplish its designed purpose. If Lectio Divina fails to address the problem, then the project will be limited in its effectiveness, and the conclusion of the project will then focus upon the ineffectiveness of Lectio Divina rather than the spiritual growth of individual believers.

Definitions

Two key terms must be defined to understand the purpose of this thesis project effectively. First, we must have a clear description of Lectio Divina. Secondly, we must understand how this project intends to measure Spiritual Growth in individual believers.

Lectio Divina is Latin for “divine reading.” This is an ancient Christian spiritual practice of reading the Bible with intentionality and devotion to hear from God. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Lectio Divina is a form of meditation rooted in liturgical celebration that dates back to early monastic communities. It was a method practiced by monks in their daily encounter with Scripture, both as they prepared for the Eucharist and as they prayed the Liturgy of the Hours. In the Middle Ages, it was used in religious orders, such as the

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22 Ibid., 2.


Lectio Divina is a method for praying with the scriptures so that the scriptures would lead you to the throne of God. As the Bible is read, they prayerfully invite the Word to become a transforming lens that brings the events of daily living into focus. As a result, one can come to live more deeply with God’s Word in mind and find the presence of God more readily in the events of each day thus fulfilling God’s original purpose for giving the scriptures. The method of Lectio Divina follows four historical steps: lectio (reading), meditatio (meditation), contemplatio (contemplation), and oratio (prayer).

Secondly, we must have a clear understanding of the use of the term spiritual growth. Spiritual growth will be understood as the process of being conformed inwardly and outwardly to the image of Christ. Spiritual growth will be the measure by which the effectiveness of Lectio Divina will be judged to address this problem. Spiritual growth will be determined entirely upon the use of Lifeway’s spiritual growth assessment process known as the Disciples Pathway Assessment.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

The assessments will be completed by voluntary participants within the adult bible study structure of Crestview Baptist Church. This age range of participants is 18-65 as not to include any children. There is no control over the adult’s continual participation within either the Bible

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25 Ibid., 76.
26 Ibid., 75.
27 Dan Korn, Lectio Divina, 2-3.
29 This assessment can be found by visiting: http://discipleshippathwayassessment.com/
Study Methodology Class that aims to teach Lectio Divina or the adult’s completion of the 30-day Bible Engagement plan that aims to implement Lectio Divina within their daily practices. Also, there is no restriction upon research participant use of other Spiritual Growth resources outside of Lectio Divina. Spiritual growth that occurs during the month of research could possibly be a result of additional spiritual growth resources. There is no control over participates that choose not to give accurate information as most of the statements within the assessment require a subjective response.

**Delimitations**

To help address these limitations and to better assess a consistent population within the church, participation will be limited to adults only within the young family’s department between the ages of 18-65 years of age who are enrolled in adult bible study structure of Crestview Baptist Church. Another constraint to address these limitations is that the second assessment will only be completed by those who completed the initial assessment prior to the methodology class and the implementation of the Bible Engagement plan. All others will not be considered relevant to this research project. The second assessment will attempt to identify the level of participation of each participant by the number of weeks completed in the methodology class and the number of days completed within the Bible Engagement plan. These three sources of information will be linked to each unique individual as it is aggregated for the results.

**Conclusion**

Lectio Divina as a Bible Engagement strategy will positively impact the spiritual growth of adults as they adopt this skill as a habitual Bible engagement practice. Lectio Divina’s unique emphasis upon the role of the Holy Spirit makes it the Bible reading method that the researcher has chosen to rely upon in order to address this lack of biblical engagement in the lives of the
congregants at Crestview Baptist Church. If the individual believers can develop the skills
needed to independently habitually engage with the Bible, they will become more effective in
their personal evangelism skills and better help fulfill Crestview’s mission to be “People Sharing
Jesus.”
Chapter 2
Foundations

Lectio Divina is a theologically sound and historically powerful method of Bible reading. A thorough review of literature will lay a historical and theological foundation that will inspire Christians to adopt this method as a Bible engagement methodology for their daily lives. This project, however, first began with a personal foundation of the researcher that was later affirmed through historical and theological affirmations.

Personal Foundation

As a six-year-old boy, I was confronted with the reality that I struggled reading because of an undiagnosed learning disability. After repeating the first grade, it appeared that all hope was lost as teachers were prepared to label me "mentally retarded" and push me into the second grade with these undiscovered and unaddressed educational delays. The second grade brought on a stricter teacher whose tactics were yelling, public humiliation, and slaps on the wrist. This hostility was transferred upon the other school children who eventually called me "stupid" as I attempted to play on the playground. I found myself confused, behind and alone as young boy who could not seem to find his place in this cruel world. The grade school years were of great trial until I experienced the compassion and intelligence of a teacher who eventually uncovered my learning disability. Upon this discovery, the best training and education strategy was implemented to help provide the skills needed to overcome this educational delay to graduate high school successfully.

The struggle with reading continued into college as I was unable to read as quickly as I needed to maintain the pace of a college education. In the solitude of a college dormitory, my struggle turned towards God as I asked of Him why He made me with this disability. Psalm
139:14 states, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful' I know that full well." This is understood to mean, as Allen Ross describes, that “God marvelously planned out our lives to the detail of our creation.”

In the darkness of my heart, I believed that I was a flawed creation of God. If God is responsible for my creation, then He was also responsible for my learning disability. I was unable to reconcile a good and perfect Creator with what I understood to be a “flaw” in my creation. This “flaw” in myself reflected as a “flaw” in God.

Seeking a Word from God, I turned unto the scriptures and was led by the Holy Spirit to 2 Corinthians 12:9 which writes, "But he said unto me." In the context of this passage, Paul is writing as God had spoken to him personally. However, in the stillness of my heart, God was no longer speaking to Paul as I read these words but through the scriptures began directly speaking unto me. God said to me through 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you; my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that Christ's power may rest on me." In hearing the voice of God through the scriptures, as spoken directly to me from God's mouth unto my heart, I was brought to my knees in repentance. What I believed was my greatest weakness became the place from which I would most powerfully encounter God each day.

My fault in reading and learning was transformed into an opportunity to be used by God for His glory. By the power of the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word of God, no longer did I believe that God had made a mistake in my creation. Rather, He created an opportunity for me to be wholly dependent upon Him and to glorify Him beyond my own physical ability. This not only transformed my perception of self, but it powerfully reconstructed my view of God. In a

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moment of surrender, I said unto the Lord, "I will never read fast, but Lord help me read deep. Lord help me see in one sentence what others see in paragraphs. Lord anoint my reading with a depth that can only come because of my slowness and Your power." Unknowingly at the time, God was introducing me to the art of religious reading.

Religious reading is a very distinct way to read. Paul Griffith’s recent study entitled *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion*, concludes that the goal of reading religiously is to afford a believer a vitally important perspective on the meaning of life.\(^{31}\) A religious reader will have a particular mindset toward what they read. A religious reader will come to the text, not with a desire to quickly understand the text but with the sense of a gold mine of riches that can never be completely exhausted.\(^{32}\) Unlike a consumer mindset that would use and then discard when done, a religious reader approaches the text with reverence and hunger for the inexhaustible riches that lie within. To read religiously is to read in a very different way. This shift in reading methodology transformed my relationship with God and the perception that I once held of my learning disability. As a result, I have come to the conclusion that religious reading is, in fact, how the Bible should be read. My learning disability has become a gift from God that enables me with a unique advantage to read religiously and study God’s Word. God has taken my weakness and for His glory created a very powerful way for me to engage with Him each day.

A historical approach to religious reading that has been well documented and has become the means by which I engage God each day is known as Lectio Divina. Lectio Divina is an ancient Christian practice of religious reading that helps Christians center themselves on God's

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\(^{32}\) Ibid., 16.
Word in order to encounter Him. This sacred reading is a distinct form of reading that is not designed to obtain knowledge or information but is the practice of opening oneself up to the work of the Holy Spirit to encounter God. As one intentionally focuses on the words of the Bible, the Holy Spirit enlightens the minds and hearts of the readers with inspiration from God. Religious reading is an approach to the biblical text that is willing to be influenced, challenged, and changed by its contents. While religious reading should never be a means to excuse diligent scholarship in the application of God’s Word, it is a way to focus upon using the Word to strengthen your relationship with God.

The validity of this personal foundation for Lectio Divina as an effective Bible engagement methodology was not a personal mystic experience that was exclusive to the researcher but was later affirmed and reinforced through the discovery of its theological foundation.

**Theological Foundation**

Lectio Divina as an effective Bible engagement methodology began when God first gave the scriptures to His people. God’s first written words were penned by His very hand in Exodus 32:15-16. God gave these words to His covenant people to guide their living that they may not sin against Him. God has given His Word to His people to establish a relationship with them and govern their lives in a way that brings His glory. God's design of speaking and then recording His words began with the establishment of a Holy people who would bear the sacred

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34 See Exodus 32:15-16.

35 See Exodus 20:20.
name of God. This foundation established a pattern from which the Jews would start to live their lives. God would speak, and the people would attempt to live according to God's Word for them.

Take, for example, the Book of Leviticus. The word Leviticus means "that which pertains to the Levites." Only a small portion, however, of the book contains the guidelines for the priest of Israel. The overwhelming majority of the book includes the religious and moral regulations for the entire nation to govern their lives. Leland Ryken has called Leviticus, "God's guidebook for his covenant people." The contents of Leviticus are almost entirely rules and regulations given by God, and they were recorded when Israel was first established as a nation. This pattern of rules and regulations given by God is something that the book of Leviticus shares with the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These rules and regulations established an interactive relationship between God and His chosen people through His written Word.

God also developed a relationship between His Word and those in a position of authority. In Deuteronomy 17:18, God directed the king to make for himself a copy of the law before he was seated upon the throne. The intent is that a king in preparation for his reign would handwrite for himself a copy of God's Word. Eugene Merrill describes this practice in this way:

This was more than a formality, however, for each king must, through all the years of his tenure, read the document so that he might properly revere God, the Great King, and adhere to every provision of covenant law and statute. The king was to rule for the Lord on the earth, and therefore he was to do so in line with the holiness and righteousness of the Lord.

This process of copying the laws of God by hand would not only provide the king with a base knowledge of God's Word but would also begin to provide influence on how the king ruled

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36 Leland Ryken, *Literary Introductions to the Books of the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 44.
37 Ibid., 41.
38 Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, The New American Commentary, 266.
God's people. The Word of God would influence how the king governed and serves as a guiding foundation for the kingdom.

The foundational principle of God’s Word is also given in the Book of Joshua. In the book of Joshua, as God commissions Joshua into the leadership of His people to occupy the Promised land, they are given this charge in Joshua 1:7-8,

> Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

As God’s people prepare to move into the occupation of the Promised Land, God reminds and reaffirms them of His desired relationship with His given Word. This relationship with His Word also contains conditional promises given with obedience or disobedience to His Word. The commands in God’s Word are followed by warnings of judgment for disobedience and blessings for compliance. The desire of God in the Bible is obedience to His commands from which He will then guarantee their prosperity. The prosperity of God became a motivating source for the people of God to be disciplined in their approach to reading God’s Word. The people of God must not only know what His Word says, but they must also be influenced by God's Word in how they live their lives to maintain this conditional relationship.

The conditional relationship between God’s people and God’s Word is the foundation for the Christian art of reading religiously. This foundation is rooted in early Jewish History for their survival under the blessing of God. In the most initial periods of Jewish history, the Torah was regarded with the utmost respect and was a text that blessed every attentive reader.\(^\text{39}\) It was

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commonplace in Jewish communities to have public readings of the Torah. One of the most dramatic encounters is recorded in the book of Nehemiah. The great scribe Ezra tells of a time after the Babylonian exile when he stood upon a raised platform and read the Torah to the assembled crowd who gathered below. Nehemiah 8:1-3 records this scene:

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. Ezra, the priest, brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.

In this moment, the Bible took its rightful God-ordained place in the restored community. The people gathered for their reading without interruption and without hurriedly moving on with their day. This practice becomes one of the first examples of religious reading as a community practice. Mervin Breneman describes this practice in the New American Commentary on Nehemiah,

Just as these people took the initiative, we should encourage all Christian believers to take the initiative in seeking spiritual revival. The people already respected the law of Moses and recognized its authority for their community. It is significant that this reading of the law and the worship service were not centered in the temple and not controlled by the priesthood. From this time on in Judaism, the Torah was more important than the temple. Likewise, for Christians, the living power of the Bible should be more important than any church building. Through Scripture the Holy Spirit brings people to abundant life.

The word of God has for too long taken a “backseat” in the life of a believer and has become a last resort or afterthought when individuals need guidance for daily life. The spiritual revival that the Word of God brought about for the people in Nehemiah is also needed today.

\[40\] Leland Ryken, *Literary Introductions to the Books of the Bible*, 44.

In addition to these Old Testament examples, the New Testament provides additional examples of the art of religious reading. Jesus modeled a life that was filled with and guided by a knowledge of God's Word. In various gospel accounts of Jesus's life, He would routinely employ the Word of God in His life and in the instruction of others. One such example is in Matthew's gospel when Jesus is tempted in the wilderness by the devil himself.\(^4^2\) Jesus, when faced with the various temptations, responded with a criticism of and defense against the devil with direct quotes from God's Word. In this single instance alone, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, Psalm 91:11-12, Deuteronomy 6:6, and Deuteronomy 6:13. Jesus' example of not only having a knowledge of God's Word but also deploying God's Word amongst the challenges of this life stands as an encouragement for every follower to know and employ God's Word throughout their daily lives. As Craig Kenner correctly concludes in the IVP New Testament Commentary, this narrative provides a model for us.\(^4^3\)

Jesus is the perfect example of being developed by the Word of God. During his wilderness period in which Satan tempted him as seen in Matthew 4, Jesus demonstrated a complete knowledge of God’s Word through his responses to Satan’s temptations by quoting passages from the book of Deuteronomy. E. M. Green has concluded with Jesus quoting from Deuteronomy that "Jesus had been studying Deuteronomy in his devotional reading. From within these two chapters, he draws on material that has been learned.”\(^4^4\) Green brings about the idea that even Jesus spent time daily studying the Word of God to accomplish the will of the Father in

\(^{4^2}\) See Matthew 4:1-11.


His life. Green makes an incredible observation about Jesus. He also took the time to study God's Word. Nothing less should be expected from believers today. If they genuinely desire to live as followers of Christ they must habitually engage with God's Word as did Jesus.

This practice can be seen in Luke's gospel which recorded the story of Jesus as a young boy while traveling to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover.\(^45\) He spent days in the temple courts listening to and asking the religious teachers questions. It was said of Jesus in Luke 2:47, "Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and answers." Howard Marshall observed in this moment that, “Jesus appears as a pupil who astonishes his teachers by the understanding of the law apparent in his questions and answers to their counter-questions; there is no thought of his precociously teaching the experts.”\(^46\) As a young boy, Jesus devoted himself to the study of God's Word so that at the right time, God the Father could call upon Him to fulfill the task that had been prepared in advanced for Him to do. From the establishment of a Holy people, as seen in Exodus, through the life of Christ the intentions of God are clearly communicated. His desire for His people is that they know the Bible and live according to the Bible.

The apostle Paul models the necessity for studying God's Word to fulfill God's purpose in bringing about transformation that God desires. In Paul's second letter to the young Timothy, Paul gives him invaluable instruction about his knowledge of and application of God's Word. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, he writes, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness that the man of God may be completely

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equipped for every good work." This key passage affirms that God is the author of all Scripture.

Philip Towner wrote of this statement of origin saying that,

Paul has in mind the Old Testament scriptures, not because the apostles’ teaching lacked authority but probably because the opponents had so misused them. At that time the Old Testament represented the revelation of God, his communication to human beings, that had been written down; but it is certainly correct to extend his meaning to include the New Testament.\(^47\)

God's authorship of all Scripture gives it the authority to influence our lives. Paul speaks of the authorship and authority of God’s Word by referencing the “breath of God” as the source from which scripture has arisen in 2 Timothy. God spoke the Bible into existence through His various human servants to serve as transcribers. Because it is the Word of God, it is profitable and authoritative for the life of the believer. Paul also asserts through this text that the Bible is a foundational asset for the spiritual growth of the believer. In response to Paul's words in Second Timothy, Jay Stott wrote,

Do we hope, either in our own lives or in our teaching ministry, to overcome error and grow in truth, to overcome evil and grow in holiness? Then it is to Scripture that we must primarily turn, for Scripture us' profitable' for these things. Indeed, Scripture is the chief means which God employs to bring "the man of God" to maturity.\(^48\)

God uses His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit to transform the life of a believer. Towner also concluded that,

The relevance of Scripture may be seen in its complete sufficiency for living the Christian life. Verse 17 closes the passage with a statement of purpose (so that) that reaches not only to the man of God who must carry out the tasks enumerated in verse 16 but to all believers. Constant study of God’s Word equips one to do all that God requires, because it contains the knowledge of God’s will.\(^49\)


\(^{48}\) J Stott, Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 103.

\(^{49}\) Philip Towner, I-2 Timothy & Titus, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, 98.
A believer who is not regularly engaging with God's Word will not be spiritually complete and will not be thoroughly equipped for every good work which God has prepared for them to do. Simply put, a mature believer is developed through God's Word. Thus, regular intake of God's Word is an expectation of all followers of Christ.

Through the art of religious reading, as the reader is seeking to understand the text, the text is also influencing the reader from within themselves per God's will for their lives. This process of exposing oneself to God's Word is not without effect in the life of the individual reader. The miracle of religious reading is the transformation that takes place by God’s power within and always in accordance with God’s will. As a result of this transformative process, God's faithful people should be habitually engaging with God's Word. Upon this conviction, faithful Christians have developed the process of religious reading known as Lectio Divina.

Lectio Divina as an effective Bible engagement methodology began through the inspiration of the researcher’s personal foundation and was later affirmed in its theological foundation. These personal and theological foundations are also rooted in a vast historical evolution of this methodology.

**Historical and Literary Foundation**

Lectio Divina has evolved and endured throughout the history of Christianity. The first extra-biblical example is seen in the years of 185-234 as Origen provided the first detailed Christian approach to religiously reading the scriptures.50 During his time at Alexandria, he served as the headmaster of a school of catechesis that focused on reading and explaining the

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A student of Origen, a gentleman, named Thaumaturgus, wrote of Origen's religious reading in this way:

He has received this greatest gift from God and heaven's noblest destiny, to be the interpreter of God's words to human beings, to have insight into the things of God as if God were speaking, and to explain them to human beings as human beings hear.\(^{52}\)

Origen’s educational goal was to encourage his students to dedicate themselves to the reading of Scripture and to then effectively communicate it to others. Origen’s method of religious reading is best understood through the metaphor of “digging wells.”\(^{53}\) Origen encouraged his students when looking within scripture for spiritual meaning to “dig a well.”\(^{54}\) His methodology entails the slow process of repetitively reading each word while seeking the Lord’s inspiration.

Origen described his process in this way, “observe each detail which has been written. For, if one knows how to dig into the depth, he will find a treasure in the details, and perhaps also, the precious jewels of the mysteries which lie hidden where they are not esteemed.”\(^{55}\) His principle may be best summarized thus: with great effort comes the great reward of a personal encounter with God. This reward has both personal benefits and benefits for others as God reveals himself within the scriptures. Origen also viewed his work in religious reading as digging on behalf of the people he served. He later stated that:

But also, each of us who serves the word of God dig wells and seeks living water. If, therefore, I too shall begin to discuss the words of the ancients and to seek in them a

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 5-8.

\(^{52}\) Raymond Studzinski, Reading to Live the Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina, 170.


\(^{54}\) Ibid., 338.

\(^{55}\) Origen, Origen: on First Principles, ed. John Behr, 136.
spiritual meaning, if I shall have attempted to remove the veil of the Law and to show that the things which have been written are 'allegorical.' I am, indeed, digging wells.\textsuperscript{56}

Since the days of Origen, God's people have been digging within God's Word to bring about personal spiritual growth in accordance with the Lord’s will. Personal spiritual growth has become one of the greatest motivations for personally reading the scripture through the methodology that Origen established early within Church tradition. Following Origen, in the year 473, the Bishop of Pavia wrote about his predecessor Epiphanius who faithfully served as Bishop from 467-497:

His rest and his recreation were the reading of Sacred Scripture. What he read through once he repeated from memory. So that his reading of the Holy Scripture might not be mere rapid reading through the words, but he portrayed in his acts the passages that he had read. ……In fine, his life made manifest the lessons he had learned from the Sacred Scriptures.\textsuperscript{57}

As we move forward in history, we arrive at the influence of Fernando Martins de Bulhões also known as St. Antony.\textsuperscript{58} Fernando began the practice of Lectio Divina that remains today. Fernando was born to a wealthy family in the middle of the third century in Egypt.\textsuperscript{59} While he was young, he inherited a sizable fortune when both of his parents tragically died. In his quest for meaning to his life and newly inherited wealth, he went to church. While at church, he heard the gospel reading from Matthew 19:21 "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me." Jesus

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 318-320.

\textsuperscript{57} Raymond Studzinski, \textit{Reading to Live the Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina}, 101.


\textsuperscript{59} Raymond Studzinski, \textit{Reading to Live the Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina}, 109.
spoke these words to the rich young man long ago, but Fernando received them as if Christ had spoken directly to him.\(^\text{60}\)

Fernando immediately sold everything he had and gave it all unto the poor that he might be able to dedicate himself wholly unto Christ. He purposefully went out to live in the desert to live as a hermit faithful unto Christ and ironically founded a movement of the Catholic church known as the Desert Fathers. His obedience to the Word of God led him to be the father of a major monastic tradition. This desert location became the spiritually fertile location from which he continued to listen each day to scripture as God's Word spoken unto him just as he did that faithful day of his salvation. This was the lesson he taught to the great flood of disciples who desired to leave the world behind to better hear from God and live according to his Word.

Similarly, is the conversion story of Aurelius Augustinus who is often referred to as Augustine of Hippo. Like Fernando, Augustine conversion in 386 centered upon his reading of the Scripture well. In his *Confessions*, Augustine described this moment of transformation in the garden of Milan.\(^\text{61}\) Augustine lived a life in pursuit of happiness through various philosophies and worldly gain. Yet he found nothing in this world that would satisfy his heart. Eventually, he met Aurelius Ambrosius or St. Ambrose of Milan, who shared with him both the scriptures and the story of Fernando’s conversion through obedience to the scriptures as God's Word spoken directly to him. Augustine later heard the voice of a child singing in the garden, *Tolle lege, Tolle lege*, which means "take and read, take and read." Augustine shares what happened next:

> I stemmed the flood of tears and rose to my feet, believing that this could be nothing other than a divine command to open the Book and read the first page I chanced upon, for I had heard the story of how Anthony had been instructed by a gospel text. He happened to arrive while the gospel was being read and took the words to be addressed to himself when he heard, "Go and sell all you possess and give the money to the poor; you will

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 113.

\(^{61}\) Raymond Studzinski, *Reading to Live the Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina*, 119.
have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." So, he promptly converted to You by this plainly delivered message. Stung into action, I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting for on leaving it I had put down there the book of the Apostle's letters. I snatched it up, opened it, and read in silence the passage on which my eyes first lighted.62

This passage that had transformed his life happened to be no other than Romans 14:13-14. Romans 14 suddenly resolved all his struggles, and for the first time, God had revealed himself unto him in an incredibly transformative manor. A transformative encounter is possible for the reader when they engage with the scriptures through the skills of religious reading.

Both Augustine and Anthony read a passage from Scripture and heard the scriptures as being Spoken to them as the Word of God. It was the turning point of their lives unto obedience to Christ. Augustine had listened to the scriptures read to him many times before; but when he heard Romans 13 read for the first time as a personal word addressed to him, it transformed his way of life. To listen to a word from God through the scriptures as being personally and individually spoken unto us is the secret of the saints that is to be rediscovered by the church today.

Ludwig Wittgenstein once noted, "you can't hear God speak to someone else, you can listen to him only if you are being addressed."63 When God speaks directly and personally to you, it will change your life. This opportunity exists today for every believer through God's Word through the art of religious reading. This same truth Francis of Assisi also discovered from God's Word in a similar encounter.

While attending a Mass one day, the Gospel was read from Matthew 10:7-10, which reads:

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The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying, give without pay. Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff for the laborer deserves his food.

Francis heard these words of God as if spoken until him for the first time. When the Mass was over, he threw away all that he had in this world and began to preach to the people of the countryside.

Anthony, Augustine, and Francis all had a life-changing experience when they received the Word of God as being spoken directly and personally to them. Scripture opens up for us the other half of the conversation in prayer. Ambrose said, "We speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles." Augustine wrote, ‘Your prayer is your word addressed to God. When you read the Bible, God speaks to you; when you pray, you speak to God.’ Cyprian wrote, ‘diligently practice prayer and Lectio Divina. When you pray, you speak with God; when you read, God speaks with you.’

This is the pattern of prayer while reading Scripture that the ancient Christians uncovered. Prayer is how we speak to God, and reading Scripture is a way for us to hear from God. As Christians desperately desire to hear from God and to know God's will for their lives, we must equip them with the skills to hear from God through His Word. To hear from God, what we need is to take up the Bible and read.

Historically, the scriptures were read to build up within oneself a consciousness of God's presence. Monastic writers such as Gregory the Great (540-604), Bede the Venerable (673-735),


and Isaac the Syrian (700) carried on the tradition of reading scripture to draw spiritual meaning. Gregory the Great's main concern was always how the scriptures directed people in their lives. He writes, ‘The scriptures provide the Christian measuring rod that could be used to assess one's progress in virtue.' Gregory believed that the scriptures spoke to individuals in terms of where they happened to be in their spiritual life. In his work, Listening, Reading, Praying: Orality, Literacy, and Early Christian Monastic Spirituality, Douglas Burton concludes that the centuries of monasticism orchestrated a life that was centered on reading and listening to the scriptures. In monasteries both the East and the West, the practice of prayerfully reading the Word of God continued as a means to direct one upon the path of holiness. This emphasis was short-lived as liturgy soon became the focus of life in monasteries.

It was not until the twelfth century that monastic tradition and behavior began to return to the tradition of religious reading. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) renewed the focus of the tradition of lectio. Bernard gave renewed attention to the process of personal reform and a return to God through reading. In his monastic theology, the Word of God revealed areas of darkness and sinfulness to be overcome through exposure to the scriptures. He writes:

> Let us follow the example of Scripture, which speaks of the wisdom hidden in the mystery, but does so in words familiar to us, and which, even as it enlightens our human minds, roots our affections in God, and imparts to us the incomprehensible and invisible things of God by means of figures drawn from the likeness of things familiar to us like precious draughts in vessels of cheap earthenware.

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67 Raymond Studzinski, *Reading to Live the Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina*, 101-150.


This renewed focus kept the monks attentive to the scriptures in their daily lives. It was during this historical period that the practice of lectio was most threatened by the growing interest in the more intellectual reading that is commonly associated with scholasticism.\(^{71}\) To counter this cultural shift a Carthusian monk named Guigo II spoke well of lectio as well established the spiritual program in his work *The Ladder of Monks*. At the heart of Guigo's methodology is the metaphor of a ladder that reaches to heaven. This image of a ladder finds its origin in the book of Genesis in the story of Jacob's dream about a ladder that reached from the earth and into heaven. The story is told in Genesis 28, in which Jacob is fleeing from his brother Esau after great deception, he had stolen the blessing of his father from his older brother. Jacob fled towards Haran; and when night had come, he laid down his head to rest upon a stone. During his slumber, he had a dream from God. He dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.\(^{72}\) Once Jacob had awoken from the dream he proclaimed in verse 16-17, "'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.' And he was afraid and said, 'how awesome is this place!'" This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Later Jesus referred to this dream of Jacob’s as recorded in the gospel of John, when he declared to Nathanael, "truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man," in John 15:1. At first, Jesus' words to Nathanael appear odd if they are not read in light of the connection to Jacob's ladder. Jesus' seemingly strange words to Nathanael reveal the real connection between heaven and earth.

\(^{71}\) Raymond Studzinski, *Reading to Live the Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina*, 166.

\(^{72}\) See Genesis 28:11-12.
Jesus bridges the divide between heaven and earth by bringing God's presence amongst the world. Guigo believed that the four steps of Lectio Divina were like the four rungs of a ladder. If the reader ascended the steps of a ladder one step at a time, it would lead them into the presence of God. Guigo described this spiritual ladder in this way:

Reading is the careful study of Scriptures, concentrating all one's powers on it. Meditation is the busy application of the mind to seek the help of one's reason for the knowledge of hidden truth. Prayer is the heart's constant turning to God to drive away evil and obtain what is good. Contemplation is when the mind is in some sort lifted up to God and held above itself so that it tastes the joys of everlasting sweetness.73

From Guigo’s ladder metaphor, he articulated and formalized the four-step process of Lectio Divina. Tragically, this practice did not remain widely used by Christians. Over the thirteenth century, the ancient practice of Lectio Divina was replaced by Lectio Spiritualis, which reflected a more prayer-like activity apart from a study of the scriptures.74 Lectio Divina is still incorrectly used by some in this way today. One of the main causes of this misuse during the thirteenth century was illiteracy. By this historical period, the scriptures were a closed book for people other than the educated clergy. The Bible was available almost exclusively in the Latin Vulgate translation, and it became a book that increasingly even the clergy did not have the literacy skills required to read. Innocent the III in 1216 wrote to the church at Metz:

The hidden mysteries of the faith are not to be indiscriminately opened to all, since they cannot be understood by all indiscriminately, but only by those who can grasp them with a believing mind. The depth of the Scriptures is so profound that not only the simple and unlettered but also the prudent and learned are not fully capable of explaining its meaning.75


74 Raymond Studzinski, Reading to Live the Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina, (Trappist, Ky: Cistercian Publications, 2009), 173.

75 Carl Mirbt, Quellen zur Geschichte Des Papsttums, 5th ed. (Tubingen: Mohr, 1934), 173.
Tragically, the Bible was viewed by the majority of the leaders of the church as vulnerable to misunderstanding by the poorly educated. As a result, it was believed that to safeguard those of limited education from committing a grievous error while reading the scriptures they would restrict the reading of scripture exclusively to the clergy. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, convened a council that declared it a crime to translate any portion of the Holy Scriptures into English or other languages.\textsuperscript{76} Praise the Lord, however, for those who greatly sacrificed as they worked to translate the scriptures into the language of ordinary people so that they could too have equal access. These illegal English translations were burned alongside their owners to be confirmed as heretical by the very ownership of the translated scriptures.\textsuperscript{77} In spite of the threat to their lives, some managed to keep these English translations of scripture and used them privately so that one day all might have access.

Finally, during the sixteenth century's Protestant Reformation, vernacular translations of the Bible became common within society. Access to these vernacular translations was in part due to the technological breakthrough of Johannes Guttenberg's printing press. Along with the encouragement from Protestant reformers to read the scriptures, people, quickly became enamored with the truth of the scriptures as they read the scriptures for the first time independently. The sixteenth-century Reformation movement brought about the invitation for all to read the Bible. The Bible thus began to retake its rightful place of prominence in the life of Christians and the Church. From 1545-1563 the Council of Trent considered the issue of vernacular translations of the Scripture.\textsuperscript{78} The Roman Catholic Church did not make a formal

\textsuperscript{76} Henry Frowde, \textit{Records of the English Bible: The Documents Relating to the Translation and Publication of the Bible in English, 1525-1611} (London: Oxford University Press, 1911), 80-81.


\textsuperscript{78} Raymond Studzinski, \textit{Reading to Live the Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina}, (Trappist, Ky: Cistercian Publications, 2009), 164.
declaration at this time. Still, it did not, however, condemn the preparation and dissemination of translations of the Bible in the language that people could understand.\textsuperscript{79} Under the leadership of Pope Benedict XIV, he authorized the use of vernacular translations by all without required permission.\textsuperscript{80}

Finally, in 1963-1965 within the Roman Catholic Community, the Second Vatican Council ushered in the return of the scriptures to their place within the life of a Catholic Christian. Recorded in the documents of Vatican II, it states:

This sacred Synod earnestly and urges explicitly all the Christian faithful, too, especially religious, to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the "excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ." Therefore, they should gladly put themselves in touch with the sacred text itself, whether it be through the liturgy, rich in the divine word, or through devotional reading, or instructions suitable for the purpose and other aids.\textsuperscript{81}

In response to this, Enzo Bianchi wrote that the Word of God had formally become central in the liturgical life of the Church.\textsuperscript{82} Lectio Divina, with its slow, meditative approach to Scripture, began to show signs of emerging again as a method by which people could engage with Scripture. With regard to this reading methodology Pope John Paul II said:

The Word of God is the first source of all Christian spirituality. It gives rise to a personal relationship with the living God and with his saving and sanctifying will. It is for this reason that from the very beginning, what is called Lectio Divina has been held in the highest regard. By means of it, the Word of God is brought to bear on life, on which it projects the light of that wisdom which is a gift of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{83}


\textsuperscript{81} Walter Abbot, \textit{The Documents of Vatican II}, (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 127.


Naturally, the connection between Bible reading and prayer is one to be encouraged in both Catholic and Protestant traditions. There is one major critique to Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology that should not be overlooked.

Caution within Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina should never be considered a process by which one pursues an independent experience with God where the goal is to empower themselves apart from the true meaning of the text. Those who take this supernatural approach to the text could tend to adopt an extreme expression that focuses on an experience with God that is separate from the objective meaning of the text. Faithful Christians should always use the Word of God to pursue knowledge of God, His wisdom, and His holiness to transform their lives to be more like Him. Lectio Divina should not be used for a mystical personal encounter with God. Those who take Lectio Divina to the extreme run the risk of disconnecting the text from the context and the natural meaning of the text in order to have a subjective and individualistic experience with God. The focus of lectio Divina should never be to have a mystical encounter with God, but instead to expose oneself objectively to the truths of God's Word in order to align one's life by following God's will.

The Word of God is to be studied, meditated upon, prayed over, and memorized for the knowledge and meaning that it contains and the authority from God that it carries, and not for the mystical experience or feeling of personal power and inner peace that it may stimulate. Sound knowledge comes first; then, the lasting kind of experience and peace comes as a byproduct of knowing and communing with God rightly through His Word. As long as a person takes this

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view of the Bible and prayer, he/she is engaging in the same kind of meditation and prayer that Bible-believing followers of Christ have always commended.

The practice of Lectio Divina is all about finding the right balance between rationalism and mysticism. Both extremes should be avoided. As long as the individuals who are practicing Lectio Divina are meditating on the objective truths that are contextually taught within the scriptures, they find themselves in the right practice. If the individual practicing Lectio Divina moves too far into mysticism, it could allow them to claim that their “experience” has authority over objective doctrine which is consistent with the Word of God. Thomas Muntzer was a German reformer who went to this extreme. Martin Luther mentions his fanaticism when discussing the necessity of the public reading of scripture: “First, attend to the public reading. Do not omit it. It seems to me that there is a miraculous spirit in those fanatics. Thomas Müntzer began it. So, they hold the Word in contempt. ‘The testimony in my inner being is enough for me.’”

Thomas Munster is an example of one who allows their experience to overshadow the objective truth of God’s Word. The reformers were not rationalists either. They felt until the Spirit opened up the objective truth within God's Word, one could not know what one ought to know according to the will of God. Martin Luther later wrote that:

You should meditate, that is, not only in your heart but also externally, by actually repeating and comparing oral speech and literal words of the book, reading and rereading them with diligent attention and reflection, so that you may see what the Holy Spirit means by them. And take care that you do not grow weary or think that you have done enough when you have read, heard, and spoken them once or twice and that you then have a complete understanding. You will never be a particularly useful theologian if you do that, for you will be like untimely fruit, which falls to the ground before it is haft ripe.

Luther, as an early reformer, would affirm the role of the Holy Spirit as a required participant in Divine interpretation of God's Word. Apart from the working of the Holy Spirit within the practice of Divine Reading, one is prone to misinterpretation and reduced application to their lives. Luther also goes on to explain the inferior extreme to which the Catholic church has taken this practice historically. He writes that the Catholic church believes that:

The highest forms of religion and holiness, and the most fervent forms of the devotion of those who worship God without the Word and command of God, are idolatry. Thus under the papacy, it was regarded as an act of the highest spirituality when the monks sat in their cells and meditated about God and His works, or when their fervent devotions so inflamed them as they genuflected, prayed, and contemplated heavenly things that they wept for sheer pleasure and joy. There was no thinking here about women or any other creature, but only about the Creator and His marvelous works. And yet this action, which reason regards as eminently spiritual, is a "work of the flesh," according to Paul. Thus, every such form of religion, which worships God without His Word and command, is idolatry. The more spiritual and holy it appears to be, the more dangerous and destructive it is, for it deflects men from faith in Christ and causes them to rely on their powers, works, and righteousness.87

The personal revelations that come from the practice of religious reading must always affirm sound biblical doctrine and biblical truth that points to salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Truth is revealed only in Jesus Christ through the scriptures. No revelation should ever explain a decision that goes against the Word of God, for John Calvin refers to this as an 'impudent trick.'88 Scriptures are in effect the 'eyeglasses through which we get knowledge of God.'89 They allow us to see Him clearly with accuracy. The Word of God, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, brings about right thinking, which in turn produces right living.

87 Ibid., 87.
The relationship between the Word of God, other Christian texts such as the Councils, and Tradition has significantly been discussed within the dialogue between the Protestant Church and the Catholic Church. The Protestant churches assume the absolute authority of the scriptures. This authority is often understood best under the well-known Protestant maxim *Sola Scriptura* (Only Scripture). This does not mean that tradition has no value, but it is secondary to the truth of the scriptures. This is true within the practice of Lectio Divina. The truth of scripture is priority over the experience. For the Protestant churches, nothing needs to be on the same authoritative level as the scriptures. John Calvin wrote, ‘the first point of Christianity is that the Sacred Scriptures are all of our wisdom and that we have to listen to God who is speaking in them, without adding anything else.’

**Requirement of the Holy Spirit within Lectio Divina**

One of the critical points of the Reformation that advocates for the use of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology was that humankind needed illumination of God's Word from the Holy Spirit. Martin Luther wrote that to understand the scriptures well, we need to live in an experience similar to that which Mary, the mother of Jesus, lived as she was ‘illuminated within from the Holy Spirit.’ The model experience is that of Mary and Elizabeth recorded in the gospel of Luke 1:41-45:

> When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice, she exclaimed: "Blessed, are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears,

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the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!

Luther wrote of this experience: “the Virgin spoke after having lived a personal experience by which the Holy Spirit illuminated and enlightened her.”93 No one can understand God and His Word if the Holy Spirit does not illuminate Him immediately. The action of the Holy Spirit needs to be experienced in the practice of religious reading steps two (Reflect) and three (Relate). In the same way, Calvin says that to understand the scriptures our reason and culture are simply not enough. The Holy Spirit, who guided the apostles, needs to enlighten us on the real meaning of the words:

It is necessary that the Spirit who spoke through the prophets, enters directly into our hearts to persuade us that they have faithfully transmitted what was instructed to them from above. Our spirits do nothing other than sway, full of doubt and hesitation until they are illuminated.94

As a result, John Calvin concludes that before reading the scriptures, we must seek the movement of the Holy Spirit who inspired them. This is his prayer in the preface of the Bible of Olivetan, the first French translation from Hebrew and Latin texts (1535): “let the Lord of lights, through his Holy Spirit, with this holy and salutary Gospel teach the ignorant, strengthen the weak, illuminate the blind and make his truth reign on all peoples and nations.”95 This is the hope of Lectio Divina, that it will bring about the spiritual growth in an individual that glorifies the Lord.

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Now that the personal, theological, and historical foundations of Lectio Divina have been firmly established, we must take a look at Lectio Divina in a step by step manner in order to understand how this methodology is accomplished.

The Four Steps of Lectio Divina

In the practice of Lectio Divina, there are four intentional actions to fulfill. Lectio (reading), meditatio (reflection), oratio (prayer/responding), and contemplatio (quiet reflection/resting). For modernization and ease of memory for the modern reader, the steps of Lectio Divina have been renamed as Read (Lectio), Reflect (meditation), Relate (contemplation), and Respond (prayer). These four titles are the four titles that Dallas Willard used in his foundational work Hearing God in order to guide a reader through Lectio Divina. The four original principles of Lectio Divina remain the same, and there has been no compromise in practice under each of these new titles.

Step 1: Read

Lectio or reading is perhaps the most challenging activity for the twenty-first century Christian. We live in an age that is consumed with media and it discourages reading in favor of visual images. Today we read material that is written with an encouragement to ‘get to the point’ as we read. Articles highlight the key ideas in bold print, and critical points are drawn to the side in a bold typeface. Tweetable quotes are often highlighted for us to quickly consume and parrot without true understanding. Today’s reader is moving quickly. In contrast, the first step in Lectio Divina calls upon the reader to slow down.

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96 Dan Korn, Lectio Divina: How to pray Sacred Scripture, 6.

Imitating the Christians of old, the reader will ruminate on the text one word at a time to hear from God. Within Lectio Divina a reader will read the same portion of the text numerous times. The goal of *lectio* is not to get to the end and move on to the next passage. The goal is to hear from God. Thus, the first step in Lectio Divina is the practice of reading and re-reading Scripture. Pope Benedict XVI has remarked that lectio, consists of pouring over a biblical text for some time, reading it and rereading it, as it were, ruminating on it as the Fathers say and squeezing from it, so to speak, all its ‘juice.’ So that it may nourish meditation and contemplation and, like water, succeed in irrigating life itself.⁹⁸

The early Christians understood that the fruitfulness of one’s prayer depended upon the Holy Spirit with which the “reader” was able to approach the Word of God. This first step is more than merely reading the words on the page, but it is inviting the Holy Spirit within you to have the Divine ability to read and read well. The goal of this reading is not to rush through several chapters of Scripture but choose one passage and be intentional in your interaction with it. Rather than trying to take in large sections of Scripture, the reader adopts a reflective stance towards a Scripture passage and when led of the Holy Spirit, pausing on a single word or phrase that resonates with the mind and heart.

**Step 2: Reflect**

The second step in Lectio Divina is known as meditatio—Latin for "meditation,"—which invites one to reflect upon what was read. Ancient monks explained this process as deep, unhurried thinking about the Word one has read. As the Word is read in this step, the process of meditating draws a person more deeply within the Word to reveal God's truth within a particular passage. During this step the reader must diligently seek the truth of God’s Word within its

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context. The reader should seek to clarify all questions and be studious in discovering the truth of God’s Word as He intended. The inherent risks of the misuse of Lectio Divina will be avoided if the reader focuses upon good scholarship during this step.

**Step 3: Relate**

The third step within Lectio Divina the ancients called *contemplatio* or “contemplation.” After diligent scholarship the reader is now in a position to consider the text in a personal manor in partnership with the Holy Spirit. Contemplation is characterized by an openness of the reader to respond to God’s Word in relationship to their life. By God's grace, contemplation gives one a unique ability to connect one's newly discovered insights from their study in step two, to daily life experiences. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God has the gracious capacity to refresh and reform the heart and mind. This step brings the intersection between the readers' life and God's Word.

**Step 4: Respond**

The fourth and final step of Lectio Divina is known as *oratio*, meaning oration, or prayer. Prayer invites one’s personal response to God. This personal response is dialogical and can be understood as “a conversation between friends,” as Teresa of Avila once defined prayer.99 The reader now takes the time to talk to God about what was read, learned, heard, or about the questions that have arisen as a result of the text. This response can become transformative when one accepts the promptings of the Word toward a particular area of one’s life. It is within this fourth step that one encounters the living God through His living Word.

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Conclusion

Lectio Divina is a theologically sound and historically powerful method of Bible reading. It is the method that adheres to God’s original intent for giving the Church His written Word and it is the method that facilitates the relational connection that God desire with His people. While there are other methods through which one can engage with God’s Word, there are none as historically proven as Lectio Divina. Proper training and education of Lectio Divina will prevent the pitfalls that would cause one to move to deep into mysticism. While Lectio Divina should never be a Bible reading methodology for sermon preparation or biblical exegesis, it is a method that strengthens one’s personal relationship with God. As a result, it is a method that should be revived and trusted by the church today.
Chapter 3

Research Design Overview

This research project uses Lectio Divina as the Bible Engagement strategy to provide intervention to positively impact the spiritual growth of adults as they adopt this skill as a habitual Bible engagement practice. This intervention is implemented in a classroom instruction model during which participants will be taught in great detail the four steps of Lectio Divina. During these weeks of classroom instruction, participants are asked to complete a 30-Day Bible Reading Plan at home each day. This 30-Day Bible Reading plan is designed to practically implement Lectio Divina in conjunction with the classroom instruction. In addition, the participants complete the Discipleship Pathway Assessment (DPA) on two separate occasions. The DPA is first completed prior to any measures of intervention as a means to establish a baseline of spiritual health. The second DPA is completed following the interventions from both the classroom instruction and the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan. These two assessments determine the impact of Lectio Divina as a Bible Engagement strategy upon the spiritual health of this select group of congregants at Crestview Baptist Church.

Methods of Intervention

There are three methods of intervention within this research project that are designed to equip a portion of congregants from Crestview Baptist Church with Lectio Divina as an effective Bible Engagement methodology, in order to address the research problem of a lack of habitual Bible engagement. These methods of intervention include a classroom instruction, a 30-Day Bible Reading plan, and the use of the Discipleship Pathway Assessment as a means to quantify the effectiveness of Lectio Divina. The first method of intervention will be the classroom
instruction that is designed to equip participants with the skills needed to use Lectio Divina as a daily Bible engagement strategy.

Classroom Instruction

The goals for the classroom instruction are twofold. The first goal is to complete the Discipleship Pathway assessment. The majority of the time during Weeks 1 and 5 of the classroom instructions will be dedicated to the completion of the Discipleship Pathway Assessment. The first assessment will establish a baseline for spiritual health prior to any method of intervention. The second assessment will be completed following the full measure of intervention. This second assessment will be used to determine the impact of Lectio Divina as a Bible Engagement strategy upon the spiritual health of this select group of congregants at Crestview Baptist Church.

The second goal for the classroom instruction is to equip participants with the knowledge and skills need to adopt Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement strategy. This will be primarily accomplished during weeks 2 and 3 of the classroom instruction. During these two weeks participants will be led through a detailed instruction for completing the four steps of Lectio Divina. During week 2 participants will learn Step 1 (Read) and Step 2 (Reflect). Step 1 (Read) is perhaps the most challenging activity for the twenty-first century Christian. The greatest challenge is breaking the habit of reading to quickly. The first step in Lectio Divina calls upon the reader to slow down. The goal of this reading is not to rush through several chapters of Scripture but choose one passage and be intentional in your interaction with it. Rather than trying to take in large sections of Scripture, the reader adopts a reflective stance towards a Scripture passage, and when led of the Holy Spirit, the reader pauses on a single word or phrase that resonates with the mind and heart. Participants will be encouraged to read a passage of scripture
a minimum of 5 times but will also be given the training to read as many times as needed to gain understanding of the passage.

The second step is to reflect. This step invites one to reflect upon what was read. Ancient monks explained this process as deep, unhurried thinking about the Word one has read. As the Word is read in this step, the process of reflecting draws a person more deeply with the Word to reveal God's truth within a particular passage. The emphasis for week 2 is to equip the reader with these two steps as they continue to engage with the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan.

During week three of the classroom instruction participants will focus on step 3 (Relate) and step 4 (Respond). The third step of Lectio Divina is to relate the text to one’s life according to God’s desire. During step 3 the reader is in the position to consider the text in a personal manor in partnership with the Holy Spirit. Relating the text is characterized by an openness of the reader to respond to God’s Word in relationship to their life. By God's grace, this third step gives the reader the ability to connect their newly discovered insights from their study in step two to daily life experiences. The Word of God become alive in a very personal way during this step as it brings the intersection between the readers' life and God's Word.

The fourth and final step of Lectio Divina that will be taught during week 3 is to Respond. Prayer based upon what was just revealed in God Word through Reading, Reflecting, and Relating now invites one’s personal response to God. The reader now takes the time to talk to God about what was read, learned, heard, or about the questions that have arisen as a result of the text. This response can become transformative when one accepts the promptings of the Word toward a particular area of one’s life. It is within this fourth step that one encounters the living God through His living Word. This equipping completes week 3 of the classroom instruction.
The classroom instruction portion of the intervention phase of this research project stands as a crucial part of the project in order to ensure a proper equipping of each participant with Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology. The classroom instruction is not only about teaching the participants the various steps of the Bible engagement methodology, but it also serves as a time for participants to ask questions that have arisen from personal devotion time utilizing the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan during the week.

**30-Day Bible Reading Plan**

The 30-Day Bible Reading plan will serve as the practical integration of Lectio Divina for each participant. The reading plan may be found in Appendix C. This reading plan is designed to be the intervention for each participant in order to address the research problem for a portion of the congregation that admires the Bible but does not read the Bible apart from times within the church. This Bible Reading plan will directly address this problem and provide a means of equipping participants each day. The Bible reading plan is the methodology for equipping a portion of our congregates with Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology.

The reading plan was titled according to the modern adaptation of the four steps of Lectio Divina: *Read, Reflect, Relate, Respond: A Journey Through Scripture*. This reading plan was initially produced by Ward Church in Wayne, Michigan, for a churchwide initiative that they completed in 2017. Their goal during this churchwide initiative was to address the problem of biblical illiteracy. Ward Church was able to address the problem of biblical illiteracy within their congregation through equipping their congregation with Lectio Divina via this Bible reading plan. While their problem of biblical illiteracy was not the same as this project, their design was the inspiration for how to best equip individuals with the practice of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology. Using this document as the foundation, the researcher was permitted
to adapt the material to fit the needs of the research project and specifically designed to address Crestview’s problem of infrequent Bible engagement outside of corporate worship.

The Bible Reading Plan has six essential parts: introduction to the text (only for days 1-7), a specified passage of scripture, and then the four parts of Lectio Divina including prompting questions to inspire and equip the reader with the skills of Lectio Divina. The first portion of the Bible Reading Plan is an introductory paragraph to the text. This introductory paragraph is used in days 1-7 to prepare the read for an encounter with God through His Word. The uniqueness of Lectio Divina is dependent upon the reader having a religious reader mindset as they approach the text. A religious reader will come to the text, not with a desire to quickly understand the text but with the sense of a gold mine of riches that can never be completely exhausted. Unlike a consumer mindset that would use and then discard when done, a religious reader approaches the text with reverence and hunger for the inexhaustible riches that lie within. To read religiously, is to read in a very different way. This introductory paragraph is designed to call the reader’s attention to shift mindsets and prepare to read religiously.

The introductory paragraph ceases following the first 7 days in order to not become a hinderance upon the original four parts of Lectio Divina. The original material from Ward Church included this introductory paragraph for all 30 days. While this introductory paragraph may enhance the readers experience through the use of this devotion, it has the potential to become a handicap for the reader if they continue to seek this commentary on the text that is prepared by someone else. Starting on Day 8 the introductory paragraph is removed, and the reader must rely solely upon the Holy Spirit to listen as God speaks through the text. There is an inherent risk within the introductory paragraph to influence interpretation and application. Thus,

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this paragraph is removed following day 7 and the reader must rely solely upon the four-step process of Lectio Divina.

The second portion of the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan is a predetermined passage of scripture. These various selected passages of scripture remain one of the original components from Ward Church. The length of each passage of scripture that was chosen for each day varies. Certain days simply have a single verse of scripture. For example, on the sixth day of the reading plan it guides participants to meditate solely upon the single verse of 2 Peter 3:9. By comparison, other days like the twentieth day of the reading plan, it has participants reflect upon the entirety of Psalm 23. This variance in passage length is indicative of Lectio Divina. Each passage of scripture seeks to diligently select the right number of verses to remain true to the context but also recognizes the limitation of this methodology to effectively process large volumes of scripture in one sitting. Lectio Divina dictates that the reader will ruminate on the text one word at a time to hear from God. Within Lectio Divina a reader will read the same portion of the text numerous times. The goal of lectio is not to get to the end and move on to the next. The goal is to hear from God. Thus, larger portions of scripture may not be helpful in the initial equipping phase of a congregation with this Bible Engagement methodology. An excerpt from the Bible reading plan for week 1 is seen below in Figure 1. Note the rather lengthy introductory paragraph followed by the specified passage of scripture for study on Day 6.
DAY 6

I don’t have to tell you we live in a fast-paced world, and it seems like it’s only getting faster. Speed limits on highways increase. News outlets rush to break the story first. We demand higher and higher speeds for our internet connections. Fast food and fast-casual restaurants are eclipsing traditional sit-down establishments. The newest cooking trend is the “instapot”. We want things our way, right away, or not at all. Today’s scripture passage reminds us that God’s timing is not always at the fast pace to which we are accustomed.

In fact, it’s starting to think that Peter had to remind his first century audience that God was not slow in keeping his promises. It’s hard to imagine a time when the definition of speed was a fast horse and important messages were often delivered by foot over long distances, that God seemed slow to them, but Peter was inspired by the Holy Spirit to pen these words even in those slow, ancient times. How much more do we need to be reminded of that today! Instead of thinking that God is “slow”, we can be reminded that He is patient, and we are to be also, as we wait on Him to keep His promises.

2 Peter 3:9
“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is Patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

The Lord is not slow

Reflect
What do you think this means?

Even when it seems like I am waiting on God forever, I can trust that His timing is perfect.

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

I must be prepared to wait on God to keep His promises and not give up hope.

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.

Gracious God, Thank you that you are patient with us and faithful to keep your promises. Please forgive me when I doubt your timing and even think that You are slow. Help me to rest in Your character and trust in You as I wait for You to fulfill your promises. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Figure 1 – Day 6 from the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan is one example of all the various elements. This day contains the introductory paragraph, the selected text, and the four steps of Lectio Divina with prompting questions and responses.
As seen above, the introductions serve as a means to prepare the reader for the text that will be considered each day. Following the introductory paragraph and the specified passage of scripture, the 30-Day Bible Reading plan is designed to now guide the reader through the fourfold process of Lectio Divina under the titles of Read, Reflect, Relate, and Respond. You will also note in Figure 1, that under the four steps of Lectio Divina is a prompting question and response that is designed to equip the reader with how to engage the text at each step.

Consider Day 6 as seen in Figure 1. The first step of Lectio Divina is to read the text provided for each day. At this point the reader should read 2 Peter 3:9. The reader, however, will not simply read the passage once, but as instructed within the equipping class during week 1, the reader will read the same portion of the text numerous times. During week 1 of the equipping class the readers will be encouraged to read each text a minimum of 5 times but will be encouraged to read the text until they feel they have grasped its content. In addition to the text, the devotional provides a prompting question to help the reader accomplish step 1 of Lectio Divina. The reader is asked, “What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?” The reader is prompted to consider the question as the read through the text numerous times. A small space is provided within the devotional for the reader to record their responses. In addition to the prompting question that is provided under each step of the process in the first 21 days of the Bible Reading plan, for the first 14 days it also contains a possible answer from the text in response to the prompting question.

Consider again Day 6 as seen in Figure 1. The reader is prompted to read 2 Peter 3:9 while considering the question, “what is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?” One possible response to reading this text and answering the prompted question is “the Lord is not slow.” The suggested response is not designed to limit the reader but simply provide what a potential
response could be when considering the text through the first step of Lectio Divina. This same process is provided for the first 14 days for all four steps of Lectio Divina. Following the first 14 days the suggested response to the prompting question is removed. As seen with the introductory paragraph in week 1, the prompting question and response is designed to equip the reader with this Bible engagement methodology but too may become a handicap to the reader if it is provided beyond the first two weeks. An excerpt from the 30-Day Bible Reading plan is provided in figure 2 to show the removal of the introductory paragraph and the response to the prompting question.

**Day 20**

**Psalm 23**
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

**Read**
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

**Reflect**
What do you think this means?

**Relate**
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

**Respond**
Ask God to help you live out this verse.

Figure 2 – Day 20 from 30-Day Bible Reading Plan is an example with introductory paragraph and the prompting question responses removed from the guide.
Following week 3 or Day 21 the prompting question is also removed to provide the reader only with the predetermined text and the four steps of Lectio Divina. This gradual approach to adopting the Lectio Divina methodology within the Bible Reading Plan alongside the equipping class will equip each participant with the needed skills required and provide the practical experience that aids in learning. The culmination of this process occurs during week 4 or Day 22 during which the 30-Day reading plan is stripped of all equipping aids and the reader is simply provided with a text of scripture and the four-step process of Lectio Divina. The introductory paragraph, the prompting questions and leading responses have all been removed. At this point of the intervention phase it is the researchers desire that the reader independently engage with scripture through the fourfold process of Lectio Divina. An excerpt from the 30-Day Bible Reading plan for Day 22 is seen in Figure 3.
Discipleship Pathway Assessment

The Discipleship Pathway Assessment (DPA) is completed on two separate occasions. The DPA is first be completed during week 1 of the classroom instruction as a means to establish a baseline of spiritual health. This baseline is used during the analysis of the results to gauge the effectiveness of Lectio Divina as a Bible Engagement methodology. The second time to complete the DPA will be following the intervention of classroom instruction and 30-Day Bible Reading Plan. These two assessments are compared to one another in order to determine the
impact of Lectio Divina as a Bible Engagement strategy upon the spiritual health of this select
group of congregants at Crestview Baptist Church.

God uses His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit to transform the life of a believer. Philip Towner concluded that, “the relevance of Scripture may be seen in its complete sufficiency for living the Christian life. Constant study of God’s Word equips one to do all that God requires, because it contains the knowledge of God’s will.”101 A believer is developed through God's Word. Thus, regular intake of God's Word is an expectation of all followers of Christ. This process of exposing oneself to God's Word is not without effect in the life of the individual reader.

The DPA provides a quantifiable way to identify spiritual growth in a believer that is caused by engaging with God’s Word. By establishing a baseline of spiritual health for each participant in week 1 through the use of the DPA we can then 30 days later have the participants complete the DPA a second time following the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan to gauge the impact if any of Lectio Divina as an effective Bible engagement methodology. The Word of God will accomplish its purpose in the life of a believer. Thus, the lack of spiritual growth from week 1 to the completion of the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan in each participant will not be because of God’s Word but will be a direct reflection upon Lectio Divina. The DPA provides us with a means to measure this effect.

The Discipleship Pathway Assessment is a new and improved version of the Transformational Discipleship Assessment that was first developed by Dr. Brad Waggoner.102 In 1989 Dr. Brad Waggoner sought within his doctoral dissertation to answer the question of how to

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measure spiritual maturity. To accomplish this task, he designed the Transformational Discipleship Assessment, which was built by compiling biblical characteristics of a disciple, theologian reviews, discipleship expert interviews, national testing and analysis in subsequent years. The first national testing of the assessment was in 2007, in which 2,500 Protestant believers were assessed using the tool. The conclusion of that assessment provided a 95% confidence that the sampling error did not exceed +/- 2.0%. In addition, Cronbach’s Alpha for each factor proved very reliable with the lowest being .826. This internal consistency establishes the reliability of the questions in the assessment tool.

This sampling data was the primary motivation for selecting the Discipleship Pathway Assessment as the tool to gauge spiritual growth for this project. Other assessments like The Anatomy of a Disciple assessment, the Growing in Discipleship by the Navigators, and The Christian Life Profile Assessment were considered but lack the statistical data to prove useful for this particular project. The Discipleship Pathway Assessment is statistically validated to


104 Ibid., 3.


106 Ibid.

107 Ibid.


109 Michael Gregory, Growing in Discipleship (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 34.

110 Randy Frazee, The Christian Life Profile Assessment Tool: Discovering the Quality of Your Relationships with God and Others in 30 Key Areas (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2005), 75.
reveal consistent patterns across the groups surveyed.\textsuperscript{111} As a result, the reliability of the survey data has a higher probability because of this consistency. According to D.G. Mayer, “validation is a necessary step for model acceptance.”\textsuperscript{112} The Discipleship Pathway Assessment has been validated which makes it an excellent assessment to gauge the impact of Lectio Divina.

The Discipleship Pathway Assessment was developed and used with permission by Lifeway to conduct the baseline assessment and the effectual assessment following the methodological practice. This assessment is made available by Lifeway to lead the individual through personal examination as a means of spiritual growth. The Discipleship Pathway Assessment gauges an individual's spiritual growth related to six specific spiritual areas. These six particular areas are: abiding in Christ, living in the Word, praying in faith, fellowshipping with believers, witnessing to the world, and ministering to others.

Each of these six areas contains ten questions that will be rated on an individual's view of themselves based on a Likert-type\textsuperscript{113} scale from 1-5. The rating score is as follows: 1-Never, 2-Seldom, 3-Occasionally, 4-Frequent, and 5-Always. Since most of the statements require a subjective response, participants were encouraged to ask the Lord to guide their evaluation. The Lord's guidance is the key to an accurate appraisal. Participants were discouraged from comparing results with others and from seeking counsel on how to answer a question from others around them. A spiritually mature score in one area would be reflected by a total of 50 points, which is the highest possible score in any one area.


Research Procedures

This project will address the daily Bible engagement skills among the adult population of Crestview Baptist Church in order to help the church accomplish its God-given mission to be "People sharing Jesus" by equipping these adults with the Bible engagement skills of Lectio Divina. This research project utilized the following process in order to equip these adults and to gauge the impact of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology.

**Phase 1: Institutional Review**

Upon receiving reader approval, permission was obtained through the institutional review board at Liberty University. Once approval was obtained, the researcher began the next steps of implementing the research plan. The institutional review approval letter can be found in Appendix A.

**Phase 2: Participant Recruitment**

To begin this intervention, four of the adult Bible Study classes were selected from the twenty-seventeen total Adult Bible Study classes. Crestview Baptist Church has a thriving Adult Bible Study ministry with 27 different adult classes that averaged 836 in weekly attendance. These four classes that were selected for this research project are known as the "Young Families Department." To increase the likelihood of participation, the researcher made conscious decisions to narrow down the research population to this single department. This decision was made based upon the perceived receptibility of the individuals within this department. Also, the researcher selected this department to research as a means to make a long-term investment in a specified generation within the church. The demographics for these classes are an age range from 18-37 and have children within the preschool department. The average weekly attendance for these four classes is 142 unique individuals. There is no perceived impact upon the results by
narrowing down the select research population to these demographics. This research project began first through the recruitment of individuals within this department.

Four weeks before beginning the research, December 05, 2019, a recruitment letter which may be found in Appendix B, was mailed to everyone who was enrolled in one of the four classes within the Young Families Department of the Adult Bible Study Ministry. Attendance consistency was an irrelevant factor to receiving the recruitment letter. Anyone who was listed upon these four class roles was sent a recruitment letter regardless of the last date which they had attended. Thus, the activity level of the participants within each of the four classes varied from those who were weekly attenders to others who have been absent for nearly a year. Crestview Baptist Church has as an internal policy within the Adult Bible Study Ministry to update each class roster the first Sunday of the New Year. Those who have been inactive for longer than six months will be contacted before being dropped off of the existing class role by the first Sunday of the New Year.

This recruitment letter was mailed out four weeks prior to the New Year which occurred before the roster update had been completed. In some individual cases this recruitment letter by consequence served as a means by which a class member or family reestablished participation in the class from which they were enrolled. Although this was not the purpose of the research project, this was simply a byproduct of the recruitment letter. The recruitment letter outlined the research project, the requirements for participation, and solicited individual involvement by attending the first assessment that was scheduled to take place on January 05, 2020. Two weeks before the start date of the research project, December 22, 2019, a verbal reminder announcement was made in the four classes to solicit participation. The recruitment letter and verbal announcement were the basis for requesting the congregant's involvement.
The research project was scheduled to begin on the first Sunday of the New Year January 05, 2020. This date and time were strategically chosen to equip participants at the start of a New Year with a new Bible Reading Methodology and Bible Reading Plan. The Fellowship Hall was chosen as a meeting venue to be discrete and to accommodate participants seated at tables. Each week was scheduled to take place during Crestview’s already established discipleship class hour from 4:00pm to 6:00pm prior to the evening worship service. During this discipleship hour a variety of classes are offered for all ages for the purpose of spiritual growth. Also, this is an hour when childcare for ages birth through twelve years of ages is provided by the church. Utilizing this established church pattern provided the best opportunity for research participation.

**Phase 3: Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1**

Methodology Study 1

January 05, 2020 was the first meeting of the research project. Each participant was given a Consent Form which may be found in Appendix C. Participants began reviewing this form upon arrival. The consent form contained a brief outline for the procedures of the research, the risks involved in participation, the benefits of participation, compensation guidelines, confidentiality guidelines, conflicts of interest disclosure statement, and a reaffirmation of the voluntary nature of the study. Once everyone had arrived, the researcher then reviewed with all participants the Consent Form and allowed for a time of additional questioning. There were no questions with regards to the Consent Form. Following this time, each participant then completed the Consent Form as a sign of voluntarily enrolling in the research.

The researcher then collected the Consent Forms, and every participant was then given the Discipleship Pathway Assessment which may be found in Appendix D. Following a brief introduction of the assessment, each participant then completed the Discipleship Pathway
Assessment at their own pace. The completion of the assessment took approximately 25 minutes to complete. The researcher was available to answer any questions of the participants as they took the assessments. As the participants completed each of the sections, they were asked to total their responses in each area as they progressed through the remainder of the evaluation. Each participant then returned their completed copy of the Discipleship Pathway Assessment to the researcher with their name written in the space provided. These assessments were placed in a marked envelope and sealed by the researcher to protect the confidentiality of each participant.

Next, each participant was given a copy of the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan that may be found in Appendix D. This 30-Day Bible Reading Plan was specifically designed for this research project to introduce and equip each individual with the Lectio Divina Bible reading methodology. To introduce Lectio Divina, participants were given the overview instructions on page 4 titled "How it works" of the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan. Then they were provided guidance to begin the devotional the next day, which was Monday, January 06, 2020.

Finally, a brief time of question and answer was made available to conclude methodology study 1. From within the group only two questions were asked. The first question one individual asked was, “if/when they would receive a copy of their results from the Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1.” The researcher informed the participants that their results would be made available by request at the conclusion of the research project. The second question that was asked by an individual was, what materials they needed to bring with them next week? For example, did they need to bring their 30-Day Bible reading plan with them to class. I informed them that it would be helpful if they wanted to have it to review in person but not required. Following a time of prayer, this concluded methodology study one.
**Phase 4: Lectio Divina Methodology Study**

Methodology Study 2

During the next two training sessions, each participant was taught in great detail the four steps of Lectio Divina. The lesson plans for sessions two and three can be found in appendices F and G. Each week, an accountability question was asked of the group on how everyone was doing with their daily devotionals utilizing the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan. No formal accountability was conducted, but an informal conversation was had as a means to encourage continued participation. Also, a time of question and answer was made available each week to ensure the quality of learning was being maintained.

Methodology study two took place on January 12, 2020. This week’s lesson plan is outlined in appendix F. The goal for methodology study two was to equip participants with step 1 “Read” and step 2 “Reflect” of Lectio Divina. After a time of instruction, a portion of our class was dedicated to a practical exercise. Utilizing’s John 4:13-14 participants were asked to practice these first two steps as a class. This practical exercise started by reading these passages silently individually. After a few moments, volunteers were then called upon to read the passage out loud. After the class had slowly read the passage approximately 8 times, they were then prompted to move to step 2 “Reflect.” The same prompting question, that is provided in the 30-Day Reading Plan was asked, “what words or phrases did the Holy Spirit illuminate or draw your attention to?” The participants first marked, underlined, or highlighted those words or phrases in their Bible or on a piece of note taking paper. They then shared their comments with the class.

The most common phrase that was illuminated was in verse 14 “will never thirst.” A brief discussion arose around this phrase. The mood of the class was one of mutual affirmation as they felt affirmed by one another in this passage. The general perception was that everyone walked
away feeling empowered by their ability to engage scripture. One participant noted that they had been enjoying the 30-Day reading plan so much that they had done a few of the lessons in one day thus putting them ahead of schedule.

Methodology Study 3

Methodology study three took place on January 19, 2020. This week’s lesson plan is outlined in appendix G. The goal for week three was to equip participants with step 3 “Respond” and step 4 “Rest” of Lectio Divina. After a time of instruction, a portion of our class was dedicated to a practical exercise. Utilizing Psalm 127 participants were asked to practice all four steps of Lectio Divina together. This practical exercise started by passing out a single sheet of paper with Psalm 127 printed upon it. Upon receiving this handout participants silently read the passage numerous times. After a few moments, a select few individuals were called upon to read the passage out loud. Next participants moved to step 2, “Reflect” by highlighting or underlining key phrases or words that the Holy Spirit laid upon their hearts. Next participants began step three, “Relate,” by being prompted with the question, “how does this effect you or apply to your life?” Due to the personal nature of this response in scripture, participants were not asked to share their responses. Finally, the practical exercise concluded by moving to step four with the prompting for everyone to move into a time of individual prayer by asking God to help us live out this verse. This concluded methodology study three.

Following our gathering, one individual spent a significant amount of time asking for clarification on how to ensure proper interpretation of any given passage utilizing Lectio Divina. A particular reference was made to Day 18 of the 30-Day Bible Reading plan. This particular participant felt that they did not fully understand Romans 12:1-2 and that steps 1 and 2 of Lectio Divina did not bring clarification that they needed for proper application. This lack of
understanding deeply affected their ability to accomplish steps 3 and 4 and produced in them a sense of doubt that Lectio Divina was a viable means for Bible Engagement. Clarification was provided with this individual that during step 2 “Reflect” one should always seek to answer, study or research any questions that arise from the text before moving on to steps 3 and 4. This participant felt encouraged to know that their lack of understanding was not an inability to hear from God but rather a need to keep studying the text for further clarification. This participant’s particular struggle with learning Lectio Divina has been observed as a common struggle with equipping individuals with this Bible engagement methodology by the researcher. Future equipping classes will need to more thoroughly address this struggle within the training during Step 2, reflect, of Lectio Divina.

**Phase 5: Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2**

Once participants have completed the methodology class and the 30-day Bible reading plan, they were then asked to retake the Discipleship Pathway Assessment as a means to measure spiritual growth following the intervention (Appendix H). This second assessment contained a pre-assessment (Appendix H) that was designed to gauge an individual's participation in the methodology class, the use of the 30-day devotional, and the completion of the first assessment. This pre-assessment will be integrated into the final analysis to determine the link between Spiritual Growth and Lectio Divina.

**Methodology Study 4**

This second assessment took place on February 09, 2020. It is important to note that this second assessment took place 5-weeks following the first assessment. While there are four different methodology studies, they take place over the course of a five-week time frame in order to accommodate the completion of the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan. Following a brief welcome
and prayer, every participant was given the Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2 which contained the Pre-Assessment (Appendix H). Following a brief introduction of the assessment, each participant then completed the Discipleship Pathway Assessment at their pace. The completion of the assessment took approximately 25 minutes to complete. The researcher was available to answer any questions of the participants as they took the assessments. As the participants completed each of the sections, they were asked to total their responses in each area as they progressed through the remainder of the evaluation. Each participant then returned their completed copy of the Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2 to the researcher with their name written in the space provided. These assessments were placed in a marked envelope and sealed by the researcher to protect the confidentiality of each participant.

Once all participants had completed the assessment they were thanked for their participation and were able to depart at their own pace. One individual asked upon departure if they could be provided with an additional Bible Reading plan to share with their spouse. This request was gladly met.

**Phase 6: Preparation of Findings**

**Coding Process**

In order to analyze the results, the researcher created a list of participants from the submitted consent forms. Each participant was assigned a random number to anonymously identify the individual and to protect their information for the findings of this research project. The individual’s names were removed from the report before being safely stored in a locked desk within a locked office. The results were not shared with other participants in the research project. The results were organized by participant number and then the corresponding responses of the individual within each of the six areas of spiritual assessment from both the first and second
Discipleship Pathway Assessments. A sample of the report of one area of spiritual assessment can be seen here in Figure 4, which shows sample results for Praying in Faith.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT CODE</th>
<th>Q1A</th>
<th>Q1B</th>
<th>Q2A</th>
<th>Q2B</th>
<th>Q3A</th>
<th>Q3B</th>
<th>Q4A</th>
<th>Q4B</th>
<th>Q5A</th>
<th>Q5B</th>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4 – Sample Respondent Overview for Praying in Faith from DPA Assessments 1(A)&2(B). The results were organized by participant number and then the corresponding responses of the individual within each of the six areas of spiritual assessment from both the first and second Discipleship Pathway Assessments. This report will be used for comparative analysis of the respondents between the two assessments.

As seen in Figure 4, each participant is assigned an anonymous number from which their corresponding responses are recorded from both assessments. “A” represents the first DPA and “B” represents the second DPA following the intervention measures. In addition, a sum total of each of the six areas was included for overall calculations; a sample of the complete sum report can be seen here in Figure 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT CODE</th>
<th>PRAYING IN FAITH (A)</th>
<th>PRAYING IN FAITH (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1011</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1012</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5 – Sample Respondent Total for Praying in Faith from Assessment 1 & 2. This report will be used for comparative analysis of the respondents between the two assessments in order to draw a on the effectiveness of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology.

In this example seen in Figure 5, there is a notable difference between the sum total results from the Discipleship Pathway Assessments A and B. This total sum report will help the
researcher then draw conclusions based upon the impact of Lectio Divina for this particular characteristic of spiritual maturity.

In addition to these two assessments, it also important to connect these sum totals with the participants pre-assessment results completed during the second assessment. A sample of the pre-assessment report can be seen in figure 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT CODE</th>
<th>Q1 (B)</th>
<th>Q2 (B)</th>
<th>Q3(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1011</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4 Weeks</td>
<td>30 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1012</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4 Weeks</td>
<td>15-20 Days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6 – Sample Respondent Total from Pre-Assessment of the Discipleship Pathway Assessment B. This pre-assessment will determine each participants level of involvement through the entire research project.

From the pre-assessment, “Q1” asked participants if they had completed the first DPA assessment. “Q2” asked participants how many weeks of the Bible engagement study they completed. Finally, “Q3” asked participants and many days of the Bible reading plan they completed. The responses to these three questions will determine the acceptable level of participate for each data set for use within the findings of this research project.

Conclusion

In order to equip this group of congregants with Lectio Divina as a Bible Engagement methodology these three interventions have been developed. The methodology class has provided the proper equipping to complete the four steps of Lectio Divina. The 30-day reading plan has provided participants with the practical experience to implement Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology. The two Discipleship Pathway Assessments have provided the validation necessary to gauge the effectiveness of Lectio Divina. These The research design aims
to strike a good balance between education and practice in order to help these individuals develop a new habit that is centered around the study of God’s Word.
Chapter 4

The research problem this project addressed is that a portion of the adult congregation at Crestview Baptist Church admires the Bible but does not read the Bible apart from times within the corporate gatherings of the church. This lack of independent Bible engagement has generated a level of biblical illiteracy that has begun to hinder the congregation's individual spiritual growth and personal evangelism effectiveness. This problem, in effect, has started to make the church less useful in accomplishing its mission and vision of being "People Sharing Jesus."

This research project determines the effectiveness of bringing Lectio Divina as a daily Bible engagement practice into the lives of the adult congregation and measuring the positive or negative change in an individual’s spiritual growth to address this problem. The desired outcome of this thesis project is to increase the number of adults who have developed a daily habit of engaging with God's Word. Intervention was implemented in a four-week classroom instruction model that took place of the course of five-weeks in order to accommodate completion of the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan. During these four classroom instruction periods participants were taught in great detail the four steps of Lectio Divina. In addition, during this five-week period, the participants completed the Discipleship Pathway Assessment (DPA) on two separate occasions. In this chapter we examine the results from these two assessments.

Analysis of Findings

38 individuals volunteered to participate in the research project by completing the consent form to enroll in the research project during week 1 of Phase 3. Not all 38 individuals, however, attended the 4-methodology training sessions nor did all 38 complete the 30-day Bible Reading plan or completed both the pre- and post-Discipleship Pathway Assessment.
The second assessment that participants completed contained a pre-assessment that revealed their level of involvement within the research intervention. The goal of the pretest was to confirm participation in the intervention techniques of the Bible Methodology Class and utilizing the provided 30-Day Bible Reading Plan. This link is required in order to evaluate the effect of Lectio Divina upon the spiritual growth of the research participants. The participant results to the pre-test can be seen below in Figures 7-9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1 – DID YOU COMPLETE ASSESSMENT 1?</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7 – Participant Response to Q1 from the Pre-Test of Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2. 36 of the 38 participants completed the Pre-Test and the Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2 – HOW MANY SESSIONS OF THE BIBLE METHODOLOGY TRAINING DID YOU ATTEND?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8 – Participant Response to Q2 from Pre-Test Assessment 2. 35 of the 38 participants were able to complete all four sessions of the Bible methodology training classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q3 – APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY DAYS DID YOU COMPLETE THE PROVIDED BIBLE READING PLAN USING THE LECTIO DIVINA BIBLE ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL 30 DAYS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9 – Participant Response to Q3 from Pre-Test Assessment 2. #0 of the 38 participants completed all 30-Days of the Bible Reading Plan.

As shown in Figure 7, 36 participants of the 38 that completed Assessment 1 were in attendance to complete the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment. In addition, not all participants completed all four sessions of the methodology training or made use of the full 30-day Bible Reading plan. Those who failed to complete the entirety of the research interventions have been removed from the final analysis of the results.
Research participants from assessment 1 with participant codes that have been italicized have been disqualified from the final analysis due to a lack of participation during the intervention phase. The disqualified participant codes numbers are as follows: 1004, 1006, 1007, 1016, 1018, 1025, 1025, 1029. The reason for each participant disqualification is listed below in Figure 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT CODE</th>
<th>DISQUALIFICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1004</td>
<td>Completed only 15-20 Days of the Bible Reading Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1006</td>
<td>Completed only 15-20 Days of the Bible Reading Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1007</td>
<td>Completed only 15-20 Days of the Bible Reading Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1016</td>
<td>Did not complete the second DPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1018</td>
<td>Completed only 15-20 Days of the Bible Reading Plan and only attended 2 of the Bible methodology training sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1025</td>
<td>Completed only 15-20 Days of the Bible Reading Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1026</td>
<td>Completed only 15-20 Days of the Bible Reading Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1029</td>
<td>Did not complete the second DPA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10 – Participant Disqualification. Each individual participant code is listed with the reason for disqualification based upon the pre-test results from the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment.

The disqualified participants reduce the total research population from 38 to 30 who complete both assessments and all of the necessary steps within the research intervention. The primary reason for disqualification was that 6 of the participants failed to complete the Bible Reading Plan. These results are reflected in Figure 10 in which 6 of the 8 disqualified participants only completed 15-20 days of the Bible reading plan.
Results from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1

As seen below in Figure 11 is the individual Discipleship Pathway Assessment results from Assessment 1 with the disqualified participants italicized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT CODE</th>
<th>ABIDE IN CHRIST</th>
<th>LIVE IN THE WORD</th>
<th>PRAY IN FAITH</th>
<th>FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS</th>
<th>WITNESS TO THE WORLD</th>
<th>MINISTER TO OTHERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1001</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>1012</td>
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<td>1017</td>
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<td>1019</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the DPA one revealed the diversity amongst the spiritual health of participants within the research project. The first assessment revealed individual responses on both ends of the scale of spiritual health. In order to interpret the results from assessment 1, the
data has been placed in values of central tendency in an attempt to describe the data set. The measure of central tendency that will be used is the mean. The participant mean for each of the six areas of spiritual maturity can be seen in Figure 12 as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ABIDE IN CHRIST</th>
<th>LIVE IN THE WORD</th>
<th>PRAY IN FAITH</th>
<th>FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS</th>
<th>WITNESS TO THE WORLD</th>
<th>MINISTER TO OTHERS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>QUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISQUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12 – Participant Mean from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1. This chart organizes the response from assessment 1 according to three groups of participants and six categories of spiritual health.

A as a research group, all six area of spiritual maturity reported an average response of 2 or “seldom.” While there are the individual participants on both ends of the scale, as a research group this response indicates a rather lower level of spiritual health according to the Discipleship Pathway Assessment. There is also a noticeable difference between the qualified and disqualified participants as seen in Figure 9. Those participants that were eventually disqualified did show a proportionate lower spiritual health. Three of the eight disqualified participants 1004, 1016, and 1026 averaged a score of “1” or “Never” in all of the six points of spiritual health. This is a group that would have most benefited from developing a habit of daily Bible engagement but were unable to fulfill all the requirements for this particular project. As visually seen in figure 10 the disqualified participants reported lower averages in all six areas of spiritual health during the baseline assessment of the DPA while the qualified participants reported higher than the overall average for all six areas of spiritual health.
Figure 13 - Participant Mean from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1. In this chart the spiritual growth of the qualified participants becomes apparent over that of the disqualified participants.

**Critical Spiritual Growth Categories**

Spiritual Growth Category of Living in the Word

There are a few critical spiritual growth categories that are worth additional exploration within the results of the first Discipleship Pathway Assessment. Of particular interest in this research project is the spiritual assessment area of “Living in the Word.” This is one area that we would anticipate Lectio Divina methodology and this research project having the greatest impact upon. This particular spiritual growth category focuses on the establishment of a regular time of personal Bible study. One of the key components of the intervention phase is the use of the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan. This 30-Day Bible Reading Plan will establish a regular time of
personal Bible study for the duration of the research project. The simple use of this 30-Day Bible Reading Plan does impact the participants results when comparing assessment 1 and assessment 2 in this particular spiritual growth category. For some participants they have moved from an infrequent Bible reader to a daily Bible reader throughout the project. Take note of the dramatic difference in Figure 10 of the Qualified and Disqualified participants within the spiritual growth category of “Live in the Word.”

Through the series of 10 questions, the spiritual growth category of “Living in the Word,” seeks to evaluate the habitual practices of the individual in their Bible engagement. During Phase 3 of the research project individuals completed the assessment without any intervention. The results are an affirmation of the research problem with a level of low response to “Living in the Word.” During Phase 4, participants completed the interventions of the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan and the methodology training classes that are design to equip the participants with the skills of Lectio Divina as a daily Bible engagement methodology. Following Phase 4, the intervention phase, participants completed the assessment a second time in Phase 5. At this point in the research project the results reveal an increased level of response based upon the anticipated effectiveness of Lectio Divina as a Bible Engagement Methodology.

In addition to this one area of spiritual growth, the anticipated result would be an increased level of response in all areas based upon the transformative power of God’s Word. Lectio Divina is about developing an intimate relationship with God by praying the scriptures. Thus, by engaging with the scriptures through Lectio Divina participants should experience a measure of spiritual growth because the Word promises such an effect. This was what Paul was teaching to young Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be
thoroughly equipped for every good work.” The effects of God’s Word when properly engage will bring about transformation. This project hinges upon this biblical truth with regard to the transformative power of God’s Word. This transformative power will be seen by comparing the results between the two assessments.

Spiritual Growth Category of Living in the Word – Question 1

The results from assessment 1 within the spiritual growth category of “Living in the Word” are as seen broken-down in Appendix I. This area of spiritual growth will be broken down even further by taking a deeper look at question 1 from the DPA. Question 1 from the spiritual growth category of “Living in the Word” asked respondents to reveal how frequently they read and study the Bible. Figure 13 reveals the response for this specified area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1 (A)</th>
<th>ALL PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>QUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>DISQUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 – “Seldom”</td>
<td>2 – “Seldom”</td>
<td>2 – “Seldom”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14 – Participant Mean from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 from the spiritual growth category “Living in the Word, Question 1, “I regularly read and study my Bible.” This particular question is of great interest in order to address the research problem.

The average response to question 1 from the spiritual growth category of “Living in the Word” was a 2 or “seldom” response. Although this response is not quantifiable by the average number of times per week in which an individual read and studies the Bible, this is a clear confirmation of the research problem that is being addressed within all the participants. The problem within a portion of congregates at Crestview Baptist church has been correctly perceived and assessed via the Discipleship Pathway Assessment.

Spiritual Growth Category of Abiding in Christ
Another critical spiritual growth category that is worth additional exploration within the results of the first Discipleship Pathway Assessment is that of “Abiding in Christ.” Again, this area of spiritual growth will be broken down even further by taking a deeper look at question 1 from the DPA. Question 1 from the spiritual growth category of “Abiding in Christ” asks respondents to reveal if they practice a regular quiet time and look forward to that time with Christ. Figure 14 reveals the response for this specified area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1 (A)</th>
<th>ALL PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>QUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>DISQUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 - “Occasionally”</td>
<td>3 - “Occasionally”</td>
<td>2 – “Seldom”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15 – Participant Mean from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 from Spiritual growth category “Abiding in Christ,” Question 1, “I practice a regular quiet time and look forward to that time with Christ.”

The response to this question was a 3 or “Occasionally.” This occasional response was given by all participants and the qualified participants. Those who were disqualified from the research project, however, reported a “2” or “seldom” response on average. This response to question 1 within the spiritual health category of “Abiding in Christ” is yet another example of the need this portion of congregants has to be equipped and encouraged with a Bible engagement methodology.

Spiritual Growth Category of Praying in Faith

Another critical spiritual growth category that is worth additional exploration within the results of the first Discipleship Pathway Assessment is that of “Praying in Faith.” Again, this area of spiritual growth will be broken down even further by taking a deeper look at question 10 from the DPA. Question 10 from the spiritual growth category of “Praying in Faith” asks respondents to reveal if they engage in a daily prayer time. While this question was not
quantified by a number of days each week in which the person has a daily prayer time, the average response to this particular question was 3 or “occasionally.” Figure 15 reveals the response for this specified area.

<table>
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<td>DISQUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</td>
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</table>

Figure 16 – Participant Mean from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 from Spiritual growth category “Praying in Faith,” Question 10, “I engage in a daily prayer time.”

It is of note, that all three participant groups reported a higher response to a time of daily prayer when compared to spending time daily studying God’s Word. From this comparison, one could conclude that prayer comes more readily for these respondents than does studying God’s Word. This metric is an encouragement for the acceptability of Lectio Divina by this group of participants as a Bible engagement methodology because it relies heavily upon prayer. This can be seen in Figure 16 which compares the results of Figure 13 and Figure 15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIVING IN THE WORD – Q1</th>
<th>PRAYING IN FAITH – Q10</th>
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<td>DISQUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</td>
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Figure 17 – Participant Mean Comparison from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 from Spiritual growth categories “Living in the Word – Q1” and “Praying in Faith - Q 10”

Conclusions from Results of Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1

The results from the Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 confirm that the participants within this research group are struggling with the very problem that Lectio Divina was designed to address. In three of the six spiritual growth categories, Living in the Word, Praying in Faith
and Abiding in Christ, questions are asked of respondents in order to identify their daily Bible engagement habits. This select group of congregants at Crestview Baptist Church has been identified through the Discipleship Pathway Assessment within these three spiritual growth categories as infrequent at best in their daily Bible engagement practices.

In one manner, these responses are disheartening to hear that these Christians are not consistently or regularly reading the Bible or praying as God would desire. It is also, however, encouraging to know that we have identified a portion of congregants who have a great need to be encouraged and equipped with the skills necessary to regularly engage with the Bible. The thesis of this research project is that Lectio Divina will dramatically increase the participants involvement in these spiritual discipline areas. The results of the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment will be able to reveal the accuracy of this thesis.

Results from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2

Following the four equipping classes and the 30-Day Bible reading plan it is time to begin to look at the results from the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment. Figure 17 contains the results from the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment which show the participants responses following the intervention techniques. Again, those participants who are italicized have been disqualified from the final analysis due to a lack of participation. The disqualified participant codes numbers are as follows: 1004, 1006, 1007, 1016, 1018, 1025, 1025, 1029. It is of additional note that participants 1016 and 1029 did not complete Assessment 2; this has been reflected by a “n/a” score in Figure 17. A total of 36 participants responded to assessment two.
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The initial results of assessment two are an encouraging indication of the positive effect that Lectio Divina has upon an individual’s relationship with God. As with assessment 1 the measure of central tendency that will be used is the mean. The participant mean for each of the six areas of spiritual growth can be seen in Figure 18.

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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 18 – Results from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2. These are the responses from the research participants following the four equipping classes and the 30-Day Bible reading plan. Those participants who are italicized have been disqualified from the final analysis due to a lack of participation. Participants 1016 and 1029 did not complete Assessment 2; this has been reflected by a “n/a.”
ABIDE IN CHRIST  LIVE IN THE WORD  PRAY IN FAITH  FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS  WITNESS TO THE WORLD  MINISTER TO OTHERS

ALL PARTICIPANTS  | 41  | 41  | 42  | 41  | 37  | 40
QUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS  | 43  | 43  | 43  | 42  | 39  | 41
DISQUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS  | 33  | 34  | 37  | 36  | 31  | 36

Figure 19 – Participant Mean from Discipleship Pathway Assessments 2. These are the responses from the research participants following the four equipping classes and the 30-Day Bible reading plan.

As a research group following the intervention, they reported on average a response of 4 or “frequent” in 5 out of 6 areas of spiritual maturity. The only area that was reported less than a “4” response was that of “Witness to the World” which reported on average a “3” or “occasional” response. These results are seen above in Figure 18. There is also a notable difference in the responses from the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment between the qualified and disqualified participants. On average the disqualified participants scored one level lower on the Likert scale in all six spiritual health areas. As visually seen in Figure 19 the disqualified participants reported lower averages in all six areas of spiritual health during the second assessment of DPA following the interventions while the qualified participants reported higher than the overall average for all six areas of spiritual health.
Figure 20 – Participant Mean from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2 in all six spiritual growth categories.

As seen above in Figure 19, those who were able to participate in all 4 weeks of the research project, qualified participants, reported a higher score in all six spiritual growth categories. As with the results of the first Discipleship Pathway Assessment, there are a few critical spiritual growth categories that need further review.

**Critical Spiritual Growth Categories**

Spiritual Growth Category of Living in the Word

The first critical spiritual growth category to consider is that of “Living in the Word.” From the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment, question 1 from the spiritual growth category of “Living in the Word” asked respondents to reveal if the regularly read and study the Bible. On average all participants reported a “4” response or “frequent.” This response was not a
quantifiable metric to determine how many days per week each respondent indicated that they read the Bible, but this metric does reveal a consistency within each week as they begin to develop a habit.

During the four weeks prior to completion of the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment participants were utilizing the 30-Day Bible Reading plan that was provided during the intervention phase. This would have directly impacted the response from all participants during the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment. The intent of the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan was to establish a daily habit of engagement with God’s Word. Participants were also asked during the pretest of the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment their level of participation in the research project.

The third question within the pretest asked, “Approximately how many days did you complete of the provided 30-Day Bible Reading Plan using the Lectio Divina Bible engagement Methodology?” One of the criteria for a qualified participant was that they had completed all 30 Days of the provided reading plan. Thus, the anticipated response to question 1 from the spiritual growth category of “Living in the Word” should have been a “5” or “Always” but the average response was limited to a “4” or “frequent.”

This may indicate that respondent did complete the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan but not necessarily as designed one day at a time. In fact, during week 3 of the intervention one participant shared with the researcher that they had been enjoying the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan so much that they had completed multiple days at one time. Only 8 of the 32 qualified participants reported the highest possible score of “5” or “Always” in response to this question from Living in the Word. Figure 20 reveals the response for this specified area based on
participants type. Again, it can be seen that those disqualified participants reported on average one lower on the Likert scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1 (A)</th>
<th>ALL PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>QUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>DISQUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>4 – “Frequent”</td>
<td>4 – “Frequent”</td>
<td>3 – “Occasional”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21 – Participant Mean from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2 from Spiritual growth category “Living in the Word, Question 1, “I regularly read and study my Bible.”

The average response to question 1 from the spiritual assessment area of “Living in the Word” was a 4 or “frequent” response on the Likert scale. This is a direct result of the 30-Day Bible Reading plan that was used within the intervention phase which facilitated frequent Bible reading.

Spiritual Growth Category of Abiding in Christ

The next spiritual growth to consider further from the second assessment is that of Abiding in Christ. The first question in the spiritual category of “Abiding in Christ” asks respondents to reveal if they practice a regular quiet time and look forward to that time with Christ. Figure 21 reveals the response for this specified area.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Q1 (A)</th>
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<th>QUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</th>
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</table>

Figure 22 – Participant Mean from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2 from the critical Spiritual growth category “Abiding in Christ,” Question 1, “I practice a regular quiet time and look forward to that time with Christ.”
Within this question the average response of 4 or “Frequent” was given by all participants and the qualified participants. Those who were disqualified from the research project, however reported a “3” or “occasional” response on average. This particular question begins to seek the personal desire that the individual has for individual times spent in God’s Word. Take note of the last phrase within the question. “I look forward to time with Christ.” Qualified participants reported an average response of having a “frequent” desire to spend time with Christ. This is an effect of reading the Bible through the use of Lectio Divina as the Bible engagement methodology. The participants “desire to spend time with Christ” is a product of God’s transformative power within His worship through His Word. This transformation was made possible in part through Lectio Divina. Lectio Divina seeks to strengthen and develop one’s relationship with God through the Word of God. Thus, an increased desire to spend time with Christ affirms the effectiveness of Lectio Divina to connect the reader to Christ through the Word.

Brad Waggoner was one of the major contributors to the development of the Discipleship Pathway Assessment. In 2008, Brad Waggoner measured more that 60 biblical characteristics of a disciple and the presence of those characteristics in the lives of church attendees.114 From his research, his team produced a ranking list of which factors were most strongly correlated to spiritual maturity. He concluded that “the number one factor, or characteristic, most correlated to the highest spiritual maturity scores is the individual’s practice of reading the Bible.” In the final remarks of his research he also stated:


115 Ibid., 5.
“We put a lot of time and energy into preparing sermons, as we should. But we make a huge mistake if we think our sermons, regardless of their quality, are enough to create sustained life transformation or sanctification in the lives of our fellow believers. Our people need daily exposure to the life-transforming power of God through his revealed word.”

There is incredible power within the Word of God to sustain and equip the believer if they have the desire and skills needed to connect with God. Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology is an incredible way for Believers to develop their relationship with God and avail themselves to the power of God.

Spiritual Growth Category of Praying in Faith

This same upward trend was seen in response to question 10 within the spiritual category of “Praying in faith.” This question asked respondents to reveal if they engage in a daily prayer time. The average response to this particular question was 3 or “occasionally.” Lectio Divina is at its core a Bible engagement methodology that utilizes the spiritual discipline of prayer in order to engage in a personal way with the Word of God. Lectio Divina not only increases the frequency with which individuals engage with God’s Word but it also increases the frequency with which individuals spend time in prayer. This effect can be seen in Figure 22 that reveals the response for this specified area of “Praying in Faith:"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q10 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>4 – “Frequent”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>4 – “Frequent”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISQUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>3 – “Occasional”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 22 – Participant Mean from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2 from Spiritual growth category “Praying in Faith,” Question 10, “I engage in a daily prayer time.”

116 Ibid., 68.
Conclusions from Assessment 2 of the Discipleship Pathway Assessment

Participants who completed the equipping opportunities with Lectio Divina experienced spiritual growth in both the spiritual disciplines of reading God’s Word and spending time in prayer. The results of the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment reveal a group of participants who on average report a frequent engagement with the assessed spiritual disciplines. Unlike the results of assessment 1, the results of assessment 2 reveal a group of participants who are spiritually growing in their relationship with God and are experiencing transformation. This transformation has been brought about by the power of God’s Word that has been effectively engaged with through Lectio Divina. This transformation can best be seen by comparing the results of the two Discipleship Pathway Assessment.

Comparison Between Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 and 2

In order to determine the impact of Lectio Divina upon a select group of congregants at Crestview Baptist Church we must compare the results of qualified participants from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 and 2. The goal of this research project is to gauge the effectiveness of using Lectio Divina as a daily Bible engagement practice by measuring the change in an individual’s spiritual growth that was experience through the use of Lectio Divina for 30 days. The outcome of this project will not be to asses one's overall knowledge of the Bible or to increase biblical literacy. The goal, however, will be to improve the skills needed for adults to confidently engage with God's Words to have a daily encounter with the living God. The effectiveness of Lectio Divina will be determined by measuring the spiritual growth that was experienced by this select group of adult participants. Effectiveness will be measured beginning with the baseline Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 and ending with Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2, which was completed after participants have engaged with God’s Word for 30-
days using Lectio Divina as their methodology. Figure 17 records a comparative analysis between the participant average within the six Spiritual Disciplines. This comparative analysis is the first indication of spiritual growth as a result of using Lectio Divina for 30 Days as a Bible engagement strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS ASSESMENT 1</th>
<th>ABIDE IN CHRIST</th>
<th>LIVE IN THE WORD</th>
<th>PRAY IN FAITH</th>
<th>FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS</th>
<th>WITNESS TO THE WORLD</th>
<th>MINISTER TO OTHERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS ASSESMENT 2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 23 – A Comparison of the Participant Mean from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 and 2. This comparison is the first indication of spiritual growth as a result of using Lectio Divina for 30 Days as a Bible engagement strategy.

The qualified participants reported on average an increase in all six areas of the spiritual growth assessment. As seen above in Figure 23, in five of the six spiritual growth areas, the qualified group of participants moved up in the Likert scale from a “Seldom” response to a “Frequent” response, or from a “2” to a “4.” This upward trend in all six spiritual growth categories reveals a group of participants who experienced significant quantifiable spiritual growth as a direct result of their use of Lectio Divina.

Spiritual growth is understood as the process of being conformed inwardly and outwardly to the image of Christ.\textsuperscript{117} These six spiritual growth areas biblically reflect a Christlikeness within an individual believer. Only through an effective Bible engagement methodology such as Lectio Divina could transformation be experience in all six areas simultaneously. Take for example the spiritual growth that was experience between the two categories of “Abide in

Christ” and “Live in the Word.” Lectio Divina is able to bring transformation to these two categories simultaneously because this methodology equips readers to interact with God while reading.

Dan Korn expresses how, “Lectio Divina is an ancient Christian practice of religious reading that helps Christians center themselves on God's Word in order to encounter Him.”

The goal of Lectio Divina is not knowledge but an encounter with God. This encounter with God brings transformation in more ways than simple knowledge of God’s Word. It transforms the whole person. If an encounter does not go on to become transformational, it is no different than the encounter Judas had with Jesus before betraying him; no different than Demas, who left Paul, “having loved this present world”; no different than the rich young ruler who left Jesus sad, loving his riches more; no different than Cain, or Balaam, or Korah, or Aachen, or Hymenaeus, or Alexander, who rejected the Gospel to be turned over to Satan.

Thus, by comparing the results from Assessment 1 and 2 it can be concluded that all participants have experienced spiritual growth in all areas of their life through the power of God and the promise of God’s Word. None of the participants, to include both the qualified and disqualified, reported a decrease in activity level in any of the six areas of spiritual growth. Thus, even the disqualified participants experienced some level, although not as much, of spiritual growth.

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A select portion of participants experienced significant spiritual growth. Eight of the qualified participants (1003, 1005, 1013,1020,1021,1031,1032,1038) reported on average “1” or “Never” within Assessment 1 in three of the six spiritual categories assessed through the Discipleship Pathway Assessment. This response was understood that the individual never or seldomly experienced these spiritual categories. Yet, the same group of participants reported on average a “4” or “frequent” response during the Discipleship Pathway Assessment 2. This group of participants experienced the most significant spiritual growth within a 30-day time period through the use of Lectio Divina.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABIDE IN CHRIST</th>
<th>LIVE IN THE WORD</th>
<th>PRAY IN FAITH</th>
<th>FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS</th>
<th>WITNESS TO THE WORLD</th>
<th>MINISTER TO OTHERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT 1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT 2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 24– A select group of eight participants (1003, 1005, 1013,1020,1021,1031,1032,1038) who reported a “1 or Never” from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 and 2 within the two spiritual growth categories of “Abide in Christ” and “Live in the Word.”

This select group of participants as reported in Figure 24, reveals the effectiveness of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology for all Christians regardless of their present level of spiritual maturity. Lectio Divina can be effective across a wide range of spiritual maturity that may be found within a church congregation.

Summary of Findings

The primary question the research sought to answer was as follows: what is the impact of the Lectio Divina method of Bible Reading in the lives of a sample of congregants at Crestview Baptist Church in Georgetown, Texas? After reviewing the findings from the research, the researcher has concluded that Lectio Divina method of Bible reading has a significant impact upon the spiritual lives of those who utilized this Bible engagement methodology over the course
of a 30-day period. By quantitative measure, Lectio Divina has proven to be an effective means of spiritual growth according to the Discipleship Pathway Assessment in which all participants experience spiritual growth in all six spiritual categories. The evidence of spiritual growth of the participants can been seen by the upward trend in the comparison of the Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 and 2. To better grasp these findings we should consider three sub-questions that most clearly communicate the effect of Lectio Divina.

**Sub-Question #1**

The first sub question to consider establishes the baseline spiritual health of the participants. This foundation must first be established in order to quantify the effect of Lectio Divina upon a select portion of congregants at Crestview Baptist Church.

**Sub-Question 1**

According to the participant responses to the Discipleship Pathway Assessment One, what is the spiritual health of the participants prior to their use of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology?

**Research Findings**

In all six area of spiritual maturity within the Discipleship Pathway Assessment this research group of participants reported an average response of 2 or “seldom.” This response indicates a low level of spiritual health according to the Discipleship Pathway Assessment prior to their use of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology. This baseline spiritual health can be seen above in Figure 12.

**Sub-Question #2**

The second sub question to consider will establish the spiritual health of the participants after using Lectio Divina as their Bible engagement strategy for the previous 30-days.
Sub Question 2

According to their responses to the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment, what is the spiritual health of the participants after their use of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology for a 30-day period of time?

Research Finding

In all six area of spiritual maturity within the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment this research group of participants reported an average response of 4 or “frequent.” This response indicates a higher level of spiritual growth following their use of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology for a 30-day period of time. This new spiritual health can be seen above in Figure 17.

Sub-Question #3

The final sub question to consider is to compare the baseline spiritual health from sub-question 1 to the new spiritual health from sub-question 2. The difference between these two results will quantify the effectiveness of Lectio Divina.

Sub-Question 3

What is the quantifiable difference between the participant responses to the Discipleship Pathway Assessment One and Two?

Research Findings

According to the Discipleship Pathway Assessment participants experience spiritual growth in all six spiritual categories. As seen above in figure 17, in five of the six spiritual growth areas, the qualified group of participants moved up in the Likert scale from a “Seldom” response to a “Frequent” response, or from a “2” to a “4.” This upward trend in all six spiritual
growth categories reveals a group of participants who experienced spiritual growth as a direct result of their use of Lectio Divina.

Conclusion of Findings

Lectio Divina has proven to be an effective Bible Engagement methodology for experiencing spiritual growth according to the Discipleship Pathway Assessment. In a 30-day time period, this select group of congregants utilized Lectio Divina as a Bible Engagement methodology and experienced spiritual growth regardless of their starting spiritual maturity level.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

Philip Towner said with reference to 2 Timothy 3:10 that “constant study of God’s Word equips one to do all that God requires, because it contains the knowledge of God’s will for living.” A believer that equips themselves with Gods Word will experience Spiritual Growth. Believers that develop a habit of engaging with God’s Word will grow consistently in the likeness of Christ as the will of God is revealed unto them. Consistent engagement with the Bible will bring about Spiritual Growth in all areas of spiritual discipline. This is also the promise of God as recorded in 2 Timothy 3:16 that God’s Word is useful for training individuals in righteousness. When believers apply Scripture’s principles to their lives it enables them to make progress in the life that is pleasing to God.

This research project attempted to evaluate the impact of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement method upon the spiritual health of a sample group of congregants at Crestview Baptist Church. After reviewing the findings from the research, the researcher has concluded that Lectio Divina method of Bible reading has a significant impact upon the spiritual lives of those who utilized this Bible engagement methodology over the course of a 30-day period.

As Richard Feynman stated in, Life Hacking Spiritual Disciplines, “it doesn’t matter how beautiful your theory is. If it doesn’t agree with experiment, then it’s wrong.” This research


project proves that Lectio Divina is an effective Bible engagement methodology for producing spiritual growth in all areas of a believer’s life by the power of God through His Word.

Review of Results

According to the Discipleship Pathway Assessment, participants experience spiritual growth in all six spiritual categories. This conclusion was made from the researches three sub questions. The first sub question was to establish a baseline spiritual health of the participants. This foundation was established in order to quantify the effect of Lectio Divina upon a select portion of congregants at Crestview Baptist Church. The research findings revealed that in all six area of spiritual maturity within the Discipleship Pathway Assessment this research group of participants reported an average response of 2 or “seldom.” This response indicates a low level of spiritual health according to the Discipleship Pathway Assessment prior to their use of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology. This baseline spiritual health can be seen above in Figure 12.

The second research sub question was designed to establish the spiritual health of the participants after using Lectio Divina as their Bible engagement strategy for the previous 30 days. The research revealed that in all six area of spiritual maturity within the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment this research group of participants reported an average response of 4 or “frequent.” This response indicates a higher level of spiritual growth following their use of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology for a 30-day period of time. This new spiritual health can be seen above in Figure 17.

The final sub question that was considered compared the baseline spiritual health from sub-question 1 to the new spiritual health from sub-question 2. The difference between these two results quantified the effectiveness of Lectio Divina. As seen above in Figure 23, in five of the
six spiritual growth areas, the qualified group of participants moved up in the Likert scale from a “Seldom” response to a “Frequent” response, or from a “2” to a “4.” This upward trend in all six spiritual growth categories reveals a group of participants who experienced spiritual growth as a direct result of their use of Lectio Divina. None of the participants, including both the qualified and disqualified, reported a decrease in spiritual health in any of the six areas of spiritual categories. Thus, even the disqualified participants experience a measure of spiritual growth.

The results from the Discipleship Pathway Assessment one and two show a demonstrable difference between the two tests. Individually, every participant was able to see his or her score for spiritual health move up after 30 days of consistent use of Lectio Divina. As a group, there was a significant move upward at the end of 30 days in their average scores. In the beginning, the majority of individual scores were in “seldom” response; whereas by the end of the 30 days, the majority of the scores had moved up into the “frequent” range. This quantitative data from the Discipleship Pathway Assessment is helpful in determining a measure of effectiveness for the Bible engagement methodology Lectio Divina.

Participants spiritual growth was experienced in many forms. From a more frequent prayer life, to more consistent Bible engagement, to greater confidence in talking about Jesus with others. The researcher has never seen another Bible Engagement Methodology that can have as much of a dramatic impact upon the spiritual lives of people in such a short amount of time as has been seen in the lives of the congregants that have used Lectio Divina as their primary Bible engagement methodology. In light of this evidence the researcher has three research applications to offer for the local church from a pastoral leadership position.
Application

Research Application #1: Encouragement

Bible reading is one of the fundamental practices of the Christian life that followers of Christ must be continually encouraged to never forsake. There is never a moment at which a Christian is finished with or done reading the Bible. Because of the Lord’s indwelling presence within the Bible, the Bible becomes an opportunity through which Christians can encounter God daily. Daily Bible reading moves beyond simply gaining knowledge to live. Rather, it becomes a method from which to encounter our Lord and experience the spiritual growth that we desire.

The researcher’s findings demonstrate a strong correlation between consistent Bible reading and spiritual growth in the people who participated in the study. Each participant saw quantifiable spiritual growth from Lectio Divina Bible reading according to the Discipleship Pathway Assessment.

For centuries Christian leaders have affirmed the central belief that consistent Bible engagement is a key factor in the lives of maturing believers. Many Christian thinkers have written deeply about the exclusive impact that the spiritual discipline of consistent Bible engagement will have upon the life of a believer. Donald Whitney wrote extensively about this spiritual discipline and its positive impact upon spiritual growth. He wrote that the Bible is the “most transforming practice available to us.”124 Charles Spurgeon spoke with great conviction about the spiritual fruit that will be produced in a believer’s life as a result of consistent Bible engagement. Spurgeon, the prince of preachers said, “a true love for the great Book will bring us great peace from the Great God and be a great protection to us. Nothing is a stumbling block to

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the man who has the Word of God dwelling in him richly.”¹²⁵ Spurgeon knew that with great confidence a believer who dwelt in God’s Word would be prepared for the ways of the world. John Adams, the second president of the United States of America, envisioned the potential impact of not just an individual who consistently engaged with God’s Word but the impact of an entire nation if it would lay hold of this truth. He wrote in his personal diary dated February 22, 1756:

“Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their own law book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! Every member would be obligated in conscience, to temperance, frugality, and industry; to justice, kindness, and charity towards his fellow men; and to piety, love, and reverence toward the Almighty God. A eutopia, what a Paradise would this region be.”¹²⁶

Time and again the testimony of Christian leaders has understood that consistent Bible engagement will have the greatest impact in the life of maturing believers. This is of course nothing new. It is well known that Bible reading is a fundamental practice of the Christian life. Christians, however, need consistent encouragement to develop a daily habit of reading the Bible. Pastoral leadership within the church should never make an assumption that their congregation understands the potential positive impact that Bible engagement has upon the life of a Christian. Rather, Christians should be reminded of this potential on a consistent basis.

One method of intervention for encouragement comes from church-wide initiatives like the one conducted at Crestview Baptist Church. The visibility of this initiative within the Young Families Bible Study department of Crestview Baptist Church has inspired other Adult Bible Study departments to solicit the same opportunity. When Bible engagement is highlighted as a


pastoral emphasis, congregants gain a renewed desire to develop a habit of reading the Bible daily.

This four course Bible Methodology course may be easily integrated within the church calendar as a discipleship opportunity. Its content lends itself to be utilized either in a traditional Sunday morning format, small group setting or additional class as was used at Crestview. Through the use of the Discipleship Pathway Assessment participants will see results from their daily Bible engagements. These results will serve as a means of encouragement for future reading once the course has ended.

Bible reading is a proven practice for growing in spiritual maturity but many churches, including Crestview, have failed to emphasize Bible reading as the primary fundamental spiritual discipline. This lack of emphasis on personal Scripture engagement is to the detriment of the individual and the church as a whole. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3 of this struggle, “But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh.” Like Paul, many pastors desire to move their congregations to deeper truths within the scriptures and their relationship with God but simply cannot move from “milk” to “solid food.” If a pastor will continually encourage their congregations to individually develop a Bible reading habit, then they will experience the same level of spiritual growth as a church.

**Research Application #2: Accountability**

One of the greatest obstacles to daily reading the Bible is often the time that is required. As was presented in Chapter 3, when the participants made the commitment to begin the Bible Reading Methodology equipping it included a 30-day Bible reading plan. This Bible reading plan
required a minimum of 15 minutes each day. The final results of this research concluded that only 30 of the 38 were able to complete all 30-days of the Bible reading plan. These 8 individuals who were unable to complete all 30 days of the Bible reading plan are an indication of the difficulty that can come with starting a new daily routine.

Crestview Baptist Church is located in central Texas just 20 minutes North of the State Capital. Families in Georgetown live busy, active, and fast-paced lives. As a result, finding 15 minutes in their schedules to read and do the Lectio Divina Bible reading plan proved to be challenging for some. Along with continued encouragement, a measure of accountability will be necessary to ensure the greatest success. One of the coincidental by-products of a 30-day course, like has been conducted during this research, is the social accountability that comes with group participation. Of the 8 individuals who failed to complete all 30 days of the Bible Reading plan, three of them expressed verbal remorse to the researcher upon completing the pre-test to the second Discipleship Pathway Assessment because they were unable to complete all 30-Days. One participant remarked that she “completely forgot” to read the Bible during week 3 of the course. Another participant remarked that “their week was so busy they were only able to complete some of the reading” that was provided for that particular week. Finally, another participant shared that “it kept slipping my mind.” These three sentiments are common excuses that pastoral leadership can provide support for congregants to overcome.

Developing any new habit can prove to be a challenge. In a group environment, however, there is a mutual expectation of Bible reading over the course of 30 days which will inevitably bring about a social accountability. Pastor Paul Carter writes that with regards to developing a Bible reading habit, “everything is easier in a team. As with exercise – as with anything – so with
reading the Bible. Therefore, do everything you can to build community into your Bible reading routine.”

Pastors can lead their churches to take this team approach to Bible reading in order to help them individually develop the spiritual discipline of daily reading God’s Word. This accountability could be accomplished through small groups of various kinds that bring people together around the study of God’s Word or even by providing resources to the congregation that equip them with skills and guidance on how to grow in this area of spiritual discipline.

In addition to believers holding one another accountable, Pastors can also have a level of accountability with their congregations when developing spiritual disciplines. A certain level of accountability, when done in love and affirmation, is an appropriate measure for pastoral leadership to take. Pastor Bill Tennie of the Effective Church Group affirms this truth that accountability reside in the hands of the Pastor. He writes,

“The solution to the problem of congregational accountability really does rest in the hands of the pastor, but to bring about the necessary changes means the pastor must be willing not only to risk their job, but to hold themselves accountable for success, failure, or for a stalemate. This means a pastor must communicate the mission in such a compelling way that the congregational leadership is moved, touched, and inspired to embrace a “new way” of being a church – or at least to continue with a more focused purpose.”

A program such as the one conducted for this research has social accountability built within but would not account for pastoral accountability. During the research Phase 4 of this project the researcher noted one participant sharing with another their responses to the steps of Read, Reflect, Respond and Rest within the 30-Day Bible Reading Plan. The researcher observed

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these two participants with open books comparing and discussing their individual response. While this was not part of the methodology class this was a natural consequence to group participation. This level of interaction serves to encourage others’ participation and has the potential to hold others accountable in order to develop a Bible reading habit.

**Research Application #3: Methodology**

The Bible engagement methodology of Lectio Divina is the most significant portion of this project. It was important for the researcher to select a method of Bible engagement that would prove to be sustainable and effective for the individual Christian to grow in spiritual maturity in all areas of their lives. The most common pattern among believers who consistently engage with the Bible is to jump from one topical study to the next. While this strategy of Bible engagement can be effective for Spiritual growth in a particular area, it has proven itself to be unsustainable for a daily interaction with God. Many believers will be very involved for the duration of the study but at the conclusion of the study it will have done nothing to equip the participants with the desire and skills to consistently engage with the Bible.

These types of studies often consist of a specified portion of scripture that is geared towards a particular topic. These studies often contain a large portion of commentary designed to steer the reader in a specified direction and to make specific applications within their lives. These devotional studies are dependent upon the scholarship of the author and generally only last for a specified period of time. Many of the devotional studies do nothing to equip or prepare the individual Christian to study the Bible independently of the provided material.

Lectio Divina proved to be the perfect Bible engagement methodology as it enabled believers to interact with the Bible independently of additional commentary or resources. After participants completed the 30-Day Bible Reading plan they had by then developed the skills
necessary to continue in their personal study of God’s Word using the process of Lectio Divina. Relying upon the Holy Spirit, Lectio Divina as a method to read the Bible produces the God ordained interaction and application of Scripture with the individual reader in order to produce spiritual growth across the full spectrum of needs. Instead of addressing one particular area of interest, the Holy Spirit through Lectio Divina is able to work within the hearts of the individual reader to address the full spectrum of spiritual needs. 1 Corinthians 2:10 tells of this interaction with the Holy Spirit, “these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” This effect was revealed in Figure 7 in which the increase of spiritual growth in all 6 areas occurred through the use of Lectio Divina. From “Abiding in Christ” to “Ministering to Others,” Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology proved to be effective in producing spiritual maturity.

As a word of caution for this methodology to the preacher. Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement method may lead to subjective, rather than objective, conclusions from the text. In other words, if one follows Lectio Divina from personal devotions all the way through unto sermon preparation, they may not preach the text, rather they may preach their interpretation and appreciation of the text. There is a danger in Lectio Divina as a method for sermon preparation and it is not advisable to be used as such. Rather, for sermon preparation, nothing will replace the hard work of diligent research and study.

Research Evaluation

It is important to take a moment and evaluate the design of this research project following its completion and consider what could have been done differently that might have yielded better results. There were several aspects of the research design and execution that went well. In fact, the researcher would encourage others to replicate if at all possible. First, the pastoral
relationship between the participants and the researcher worked in his favor. Initially, the researcher was concerned about this as a potential threat to the integrity of the results on the Discipleship Pathway Assessment. Particularly the researcher was concerned that the participants would not be honest while completing the first Discipleship Pathway Assessment but would rather over inflate their responses due to this pastor-congregant relationship. After completing this research, the researcher believes the opposite occurred within this study. Rather than being a hinderance to the research project, this pastor-congregant relationship proved to be helpful as individuals remarked they felt comfortable being honest.

Another aspect of the project that the research would encourage other to replicate was the use of the Discipleship Pathway Assessment. This assessment was easily understood and there were minimal instructions required to complete it. This assessment was easily completed by all participants and proved to be very enlightening for those who completed it. The Discipleship Pathway Assessment contained a broad view of spiritual growth opportunities that was helpful for the participant to consider as they sought to develop a Bible engagement routine.

One final aspect of the project that the researcher believed worked well was the choice to narrow down the participant pool of people to the Young Families Bible Study Department. This single department produced 38 volunteers. The researcher initially thought about opening up the opportunity church-wide but after careful consideration as discussed in Chapter 3 made what turned out to be a wise decision to narrow down the opportunity. This turned out to also be one of the aspects of the project that I would recommend changing as well. While 38 participants were manageable, the research project may have benefited from a smaller group that could have allotted for additional time of discussion. This larger group prevented some from being able to ask questions and to discuss what could have been productive and relevant conversations.
In addition to the class size, the researcher would also recommend for anyone who desire to replicate this course to slow everything down. If done again, the research would increase the number of weeks from 4 to 6 or to increase each class from 1 to 2 hours. The first and last week should simply be devoted to completing the Discipleship Pathway Assessment with no additional training scheduled for those weeks. During this research project weeks 1 and 4 were extended to an unplanned hour and half because we were simply unable to complete all the necessary requirements. This poor time management placed a strain on the participants as we went longer than anticipate for two of the four weeks.

Additional Research

The project’s purpose was satisfied, and the original problem was addressed but additional research could be done in the following areas.

Other Bible Engagement Methodologies

Would other Bible Engagement methodologies produce similar results? A comparative analysis of various Bible engagement methodologies would be beneficial. Was the spiritual growth experienced in this research a byproduct of Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement methodology specifically or simply the product of any Bible engagement methodology? The power of God that resides within His Word could potentially make any Bible engagement strategy effective. Hebrews 4:12 describes this power as a “double edge sword” in how the Word impacts the readers life. This power is attributed to God’s Word and not the engagement strategy.

Larger Number of Participants

While 38 individuals participated in this project, the research might have benefited from a larger pool of participants. This leads to the discussion of whether or not a project could be
designed to accommodate a larger number of participants that would enable this research problem to be addressed on a churchwide scale? If such a project existed, could it be designed to reach all ages within the church? In all of the research conducted for this project there was no evidence of Lectio Divina being used as Bible engagement methodology among believers below 18 years of age. If this project was to be used on a churchwide scale, additional research would be need with regards to the most effective strategy to equip children with Lectio Divina as a Bible engagement strategy.

**Sustained Spiritual Growth**

Participants within this research project experienced a great measure of spiritual growth. The question remains if this spiritual growth would have sustained over the course of a Believers life. Is Lectio Divina a sustainable Bible reading methodology over the lifetime for a believer? Would the spiritual growth continue to be produced as a result of Lectio Divina or is there a capacity it can accomplish? Only by additional research that followed individuals of a great period of time would conclude this question.

**Final Remarks**

Overall, this project proved successful at motivating individual Christians to develop a habit of reading the Bible. The problem of a low level of Bible engagement outside of corporate gatherings remains a real threat to the church. Consistent Bible engagement is an indispensable spiritual discipline in the life of growing Christians.¹²⁹ However, research shows in America, that less than twenty percent of the people who profess Jesus as their Lord and Savior will read the

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Bible from cover to cover in their lifetime. Many who profess they are Christian will also unashamedly state that they are too busy or have no time to read the Bible at all. Pastors who take upon the mantle of leadership within the local church must seek ways to be intentional about mobilizing their congregations to engage with Scripture in order to address this alarming trend.

Bible engagement methodologies such as Lectio Divina can begin to address this problem one individual at a time. As churches seek to encourage and equip their congregations with various Bible engagement methodologies, they can do so with the assurance that God’s Word remains a powerful resource to produce spiritual growth in their lives. Churches must continually encourage and equip their congregations with the skills necessary for habitual Bible engagement. This thesis project offers the local church a solution, a resource, and a practical suggestion for getting their congregation to engage with the Bible in addition to times of corporate gathering.

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Bibliography


APPENDIX A - Institutional Review Board Approval

October 4, 2019

Robert Stephens
IRB Exemption 3910.100419: The Impact of a Lectio Divina Bible Reading Methodology in the Lives of a Sample of Congregants at Crestview Baptist Church

Dear Robert Stephens,

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

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

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

(ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

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

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

Sincerely,

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

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
APPENDIX B – Recruitment Letter

Adult Bible Study Class
Crestview Baptist Church
2300 Williams Dr,
Georgetown, TX 78628

Dear Bible Study Class Member,

As a graduate student in the 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 determine what impact, if any, the Lectio Divina Bible reading methodology has on the habitual Bible reading practices of adults. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are at least 25 years of age, are currently enrolled in one of the adult Bible study classes within Crestview Baptist Church’s Young Families department, and you are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete two assessments (one at the start of the study and another at the end of the study) and a 30 day study program that includes a 30-day Bible reading plan that will require approximately 15 minutes of your time per day. It should take approximately 25 minutes for you to complete each assessment. The 30-day study program will take approximately 1 hour per week and will provide you with instruction in the Lectio Divina Bible reading methodology and strategies to potentially help you develop a daily practice of Bible reading.

To participate, please attend the introductory session to complete the first assessment and hear more about Lectio Divina Bible reading methodology on [Date] in the Fellowship Hall at Crestview Baptist Church at 4:30 pm.

A consent document will be provided at the first meeting. The consent document contains additional information about my research, and you will need to sign and return it along with your completed assessment.

It is my prayer that this will be a beneficial opportunity for you as we have the chance to study the Bible and work together at developing a personal Bible reading habit in our lives.

Sincerely,

Robert Stephens
Associate Pastor
512-863-6576
robert@peoplesharingjesus.com
APPENDIX C – Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

The Impact of the Lectio Divina Bible Reading Methodology upon the Spiritual Growth of Congregants

Robert Stephens
Liberty University
Rawlings School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study on the impact of the lectio divina Bible reading methodology upon the spiritual growth of a sample of congregants within Crestview Baptist Church. The purpose of this research is to determine the impact, if any, a Bible reading plan might have on the habitual Bible reading practices among adults. You were selected as a possible participant because you are 25 years of age or older, and you are presently enrolled in an adult Bible study class within the Young Families department at Crestview Baptist Church. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Robert Stephens, a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine what impact, if any, the lectio divina Bible reading methodology will have upon the spiritual growth of believers.

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

1. Complete an assessment as a baseline understanding of your present level of Bible engagement and spiritual growth. This assessment will take approximately 25 minutes to complete.
2. Participate in a four-week study that will focus on learning the lectio divina Bible reading methodology and commit to practicing the Bible reading methodology at least five times per week during the four-week study duration. The study will take place on Sunday afternoons from 4:30-5:30 in the Fellowship Hall. Your daily Bible engagement will take approximately 15 minutes per day.
3. Complete a second assessment. This will assess the impact of the Bible reading methodology upon your spiritual growth. This assessment will take approximately 25 minutes to complete.

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

Benefits: The direct benefits participants might expect to receive from taking part in this study are an increased knowledge of lectio divina as a daily Bible engagement methodology, experience of being part of a community effort to improve your daily habit of reading the Bible and personal spiritual growth.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.
Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher and the researcher’s faculty mentor will have access to the records.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. Participant survey responses will be retained for three years after the completion of the study.
- The results from your first and second assessment will be compared to evaluate the impact of lectio divina upon your spiritual growth. Your personal identifiable information will not be disclosed at any time.
- Data will be stored in a locked desk file drawer for the remainder of the study. After three years, all records will be shredded.

Conflicts of Interest Disclosure: The researcher serves as the associate pastor at Crestview Baptist Church. To limit potential conflicts, your personal involvement and your assessment reports will be kept private from the church’s congregant management systems. At no time will your involvement be disclosed to other congregants or staff members. In addition, the results from your assessment will not be linked in any way to your membership profile here at Crestview Baptist Church. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

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

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

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Robert Stephens. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at robert@peoplesharingjesus.com. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty chair, Jacob Dunlow, at jdunlow@liberty.edu.

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

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.
Today you will complete the Discipleship Pathway Assessment. The Discipleship Pathway Assessment is an assessment for individuals and churches to measure discipleship progress in becoming more like Christ.

This assessment is a statistically validated assessment tool built on exhaustive research. This assessment measures six signposts that reveal each person’s spiritual progress on their discipleship pathway.

Your Results will be grouped by 6 biblical Signposts:
1. Abiding in Christ
2. Living in the Word
3. Praying in Faith
4. Fellowshipping with Believers
5. Witnessing to the World
6. Ministering to Others

Our goal is to assess the impact of Lectio Divina Bible Reading methodology upon these 6 biblical signposts.

To complete the assessment:
- Turn to page two and write your name on the top of the page in the blank space provided.
- Then proceed with the remainder of the assessment.
- Upon completion, please add the total for each category for your review.
- Finally, return it to Robert Stephens.
Discipleship Pathway Assessment

Your spiritual journey as a follower of Christ began the moment you admitted personal sin and placed your trust in Christ as Savior and Lord. From that point, until death or the return of Christ, your life’s call is to grow in Christlikeness.

Jesus summarizes the disciple’s call in Mark 8:34, “If anyone wants to be My follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me” (Holman CSB).

Accomplishing such a challenging assignment requires growing in your understanding of what it means to be a Christian, expanding your personal knowledge of biblical truth, and applying daily what you learn. Through the presence of His indwelling Spirit, God enables you to know, obey, and serve Him.

God expects His children to grow spiritually and His Word encourages personal examination as an element of growth.

- “Let us search out and examine our ways…” Lamentations 3:40
- “Now, the Lord of Hosts says this: ‘Think carefully about your ways.’” Haggai 1:5
- “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.” Psalm 139:23-24
- “But each person should examine his own work, and then he will have a reason for boasting in himself alone, and not in respect to someone else.” Galatians 6:4
- “Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people, but as wise.” Ephesians 5:15

This assessment process can help you complete an examination and careful search of your spiritual growth. Complete the Spiritual Growth Assessment.

The assessment helps you think carefully about your spiritual development related to six specific spiritual disciplines: abiding in Christ, living in the Word, praying in faith, fellowshipping with believers, witnessing to the world, ministering to others. Before completing your responses, ask the Lord to guide your evaluation. Since most of these statements require a subjective response, His guidance is the key to an accurate appraisal. Also, resist the urge to compare scores with others. Self-condemnation or pride could result from such comparisons. Trust God to help you grow spiritually by revealing heart issues and empowering you to take action.

As you complete this assessment process the temptation might be to think your efforts are central to growing spiritually. Remember, becoming like Christ centers on His work in us and not our work for Him. God desires heart change over religious actions. Without question, God does the revealing, the renewing, the empowering, and the recreating. Your part as His disciple is to do the yielding, the submitting, and the obeying.
## Spiritual Growth Assessment

As you complete the assessment, avoid rushing. Listen for God’s voice to encourage and challenge you. Consider this experience as one-on-one time with Him. Be intentional in your growth towards Christlikeness. Use the scale below to respond to each statement.

Never - 1  Seldom - 2  Occasionally - 3  Frequent - 4  Always - 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ABIDE IN CHRIST</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I practice a regular quiet time and look forward to that time with Christ.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When making choices, I seek Christ’s guidance first.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My relationship with Christ is motivated more by love than duty or fear.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I experience life change as a result of my worship experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When God makes me aware of His specific will in an area of my life, I follow His leading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I believe Christ provides the only way for a relationship with God.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My actions demonstrate a desire to build God’s kingdom rather than my own.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I trust Christ to help me through any problem or crisis I face.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I remain confident of God’s love and provision during difficult times.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Abide in Christ Total** | |

| **LIVE IN THE WORD** |          |
| 1. I regularly read and study my Bible. |          |
| 2. I believe the Bible is God’s Word and provides His instructions for life. |          |
| 3. I evaluate cultural ideas and lifestyles by biblical standards. |          |
| 4. I can answer questions about life and faith from a biblical perspective. |          |
| 5. I replace impure or inappropriate thoughts with God’s truth. |          |
| 6. I demonstrate honesty in my actions and conversation. |          |
| 7. When the Bible exposes an area of my life needing change, I respond to make things right. |          |
| 8. Generally, my public and private self are the same |          |
| 9. I use the Bible as the guide for the way I think and act. |          |
| 10. I study the Bible for the purpose of discovering truth for daily living. |          |

| **Live By God’s Word Total** | |

| **PRAY IN FAITH** |          |
| 1. My prayers focus on discovering God’s will more than expressing my needs. |          |
| 2. I trust God to answer when I pray and wait patiently on His timing. |          |
| 3. My prayers include thanksgiving, praise, confession, and requests. |          |
| 4. I expect to grow in my prayer life and intentionally seek help to improve. |          |
| 5. I spend as much time listening to God as talking to Him. |          |
| 6. I pray because I am aware of my complete dependence on God for everything in my life. |          |
| 7. Regular participation in group prayer characterizes my prayer life. |          |
| 8. I maintain an attitude of prayer throughout each day. |          |
| 9. I believe my prayers impact my life and the lives of others. |          |
| 10. I engage in a daily prayer time. |          |

| **Pray In Faith Total** | |
### FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS

1. I forgive others when their actions harm me.
2. I admit my errors in relationships and humbly seek forgiveness from the one I’ve hurt.
3. I allow other Christians to hold me accountable for spiritual growth.
4. I seek to live in harmony with other members of my family.
5. I place the interest of others above my self-interest.
6. I am gentle and kind in my interactions with others.
7. I encourage and listen to feedback from others to help me discover areas for relationship growth.
8. I show patience in my relationships with family and friends.
9. I encourage others by pointing out their strengths rather than criticizing their weaknesses.
10. My time commitments demonstrate that I value relationships over work/career/hobbies.

**Build Godly Relationships Total**

### WITNESS TO THE WORLD

1. I share my faith in Christ with non-believers.
2. I regularly pray for non-believers I know.
3. I make my faith known to my neighbors and/or fellow employees.
4. I intentionally maintain relationships with non-believers in order to share my testimony.
5. When confronted about my faith, I remain consistent and firm in my testimony.
6. I help others understand how to effectively share a personal testimony.
7. I make sure the people I witness to get the follow-up and support needed to grow in Christ.
8. I encourage my church and friends to support mission efforts.
9. I am prepared to share my testimony at any time.

**Witness To The World Total**

### MINISTER TO OTHERS

1. I understand my spiritual gifts and use those gifts to serve others.
2. I serve others expecting nothing in return.
3. I sacrificially contribute my finances to help others in my church and community.
4. I go out of my way to show love to people I meet.
5. Meeting the needs of others provides a sense of purpose in my life.
6. I share biblical truth with those I serve as God gives opportunity.
7. I act as if other’s needs are as important as my own.
8. I expect God to use me every day in His kingdom work.
9. I regularly contribute time to a ministry at my church.
10. I help others identify ministry gifts and become involved in ministry.

**Minister To Others Total**
APPENDIX E – 30-Day Bible Reading Plan

READ
REFLECT
RELATE
RESPOND

A 30-DAY JOURNEY THROUGH SCRIPTURE WITH LECTIO DIVINA
Spiritual growth is not an option in a believer’s life. God expects us to grow. One of the most significant ways we can experience growth in our lives is to read the Bible on a daily basis.

The Bible is the most incredible and unique book ever written. All 66 books, from Genesis to Revelation, are God’s inspired Word given to us through many human authors over a period of time to help us grow in our faith. They show us what is true and real in a world that is rapidly changing and where everyone does what they feel is right. In them we discover what God is like, find guidance when we are lost, hope when we are suffering and most of all we find Jesus, the most amazing person who ever lived.

Your spiritual life is important, and we believe that nothing has a greater impact on your growth than reading and reflecting on Scripture. When you find a time and a place to read the Bible every day, you will see that His Words are life-giving, often challenging, but will in the end transform you.
HOW IT WORKS

Each day you will read a specific passage and we will guide you through a fourfold process: Read, Reflect, Relate and Respond. For the first seven days there is a brief introduction to each passage and there are sample answers provided to help you engage in the fourfold process.

The second week, there are only sample answers given in the fourfold process. And the third week, just the fourfold process. Please remember, this experience is about listening to how the Bible speaks into your life. Let the introductions and sample answers be a guide, but don’t let them keep you from interacting with the Bible on your own.

Read
Open your Bible to the specific reading for the day. As you read, observe words, phrases, or a particular verse that stands out to you. Feel free to underline or highlight in your Bible if that helps you. Write down what stands out to you.

Reflect
Ask yourself: What is God saying in this passage? What is the writer trying to communicate by his particular choice of words and phrases? What is the tone of the passage? The particular situation or setting?

Relate
Now make it personal. Ask yourself: How does this affect or apply to my own life? Is God giving me an instruction, an encouragement, a promise, or a correction to a specific area of my life?

Respond
Finally, ask God to help your live out this verse. What do you want me to do with what I've learned? James 1:22 says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” Pray and ask God to help you.

If you miss a day, don’t fret, just go to the day we’re currently on.
Jesus was a master at using everyday situations to explain spiritual realities, and His encounter with the Samaritan woman was no exception. In John chapter 4, we see Jesus make a deliberate choice to go through Samaria, a region Jewish people usually avoided as they did not interact with Samaritans. However, that day, in the town of Sychar, at Jacob’s well, Jesus broke with convention and spoke with a Samaritan woman. While their interaction began over water from the well, Jesus took the conversation deeper, to the spiritual needs of the woman. Today’s passage comes from the middle of that conversation, where Jesus is talking about a spiritual reality. The woman is still focused on her physical needs and not her spiritual needs. Eventually, she will recognize that she is speaking to the Messiah and will invite others to come and meet Jesus, but it takes some time for her to finally recognize what Jesus is offering her.

As we think about this interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan women, it’s good to reflect on our lives and recognize how our felt physical needs and religious questions can interfere with recognizing our own spiritual needs and accepting the invitation that Jesus offers.

**John 4:13-14**

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
NOTES - DAY 1

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?
“…whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.”

Reflect
What do you think this means?
*Jesus offers something that will satisfy my deepest longings.*

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?
*Like the Samaritan woman, I need to see past my physical needs and to my spiritual need for Christ. I must turn to Him to meet the deepest needs of my life.*

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
*Lord Jesus – Thank you for how you take deep spiritual realities and explain them through ordinary means that we can relate to. Thank you that you care about our physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Help me to trust you with all of my needs, but not to get so caught up in my physical needs, that I miss out on the water that you give that will sustain my soul. Help me to always be aware of the water that you offer and trust in you to meet my deepest needs. Amen.*
Today’s passage comes from the book of Psalms; this book has been rightly called the Hymnal of Israel. The Psalms are a collection of poetry that were set to music in corporate worship. Many of the Psalms have the author identified, and Psalm 27 is labeled as a Psalm of David. It’s not certain exactly when David wrote this particular Psalm, but we know from elsewhere in Scripture that he had a lifetime of trusting and relying on God to draw upon as he was inspired to pen these words.

Psalm 27 opens with David praising God for who He is and recognizing that there is no need to fear anything else. He proclaims that God is his light. Light often provides hope, direction, and comfort. Clearly, God provides all those things to David and offers them to us as well. David writes that God is his salvation. Indeed, God has delivered David from the time he was a boy tending his Father’s sheep, to rescuing him from Saul and protecting him in the battlefield. David knows that God not only provided physical salvation, but spiritual salvation as well. Lastly, in today’s passage, David refers to God as his stronghold. This isn’t a word we use often today, but when David wrote it, the word was used to convey the idea of a defense, fortress, and a place of protection. Just in one verse, David gives us a powerful view of our Creator.

Psalm 27: 1
The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?
NOTES - DAY 2

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?
*Whom shall, I fear?*

Reflect
What do you think this means?
The context of the question provides the answer. Since God is my light, salvation and stronghold, I do not need to be afraid of anyone or anything.

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?
*It can be easy to be concerned about the world around me. Sometimes, I can feel helpless as there are so many things I can’t control. This passage reminds me that God is my ultimate protector and provider, so I don’t need to fear what I can’t control. Instead, I need to keep my eyes on God and remember that He can save me from anything that comes my way.*

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
*Lord, thank you that you are my light, my salvation and my stronghold. Help me to trust in you and keep my eyes on you instead of my fears. Help me move forward in faith, trusting that you can take care of me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*
DAY 3

It’s not too hard to feel anxious in the world we live in today. We don’t even have to turn on the TV anymore to have devastating news reach us. Our smartphones inform us instantly when there is a mass shooting or other tragedy. Hurricane models now predict days in advance before a storm hits our shores, so we can keep a watchful eye on what might befall citizens vulnerable to the storm’s damage. Social media reminds us of the deep divides in our country along racial and political lines. For some of us, we don’t have to look outside our homes to feel anxious. We get a test back from the doctor that’s not quite right, and more tests are needed. We struggle to pay the bills. We are concerned for a child who seems to have walked away from the faith. So many things are out of our control, and we can feel helpless.

Peter was no stranger to anxiety. He watched as Jesus was arrested and crucified. Peter had suffered in his own life for the sake of the gospel and was imprisoned for his faith. In the book, 1 Peter, he encourages the church, who finds herself in the midst of persecution, and encourages her to persevere. It’s no wonder that near the close of his letter, he reminds his readers that they can cast their anxiety on the Lord.

1 Peter 5:7
Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.
NOTES - DAY 3

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?
Cast all your anxiety on him.

Reflect
What do you think this means?
God wants me to trust him with everything that makes me anxious, and, not only that, He invites me to cast it on Him, not to continue to carry it.

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?
While I should come to God with thankfulness for all he has done, I can come to Him with what is making me anxious. In fact, here I am commanded to cast my anxieties on Him. What a relief!

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
Gracious God, thank you that you not only will receive my prayers of Thanks-giving, but my prayers of concerns and worries as well. Help me to understand how much You care about me, so that I can be free of the anxiety that can weigh me down and keep me from following after you wholeheartedly. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.
Today’s passage comes from the book of Deuteronomy, the last book of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. This five-book section is what Jewish people refer to as the “Torah” or “the Law”. It’s important to understand that this book is not just a list of commands. Deuteronomy tells part of the early story of God’s people, Israel. Context is always helpful when determining the meaning of a verse or passage. It’s always great to back up and read some of the verses that precede and follow the passage you are studying. In this case, reading the end of the previous chapter leads to the discovery of Deuteronomy 5:29, “Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!” We see here that God isn’t giving commands for his sake alone. He provides them for the well-being of His people! Let’s keep that in mind as we read today’s passage.

**Deuteronomy 6:4-5**

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*
NOTES - DAY 4

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?
With all your heart

Reflect
What do you think this means?
God wants my whole-hearted devotion toward Him.

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?
God doesn’t want only half-hearted affection from me; He wants me to be “all in”. As passionately as I would show attention toward a new love interest, a career goal, or my favorite sports team, God wants my devotion and attention directed from my heart.

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
Gracious God – Thank you that you have given commands that work for my good. Help me to recognize that as I strive to love you with all of my heart. Please give me the strength to put aside things that would keep me from following your commands. In Jesus’ name. Amen
DAY 5

If you read yesterday’s passage, today’s passage should have a familiar ring to it! As we read Matthew 22 leading up to today’s passage, we see various groups trying to trap Jesus with their questions. It could be funny for us to think about now, but in Jesus’ time, there were men who actually thought they were smart enough to outsmart the Son of God!

After the Sadducees had tried and failed, the Pharisees wanted a turn. They asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was. He responded with the familiar words from Deuteronomy 6, which should have been a satisfactory answer to the Pharisees. However, Jesus added a bonus answer in letting them know that it was like the first, to “Love your neighbor as yourself”. Jesus’ simple response to their question provides us with at least two important things to ponder.

1. Loving my neighbor is a part of loving God well. I can’t divorce love of God from love of my fellow man. As important as it is to love God, it isn’t complete unless that love transforms us to love our neighbors.

2. A dangerous trend is emerging in which people are being instructed that they don’t have to believe the whole Bible, only in the story of Jesus. While this may be a beginning path for someone outside the faith who struggles to believe everything in the entire Bible, there are problems to that approach for those of us who follow Christ. This passage highlights one of those problems. Let’s say for example, that someone has decided to reject the Old Testament or at least the Exodus event contained in the Old Testament but believes in Jesus’ words. Jesus quoting Deuteronomy here poses quite a problem. If Deuteronomy cannot be trusted, then if Jesus is quoting from it, what does that say about Jesus’ words? This passage should serve as a reminder that the entire Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 2:16). If Jesus trusted the words of Deuteronomy (and many other Old Testament verses) than so can we!

Matthew 22:37-39

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”
NOTES - DAY 5

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?
*Love your neighbor as yourself*

Reflect
What do you think this means?
*I have a tendency to think of my own needs/desires very easily and take care of myself very naturally, God calls me to look beyond myself to love others in the way I love myself.*

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?
*Loving God means loving others. If I want to love God fully, I will love my “neighbor” fully. We are reminded by the parable of the Good Samaritan that my “neighbor” might be someone that is from a different background or religion than me (Luke 10:25-37).*

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
*Heavenly Father – Thank You for being the ultimate example of sacrificial love. Help me to follow your example and love my neighbor as myself with the strength and love that you provide. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*
DAY 6

II Peter 3:9
I don’t have to tell you we live in a fast-paced world, and it seems like it’s only getting faster. Speed limits on highways increase. News outlets rush to break the story first. We demand higher and higher speeds for our internet connections. Fast food and fast-casual restaurants are eclipsing traditional sit-down establishments. The newest cooking trend is the “instapot”. We want things our way, right away, or not at all. Today’s scripture passage reminds us that God’s timing is not always at the fast pace to which we are accustomed.

In fact, it’s starting to think that Peter had to remind his first century audience that God was not slow in keeping his promises. It’s hard to imagine a time when the definition of speed was a fast horse and important messages were often delivered by foot over long distances, that God seemed slow to them, but Peter was inspired by the Holy Spirit to pen these words even in those slow, ancient times. How much more do we need to be reminded of that today! Instead of thinking that God is “slow”, we can be reminded that He is patient, and we are to be also, as we wait on Him to keep His promises.

II Peter 3:9
The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
NOTES - DAY 6

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?
The Lord is not slow

Reflect
What do you think this means?
Even when it seems like I am waiting on God forever, I can trust that His timing is perfect.

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?
I must be prepared to wait on God to keep His promises and not give up hope.

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
Gracious God, thank you that you are patient with us and faithful to keep your promises. Please forgive me when I doubt your timing and even think that You are slow. Help me to rest in Your character and trust in You as I wait for You to fulfill your promises. In Jesus’ name. Amen.
DAY 7

James 4: 7-8a

As we wrap up the first week in our Bible reading plan, we’re reminded of a yet another important promise from God. This promise tells us that if we come near to Him, He will come near to us. A simple, but profound promise to consider for sure. All major religions require a set of behaviors, conditions, and rules to follow to try to appease a “god”. This is where Christianity is different. We are given the assurance that all we need to do is draw close to God and He will come near to us. Yes, God desires us to lead holy lives, set apart for Him, but we can live that way with the strength and grace that He provides. As we will see tomorrow, the fruit of the Spirit, is just that, an outworking of the Spirit’s work in our lives, not a list of behaviors we try to master so God will love us. As you continue in this series, be mindful of this promise. Sometimes you may not feel closer to God, but we have His Word to remind us that He will come near to us when we draw near to Him.

James 4: 7-8a

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.
NOTES - DAY 7

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

*He will come near to you*

Reflect
What do you think this means?

*God doesn’t wait for us to have our “act together” to come close to us. He only looks for our desire to be near to Him.*

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

*This assurance is a wonderful comfort, not only in my own life, but knowing that God will draw near to all who earnestly seek Him.*

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.

*Holy God – Thank you for this amazing promise revealed in your Word to me today. Help me to walk in the assurance of knowing that when I come close to You, you will come close to me. Help me to share that important promise with others, who may feel that you are far away. Thank you for being Emmanuel – God with us. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.*
DAY 8

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
DAY 8

**Read**
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

_The fruit of the Spirit is..._

**Reflect**
What do you think this means?

_These nine attributes are seen as “fruit,” the outgrowth of the Spirit in our lives, not a list of “to-dos.”_

**Relate**
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

_To see the kind of transformation that I want to see in my life (i.e. to be more loving, joyful, etc.) I must draw on the Spirit for strength and transformation; it’s His fruit, not mine._

**Respond**
Ask God to help you live out this verse.

_Almighty God – Thank you for the gift of your Spirit who transforms my life. Help me to actively trust in Him to make the changes in my life that I want to see. Thank you for your grace, mercy and patience as I grow in my walk with you. In Jesus’ name. Amen._
Revelation 22:17

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.
DAY 9

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

*Whoever is thirsty, let him come*

Reflect
What do you think this means?

*I think this means that the Spirit of God beckons me to take my thirst to Him and He will give freely*

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

*Too often I turn to things of the world to try and satisfy my thirst, relationships, career success, and material things. I need to learn to turn to God with my thirst, because only He can offer the water of life that will truly satisfy my soul.*

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.

*Dear Heavenly Father–Thank you for your invitation to come to you when I am thirsty. Help me to understand that my real thirst is for you and to turn to you with my desires and longings instead of the world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*
NOTES - DAY 10

John 3:16-17
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.
NOTES - DAY 10

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world.*

Reflect
What do you think this means?

*Jesus’ mission was one of offering salvation and hope, not condemnation*

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

*If Jesus’ mission was not that of condemnation, my mission shouldn’t be one of condemnation either.*

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.

*Gracious God, thank you for your Son Jesus that you sent to save the world, not condemn it. I confess it can be tempting to condemn others I see acting contrary to Your Word. Help me not to condemn others, but to pray for them and reach out to them with Your message of hope and salvation. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.*
Proverbs 3:5-6
Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight
DAY 11

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

*Lean not on your own understanding*

Reflect
What do you think this means?

*I should look to God and His Word to provide my understanding of the world around me and not to myself.*

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

*It’s so easy to rely on my way of thinking as I navigate the world around me. It’s also tempting to listen to others explain the condition of the human heart or the source of evil in the world according to reason or scientific study. God alone knows the condition of the human heart, and the way things appear is not always the way they actually are according to His Word. In seeking to walk a straight path, I should lean on Him, not on my own knowledge.*

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the gifts of Your Word and the Holy Spirit to guide me and direct me. Help me to trust in You completely, obeying Your Word and Your Spirit as I walk through this world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*
DAY 12

Hebrews 11:1
Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.
DAY 12

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

Certain of what we do not see

Reflect
What do you think this means?

Faith gives us a new set of eyes to see what our physical eyes cannot yet see and comprehend.

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

Too often what I ascribe as “faith” is more like wishful thinking. True faith is taking God at His Word and seeing His promises fulfilled even as I wait.

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.

Faithful Father—Thank You that Your Word is true, and Your Promises are real. Help me to have the kind of faith that expresses a genuine trust in You, not merely wishful thinking. Give me eyes of faith to see what You will do, even as I wait for those promises to be fulfilled. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.
Isaiah 40:31
But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.
DAY 13

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

*Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength*

Reflect
What do you think this means?

*Hoping in God strengthens those who put their trust in Him*

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

*When I feel weary or tired, I should remind myself about this promise and ask God to renew my faith and hope in Him.*

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.

*Heavenly Father, it is easy to feel tired and weary when I take my eyes off You. Strengthen my faith so that my hope is in You, and I do not grow weary in doing Your Will. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*
Psalm 1

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law, he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perishes.
DAY 14

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?
He is like a tree planted by streams of water.

Reflect
What do you think this means?
I picture a tree planted by water as being well nourished, healthy, strong, secure.

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?
I desire to be like that tree. This passage promises that if I meditate on the law of God day and night and make His law my delight, I can be secure and strong like that tree, producing fruit, too!

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
Heavenly Father—Thank you again for the gift of your Word. Help me to delight in it and meditate on it day and night. Thank you for the promise of being like a tree planted by streams of water. Help me to abide in you so that I produce fruit and offer the world around me a sense of stability. In Jesus’ name, Amen.
DAY 15

John 15:5
I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.
DAY 15

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

Reflect
What do you think this means?

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.
DAY 16

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

Reflect
What do you think this means?

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
DAY 17

Acts 1:8

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*
DAY 17

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

Reflect
What do you think this means?

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
Romans 12:1-2
Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
DAY 18

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

Reflect
What do you think this means?

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
Colossians 3:12-14
Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
DAY 19

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

Reflect
What do you think this means?

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
Psalm 23
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
DAY 20

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

Reflect
What do you think this means?

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
DAY 21

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
DAY 21

Read
What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?

Reflect
What do you think this means?

Relate
How does this affect you or apply to your life?

Respond
Ask God to help you live out this verse.
DAY 22

*Matthew 16:13-17*
DAY 23

Matthew 14:22-33
Read

Reflect

Relate

Respond
DAY 24

Matthew 20:20-28
DAY 24

Read

Reflect

Relate

Respond
DAY 25

Matthew John 4:1-42
DAY 25

Read

Reflect

Relate

Respond
DAY 26

John 12:1-8
DAY 26

Read

Reflect

Relate

Respond
DAY 27

John 13:1-17
DAY 27

Read

Reflect

Relate

Respond
DAY 28

*John 11:1-44*
DAY 28

Read

Reflect

Relate

Respond
DAY 29

Luke 19:1-10
DAY 29

Read

Reflect

Relate

Respond
DAY 30

Matthew 28:16-20
DAY 30

Read

Reflect

Relate

Respond
APPENDIX F – Week 2 Lesson Plan

Lectio Divina - Steps 1 and 2

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Goal of Lectio Divina – To hear from God in a personal way in accordance to His will for your life through His divinely inspired Word.

Illustration: Stories of St. Augustine, St. Anthony, St. Francis

- Rediscover this pattern of prayer

Life of Christ – Jesus Temptation in the Wilderness – Matthew 4:1-11

- Jesus knew God’s Word
- Jesus Used God’s Word

In the practice of Lectio Divina there are four intentional actions to fulfill.

- Lectio (read)
- Meditation (reflect)
- Oratio (relate)
- Contemplation (respond)

The first step is Lectio or reading:

- Perhaps the most challenging action for the twenty-first century Christian.
- Today when we read material that is written with an encouragement to “get to the point” when we read. Articles highlight the key ideas in bold print and key points are drawn to the side in a bold type face. Today’s reader is moving quickly.
- In contrast, the first step in lectio divina calls upon the reader to slow down.
- Imitating the monks of old, the reader will ruminate on the text one word at a time with the goal to hear from God.
• The goal of lectio (reading) is not to get to the end and move on to the next rather if we want to hear from God then first step is to read well.

• Pope Benedict XVI has remarked that lectio “consists in pouring over a biblical text for some time, reading it and rereading it, as it were, ruminating on it as the Fathers say and squeezing from it, so to speak, all its “juice.” So that it may nourish meditation and contemplation and like water, succeed in irrigating life itself.132”

• This first step is more than merely reading the words on the page, but it is inviting the Holy Spirit within you to have the Divine ability to read.

• The goal of this reading is not to rush through several chapters of Scripture but choose one passage and be intentional in your interaction with it.

• Rather than trying to take in large sections of Scripture the reader adopts a reflective stance towards a Scripture passage and when led of the Holy Spirit pausing on a single word or phrase that resonates with the mind and heart.

Key Points to practice:

• Read and Re-read as many times as necessary: 5 -20 times.

• Use shorter passages of scripture

• Read aloud if possible

• Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you read

Practical Exercise:

Day 1 – 30 Day Bible Reading Devotional – John 4:13-14

• Short passage – only two verses- great depth of truth in these two verses

The second step is known as “meditatio"

• Latin for "meditation"— which invites one to reflect upon what was read
Reflect

Ancient monks explained this process as deep, unhurried thinking about the Word one has read.

It has been best described as a rumination during which a cow chews the cud.

As the Word is read in this step, the process of ruminating draws a person more deeply with the Word to reveal God’s truth within a particular passage for the individual.

This step is dependent upon the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

As you read ask yourself these questions:

- What is the verse or phrase that stands out to you?
- What do you think this means?

Write the responses to these questions as you continue to read and reread the text.

When God speaks directly and personally to you it will change your life.

Practical Exercise:

- Day 1 – 30 Day Bible Reading Devotional – John 4:13-14

As you read this passage this week, what stood out to you? What words or phrases did the Holy Spirit illuminate or draw your attention unto?

Closing Remarks and Prayer

- Keep working through your devotional
- See you next week
APPENDIX G - Week 3 – Lesson Plan

Lectio Divina - Steps 3 and 4

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Goal of Lectio Divina – To hear from God in a personal way in accordance to His will for your life from His divinely inspired Word.

In the practice of Lectio Divina there are four intentional actions to fulfill.

- Lectio (read)
- Meditation (reflect)
- Oratio (relate)
- Contemplation (respond)

The third step is Oratio or Relate:

- Contemplation is characterized by an openness of the reader to respond to God’s Word in relationship to their life.
- By God’s grace, contemplatio gives one a unique ability to connect one’s newly discovered insights from step two, to daily life experiences, with the inspiration that comes from the Word of God and that has the gracious capacity to refresh the heart and mind.
- This step brings the intersection between the readers' life and God's Word.

Word of Caution:

- Within steps two and three lie the potential danger that some contemporary critics have cast aside Lectio Divina as a bible engagement methodology.
- Lectio Divina should never be considered a process by which one pursues a mystical experience with God from which the goal is to empower themselves. Those who take this
supernatural approach to the text could tend to adopt an extreme expression that focuses on an experience with God that is separate from the objective meaning of the text.\textsuperscript{133}

- Faithful Christians should always use the Word of God to pursue knowledge of God, His wisdom and His holiness with the aim of transforming their lives.
- Lectio Divina should not be used for a mystical personal encounter with God.
- Those who take Lectio Divina to the extreme run the risk of disconnecting the text from the context and the natural meaning of the text in order to have a subjective and individualistic experience with God.
- The focus of lectio Divina should never be to have a mystical experience with God but to rather expose oneself objectively with the truths of God’s Word in order to align one’s life in accordance to God’s will.

**Key to Success:** The Word of God is to be studied, meditated upon, prayed over, and memorized for the knowledge and meaning they contain and the authority from God they carry, and not for the mystical experience or feeling of personal power and inner peace they may stimulate.

- Sound knowledge comes first; then the lasting kind of experience and peace comes as a byproduct of knowing and communing with God rightly through his Word.
- As long as a person takes this view of the Bible and prayer, he/she is engaging in the same kind of meditation and prayer that Bible-believing followers of Christ have always commended.
- As long as the individuals who are practicing lectio Divina are meditating on the objective truths that are contextually taught in within the scriptures they find themselves in right practice.

\textsuperscript{133} Tim Challis
If the individual practicing Lectio Divina moves too far into mysticism it could allow them to claim that their 'inner light' had authority over objective doctrine that are true to the Word of God.
APPENDIX H – Discipleship Pathway Assessment #2

1. Did you complete the first assessment on (date)? Please mark the answer indicating your participation. If “yes” please proceed to the remainder of the assessment. If “no” thank you for your time, but there is no need to proceed through the remainder of the assessment.

   ______ YES   ______ NO

2. If you answered “Yes” to question one, how many weeks, if any, did you participate in the Bible Engagement study? Please circle the answer indicating your level of participation.

   1 Week  2 Weeks  3 Weeks  4 Weeks  I was unable to attend any

3. Approximately how many days did you complete the provided Bible Reading Plan using the lectio divina Bible engagement Methodology? Please circle the answer indicating your level of participation.

   All 30 Days  15-20 Days  5-10 Days  1-5 Days  None

You may now complete the Discipleship Pathway Assessment

To complete the assessment:
- Turn to page two and write your name on the top of the page in the blank space provided.
- Then proceed with the remainder of the assessment.
- Upon completion, please add the total for each category for your review.
- Finally, return it to Robert Stephens.
Discipleship Pathway Assessment

Your spiritual journey as a follower of Christ began the moment you admitted personal sin and placed your trust in Christ as Savior and Lord. From that point, until death or the return of Christ, your life’s call is to grow in Christlikeness.

Jesus summarizes the disciple’s call in Mark 8:34, “If anyone wants to be My follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me” (Holman CSB).

Accomplishing such a challenging assignment requires growing in your understanding of what it means to be a Christian, expanding your personal knowledge of biblical truth, and applying daily what you learn. Through the presence of His indwelling Spirit, God enables you to know, obey, and serve Him.

God expects His children to grow spiritually and His Word encourages personal examination as an element of growth.

- “Let us search out and examine our ways…” Lamentations 3:40
- “Now, the Lord of Hosts says this: ‘Think carefully about your ways.’” Haggai 1:5
- “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.” Psalm 139:23-24
- “But each person should examine his own work, and then he will have a reason for boasting in himself alone, and not in respect to someone else.” Galatians 6:4
- “Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people, but as wise.” Ephesians 5:15

This assessment process can help you complete an examination and careful search of your spiritual growth. Complete the Spiritual Growth Assessment.

The assessment helps you think carefully about your spiritual development related to six specific spiritual disciplines; abiding in Christ, living in the Word, praying in faith, fellowshipping with believers, witnessing to the world, ministering to others. Before completing your responses, ask the Lord to guide your evaluation. Since most of these statements require a subjective response, His guidance is the key to an accurate appraisal. Also, resist the urge to compare scores with others. Self-condemnation or pride could result from such comparisons. Trust God to help you grow spiritually by revealing heart issues and empowering you to take action.

As you complete this assessment process the temptation might be to think your efforts are central to growing spiritually. Remember, becoming like Christ centers on His work in us and not our work for Him. God desires heart change over religious actions. Without question, God does the revealing, the renewing, the empowering, and the recreating. Your part as His disciple is to do the yielding, the submitting, and the obeying.
**Spiritual Growth Assessment**

As you complete the assessment, avoid rushing. Listen for God’s voice to encourage and challenge you. Consider this experience as one-on-one time with Him. Be intentional in your growth towards Christlikeness. Use the scale below to respond to each statement.

Never - 1  Seldom - 2  Occasionally - 3  Frequent - 4  Always - 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ABIDE IN CHRIST</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. I practice a regular quiet time and look forward to that time with Christ.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. When making choices, I seek Christ’s guidance first.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. My relationship with Christ is motivated more by love than duty or fear.</td>
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<td>4. I experience life change as a result of my worship experiences.</td>
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<td>5. When God makes me aware of His specific will in an area of my life, I follow His leading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I believe Christ provides the only way for a relationship with God.</td>
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<td>7. My actions demonstrate a desire to build God’s kingdom rather than my own.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I trust Christ to help me through any problem or crisis I face.</td>
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<td>10. I remain confident of God’s love and provision during difficult times.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Abide in Christ Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>LIVE IN THE WORD</strong></td>
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<td>1. I regularly read and study my Bible.</td>
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<td>2. I believe the Bible is God’s Word and provides His instructions for life.</td>
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<td>3. I evaluate cultural ideas and lifestyles by biblical standards.</td>
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<td>4. I can answer questions about life and faith from a biblical perspective.</td>
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<td>5. I replace impure or inappropriate thoughts with God’s truth.</td>
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<td>6. I demonstrate honesty in my actions and conversation.</td>
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<td>7. When the Bible exposes an area of my life needing change, I respond to make things right.</td>
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<td>8. Generally, my public and private self are the same</td>
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<td>9. I use the Bible as the guide for the way I think and act.</td>
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<td>10. I study the Bible for the purpose of discovering truth for daily living.</td>
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<td><strong>Live By God’s Word Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>PRAY IN FAITH</strong></td>
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<td>1. My prayers focus on discovering God’s will more than expressing my needs.</td>
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<td>2. I trust God to answer when I pray and wait patiently on His timing.</td>
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<td>3. My prayers include thanksgiving, praise, confession, and requests.</td>
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<td>4. I expect to grow in my prayer life and intentionally seek help to improve.</td>
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<td>5. I spend as much time listening to God as talking to Him.</td>
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<td>6. I pray because I am aware of my complete dependence on God for everything in my life.</td>
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<td>7. Regular participation in group prayer characterizes my prayer life.</td>
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<td>8. I maintain an attitude of prayer throughout each day.</td>
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<td>9. I believe my prayers impact my life and the lives of others.</td>
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<td>10. I engage in a daily prayer time.</td>
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<td><strong>Pray In Faith Total</strong></td>
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### FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS

1. I forgive others when their actions harm me.
2. I admit my errors in relationships and humbly seek forgiveness from the one I’ve hurt.
3. I allow other Christians to hold me accountable for spiritual growth.
4. I seek to live in harmony with other members of my family.
5. I place the interest of others above my self-interest.
6. I am gentle and kind in my interactions with others.
7. I encourage and listen to feedback from others to help me discover areas for relationship growth.
8. I show patience in my relationships with family and friends.
9. I encourage others by pointing out their strengths rather than criticizing their weaknesses.
10. My time commitments demonstrate that I value relationships over work/career/hobbies.

**Build Godly Relationships Total**

### WITNESS TO THE WORLD

1. I share my faith in Christ with non-believers.
2. I regularly pray for non-believers I know.
3. I make my faith known to my neighbors and/or fellow employees.
4. I intentionally maintain relationships with non-believers in order to share my testimony.
5. When confronted about my faith, I remain consistent and firm in my testimony.
6. I help others understand how to effectively share a personal testimony.
7. I make sure the people I witness to get the follow-up and support needed to grow in Christ.
8. I encourage my church and friends to support mission efforts.
9. I am prepared to share my testimony at any time.

**Witness To The World Total**

### MINISTER TO OTHERS

1. I understand my spiritual gifts and use those gifts to serve others.
2. I serve others expecting nothing in return.
3. I sacrificially contribute my finances to help others in my church and community.
4. I go out of my way to show love to people I meet.
5. Meeting the needs of others provides a sense of purpose in my life.
6. I share biblical truth with those I serve as God gives opportunity.
7. I act as if other’s needs are as important as my own.
8. I expect God to use me every day in His kingdom work.
9. I regularly contribute time to a ministry at my church.
10. I help others identify ministry gifts and become involved in ministry.

**Minister To Others Total**
Appendix I – Participant Response from Discipleship Pathway Assessment 1 within the
“Living in the Word” Spiritual Category

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