

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Prayerlessness: Using Expository Sermons to Change the way Believers Pray

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

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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In America, the church is operating with less supernatural power than it once did or currently does in other parts of the world, especially as it relates to those like East Barbourville Baptist Church who belong to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). For example, the Annual Church Profile data of the SBC for the 2018 year reveals that its overall membership has reached a thirty-year low. Likewise, the data reveals a decline in baptisms for the tenth year in a row. Yet, the church has access to more ministry tools and better training than any previous generation, so what is the problem?

The project director believes that the problem is tied to the prayerlessness of the contemporary congregation. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to confront and correct the prayerlessness of East Barbourville Baptist Church through the use of expository sermons. With that said, the project director will survey the congregation to evaluate the quality of their prayer life. Using the results of the survey as a baseline measurement for the congregation's prayer lives, he will then rely upon the use of expository sermons to equip and empower the congregation to improve the time they spend in prayer. Afterwards, the project director will survey the congregation to identify the impact that the expository sermons have had in the prayer lives of the congregation.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Ministry Context	1
Problem Presented	4
Purpose Statement	8
Basic Assumptions	9
Definitions	12
Delimitations	14
Limitations	15
Thesis Statement	17
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework	18
Literature Review	18
Theological Foundation	30
Theoretical Foundation	40
Chapter 3: Methodology	49
Intervention Design	49
Implementation of Intervention Design	56
Chapter 4: Results	72
Practical Significance	73
Pre-Project Survey Percentage Scores Per Question	75
Effect of Change from Pre-Post Per Question	82
Effect of Change from Pre-Post Per Question Section	88
Reverse Effect of Change from Pre-Post	90
Statistical Significance	91
Paired t-test Comparing all Questions Pre-Post	93
Paired t-test Per Question	94
Paired t-test Per Section	103
Conclusion	105
Chapter 5: Conclusion	106
Conclusions from the Research Project	106
Challenges of the Research Project	108
Positives Associated with the Research Project	111
Suggested Improvements for the Research Project	112
Future Interest of Study	114
Conclusion	117
Bibliography	119
Appendix A	122

Appendix B.....	123
Appendix C.....	125
IRB Approval.....	127

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Ministry Context

The following is a research project that will be conducted within the ministry context of the congregation where the project director serves as pastor. The name of the church is East Barbourville Baptist Church and is in a small rural town of Southeastern Kentucky called Barbourville. The initial vision and groundwork for what would one day become East Barbourville Baptist Church were first born in the heart of the leadership and laity of the First Baptist Church of Barbourville. As early as 1939 members of the First Baptist Church began a Sunday School ministry in the community where East Barbourville Baptist Church exists today. In those early days, these Sunday School classes were held on Sunday afternoons and met in what was then called “The Old Hignite Feed Barn.” According to records obtained from First Baptist Church of Barbourville, the Sunday School ministry ran strong for a period of approximately four years and frequently reached upwards of one hundred people in attendance. Unfortunately, there is no record of the work between 1943 and July of 1949 which has led some to believe that there was no work taking place during that time.

Nevertheless, records show that the work resumed by July of 1949 when the pastor and members of the First Baptist Church of Barbourville held a tent meeting in the neighborhood of what is now known as East Barbourville Baptist Church. In addition, they formally voted to begin a mission that they chose to name Highway Chapel. As a mission, the congregation acquired and outgrew several different buildings and properties within the same geographical location. The first building was an old restaurant building known as the “Sizzling Steak.” Next, following World War II the America Legion gave some barrack buildings otherwise known as “Quonset huts” to the mission and they were erected on a piece of donated property. Finally, in

August of 1954 First Baptist Church of Barbourville voted to purchase what was known as the “Old Deluxe Laundry” building and property where the church campus continues to reside today.

It should be noted that East Barbourville Baptist Church was finally and formally constituted as an independent and self-supporting church on September 9, 1962. During that time, the Southern Baptist Convention had launched a church-planting initiative called the 30,000 movement and East Barbourville Baptist Church was among the nearly 25,000 new congregations who were constituted as independent and self-supporting churches. Since then the congregation has experienced several seasons of growth and expansion. As such, they moved into a new sanctuary in the year 2000 and built a recreational and educational building in 2016. In addition, the project director began his ministry at East Barbourville Baptist Church in January of 2012. Up until that point the church had enjoyed the tenure of a thirty-year pastorate. Following the retirement of their long-tenured pastor, the church relied upon the leadership of an interim pastor for approximately a year a half before calling the project director to lead the congregation. The project director has since served as the senior pastor for the last eight years.

Having been in existence for over fifty-five years East Barbourville Baptist Church is characterized as an established congregation with a traditional style of worship. As such, the church has maintained the pattern of holding at least three church services per week since being constituted as a church in 1962. With that said, the Sunday morning service has historically been the most frequently attended service of the week. During the Sunday morning service, the congregation devotes most of their time to singing and preaching with minimal opportunities for individual and corporate prayer throughout the service. Likewise, the Sunday evening service is similar in style and structure to that of the Sunday morning service meaning there is little opportunity provided for individual or corporate prayer. The Wednesday evening service on the

other hand varies from the other two weekly services in style, structure, and attendance. For example, the bulk of the service is focused on prayer and Bible study with little attention given to congregational singing. The design is intentional as the pastor desires to provide a platform for a corporate and concerted effort of prayer within the congregation. Nevertheless, the midweek service is the least attended service of the week. While there are several variables that might affect the attendance of this service the project director suspects that part of the lack of participation is tied to the health of the congregation's prayer life or the lack thereof. This is a problem that he will seek to address with a select group of active members of his congregation throughout the duration of this project.

According to the 2018 annual church profile, East Barbourville Baptist Church averages two hundred and twenty-four in active attendance on Sunday mornings. While some of those who attend are prospective members most of them are active members of the congregation. As such, the church and the project director view an active member of the congregation to be someone who regularly attends church after they have publicly professed faith in Christ and followed through in believer's baptism. With that said, the church maintains up to date membership records that are directly associated with two types of church members. First, the church keeps a record of those that are referred to as inactive members. For all practical purposes, inactive members are those who at one point and time was active in attendance following their profession of faith and baptism but are no longer active in attendance today. It should be noted that a person who has not attended a service in a given year qualifies as an inactive member and is moved to the inactive list unless they are away at college, caring for a shut-in, or deployed in the military. Second, the church keeps a record of those members who

have professed faith in Christ, been baptized, and attended the church within the last twelve months.

As such, the deacon ministry of East Barbourville Baptist Church works to keep these membership lists up to date in conjunction with the church's Deacon Family Ministry Plan. In conjunction with the Deacon Family Ministry Plan, each deacon is assigned several individuals or families that belong to the church as active members. The deacons are responsible for praying for these families, ministering to them as an extension of the pastoral care ministry of the church, and keeping up with the attendance records of their assigned members. After attempts have been made to restore an individual or family to the fellowship of the church their lack of attendance is then addressed in one of the twelve deacon meetings of the year in consultation with the pastor. At which point the deacons and pastor will advise the church secretary to move the inactive individual or family to the inactive membership list of the church. According to this data, the number of inactive members is shown to exceed the number of active members by a large margin. Nevertheless, the pastor is determined to invest in the spiritual growth of the active membership of the congregation using the Sunday morning service and the pulpit as a catalyst for making mature disciples for Christ.

Problem Presented

Culturally speaking, opponents of the Christian faith would suggest that congregations like East Barbourville Baptist Church are facing the threat of extinction as the religiosity of America appears to be waning while the secularization of America appears to be gaining momentum. However, research data discovered by those at the Barna Group suggests that

America is still a deeply religious nation.¹ Some might even go so far as to suggest that it is actually a Christian nation. For example, the aforementioned research survey conducted by the Barna Group indicates that at least seventy-nine percent of respondents believe in God and identify as someone who adheres to a world religion.² It should be noted that out of those who responded to the survey only six percent claimed to be affiliated with one of the world religions such as Judaism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, Islam, etc. while the remaining seventy-three percent identified themselves as distinctly Christian.³ Therefore, one is left to concur that the majority of the religiously affiliated in America identify themselves as Christians.

Likewise, the religiosity of America can also be seen in the number of people who claim that they pray daily. For example, according to a different study conducted by those at the Pew Research Center, there is some fifty-five percent of American adults who claim that they spend time in prayer each day.⁴ Of course, this number represents all of those who identify themselves to be adherents of some brand of organized religion. Ironically, this number also includes a small number of the religious unaffiliated who admit that prayer is at least a small part of their life whether religion is or not. Nevertheless, considering this data Americans, in general, are shown to pray more often than those living in other western civilizations such as Canada, Australia, and all of the European states.⁵

¹ "The State of the Church 2016," Barna Group, September 15, 2016, www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016/.

² "The State of the Church 2016," Barna Group, 2016.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dalia Fahmy, "Americans Are Far More Religious than Adults in Other Wealthy Nations," Pew Research Center, Pew Research Center, accessed July 31 2018, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/07/31/americans-are-far-more-religious-than-adults-in-other-wealthy-nations/.

⁵ Ibid.

Yet, the question remains regarding the commitment to prayer in the lives of those who profess to be Christians. More pointedly this author is especially concerned with the commitment to prayer that is found among those who are classified as Evangelical Protestants. As such, the data shows that seventy-nine percent of evangelical Protestants are praying daily while fourteen percent admit to praying at least weekly.⁶ Nevertheless, the author finds this information both encouraging and discouraging. First, this news is encouraging because the number of Evangelical Protestants who are praying exceeds the national norm of fifty-five percent as mentioned above. However, this report is also discouraging because it reveals that twenty-one percent of Evangelical Protestants are neglecting to spend time in prayer each day as they reportedly pray just weekly, monthly, or seldom if ever.⁷

With that said, the percentage of those who are neglecting to pray is concerning given the fact that the Southern Baptist Convention of which this author and his congregation belong falls under the category of Evangelical Protestants. According to Pew Research Center, four percent of the Evangelical Protestants who were surveyed as a part of this study identify as members of the Southern Baptist Convention.⁸ As a result, when one takes a closer look at prayer by the numbers within the Southern Baptist Convention the landscape appears strikingly similar to that of Evangelical Protestants as a whole. For example, eighty-one percent of Southern Baptist congregants indicated that they pray daily while another twelve percent admitted that they pray

⁶ “Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics,” accessed July 31, 2018, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Members of the Southern Baptist Convention Who Pray Weekly - Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics,” Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project, July 31, 2018, www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/frequency-of-prayer/weekly/religious-denomination/southern-baptist-convention/.

at least weekly.⁹ Once again the author finds these numbers to be both encouraging and discouraging as well. First, it is encouraging to note that the number of those praying on a daily basis within the Southern Baptist Convention exceeds the overall number of those praying daily within the realm of all Evangelical Protestants by a margin of at least two percent. On the other hand, these numbers are discouraging because the remaining nineteen percent of those within the Southern Baptist Convention are neglecting to spend time in prayer each day as they reportedly pray just weekly, monthly, or seldom if ever.¹⁰

Admittedly, the percentage of Southern Baptists who participated in the Pew Research Center survey referenced above are affiliated with but not necessarily active in attendance at a Southern Baptist Church. Therefore, the numbers above while promising, have not necessarily been proven to be true within the context of a local congregation. For example, a recent research project involving prayer and its role in church revitalization found that as few as thirty-three percent of the active congregants of the project directors church were maintaining prayer time with God every day.¹¹ It should be noted that Dr. Sean Lee sought to recruit project participants who were faithful in attendance and active in the ministry of his church. As such, each participant who participated in his project either served in a leadership role or on a committee of Holly Grove Baptist Church.¹² In response, the project revealed that one-hundred percent of

⁹ “Members of the Southern Baptist Convention - Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics,” accessed July, 31 2018, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/southern-baptist-convention/#beliefs-and-practices>.

¹⁰ “Members of the Southern Baptist Convention - Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics,” accessed July 31, 2018, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/southern-baptist-convention/#beliefs-and-practices>.

¹¹ Sean Lee, “Equipping A Select Group of Leaders of Holly Grove Baptist Church, Spring Hope, North Carolina, To Pray in Preparation for Church Revitalization.” (D.Min diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 97.

¹² *Ibid.*, 65.

participants acknowledged that they struggled with prayer while sixty-seven percent of participants were shown to be neglecting to pray daily.¹³

Needless, to say in light of the data that has been presented above this author is concerned about the quality of the prayer life of the Southern Baptist congregation which he has been called to lead as pastor. According to the data that has been previously discussed at least nineteen percent of Southern Baptist congregants are struggling when it comes to spending time each day in prayer.¹⁴ In addition, as many as sixty-seven percent of active members may be struggling when it comes to spending time in prayer each day.¹⁵ With that said, the problem this research project will address is the level of prayerlessness that is found within the active members of East Barbourville Baptist Church.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is to confront and correct the perceived prayerlessness of East Barbourville Baptist Church through the use of expository sermons. As a Southern Baptist pastor, the project director wants to strengthen the prayer life of the congregation that he leads. As such, he is concerned regarding how his congregation compares with the available data related to the prayer life of other Southern Baptists and congregations like his as discussed above. In his estimation, according to the Bible, every born-again believer should have a daily commitment to the spiritual discipline of prayer. With that said, the project director will seek to

¹³ Ibid., 97.

¹⁴ “Members of the Southern Baptist Convention - Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics,” accessed July 31, 2018, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/southern-baptist-convention/#beliefs-and-practices>.

¹⁵ Sean Lee, “Equipping A Select Group of Leaders of Holly Grove Baptist Church, Spring Hope, North Carolina, To Pray in Preparation for Church Revitalization,” (D.Min diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 97.

identify what impact if any that expository sermons can have in moving believers within his congregation to a greater level of commitment to prayer.

The project director believes the tangible benefits of those involved with this project will be threefold. First and foremost, the project participants will benefit from being challenged to reach a greater level of commitment to prayer in his or her Christian walk. This will occur as the project director preaches a four-week expository sermon series centered upon the subject of prayer. As a result of being informed and inspired by God's Word, members will be motivated to devote more time to the spiritual discipline of prayer. Second, the health of the congregation will benefit as members become equipped and mobilized as prayer warriors within the church. The Bible is replete with examples of God moving in supernatural ways in response to the prayers of His people. Therefore, a praying church should expect to experience the Spirit of God working in and through the life of the congregation. Third, the project director will be able to measure the impact of his preaching as it pertains to discipleship and sanctification within the life of the congregation. Too often preachers measure their effectiveness in the pulpit by the number of folks kneeling at the altar during an invitation that is given at the end of a worship service. However, the impact of their preaching is not always immediately or visibly evident. In some cases, such as prayer the parishioner's spiritual growth is manifested in private as an act of worship between them and God. With that in mind, this project will allow the project director to determine a correlation between the sermon's impact in areas other than those which merit a public response.

Basic Assumptions

The project director believes that several underlying assumptions play a guiding role in this research project. It should be noted that these assumptions are the result of personal study

and meditation involving several passages of Scripture that are found in both the Old and New Testaments. The first assumption guiding the project highlights the need for believers to be taught how to pray. The basis for this assumption is found in Luke's gospel. For example, according to Luke 11:1 Jesus "was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples."¹⁶ Clearly, teaching a follower to pray was a common practice as illustrated in the reference to John the Baptist instructing his disciples in the discipline of prayer. In response to their request, Jesus then proceeded to teach His disciples how to pray as well using what has been called the model prayer or the Lord's prayer.

Another underlying assumption that will play a guiding role in this project is the understanding that believers should maintain some type of daily prayer time with God. Admittedly, the Bible does not prescribe a set time for prayer nor does it command the believer to pray a specific number of times each day. However, throughout the Old and New Testaments, a pattern of praying multiple times per day can be observed. In the opinion of this author, these biblical examples support the assumption that prayer should be a daily discipline in the life of the Christian. The prophet Daniel is one of these examples. Daniel was so committed to the spiritual discipline of prayer that he determined to pray three times a day just as he had always done even if continuing to do so costed him his life. The determination of Daniel's prayer life is felt in the words of Daniel 6:10 where the author explains "When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house. The windows in its upper room opened toward Jerusalem,

¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are in this thesis project will be from the Holman Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011).

and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”

In the New Testament Jesus often spoke in parables. On one occasion the parable He told was focused on the subject of prayer. In the words of Luke 18:1, “He then told them a parable on the need for them to pray always and not become discouraged.” Throughout the parable, He described a persistent widow who continually pleaded for help from someone referred to in the parable as an unjust judge. In the end, the persistence of the widow prevailed, and her petition was granted by the one who had the power to act on her behalf. Jesus concluded the parable with these words in Luke 18:6-7 “Then the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 Will not God grant justice to His elect who cry out to Him day and night? Will He delay to help them?” In the opinion of this author, these words indicate a divine expectation for the believer to pray at least daily if not at multiple points throughout the day.

In addition, there is evidence in the New Testament to suggest that the early church and first-century Christians had adopted a pattern of praying up to as many as two or three times per day. With that said, the book of Acts points to the early Christian community’s involvement with set prayer times that were observed in conjunction with the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.¹⁷ For example, Acts 2:42 explains that after the church was born on the day of Pentecost “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.” A few verses later in Acts 2:46 Luke adds that “Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude.” It is understood from the historical and cultural context

¹⁷ John B. Polhill, *New American Commentary – Acts* (Nashville: TN, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 120.

of the first century that worshippers would gather at the temple complex during the third, sixth, and ninth hours of the day to pray.¹⁸ With that said, it is understood that the observance of these set hours of prayer is what Luke was referring to in Acts 2:42 when he mentions “the prayers” and in Acts 2:46 when he mentions their daily attendance at the “temple complex.” This interpretation is further supported by Acts 3:1 where Luke explains that “Peter and John were going up together to the temple complex at the hour of prayer at three in the afternoon” and in Acts 10:3 and Acts 10:30 as a Christian named Cornelius is shown to be observing the ninth hour of prayer in his home.

In addition, the apostle Paul summarizes the frequency of a Christian’s prayer life in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 when he instructs the child of God to “pray without ceasing” and to “Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request” according to Ephesians 6:18. As such, these passages argue for the Christian to practice a lifestyle of prayer with an ongoing and unbroken pattern of praying at least each day. With that said, the project director will use these underlying assumptions to guide his project in hopes that he might effectively equip the active members of East Barbourville Baptist Church to reach new levels in their prayer lives.

Definitions

In a church, there are guests, attenders, and members. Guests are those who attend a church for the very first time. Attenders are those who attend the church on more than one occasion without taking the necessary steps to become a formal member of the congregation. An *active church member* on the other hand is recognized, at least for the purpose of this project, as

¹⁸ Ibid, 125.

someone who regularly attends church after they have publicly professed faith in Christ and followed through with believer's baptism.

There are multiple spiritual disciplines associated with the Christian life. Among them are the inward disciplines of meditation, study, fasting, and prayer. Nevertheless, this project is focused upon the spiritual discipline of prayer. In regards to prayer, E.M. Bounds once described it as a voice that goes into God's ear, which lives as long as God's ear is open to holy pleas, as long as God's heart is alive to holy things.¹⁹ The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology described prayer as the way one makes contact with God and the way by which God communicates with man.²⁰ Therefore, it is understood that a prayer is a unique form of communication. A form of communication that connects the throne room of heaven with worshippers here on earth. Therefore, for this project *prayer* will be defined as reverently and openly communicating with God.²¹

According to Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *preaching* is the oral communication of biblical truth by the Holy Spirit through a human personality to a given audience with the intent of enabling a positive response.²² With that said, there are various types of sermons that are preached within the realm of homiletics. The three traditional categories representing these types of sermons are the topical sermon, the textual sermon, and the expository sermon.²³ In conjunction with this project, the project director will rely upon the use of the expository sermon.

¹⁹ E.M. Bounds, *The Best of E.M. Bounds on Prayer* (Grand Rapids: MI, Baker Book House, 1981), 75.

²⁰ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: MI, Baker Academic, 2001), 946.

²¹ Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick, *The Battle Plan for Prayer* (Nashville: TN, Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2015), 33.

²² Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 27.

²³ Donald L. Hamilton, *Homiletical Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 24.

An expository sermon is understood to be a discourse that expounds a passage of Scripture, organizes it around a central theme and main divisions which issue forth from the given text, and then decisively applies its message to the listeners.²⁴

Delimitations

As pointed out by Sensing this project cannot cover every conceivable angle or investigate every single interesting or pertinent idea related to expository sermons and their impact upon the prayer life of the congregation.²⁵ Therefore, the project director recognizes the need for establishing some delimitations that will aid him in keeping the project keenly focused. In doing so, the project director will begin by recruiting forty-four active members of East Barbourville Baptist Church who will be asked to complete the pre and post-project survey questionnaire and attend or at least listen to the expository sermon series on prayer. It should be noted that forty-four members will be recruited because this number constitutes a total of twenty percent of the active members of his congregation. Likewise, the focus is on active members of the congregation because these individuals are the ones who have been baptized and are demonstrating a commitment to grow in their walk with Christ.

In addition, the project director will recruit a total of twenty-two females and twenty-two male participants who are at least eighteen years of age or older for the project. Ideally, this controlled sampling will allow the project director to understand the impact of expository sermons as it relates to the prayer lives of both men and women in the congregation. Also, this will allow the project to focus on those who have reached a point of maturity in their stage of life

²⁴ Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 29.

²⁵ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 20.

and the Christian faith. This is in keeping with Sensing who advocates that one should delimit their project by defining their scope and setting their boundaries.²⁶

Lastly, the scope of this project will span a total of six weeks. The first week will involve the completion of the pre-project survey which the project director will use to establish a baseline measurement for the participant's current level of commitment to prayer. Next, the project director will preach a four-week series of expository sermons related specifically to the subject of prayer. Afterward, the project director will use a post-project survey questionnaire to measure the effect that the series of expository sermons has had on the prayer lives of the participants.

Limitations

Through the execution of this project, the project director is seeking to determine whether expository sermons can have a direct impact on the way that believers pray. In other words, can expository sermons be used in reversing the perceived prayerlessness that exists within churches like his which belong to the Southern Baptist Convention? Specifically, he is most interested in discovering how this directly plays out in the prayer lives of the congregation where he serves as pastor. As such, he recognizes that the scope of this project is limited to the congregation of East Barbourville Baptist Church and the fact that it represents only a small sampling of the Southern Baptist Convention. With that said, the project director agrees with Tim Sensing and the concern he raises regarding the fact that there may be limitations surrounding ones' study within which the conclusions of the project must be confined.²⁷ Therefore, it is accepted that the data

²⁶ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 20.

²⁷ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 20.

discovered through this project may or may not apply to all ministry contexts that identify themselves as Southern Baptist congregations.

In addition, the project director recognizes that the research project will be limited to some degree by what Sensing refers to as uncontrolled variables.²⁸ With that in mind, the first uncontrolled variable that concerns the project director is related to the completion of the survey questionnaire which will involve the participation of members of his congregation. Here Sensing cautions the researcher to keep in mind that the data they analyze might be the result of what he calls a rehearsed script.²⁹ In other words, because of the relationship that exists between the pastor and the congregation participants may be tempted to tell their pastor what they think he wants to hear. As a result, participants may end up painting a picture regarding their prayer life that is otherwise untrue so that they may look spiritual in the eyes of their pastor. It should be noted that this kind of response is rooted in the human tendency to be self-serving and grounded in ego. Therefore, it must be understood that because the reputation of participants is tied to the project results participants will most likely present their identity from a guarded perspective.³⁰

Likewise, the project director recognizes that the success of the research project relies upon both the honest evaluation of the prayer life of participants as well as the individual's consistent participation in the expository sermon series on prayer. In other words, the project director will be relying upon the individuals involved in the survey to honor their commitment to the integrity of the project by attending each sermon in the sermon series. In a perfect world, this would not present a problem. However, the project director realizes that a combination of factors can create problems and prevent participants from maintaining perfect attendance for the sermon

²⁸ Ibid., 21.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 21.

series. For example, issues such as sickness, accidents, or injuries cannot be scheduled. In addition, some work schedules can change without adequate notice. Therefore, the project will be limited by the participant's inability to maintain perfect attendance for the duration of the project.

Finally, the fact that some participants may ultimately be unsaved presents a unique limitation to the project as well. With that said, it is understood among the Christian community that not everyone who is a member of the church is a Christian. Ultimately, only God and the individual themselves know whether they have truly been born again. Unfortunately, there is no way for the project director to know whether a potential participant is genuinely a Christian. All the project director can rely upon is the person's profession of faith and record of membership within the church beginning with their date of baptism. As such, these individuals would limit the scope of the project as they would not be expected to demonstrate any change in their prayer pattern from the beginning to the end of the project.

Thesis Statement

Prayer is an important relational element of a believer's walk with God. Likewise, pastors have a unique platform from which they can impact the spiritual growth of their congregations when it comes to areas such as prayer. As such, pastors should use the pulpit to preach expository sermons that will instruct and inspire members to pray daily.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

A plethora of resources exists pertaining to the study of the subject of prayer. However, every resource is not necessarily reliable, and every author is not necessarily credible. Therefore, the project director has primarily interacted with those sources that are deemed to be of academic quality written by those who are considered to be scholars or at least experts in the field when it comes to the subject of prayer. With that said, the goal of this chapter is to review the selected literature that the project director has consulted as a part of this study in order to equip him for the task of preaching and teaching on the subject of prayer. It should be noted that the project director did not limit his study by consulting only books that had been previously published about prayer. He did however expand his review of the literature by exploring other scholarly publications such as journal articles as well as other research project dissertations. As such, the literature review should demonstrate a balanced level of both classic and contemporary scholarship.

Richard Foster has written a book titled *Celebration of Discipline*. The book was first written in 1978 and has since been recognized for its contribution to the study of spiritual disciplines. The book explores a total of twelve spiritual disciplines consisting of three categories namely inner disciplines, outward disciplines, and corporate disciplines. Among the inner disciplines that Foster discusses is the discipline of prayer. In the words of Foster prayer out of all the spiritual disciplines is the most central because it ushers one into perpetual communion with the Father.³¹ It should be noted that Foster draws his insights primarily from the Scriptures

³¹ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978), 33.

themselves while leaning on the works of others such as Andrew Murray, Martin Luther, David Brainerd, Adoniram Judson, George Fox, John Hyde, and others. According to Foster prayer is something that you must learn.³² Likewise, in making that point he shares from his own experience with prayer and how he has come to grow in the discipline as a Christian. Furthermore, this chapter on The Discipline of Prayer is focused on intercessory prayer and teaching believers how to pray effectively for others.³³

The Power of Prayer and Fasting is a book written by Dr. Ronnie Floyd. The book was written in 2010 and explores the subject of prayer and fasting using the author's personal testimonies and the study of the biblical precedent for prayer and fasting. In the words of Dr. John Bright, fasting coupled with prayer is a spiritual atomic bomb because of the potential of their combined spiritual power. As such, Bright thinks that Floyd's book explains how one goes about the task of lighting the fuse.³⁴ However, Floyd himself admits within the book that he struggled with knowing how to effectively engage in these spiritual disciplines early in his Christian life. He also laments the fact that the subject has seldom been adequately addressed in recent generations. In doing so he alleges that the lack of prayer and fasting has resulted in a lack of supernatural power in the life of today's church and contemporary Christians.³⁵ Nevertheless, his commitment to Biblical truth eventually led him to fully realize the power of prayer and fasting in his own life and ministry. Therefore, he has written this book to challenge his readers to pursue the God of heaven through the means of prayer and fasting.³⁶ Likewise, he promises

³² Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 36.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ronnie Floyd, *The Power of Prayer and Fasting* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2010), xi.

³⁵ Ibid., 3.

³⁶ Floyd, *The Power of Prayer*, 13.

that when the power of prayer and fasting is discovered and developed in one's life then one can expect to experience spiritual breakthroughs that Satan had convinced them was not possible.³⁷

Prayer is among the weaponry that Christians have been armed with when it comes to defending themselves amid the conflict that is otherwise known as spiritual warfare. As such, Chip Ingram has written a book titled *The Invisible War*. In the book, Ingram discusses spiritual warfare and how to stay battle-ready by putting on the whole armor of God as Paul instructs in Ephesians 6:10-20. With that said, in the final section of the book, Ingram elevates the priority of prayer and the role it plays in helping believers to faithfully overcome the attacks of the enemy. Ultimately, in preparation for the battle, Ingram seeks to call Christians to return to a lifestyle of fervent prayer like that which was modeled faithfully by the early church. According to Ingram, prayer is the missing ingredient in the lives of most Christians and within most churches.³⁸ Therefore, he attempts to convince his readers that prayer is the most powerful and strategic corporate weapon that they can yield in the midst of spiritual warfare.³⁹ In doing so, he offers a prayer strategy that is built around the acronym ACTS which stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In his opinion, anyone who prays regularly through the ACTS acronym will have a well-rounded and consistent prayer life.⁴⁰

Timothy Keller recently wrote a book called *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. The book was written from a pastoral perspective in an attempt to create a resource that would aid contemporary Christians in understanding the practice of prayer. As such, Keller sought to produce a user-friendly resource that would approach the subject of prayer with a

³⁷ Floyd, *The Power of Prayer*, 3.

³⁸ Chip Ingram, *The Invisible War* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 156.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

combined theological, devotional, and practical perspective. In his estimation, most have mistakenly limited prayer to one of two types. For example, some view prayer as merely something that is “communion-centered” or they view it as something that is merely “kingdom-centered.”⁴¹ Keller builds a case in his book articulating that prayer is a matter of both-and rather than either-or. Put another way Keller explains that prayer should be understood as both conversation and encounter with God.⁴²

It should be noted that Keller states his case using the support of Scripture and its theology of prayer. Here he alludes to the fact that Jesus serves as the mediator between God and man allowing man the opportunity to boldly approach God’s throne with his requests and petitions according to Hebrews 4:14-16 and Hebrews 7:25. In addition, Keller points to Romans 8:9-11 and Romans 8:26-27 where it is promised that God dwells within the believer through the Spirit and the Spirit thereby helps the believer to pray. Likewise, according to 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, the believer is left to gaze and contemplate the glory of Christ. Therefore, according to Keller prayer is best understood as a continuation of a conversation that God has started through His Word and His grace, which eventually becomes a full encounter with Him.⁴³

The book *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* was written by Patrick D. Miller intended for a broad audience within the community of faith. As such, Miller assumed that everyone within the realm of Christianity from professors, to pastors, to those occupying a church pew, would benefit from his biblical examination of the subject of prayer. Unlike other authors who have written regarding the subject of prayer Miller does not

⁴¹ Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2014), 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 48.

attempt to assign a definition to the spiritual discipline of prayer. Instead, he offers an illustration describing the act of prayer as that occasion which occurs when human beings, at their initiative, address God with some sort of need in hopes of experiencing a divine response.⁴⁴ In doing so, he does however recognize as most authors and their definitions of prayer point out that the practice of prayer is what occurs when a higher power is in touch with human life.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, Miller contends that prayer is not just a matter of spirituality. In his estimation prayer should be understood as a matter of sound theology as well.⁴⁶ According to Miller, theologians have long maintained that theology is at least in part an outgrowth of prayer. As he sees it religious faith seeks not to think one way and to pray another. Rather it seeks to usher the worshiper into the presence of God, in a manner that is consistent with what one believes and professes to be true about God and to think about God in a way that is shaped by the experience of an actual encounter with God through prayer.⁴⁷ With that in mind, he writes his book with the conviction that faith and prayer are inextricably woven together into a single whole. As such, within the book, Miller explores the structure and shape of biblical prayer as modeled in both the Old and New Testament.

It should be noted that most of his discussion is centered upon the Old Testament. According to Miller, the reason for mostly interacting with the Old Testament is rooted in the fact that there are more examples of prayer and people praying in the Old Testament than there are examples of prayer and people praying in the New Testament. On the other hand, he argues that there is far more instruction regarding prayer in the New Testament than there is instruction

⁴⁴ Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

regarding prayer in the Old Testament.⁴⁸ Likewise, in the Old Testament prayer appears to be tied more to a particular occasion than to a call to continue constantly in prayer whereas in the New Testament one begins to recognize prayer as a spiritual discipline that demonstrates an ongoing and regular part of one's relationship with God.⁴⁹ With that said, Miller closes his book examining what is perhaps the most important and best known of the recorded prayers within all of the New Testament. This of course is in reference to what has been labeled as the Lord's Prayer which Jesus first used when teaching His disciples how to pray.

All the Prayers of the Bible is a book written by Herbert Lockyer. The book was written as a study resource for preachers, teachers, church leaders, and those conducting private family worship at home. Within the book, the author goes so far as to define and describe the act of prayer for the reader. For example, according to Lockyer prayer is simply defined as the desire, opportunity, and privilege of talking with God.⁵⁰ In addition, the author describes prayer as something more than just the recital of well-known and well-worn phrases, rather prayer as he sees it should be understood as the outpouring of the human heart to God.⁵¹ With that in mind, Lockyer proceeds through the remainder of the book to illustrate what it has looked like throughout the Bible for the saints of old to pour out their hearts to God as they talk with Him through the spiritual discipline of prayer.

As the book unfolds the author is quick to point out that there are at least six hundred-fifty prayers recorded in the Bible excluding the Psalms.⁵² Nevertheless, books like Leviticus,

⁴⁸ Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 307.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 312.

⁵⁰ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Prayers of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960), 17.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 6.

Obadiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, Galatians, or 2 John contain either no recorded prayers or no reference to prayer at all as indicated in Lockyer's table of contents. Yet, in the remaining fifty-nine books of the Bible, it becomes evident that prayer is an important component within both the Old and New Testament. For example, from Genesis to Malachi there is observable proof of prayers being answered. That is to say that no petition in submission to the divine will ever failed to receive an appropriate answer.⁵³

Yet, Lockyer is quick to point out that there is a distinct difference between prayers that were prayed in the Old Testament and prayers that were prayed in the New Testament. Lockyer explains that with except for David in the Psalms the prayers of the Old Testament saints were most concerned with secular or general blessings. In other words, their prayers were earthlier in nature.⁵⁴ That means their desire was not so much to know God through prayer but to experience the provision of God as He met the needs of their life. On the other hand, the New Testament and its directives regarding prayer appear more concerned with the worshiper praying in pursuit of spiritual blessings than they are the worshiper praying in pursuit of earthly blessings.⁵⁵ With that said, the desire of the New Testament was built around the worshiper knowing God through the intimacy of prayer rather than just experiencing God through the way He met their needs.

According to Lockyer, instructions outlined in the four gospels in conjunction with the teachings of Christ suggest that Jesus believed prayer to be a working force, a dynamic rather than a doctrine in the life of the child of God.⁵⁶ Likewise, in Lockyer's estimation, unanswered prayers likely failed to receive an answer because they were not offered according to the divine

⁵³ Lockyer, *All the Prayers*, 173.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

order or according to the defined conditions that can be identified within the New Testament. Therefore, Lockyer advocated for worshipers to ensure that the following conditions accompanied their prayers. Among those conditions were the characteristics of sincerity, humility, repentance, obedience, faith, forgiveness, fasting, persistence, and privacy. Furthermore, he indicated the necessity for the worshiper to pray in accordance with the divine will and in the power of the divine name.⁵⁷ In doing so Lockyer felt the worshiper would be positioned to pray effectively in the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father.⁵⁸

In 2007 author Nico Koopman wrote an article titled *The Lord's Prayer-An Agenda for Christian Living*. The article opened stating that what Christians pray reflects what they believe and how they will live.⁵⁹ Likewise, it can be implied that whether or not they pray reflects what they believe and how they will live. With that in mind, Koopman highlights the fact that prayer determines ethics. In other words, prayer is a contributing factor to who you are, what you do, and the moral vision that you actually choose to live by.⁶⁰ Therefore, Christians are expected to pray and if they are uncertain about how to pray then they should follow the instructions of the author who uses the Lord's Prayer as a foundation for teaching the relationship between prayer and sanctification. Basically, in the article, the author outlines and illustrates a skeletal structure of prayer by unpacking and applying the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13.

Author Phillip Long in his article *Praying Like the Pagans* challenges his readers to guard their motives when it comes to prayer. In his estimation learning when and where to pray

⁵⁷ Lockyer, *All the Prayers*, 178.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁵⁹ Nico Koopman, "The Lord's Prayer—An Agenda for Christian Living." *Journal of Reformed Theology* 1, no. 1 (2007): 4-5, February 10, 2020, <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezpz.ccbbc.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=32579187&site=ehost-live>.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

is just as important as learning how to pray otherwise someone will become the victim of praying mere self-serving prayers.⁶¹ As an example, he points to Jesus' discussion of prayer in Matthew 6:5-8. In this passage which is an excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount Jesus warns against praying like the hypocrites or the heathen. According to Jesus, the hypocrites are those who love to pray in public places so that they may be heard and seen by men while the heathen are those who like to use vain repetition in hopes that their many words will gain God's attention. However, Jesus' teaching which Long reiterates in his article argues that the prayer lives of Christians should be both private and pointed. As a matter of fact, the prayer lives of Christian should be so private that they make it their habit of finding a hiding place so that they are free to pray without the temptation of trying to impress other people.⁶²

A graduate student named Gershwin Francis Emmanuel Grant conducted doctoral research in 2014 related to the subject of prayer within the context of his ministry setting. The project was birthed out of a concern that he had regarding his congregation and their tendency to function solely as a program-based church. In his estimation, the church had settled over the years becoming complacent with just practicing a type of religious intellectualism. It should be noted that this style of ministry mostly prefers propriety over passion in areas such as worship and prayer.⁶³ Typically, as he explains, these kinds of churches emphasize biblical study and are cognitively oriented being more informational and dogmatic than they are emotional or

⁶¹ Phillip J. Long, *Praying Like the Pagans – Matthew 6:5-8* (Grand Rapids: Newstex, 2018), accessed February 5, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.ezpz.ccbbc.edu/docview/2254044945?accountid=10175>.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Gershwin Francis Emmanuel Grant, "Evaluating the Impact of a Sixteen-Day Spiritually Formed Prayer Immersion Program on Members of a Conservative Baptist Church," Order No. 3629062, Nyack College, Alliance Theological Seminary, 2014, In PROQUESTMS Religion Database, accessed February 7, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.ezpz.ccbbc.edu/docview/1561513938?accountid=10175>, 12.

expressive.⁶⁴ As such, he found that his congregation had carefully avoided any type of interfaith involvement with other congregations especially among those within the community who were identified as Charismatic churches.

Nevertheless, Grant conducted his research to enhance the spiritual well-being of his project participants in hopes that he might help them connect to God by allowing the Holy Spirit to engage and transform them through spiritually formed prayer.⁶⁵ As such, the project involved immersing the participants in characteristics related to the Spiritual Formation Movement in order to see if the participants would report an increased score in the areas he categorized as (PAMS) Prayer and Meditation Satisfaction and (SWB) Spiritual Well Being. Therefore, in conjunction with his research Grant developed a curriculum that he used with a focus group from his church. The curriculum was comprised of proven practices that were derived from the spiritual disciplines of prayer, worship, Bible study, and meditation. In addition, the program spanned a total of sixteen days. According to Grant the length of the program was considered appropriate in that it would allow for a period of intense, focused, and complete participation.⁶⁶

In conjunction with the project, participants had to commit to the program requirements that were set by the research author. For example, the research author required participants to attend an orientation seminar on the first day of the study period. Also, participants had to agree to be present for three specific Sunday morning worship services ranging from the beginning, midpoint, and end of the study period of the project. The research author also required participants to limit their spiritual intake for a period of sixteen-days insisting that they focus only on the Participant Study Guide that was provided to them in conjunction with the project.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Grant, "Evaluating the Impact of a Sixteen-Day," 5.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 21.

During these sixteen-days' participants were instructed by the provided study guide in the areas of worship, prayer, and meditative practices. Furthermore, their daily reading involved reading excerpts from various prayer and spiritual formation authors as well as a series of Scripture passages. Finally, their daily activities concluded with the completion of worksheets consisting of reflection questions revolving around insights the participants had gained each day.

Likewise, throughout the duration of the project participants were required to complete a total of four assessments in relation to the study period. The first two assessments were completed at the beginning and end of the study period whereas the remaining two assessments were not completed until two months after the conclusion of the project itself. As a result, the assessment tools taken at the beginning and end of the project were compared with and measured against the assessment tools that were taken two months after the project was completed. In doing so, the research author was then able to determine if the participants had experienced an increase or decrease in the areas of their Spiritual Well Being and their Prayer and Meditative Satisfaction.⁶⁷

At the conclusion of the project, the research author evaluated the results of the study which he had conducted using a focus group from his church. According to the statistical data, the study demonstrated significant levels of growth in the area of Prayer and Meditation Satisfaction and the area of Spiritual Well Being. For example, the cumulative scores for Prayer and Meditation Satisfaction were found to have increased by a total of sixty-six percent at the end of the program.⁶⁸ Likewise, the cumulative scores for the area of Spiritual Well Being were found to have increased by a total of twenty-two percent by the end of the program.⁶⁹ With that

⁶⁷ Grant, "Evaluating the Impact of a Sixteen-Day," 22.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 99.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 104.

said, the research author viewed the data as confirmation that the program was successful in introducing the participants to new spiritual practices which resulted in greater levels of Prayer and Meditation Satisfaction and Spiritual Well Being.

Dr. Sean Lee wrote a dissertation titled *Equipping a Select Group of Leaders of Holly Grove Baptist Church, Spring Hope, North Carolina, To Pray in Preparation for Church Revitalization*. His research was built around studying and changing the prayer habits of a core group of church members where he served as pastor for the purpose of church revitalization. Specifically, he focused on studying ten percent of the congregation resulting in a total of six participants who took part in his project.⁷⁰ In selecting his participants, he looked for three male and three female candidates who ranged in age from their early twenties to mid-sixties. Also, he sought candidates who were faithful in their church attendance and actively involved in the ministry of Holly Grove.⁷¹ According to his research, Dr. Lee discovered that only two of the six congregants surveyed from his congregation acknowledged that they maintained a daily prayer time with God. Likewise, one hundred percent of the group including the project director admitted to struggling with the discipline of prayer.⁷²

Therefore, the project director used a total of eight one-hour equipping sessions to address the prayerlessness of this select group from his congregation. These sessions took place over eight weeks and met during the Sunday School hour at 10:00 a.m.⁷³ During those eight weeks, the project covered an eight-week outline related primarily to prayer itself and the role it

⁷⁰ Sean Lee, "Equipping A Select Group of Leaders of Holly Grove Baptist Church, Spring Hope, North Carolina, To Pray in Preparation for Church Revitalization," (D.Min diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 65.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 87.

⁷³ Ibid., 65.

serves in the work of church revitalization. The outline explored such areas as the priesthood of the believer, proactive prayer vs. reactive prayers, the content of our prayers, hindrances to prayer, spiritual warfare and prayer, the use of Scripture in prayer, my personal walk with God and prayer, and prayer and church revitalization.⁷⁴ As a result of the eight-week study, the post-project survey data revealed that the number of participants who maintained a daily prayer time with God had grown significantly from thirty-three percent to one hundred percent.⁷⁵ With that said, this project director plans to use the example of the intervention found in this doctoral project as inspiration for the intervention he is using in his doctoral project.

Theological Foundation

The spiritual discipline of prayer is nearly as old as creation itself. According to the Bible, Adam and Eve enjoyed a unique and unrivaled fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden. As a matter of fact, Genesis 3:8 pictures God walking and talking among them during the cool of the day. Yet, this fellowship was short-lived once Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil. As a result, God banned them from the garden and His presence. With that said, humanity began to rely upon prayer as the primary vehicle of communication and fellowship between them and God. Put another way, the biblical examples of prayer portray Yahweh as a God who listens rather than a deity who is distant or has to be cajoled into attending to the needs of His people.⁷⁶ Therefore, it is not surprising that scholars have identified some eighty-five original prayers in the Old Testament in

⁷⁴ Lee, "Equipping A Select Group," 66.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁷⁶ John D. Berry, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Prayer, Logos.

addition to around sixty whole Psalms and fourteen parts of Psalms that they classify as prayers.⁷⁷

It should be noted that the first reference to prayer in the Bible is found in what Scholars identify as the patriarchal period.⁷⁸ For example, in association with Seth and the birth of his son Enosh the biblical writer explains in Genesis 4:26 that “At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.” Likewise, Abraham is described in Genesis 12:8 and Genesis 21:33 as one who “called upon the name of the Lord.” Yet, the utilization of what would later be labeled as prayer did not end with any of the Patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. Instead, a pattern of prayer can be traced into and beyond the pre-exilic and post-exilic periods of Jewish history. As such, the prayer lives of people continued to evolve in each subsequent generation. With that in mind, it is observed that the prayers of the patriarchs were closely associated with the act of worshippers offering their sacrifices to God which is seen in passages like Genesis 26:25 where Jacob “built an altar there” and “called on the name of the Lord.”⁷⁹

On the other hand, the emphasis of prayer during the pre-exilic period takes the shape of intercessory prayers. Scholars contend that during this era intercession was confined to outstanding personalities who by virtue of their divinely appointed positions of prophet, priest, and king demonstrated peculiar power in prayer as mediators between God and men.⁸⁰ Examples of this kind of praying can be observed in the prayer lives and ministries of those such as Moses (Exodus 32:11), Aaron (Num. 6:22-27), Samuel (1Sa. 7:5-13), Solomon (1 Ki. 8:22-53), and Hezekiah (2 Ki. 19:14-19). In addition, prayer was an important component in the ministry of the

⁷⁷ J. D. Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962), 949.

⁷⁸ Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, 949.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

prophets as well. According to scholars, the very reception of the revelatory Word from God by the prophets involved the prophet maintaining a prayerful relationship with the Lord as can be seen in passages like Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 11:20-23; 12:1-6; 42:1; Daniel 9:20, and Habakkuk 2:1-3.⁸¹ Likewise, the intercessory nature of prayer is also found in the Book of Psalms. For example, the psalmist is found praying for such concerns as the pardon of sin (Psalm 51), deeper communion with God (Psalm 63), divine protection (Psalm 57), supernatural healing (Psalm 6), and vindication (Psalm 103) just to name a few.⁸²

However, despite their longstanding commitment to prayer Israel still found herself on the wrong side of the Law of God. As a result, God eventually brought judgment upon the divided Kingdom. In doing so, those in the Northern Kingdom otherwise known as Israel were exiled by the Assyrians, while those in the Southern Kingdom also known as Judah were exiled by the Babylonians. Therefore, this period is referred to as the exilic period. Needless to say, because of the exile, the religious life in Israel no longer looked the same. For example, the Temple which was located in Jerusalem now laid in ruins meaning that the altar rites and sacrifices prescribed in the Old Testament were no longer being performed.⁸³ Yet, that did not stop Israel from worshipping the Lord. For example, the synagogue emerged as the new center of the religious community. Within the synagogue, worshippers practiced such religious acts as circumcision, fasting, Sabbath observance, and of course prayer.⁸⁴ Therefore, prayer continued to be an important part of the fabric of Israel's faith during the exilic period. A powerful example of

⁸¹ Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, 949.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

this is the Prophet Daniel who according to Daniel 6:10-28 refused to stop praying three times a day even though a new Babylonian law forbade him from the practice.

In addition, a pattern of prayer in the lives of God's people can be traced throughout the post-exilic period as well. This is especially noticeable when one reads the Old Testament books of Ezra and Nehemiah. In these two books students of the Bible find details related to what transpired as a part of a project that involved the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the restoration of the Temple following the Babylonian exile. One scholar has observed that prayer does not appear to be as stiff and ritualistic during this period compared to earlier periods of Old Testament history. In other words, after the exile, there was undoubtedly a framework of devotion, but within it, freedom was secured for the individual.⁸⁵ As such, the individual was not bound by a set of fixed rules related to prayer. Rather they were engaged in a form of spiritual devotion that involved their hearts genuinely crying out to God. Examples of their praying can be found in passages like Ezra 8:23 where it is said that they "fasted and implored our God for this, and He listened to our entreaty" or Nehemiah 4:9 where it reads that "and we prayed to our God and set a guard as protection against them day and night."

Clearly, a pattern and foundation for the spiritual discipline of prayer can be traced back as far as the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis and run consistently through the close of the Old Testament. Likewise, a pattern of prayer in the life of the church and first-century Christians is outlined in the New Testament as well. To observe this pattern, one needs to look no further than that of Jesus Himself. It is evident in the gospels that Jesus lived a life of prayer. For example, the gospels provide at least fifteen accounts of Jesus praying during His earthly life and ministry. Out of those fifteen accounts eleven of them are recorded in the gospel of Luke.

⁸⁵ Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, 949.

According to author Dave Early, Luke's gospel devotes more attention to the prayer life of Jesus than the other gospel writers because Luke's gospel focuses more on the humanity of Jesus than that of the other gospel narratives.⁸⁶

With that in mind, one is not surprised to read a verse like Luke 5:16 which describes how "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." It should be noted that excerpts from His words in Matthew and Luke's Gospels show that He expected His followers to pray as well. For example, in Matthew 6:5 Jesus' expectation is conveyed in these words "And when you pray." Whereas in Matthew 6:6 His expectation is expressed in the statement "But when you pray." In Matthew 6:7, Jesus once again states His expectation using the words "And when you pray." Then before wrapping up His teaching on prayer he frames His expectation in this way "This, then is how you should pray." The expectation of prayer is also implied in Jesus' words found in Luke 11:9 where it is written "So I say to you: Ask...seek...knock." Finally, Luke makes this expectation as clear as possible when he introduces Jesus' parable about the persistent widow in Luke 18:1 where it is written "He then told them a parable on the need for them to pray always and not become discouraged."

When the curtain closes on Jesus' life and ministry the gospel accounts provide little to no insight regarding how the disciples would respond to Jesus' expectation of prayer as a spiritual discipline in the Christian life. However, as Greg Stier has pointed out it only takes a cursory reading of the book of Acts to see that prayer was the engine that drove every move the early believers made.⁸⁷ For example, before His ascension, Jesus instructed His disciples to stay in Jerusalem where they were to await the promise of the Father. In response, they waited but

⁸⁶ Dave Early, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High Impact Leaders* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2008), 18.

⁸⁷ Greg Stier, *Gospelize Your Youth Ministry* (Arvada, CO: Dare 2 Share, 2015), 72.

they were careful not to waste their time. According to Luke, their first order of business was the work of prayer. In Acts 1:14 Luke explains that “All these were continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.” As such, it is here that one first begins to see the makings of what would prove to be a “pray first” philosophy of ministry.⁸⁸

In keeping with their “pray first,” commitment to prayer one notices that the early believers rightfully refused to make an important decision without first petitioning God for direction regarding His will in the decision that they were about to make. A theme which proved to be prevalent in the prayer life of Jesus and the early church as recorded by Luke in his gospel and the Book of Acts.⁸⁹ For example, following the betrayal of Judas, the number of apostles which started at twelve was suddenly reduced to eleven. Considering this vacancy, they sought to replace Judas with either Joseph called Barsabbas or another individual named Matthias. It was in advance of this decision that Luke highlights their continued commitment to prayer in Acts 1:24 when he writes “Then they prayed, “You, Lord, know the hearts of all; show which of these two You have chosen.” In response, Matthias was appointed to serve as an apostle in Judas’ place.

Furthermore, their commitment to prayer can be observed following the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost as well. In the following chapter, the day of Pentecost arrives, and the church is born as the apostles received the promise of the Father in the form of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit moved upon the apostles, the preaching of God’s Word was accompanied by the supernatural gift of speaking in a foreign tongue so that everyone heard the message in their

⁸⁸ Stier, *Gospelize Your Youth Ministry*, 72.

⁸⁹ Robert H. Stein, *The New American Commentary: Luke* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 192.

language. It should be noted that this event involved an audible, visible, and manifested demonstration of inspired speech.⁹⁰ As a result, about three thousand were saved and added to the church that day. Surprisingly, the early Church was not overwhelmed by the sudden explosion of church growth. Instead, according to Luke 2:42, they strategically led these new believers to devote “themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.” With that in mind, the presence of the article in the Greek text before the word prayers has led some scholars to view this statement as a reference to a continued pattern of observance of the formal hours of prayer in the Jewish temple.⁹¹ However, most agree that it merely involves the act of the early believers spending time together in prayer in private worship in homes.⁹² Nevertheless, it is safe to say that at the outset of the early church’s existence the spiritual discipline of prayer served as a foundational component of their corporate DNA. As such, the apostles took the initiative to instill the importance and pattern of this spiritual discipline into the faith commitment of the new believers.

Likewise, the early church relied primarily on the spiritual discipline of prayer when facing increased opposition and persecution. With that said, one does not have to read very far in the book of Acts to discover that everyone in and around Jerusalem was not excited about the church’s growth and the advancement of the gospel message. For example, in Acts 4 and Acts 12 the apostle Peter found himself being arrested and imprisoned for no other reason than preaching the gospel. The initial reaction of the church after he returned to the other believers and reported all the threats that the chief priests and the elders had made towards him and the church was that of prayer. Luke describes their response to these threats in Acts 4:24 as he writes “When they

⁹⁰ Polhill, *New American Commentary—Acts*, 98.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 121.

heard this, they all raised their voices to God” and according to Acts 4:29 they corporately asked God to specifically “consider their threats, and grant that Your slaves may speak Your message with complete boldness.” In regard to this passage, scholars point out that the offering of an occasional prayer of this nature in unison would not have been the norm. Rather given the circumstances, the whole Christian community in a rare moment of intercession found themselves united in corporate prayer.⁹³ As such, by the end of the chapter, their prayer was answered as Luke explains in Acts 4:31 “When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God’s message with boldness.”

With that said, they continued to preach Christ despite the mounting pressure of persecution that was being leveraged against them. Eventually, however, this would result in Peter being imprisoned a second time. By this point, James the brother of John had been martyred at the hands of King Herod who had cruelly attacked some who belonged to the church. When Herod saw that his actions pleased the Jews he then proceeded to capture and imprison Peter as well. Peter was placed under heavy security, being guarded by four squads of four soldiers each who would alternate every three hours to ensure maximum alertness. As such, he would await his trial and possible execution under these circumstances unless aided by divine intervention.⁹⁴ In light of what had happened to the apostle James the church feared for Peter’s life and were careful to intercede on his behalf. Here the church is once again shown using their most effective means of assistance as they prayed continually for Peter.⁹⁵ For example, Luke explains this in detail in Acts 12:5 as he writes “So Peter was kept in prison, but prayer was

⁹³ Polhill, *New American Commentary – Acts*, 149.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

being made earnestly to God for him by the church.” Nevertheless, supernaturally God responded to their prayers, and Peter was miraculously delivered and restored to the fellowship of the church once again.

Clearly, a person would have to completely ignore the evidence of the New Testament to miss the early church’s commitment to prayer as displayed throughout the Book of Acts. Needless to say, the apostles were careful to leave no room for doubt at least as far as their commitment to prayer was concerned. Luke reveals that the apostles saw prayer as one of their two primary responsibilities in ministry. For example, in Acts 6, readers are introduced to a growing pain that the church quickly experienced following the day of Pentecost. According to the opening verses of this chapter, a complaint arose in the church at that time because some widows were being taken care of while others within the church were being neglected. To correct the issue, the apostles proposed a solution that consisted of the church appointing seven qualified men to the task of caring for these widows and their needs. Yet, the purpose behind appointing capable people to oversee this task had to do with more than just caring for widows. As such, Acts 6:4 highlights the fact that this move would allow the apostles to continue to devote themselves “to prayer and to the preaching ministry.”

Furthermore, the early church’s commitment to prayer can be observed in conjunction with the mission strategy of the church. In Acts 1:8 Christ instructed His disciples to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth. It should be noted that it did not take long for the early church to get to work doing just that. Of course, they were not without their fair share of opposition as noted above. However, the persecution that they experienced served more as a catalyst for the cause of Christ rather than a concern for the church. Despite intense persecution that had broken out against the church those in Antioch sensed the

Lord leading them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work that He had called them to do in pioneering the gospel to the unreached cities of the Mediterranean world. As such, Luke explains in Acts 13:3 that “after they had fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them off.” Likewise, according to Acts 14:23, Paul and Barnabas made it their custom in every church where they had appointed elders to pray and fast as they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. With this in mind, it is obvious that prayer was of supreme importance to Luke and his historical record related to the ministry of the early church.⁹⁶

With that said, the fulfillment of Jesus’ expectation of prayer is evident throughout the remainder of the New Testament as well. As such, the apostle Paul advocated for the continued pattern and practice of prayer throughout several of his epistles. Two immediate examples are Colossians 4:2 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17. In Colossians 4:2 Paul instructs his readers when he writes “Devote yourselves to prayer.” Likewise, in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul exhorts his readers to “Pray without ceasing.” According to Donald S. Whitney, these passages emphasize two important characteristics of prayer. First, considering Colossians 4:2 prayers should be recognized as a committed discipline of the Christian life. Second, in light of 1 Thessalonians 5:17 prayer should be understood as an unbroken relationship between the Christian and God the Father.⁹⁷ In light of this historical record, it is understood that twenty-first-century Christians should continue to function as a people of prayer.

⁹⁶ Roy B. Zuck and Darrell L. Brock, *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994), 157.

⁹⁷ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 67.

Theoretical Foundation

Therefore, just as Jesus and the early church lived a life of prayer so should those who identify as His followers in every subsequent generation. It should be noted that this thought does not stand alone as an unsubstantiated assumption. It is, however, a theological position that has been communicated through the written publications of both classical and contemporary Christian authors. As such, these authors are recognized as proven spiritual leaders whose integrity and intellectual prowess in theological matters have awarded them the opportunity within the realm of Christendom to weigh in on matters of faith and practice.

With that said, Donald S. Whitney serves as a contemporary and authoritative voice about spiritual disciplines which includes the spiritual discipline of prayer. In the opinion of Whitney, the words of Jesus quoted in the New Testament, as discussed above are as much His will for believers today as they were when Jesus first spoke them in the first century. In other words, he believes that Christians should treat Christ's words regarding prayer-like words that Jesus has spoken to them face to face.⁹⁸ Furthermore, in agreement with Whitney, is a Christian leader from the 1800s named R.A. Torrey who has also written in support of promoting the continued practice of prayer in the Christian life. According to Torrey "prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God's infinite grace and power." That is to say that "All that God is and all that God does is at the disposal of prayer." However, as Torrey adds "we must use the key."⁹⁹ This is understood to imply that one must devote themselves to a life of prayer if the power of God through prayer is to be realized in their life.

⁹⁸ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*, 67.

⁹⁹ R.A. Torrey, *The Power of Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1924), 17.

Likewise, in his book *Institutes of the Christian Religion* John Calvin exhorts his readers to recognize what he calls the necessity of practicing the spiritual discipline of prayer. According to Calvin “Words fail to explain how necessary prayer is, and in how many ways the exercise of prayer is profitable.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, Calvin sees prayer as a practice that should not be ignored by those who identify themselves as followers of Christ especially because the Lord instructed and ordained prayer “not so much for His own sake as for ours.”¹⁰¹ In light of the writings of E.M. Bounds, it appears that he concurs with Donald S. Whitney, R.A. Torrey, and especially John Calvin regarding the necessity of the ongoing practice of prayer. For example, Bounds explains that “God has of His own motion placed Himself under the law of prayer, and has obligated Himself to answer the prayers of men.”¹⁰² As such, Christians should make it their business to pray according to the leader of the great reformation named Martin Luther. In line with the others, Luther asserts that “just as it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray.”¹⁰³

While the previous discussion addressed the necessity of the continued practice of prayer the immediate discussion speaks of the power of prayer when employed in the life of the Child of God. As a pastor and effective preacher of the Word of God Charles Spurgeon had become increasingly familiar with the power of prayer having observed its effects in his own life and ministry. As such, he described prayer “as the slender nerve that moves the muscle of omnipotence.”¹⁰⁴ It should be noted that he was not alone in this sentiment. As a matter of fact,

¹⁰⁰ Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 2:851.

¹⁰¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian*, 2:852.

¹⁰² E.M. Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1931), xxx.

¹⁰³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*, 68.

¹⁰⁴ Charles Spurgeon, *Twelve Sermons on Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1971), 31.

several Christian authors highlight prayer as a means by which the believer taps into the supernatural power of God. For example, Billy Graham, E.M. Bounds, and R.A. Torrey are among those in agreement with Spurgeon just to name a few.

In the Words of Billy Graham “More can be done by prayer than anything else.” Here he alleges that prayer is the Christian’s greatest weapon in the arsenal of the spiritual armor. Yet he laments the fact that “In this modern age in which we live, we have learned to harness the power of the mighty Niagara and turn its force to our use and our good. We have learned to hold steam captive in boilers and release its tremendous power to turn our machines and pull our trains. We have learned to contain gasoline vapors in a cylinder and explode them at the appointed second to move our automobiles and trucks along our highways. We have even discovered the secret of releasing energy in the atom, which is capable of destroying entire cities and civilizations. But very few of us have learned how to fully develop the power of prayer.”¹⁰⁵

Unfortunately, the words of Billy Graham are prophetic. They are prophetic in the sense that prayerless people are spiritually powerless people whereas prayerful people are spiritually powerful people. However, this must not be misunderstood as some form of power that the prayer warrior possesses in and of themselves. Rather, it is a divine power that is only accessible when one knocks on the door of the throne room of heaven imploring God to act in response to their prayers. E.M. Bounds spoke to this when he wrote “He has ordained prayer as a means whereby He will do things through men as they pray, which He would not otherwise do” meaning “man has it in his power to by prayer, move God to work in His own way among men, in which way He would not work if prayer was not made.”¹⁰⁶ It is here that R.A. Torrey agrees

¹⁰⁵ Cort R. Flint, *The Quotable Billy Graham* (Anderson, SC: Droke House, 1966), 154.

¹⁰⁶ Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, xxx.

with Spurgeon, Graham, and Bounds asserting that “Prayer can do anything that God can do, and as God can do anything, prayer is omnipotent.”¹⁰⁷

Yet, the case can be made that in order to practice prayer and to tap into the power of prayer one must first be diligent to keep an appointment with prayer. As such, it has already been established that Jesus lived and led a life of prayer. In the words of S.D. Gordon “Jesus prayed. He loved to pray. He prayed so much and so often that it became a part of His life. It became to Him like breathing – involuntary.”¹⁰⁸ Therefore, Jesus is the greatest example that one can model their prayer life after. According to Dave Early prayer was the first of Jesus’ daily activities and appointments. It was the number one item on his schedule each day meaning if nothing else got done that day at least He had prayed.¹⁰⁹

Yet, as indicated in the introduction of this project it is apparent that some are not demonstrating Jesus’ level of commitment to prayer in their own lives. It is here that Paul Cho seeks to reverse the thought process of those who may mistakenly suggest that they are too busy to pray. According to Cho “One of the greatest lies of Satan is that one does not have enough time to pray.” However, as he explains “all of us have enough time to sleep, eat, and breathe.” Therefore, “as soon as we realize that prayer is as important as sleeping, eating, and breathing, we will be amazed at how much time we have to pray.”¹¹⁰ With that said, one must intentionally work at making and maintaining an appointment with prayer. Believers would do well at this point to learn from the wisdom and experience of Martin Luther who suggests that “it is a good

¹⁰⁷ Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 17.

¹⁰⁸ S.D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 15.

¹⁰⁹ Early, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High Impact Leaders*, 19.

¹¹⁰ Paul Y. Cho, *Prayer: Key to Revival* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1993), xxx.

thing to let prayer be the first business of the morning and the last at night.¹¹¹ Therefore, Christians should make it their aim to at least begin and end the day spending time with the Lord in prayer. After all, in the words of Andrew Murray “There can be no communication with a holy God, no fellowship between heaven and earth, no power for the salvation of souls, unless much time is set apart for it.”¹¹²

In addition to keeping a regular appointment with prayer, it would be helpful if one had a designated place to practice the discipline of prayer as well. This is the concept behind Bill Hybels’ idea of utilizing and implementing what he refers to as a prayer room. According to Hybels “Once you identify such a place and begin to use it regularly, a kind of aura surrounds it.” He further explains that “Your prayer room, if it is a laundry room in the basement, becomes to you what the Garden of Gethsemane became to Jesus - a holy place, the place of meeting with God.”¹¹³ Likewise, students of the Bible are familiar with Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 6:6 regarding prayer. With that said, in this passage Jesus instructed His disciples when praying to “go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Whereas Hybels chose to call the location a prayer room and Jesus chose to call it a private place Andrew Murray has opted to identify the location as Jesus’ schoolroom. In the words of Murray “He wants each one to choose for himself that fixed spot where He can daily meet Him.” He further explains that the “inner chamber, that solitary spot, is Jesus’ schoolroom.” Also, he adds that the “spot may change from day to day;

¹¹¹ Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray* (Louisville: Westminster Knox Press, 2000), 193.

¹¹² Andrew Murray, *The Prayer Life* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1981), 97.

¹¹³ Bill Hybels, *Too Busy Not to Pray* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 9.

but that secret place there must be.” Because it is here in this location on bended knee “that Jesus comes to teach us to pray.”¹¹⁴

After these steps have been taken and one is ready to meet with God in their determined place of prayer and keeping with their regular appointment with prayer, then they are positioned to turn the problems and pressures of their life into prayers. In light of life’s problems and pressures the apostle Peter counsels’ believers to do just that with his words found in 1 Peter 5:7. Here he instructs the child of God to make it a practice of “casting all your care on Him, because He cares about you.” Author Dave Early illustrates for his readers what this looks like in his own life. For example, in an effort to be transparent he admits to struggling with worry as he offers insight into his personal practice of dealing with the pressures and problems that he finds overwhelming. According to Early, he makes worry lists which he then converts to prayers lists that contain concerns which he takes to God in prayer.¹¹⁵

It should be noted that this was the practice of George Muller as well. According to his biographer “throughout all his experience in conducting the orphanages this servant of God testified that no meal, even when he was feeding two thousand orphans daily by faith, was more than thirty minutes late.¹¹⁶ In response, Muller was quick to give the glory to whom it was due. In his estimation, the needs of the orphanages were not met through the provisions made available by men but by the power of God through prayer. As such, he explained “we let God work for us, when the hour of trial of our faith comes, and do not work a deliverance of our own.”¹¹⁷ As a result, that is what prayer does. It relies on God to work on behalf of the one

¹¹⁴ Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 11.

¹¹⁵ Early, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High Impact Leaders*, 84.

¹¹⁶ Basil Miller, *George Muller: Man of Faith and Miracles* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1941), 85.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

looking to Him in prayer. S.D. Gordon agrees and elaborates on the thought when he writes “Prayer wonderfully clears the vision; steadies the nerves; defines duty; stiffens purpose; sweetens and strengthens the spirit.”¹¹⁸

Nevertheless, realizing and affirming that one should pray is not the same as engaging in the spiritual discipline of prayer. Furthermore, there is a mysterious side of prayer that might at times deter some from praying because they feel that they are not adequately prepared when it comes to knowing how to engage in the spiritual discipline of conversing with God. For example, Jesus’ disciples approached Him in Luke 11:1 requesting that He teach them to pray just as John the Baptist had also taught his disciples to pray. It is here that Dave Early along with Stephen and Alex Kendrick encourages their readers in employing the use of the acrostic ACTS as a model of prayer.

It should be noted that the letters of the acrostic ACTS stand for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. According to author Dave Early, this acrostic contains the major elements set forth by Christ in the model prayer that Jesus used when teaching His disciples to pray.¹¹⁹ With that in mind, Stephen and Alex Kendrick offer further explanation and application of these four categories in their book *The Battle Plan for Prayer: From Basic Training to Targeted Strategies*. For example, the Kendrick brothers define Adoration as praying in a way that expresses praise and worship to God. It should be noted that at this moment the one praying is not requesting anything from God but merely adoring and honoring Him in their heart.¹²⁰ Confession on the other hand is that which they say takes place when the worshipper

¹¹⁸ Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 214.

¹¹⁹ Early, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High Impact Leaders*, 129.

¹²⁰ Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick, *The Battle Plan for Prayer: From Basic Training to Targeted Strategies* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 40.

gets honest with God about sin that is present in his or her life. As they see it getting right with God and staying clean before God is necessary if one is to remain close to Him and be effective in prayer.¹²¹ In regards to thanksgiving, the Kendrick brothers define it as God-directed and humbly expressed gratitude. As such, thanksgiving differs from that of adoration in that while praise focuses more on who God is thanksgiving highlights what God has done or is doing.¹²² Finally, supplication is understood to involve the actual act of asking for something from God on behalf of the individual who is praying or others.¹²³

With that in mind, Dave Early encourages his readers to utilize the letters of the acrostic ACTS as headings which can ultimately guide them in praying through each category represented in Jesus' model prayer. In his experience, this will result in a level of praying that might span a matter of minutes or that might be stretched out over a period of an hour or more.¹²⁴ However, Early does find a level of disagreement with the Kendrick brothers regarding the exact order of the acrostic when being incorporated into a pattern of prayer. For example, Dave Early prefers to rearrange the acrostic putting the category of thanksgiving first followed by adoration, confession, and supplication. In his estimation, this structure best follows the prescription found in Psalm 100:4 when the Psalmist exhorts worshipers to "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name."¹²⁵

The Kendrick brothers on the other hand do not advocate for the rearranging of the acrostic as a model of prayer in the way that Dave Early does. Yet, that does not mean that they

¹²¹ Ibid., 42.

¹²² Ibid., 44.

¹²³ Ibid., 46.

¹²⁴ Early, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High Impact Leaders*, 130.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

do not argue for freedom in praying through these respective categories. In their estimation, any prayer at any moment will most likely involve one or all four of these categories as outlined in the model prayer.¹²⁶ Therefore, according to their explanation, the child of God is free to move in and out of these four areas systematically or independently of one another as a part of their fellowship with God.¹²⁷ They do however argue that out of these four categories there is biblical wisdom in listing supplication last. Their rationale for taking this position is built upon their belief that only after one has adored God, confessed their sin, and thanked God for what He has already done will the heart be pure and ready to pray in faith.¹²⁸ In conclusion, if one desires to pursue an intimate relationship with God then they should pray, and could likely benefit from making make it a point to structure their prayers around the areas of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

¹²⁶ Kendrick and Kendrick, *The Battle Plan for Prayer*, 40.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 46.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In light of the stated problem discussed above, the project director is concerned about the quality of the prayer life of the Southern Baptist congregation which he has been called to pastor. It should be noted that his concern is tied to the results of the Pew Research Center's survey which was cited above and its relevant data which indicates that nearly twenty percent of Southern Baptists are not spending time in prayer each day. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to confront and correct the prayerlessness of East Barbourville Baptist Church through the use of expository sermons. Ultimately, this research project will allow the project director to determine whether expository sermons are an effective tool for training Christians to pray. Also, it will allow the expositor a way to measure the effectiveness of expository sermons while addressing the problem of prayerlessness within the congregation of East Barbourville Baptist Church.

Intervention Design

As such, it should be noted that this research project is not funded by any outside entity or organization. Rather the project director is seeking to complete this project because of his own personal, ministerial, and academic interests. With that said, in conducting the applied research portion of the project the researcher relied upon the administration of both a pre- and post-project survey as his sole research instrument. The project director utilized the surveys to solicit prayer specific data from those who are recognized as active members of East Barbourville Baptist Church. As defined above in chapter one of this document an active member of East Barbourville Baptist Church is someone who regularly attends church services after they have publicly professed faith in Christ and followed through in believer's baptism. It should be noted

that the project director will be able to access this information through church records that are maintained by the church clerk in conjunction with the church's deacon ministry. The deacon ministry of the church is ultimately responsible for organizing and overseeing the administration of the church's deacon family ministry plan which plays an integral role in that the congregation maintains up-to-date membership records.

As such, one of the goals of the ongoing deacon family ministry plan is to keep up with the attendance patterns of the families that each deacon has been assigned to pray and care for as a part of the deacon family ministry plan. For example, if an assigned individual or family has not attended church over a period of twelve months and adequate attempts have been made to restore the individual or family to the fellowship of the church the deacon body will then recommend to the pastor and the church clerk that the individual or family needs to be reassigned to the inactive membership list. Considering this process, the church currently averages two hundred and twenty-four in active attendance on Sunday mornings according to information submitted on the 2018 annual church profile of East Barbourville Baptist Church. Thanks to this process and the available information contained in current church records the project director was able to clearly and correctly differentiate between those who are active members and those who are otherwise inactive members of the congregation.

As such, the project director looked to enlist the involvement of forty-four active members of the congregation who are at least eighteen years of age or older consisting of both male and female participants. The project director has chosen to focus his research on those who meet this criterion for several reasons. First, these participants will be free to participate in the project according to their own free will without requiring the consent of a guardian as well as the assent of a child. Second, these participants should represent members of the congregation who are

mature as it relates to life and the Christian faith. Third, these participants are assumed to be able to control their level of commitment at each subsequent phase of the project as they should not have to rely upon anyone else for transportation to and from the corresponding sermon series.

Furthermore, it should be noted that this number of prospective participants will be targeted because it equates to a total of twenty percent of the project director's active congregation at the time the applied research is being planned and executed by the project director. The decision to target twenty percent of the project director's congregation was reached in consultation with the project mentor Dr. Jason Mitchell. According to Dr. Mitchell, fifteen participants would have sufficed as a base minimum for the participation of the project in general. Besides, ten percent of the active congregation would have provided more than the minimum or base number of just fifteen participants. However, according to Dr. Mitchell, more data would be better because it will allow for more meaningful results and a comprehensive picture of the congregation. Therefore, the project director will adhere to the instruction of the project mentor and seek a greater level of participation to achieve a more thorough assessment of the prayer life of the active congregation of East Barbourville Baptist Church.

It is important to note at this point that the nature of this project will not require participants to be interviewed. Therefore, there will be no need to photograph participants nor will there be a need to have audio or video recordings of those who agree to participate in this project. Furthermore, participants will also be asked to volunteer their time and involvement in this project. Therefore, participants will not be paid, given food, gifts cards, or any other type of compensation in return for their involvement in this research project. However, participants are not expected to walk away empty-handed. The project director genuinely expects participants to

directly benefit from their participation in the project as the project will provide participants with an opportunity to grow personally and spiritually in the spiritual discipline of prayer.

With that in mind, the project director will diligently work to protect the privacy of participants by securing project data using a password-protected computer that only the project director will have access too. In addition, because the researcher's project is anonymous the project will not require the project director to use any identifying codes or pseudonyms in reference to the identity of participants thereby adding another layer of protection for participants and the information they provide in conjunction with their participation. Therefore, it should be understood that there is a minimal risk associated with a participant's involvement in this project. This means the project director sees no inherent risk associated with a participant and their involvement in his research project.

To recruit the forty-four prospective participants for the research project the project director will rely upon the use of a recruitment letter and in-person conversations with prospective participants who qualify as candidates for his study based on the criterion above. As such, the project director intends to personally distribute each letter to each prospective participant by hand either before the start of or immediately following a Sunday morning worship service. In the recruitment letter, the project director will describe the purpose of the project and the reason for the individual's requested involvement. Also, the project director will explain the length of the project and the stated expectations that will be associated with each participants' involvement. Furthermore, the recruitment letter will provide prospective participants with a link they can enter into a web browser to access the pre-project survey through the host site Survey Monkey.

With that in mind, the pre-project survey will serve as the baseline measurement of the congregations' active prayer life. Therefore, the project director will initiate the applied research portion of his project using a pre-project survey as his research instrument as mentioned above. The goal of the applied research portion of this research project is to compare the initial baseline score of the pre-project survey with the final post-project survey scores of participants. The purpose of the pre- and post-survey comparison is to determine whether the accompanying expository sermon series has resulted in a positive effect on the way participants pray. As such, the project director will design, publish, and collect responses for the pre- and post-project surveys using an organization known as Survey Monkey as the host site.

The pre-project survey will begin with what is called a consent form. The consent form will reiterate the purpose of the overall project and explain the protection and rights of participants should they consent to participate in the project by completing the corresponding survey. The consent form will be followed by a consent question where participants will be asked to answer either yes or no before being able to proceed with the actual survey. If a prospective participant answers "no" then he or she will be immediately denied access to the survey and redirected to a disqualification page with the help of a Survey Monkey feature known as skip logic. On the other hand, if the prospective participant answers "yes" then he or she will be immediately given access to the thirty-six remaining questions of the pre-project survey.

It should be noted that the thirty-six questions of the pre-project survey will represent a total of three categories that the project director is seeking to measure as it relates to each participant's prayer life. These areas include measuring the participant's attitude, actions, and awareness in regard to the individual's commitment to the spiritual discipline of prayer. For further clarity, the twelve questions related to a participants' attitude towards prayer will be

seeking to measure the individual's beliefs regarding prayer. These attitudes or beliefs are those that have otherwise been influenced by one's interpretation of the Bible and the influence of biblical truth. Likewise, the twelve questions related to a participants' actions regarding prayer will seek to measure the actual activity of a participants' prayer life. Mainly, the researcher will be trying to determine if the individual's prayer life is strong, weak, or somewhere in between. Finally, the twelve questions related to a participants' awareness of prayer will seek to measure the individual's previous level of training or instruction as it pertains to the spiritual discipline of prayer. Here the researcher will be trying to determine the level of training that the participant has previously received in being equipped to pray.

Furthermore, the questions asked as a part of the pre-project survey will be triangulated. In other words, each category will consist of a total of twelve questions that will be asked at various points throughout the survey. This approach will ensure that the researcher has multiple answer samples or data points pertaining to the three areas of attitude, actions, and awareness. In addition, it should be noted that the pre-project survey will remain completely anonymous. As such, the project director will make sure that the forty-four prospective participants understand the anonymity of the project in hopes that participants will not skew the results of the survey in an attempt to guard their reputation in the eyes of their pastor.

At this point in the project, the project director will proceed to preach an expository sermon series that centers upon the subject of prayer. The intended length of the sermon series will be four weeks or the equivalent of four sermons. During this time, the project director will preach a total of four expository sermons on the subject of prayer based on the text found in Luke 11:1-13. In doing so, participants will be required to attend each service or at least listen to each sermon that belongs to the sermon series on prayer. In the event, that participants are unable to

physically attend all four sermons they will be expected to watch or listen to each sermon via the available recording on Facebook or YouTube in order to participate in the final post-project survey. In response, the project director anticipates that the expository sermon series will result in increased prayer within the lives of the project participants.

With that said, the project director will conclude the applied research portion of the project by instructing participants to complete the post-project survey. In doing so, he will distribute a second recruitment letter to the same forty-four prospective participants' asking them to complete the post-project survey at that time. It should be noted that the second recruitment letter will contain an updated link that participants' will need to enter into their web browsers to access the post-project survey. The post-project survey will consist of three qualifying questions followed by the same thirty-six questions that were asked in the pre-project survey. In the first three questions participants' will be asked if they consent to participate in the research project's survey, if they completed the pre-project survey, and if they attended or listened to all four sermons that were preached in the sermon series dealing with prayer. If participants answer "No" to any of the first three questions, then he or she will be denied access to the post-project survey and will be immediately redirected to a disqualification page. Furthermore, the post-project survey will consist of the same thirty-six questions that were used in the pre-project survey. Likewise, the results of the post-project survey will be anonymous, and the completion of the survey will be expected to take between ten and fifteen minutes.

As such, the project director will compare the post-project survey results against the results of the pre-project survey. With that in mind, the project director will be able to determine whether an expository sermon series is an effective tool for equipping and empowering believers to pray. He will reach this conclusion using what is called a paired t-test. A paired t-test is a type

of test that researchers use when they need to compare two samples to determine whether the mean of a dependent variable is the same or different in two related groups. Specifically, the project director will use the paired t-test to determine if the mean difference between the two surveys is significantly different from zero. As a result, the project director should be able to determine from those calculations whether the expository sermon series on prayer has had an impact on the way that people believers pray.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

Before conducting the applied research portion of the project, the project director put together a project proposal and submitted it along with an accompanying application to the Internal Review Board of Liberty University. The Internal Review Board of Liberty University otherwise referred to as the IRB is the group entrusted by Liberty University to examine and approve proposed projects as long as the disclosed parameters of the project align with the guidelines and regulations that are set forth by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Once the Internal Review Board has determined that a proposed project will be executed according to the acceptable guidelines then the Internal Review Board will permit researchers to work with living subjects as an integral part of their research project.

With that said, the project proposal was submitted to the Internal Review Board on October 23, 2019. The project proposal consisted of an overview of each subsequent chapter of the actual research project. Furthermore, the Internal Review Board application consisted of a thorough explanation of the project's purpose and structure to ensure that the project was carefully following ethical principles as regulated by the federal government. As such, the Internal Review Board required the submission of the recruitment document, the consent form, and the survey

questions that the project director intended to use as his research tool. Throughout the process of securing permission to conduct the applied research portion of the project, the Internal Review Board requested revisions of each of the submitted documents before finally granting the project director permission to proceed with the applied research portion of his project. At this point, the revised and resubmitted documents were found to be aligned with the guidelines and regulations that are set forth by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Therefore, after reviewing the project director's revised and resubmitted documents the project director was granted exemption from any further Internal Review Board review and given permission to proceed with the applied research portion of his project using living subjects as of December 12, 2019. It should be noted that the exemption certificate is included in the appendices of this document.

With the exemption certificate being issued by the Internal Review Board the project director then proceeded to design and publish the pre-project survey which he would use as his research instrument. In developing the research instrument, the project director chose to use a host site called Survey Monkey as the platform he would rely upon when designing and publishing his survey. While there were other options available for the project director to use at this point in the research process, he settled on Survey Monkey and their platform for several reasons.

For example, Survey Monkey offered all the features that the project director was looking for in designing his research tool. Features such as skip logic which is a setting within a question that redirects someone to a disqualification page if they answer no to something like the consent question. Another feature that attracted the project director to Survey Monkey was the ability to collect responses from multiple contact points such as a text message, email, social media post,

or a public kiosk. The project director also liked the user-friendly analytics that were available in real-time calculations as new responses were submitted. In addition, the project director liked the security that the host site provided. For example, if the project director attempted to log into the host site from a different device or computer than the one previously associated with his account then he had to work through multiple layers of authentication to prove that he was the individual authorized to access the confidential information associated with the research project.

Furthermore, the project director liked the pricing of Survey Monkey. While some of the features of Survey Monkey were free to use the number of survey responses being collected along with the use of the skip logic feature required the project director to purchase an annual subscription that was fairly inexpensive.

It should be noted that the project director first began working on designing the pre-project survey in December 2019. However, the Christmas holiday season limited his time and prevented him from being able to finalize and publish the survey in December 2019 as he had originally planned. Therefore, the survey was not finalized and published until January 4, 2020. As stated above the pre-project survey was created to solicit prayer specific data from active members of East Barbourville Baptist church whom the project director recruited as qualifying participants in his research project. The pre-project survey consisted of thirty-six questions representing a total of three categories. Namely, the categories of attitudes, actions, and awareness as described in the section above. It should also be noted the pre-project survey questions can be found in the appendix section of this document. As such, the pre-project survey provided the project director with the initial baseline measurement of the congregations' active prayer life which the project director used when comparing post-project survey results that participants completed after listening to the four-part expository sermon series on prayer.

Initially, the project director intended to recruit the forty-four participants using a recruitment letter that he planned to distribute by hand to select members of the congregation during a Sunday morning worship service in either late January or early February 2020. However, circumstances suddenly and unexpectedly changed in the middle of the applied research portion of the project in light of a global pandemic called COVID-19 or novel Coronavirus. As a result of the global pandemic, the project director's congregation was prevented from conducting in-person services due to a ban on mass gatherings that were issued by state government leaders. At first, the project director delayed moving forward with the applied research portion of the project for several reasons. First, he wanted to proceed with care and caution to protect the health and wellbeing of his congregation and the surrounding community. Second, he was unsure how long the ban on mass gatherings would remain in effect as ordered by government officials. Third, he was uncertain about how the situation would affect participation in his project due to his church not being able to meet for in-person services. Nevertheless, the project director was able to lead his church to move worship services online using the Facebook livestream feature with services also being archived on the church's YouTube channel. In addition, the church was able to add a drive-in service option by Easter Sunday on April 12, 2020.

Naturally, the project director did not want to delay the forward progress of his project any more than the global pandemic had already required. At the same time, the project director knew that people were struggling with anxiety and fear considering the physical, financial, and political uncertainty associated with the global pandemic. Therefore, he determined that the continuation of the research project amid the global pandemic would serve as much more than just an academic exercise for him to complete. More importantly, the sermon series on prayer

would serve as a catalyst for spiritual renewal and strength during a chaotic time in people's lives. A point in time that placed an increased value on growing in one's understanding and practice of prayer. Therefore, he had to rethink his process of recruiting participants without changing anything about the overall structure of his project as approved by the Institutional Review Board. Therefore, in light of this development, the project director had to rely upon the church's database of email addresses in order to recruit participants for his project. As such, he emailed the recruitment letter as an attachment to the forty-four active members of the congregation who met the qualifications that were explained above. The recruitment letter was emailed on April 22, 2020. In the email, the project director described the purpose of the project and the reason for their requested involvement. Also, he explained the length of the project and the stated expectations that would be associated with their involvement. It should be noted that the recruitment letter which he sent as an email attachment can be found in the appendix section of this document.

The recruitment letter instructed participants who agreed with the purpose and expectations of the project to click the link that had been embedded in the email. After clicking the link participants were then redirected to the pre-project survey that the project director had designed and published using Survey Monkey. As has already been stated throughout this document the pre-project survey consisted of a total of thirty-six questions related to the prayer life of the individual participant. Furthermore, according to analytics provided by the survey host site, the pre-project survey took participants an average of five minutes and twenty-six seconds to complete rather than the initial ten to fifteen minutes that was originally anticipated.

In addition, the project director was pleased that the pre-project survey had a participation rate of nearly eighty-two percent as thirty-six out of forty-four requested participants completed

the pre-project survey. However, the project director was disappointed with how long it took to reach a participation rate of eighty-two percent. According to analytics provided by Survey Monkey, the first survey was completed on April 23, 2020. Unfortunately, it took twelve days for the final survey results to be collected. According to the analytics provided by Survey Monkey, the last survey was not completed until May 4, 2020. Nevertheless, with the pre-project survey finally completed the project director possessed the first set of data that he needed in order to evaluate the quality of the group's prayer life based on the areas of attitude, actions, and awareness. Once more, he possessed the first set of data which would serve as the baseline measurement against which the post-survey results are being compared as a part of this research project.

With the pre-project survey completed the project director then proceeded to preach a four-week expository sermon series that centered upon the subject of prayer. Ideally, the project director envisioned preaching this sermon series on Sunday mornings during an in-person worship service at East Barbourville Baptist Church. However, the continued threat of the global Pandemic known as COVID-19 created a challenge for the project director as state government leaders in the commonwealth of Kentucky continued their ban on all mass gatherings in an effort to prevent the further spread of the novel Coronavirus. Obviously, unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures. As such, the project director found himself with a couple of options in moving the project forward in light of needing to preach the four-part expository sermon series on prayer.

For example, the project director could have preached the corresponding expository sermon series on Sunday mornings in conjunction with the drive-in worship service that he had led East Barbourville Baptist Church to launch on Easter Sunday 2020. It should be noted that these

services were only possible if weather conditions remained favorable in the weekend forecast. This type of worship service consisted of the church's praise team and pastor ministering from an outdoor stage. Also, those in attendance would park where directed and tune their car radio to a designated frequency as a short-range FM transmitter would broadcast the worship service into their vehicle. On the other hand, the project director could have opted to preach the expository sermon series during a Sunday or Wednesday evening worship service. As has already been stated the situation surrounding the novel Coronavirus had resulted in the project director also leading East Barbourville Baptist Church to move Sunday and Wednesday worship services online using Facebook and YouTube. This was especially true at the outset of the ban on mass gatherings due to the global pandemic. However, after adding the drive-in service to Sunday mornings then only the Sunday and Wednesday evening services were solely held indoors and online where they were consistently livestreamed on Facebook and archived on YouTube.

With that in mind, the project director carefully weighed these options. Finally, the project director concluded that it would be best to forego the sermon series on Sunday mornings and to focus on preaching it in conjunction with the indoor online-only livestreamed services instead. The project director made this decision for several reasons. First, even though attempts were made to livestream the outdoor drive-in services on Sunday mornings the project director felt that the drive-in services had too many moving parts which could potentially threaten a participant's level of participation in the sermon series. These moving parts include such uncontrollable factors as inclement weather, equipment failure, and a poor internet connection. Second, the project director felt that preaching the sermon series indoors would ensure that the sermons were recorded and archived online which would allow participants to watch or listen to the sermons at their convenience each week. The project director hoped that this would eliminate

any other uncontrollable factors that might threaten a participants' participation in the project due to unforeseen issues such as scheduling conflicts, sickness, etc. Third, by preaching the sermon series indoors the project director would also be able to utilize the church's projection equipment as a visual aid tool throughout the duration of the sermon series. As such, the project director could display the accompanying sermon series graphic that had been created for use with the sermon series. In addition, the project director could display the title, biblical text, and outline of each subsequent sermon in the series so that participants could take notes and carefully follow the flow of each sermon. In conclusion, the project director felt that this approach would provide the most consistent means of delivery with the least amount of possible interruptions.

As a result of this decision, participants were asked to watch each sermon via Facebook Live or through YouTube considering the COVID-19 global pandemic. With that said, the sermon series was based upon Luke 11:1-13 and was titled "The Pathway to Prayer" series. The sermon series was built around the request of Jesus' disciples in Luke 11:1. In this passage one observes Jesus' disciples asking for Christ to teach them how to pray like John the Baptist had taught his disciples. Furthermore, the sermon series focused primarily on how Jesus taught His disciples to pray using what is sometimes called the Lord's Prayer or the model prayer.

The first sermon in the series was preached on May 20, 2020. The title of the sermon was "The Priority of Prayer." This sermon was based upon the passage in Luke 11:1-2 and Jesus' example of placing an obvious priority on prayer in His personal walk with God. For example, as discussed in Chapter Two of this research project the gospel writers provide at least fifteen accounts of Jesus praying during His earthly life and ministry with eleven of those accounts being recorded in the gospel of Luke. Furthermore, in Luke 5:16 the priority of Jesus' prayer life is conveyed in the commentary that Luke provides when he writes "Jesus often withdrew to

lonely places to pray.” In contrast, the research director drew the congregation’s attention to the fact that some nineteen percent of Southern Baptist congregants indicated in a Pew Research Center survey that they failed to pray daily. Also, the research director used this sermon to compare the Pew Research Center’s survey data with his pre-project survey data that he had recently collected. As such, using this sermon the project director was able to confront the observed prayerlessness of his congregation as he reported the fact that nearly seventeen percent of respondents from within East Barbourville Baptist Church admitted that they did not pray daily.

The project director then used the remainder of the sermon to remind the congregation of their need to make prayer a priority in their life just like Jesus did according to the gospels. With that said, he built this sermon around four points or observations related to the prayer life of Jesus. First, prayer was a priority of Jesus no matter the time of day and should be for the Christian as well. This is obvious in passages such as Mark 1:35-36, Matthew 14:23, or Luke 6:12 which speak to Jesus praying either early in the morning, in the afternoon, or all night. Second, prayer was a priority of Jesus no matter where He was and should be for the Christian as well. This is obvious in passages such as Mark 6:46, Mark 14:32, Luke 5:15-16, and Luke 3:21 which show Jesus praying in various locations. In short, the project director reminded the congregation that prayer is not confined to a particular place as illustrated in the prayer of Jesus. Third, prayer was a priority of Jesus no matter who He was with and should be in the life of the Christian as well. This is obvious in passages such as Luke 5:16, John 11:41-42, Luke 9:28 which picture Jesus either praying alone, praying in public, or praying in partnership with others. Finally, the project director shared with the congregation that prayer was a priority of Jesus no matter the circumstance or situation. A truth that is obvious in passages such as Luke 3:21-22,

John 6:11, Luke 22:31-32, Luke 6:12-13, John 12:27-28, Matthew 26:36-39, and Luke 23:46. In these passages Jesus is shown praying as an act of worship, praying over meals, praying on behalf of others, praying in advance of making decisions, praying amid sorrow and suffering, and praying with dying breath. In concluding the sermon, the project director pointed out that prayer continues to be a priority of Jesus as He sits at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for the saints in heaven according to Romans 8:34.

The second sermon in the series was titled “The Pattern of Prayer” based out of Luke 11:2c-4. This sermon was first preached on Sunday night May 31, 2020. However, after the conclusion of the sermon, the project director discovered that there was a serious problem with the sound on the livestream feed. According to feedback provided from those who were attempting to watch the service live, there was a terrible echo that prevented the service or the sermon from being discernable. The project director attempted to watch the recording of the service and agreed with those who had stated that there was a sound problem. In light of this development, the project director had to employ a local sound and technology technician to correct the problem. Thankfully, the problem was able to be fixed in time for the upcoming Wednesday evening service. Therefore, the project director preached the second sermon of the series again on Wednesday, June 3, 2020. In this sermon, the project director focused on teaching the congregation how to pray using the ACTS prayer strategy which he introduced in chapter two of this research project. It should be noted that the acrostic ACTS stands for adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Furthermore, the acrostic ACTS is believed to represent the four ingredients that can be found in the model prayer or Lord’s prayer as taught by Jesus in Luke 11:2-4.

With that said, in part one of this two-part sermon the project director instructed the congregation on how to pray with a spirit of adoration and with a spirit of confession. At this point, the project director drew the congregation's attention to the word "hallowed" or "honored" as it is sometimes rendered in translations other than the King James Version. The project director explained that this word carries with it the idea of sanctifying something or setting it apart from that which is ordinary or common. In this context, the word calls for the hallowing, honoring, or what one might refer to as the adoring of the name of God. In addition, the project director made sure that worshipers understood the difference between adoration and thanksgiving. For example, he explained that adoration is a way that one expresses praise and worship to God by honoring Him for who He is rather than for what He has done. Likewise, the project director instructed the congregation to pray with a spirit of confession. As such, the project director explained that to live in fellowship with God worshipers must continually confess their faults and failures to the Lord seeking His cleansing through times of confession in prayer. An action that simply involves the worshiper being honest with God about sin that is present in his or her life.

The third sermon in the series was preached on Sunday evening June 7, 2020. As mentioned in the paragraph above this was the second part of a two-part sermon titled "The Pattern of Prayer." In this sermon, the research director picked up where he had originally left off in the previous service when he preached part one of the sermon "The Pattern of Prayer." As such, he finished preaching on the ACTS prayer strategy using the remaining two components of prayer that were outlined in the model prayer and illustrated using the ACTS acrostic. These components include praying with thanksgiving and supplication. Here the project director reminded participants that a worshiper's prayers should be saturated with both adoration and

thanksgiving. As such, a worshiper should adore God by praising and honoring Him for whom He is as discussed above while also expressing heartfelt gratitude to God who all that He has done or is doing in one's life. A practice that is reiterated in passages like Psalm 103:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, and Hebrews 13:15. Likewise, the project director called on worshipers to be diligent in praying with supplication. In other words, as the project director explained in the message worshipers should rely upon prayer as to how they ask something from God either for themselves or on behalf of others. For example, Jesus taught His disciples to pray and ask for a daily provision of food and divine protection from evil or temptation. In the same respect, Abraham prayed for his nephew Lot asking God to deliver him from Sodom and Gomorrah before it was destroyed. Therefore, Christians should do their due diligence to call upon God for help in a time of need.

Finally, on Wednesday, June 10, 2020, the project director preached the fourth and final sermon in the series titled "The Persistence of Prayer." This sermon was based on the text found in Luke 11:5-13. In this sermon the project director used Jesus' instruction and illustration of asking, seeking, and knocking to challenge believers to maintain a daily and persistent prayer life. In this passage, Jesus compared the believer who prays, to a person who comes asking for bread in the middle of the night from his friend. Through the interaction of this man and his friend along with the insights that Christ offered in the text, the project director led the congregation to make five observations about prayer as he challenged them to become persistent prayer warriors.

First, he reminded the congregation that when praying the time of day is not a factor. In other words, as celebrated by the Psalmist in Psalm 121:4 "the Protector of Israel does not slumber or sleep." Therefore, no matter how dark the night or inconvenient the hour of the day

God's ear is always attentive to the prayers of His people. Second, he reminded them that any size of a request is fine. For example, the Bible is replete with examples of worshipers calling on God with requests of all shapes and sizes. According to 1 Samuel 1:11, Hannah prayed for the Lord to bless her to give birth to a son and He did. Likewise, King Hezekiah prayed according to 2 Kings 20:2-3 and asked God to heal him when he was deathly ill, and God extended his life by fifteen years. In the New Testament, Jairus prayed when his daughter was sick unto death in Mark 5:23-42 and Christ raised her from the dead. Likewise, according to Luke 23:42-43 the thief on the cross prayed in his dying breath for salvation and Christ assured him that on that day he would be with Him in paradise. Third, the project director reminded the congregation that the turning point in prayer is praying with a fervent focus. In the words of Jesus in Luke 11:8 the man's friend responded to the man in need because of his persistence. At this point, the project director reminded the congregation that it is not how much you say but how often you pray that matters to God. For example, in Matthew 6:7 Jesus forbids babbling on and on with empty words like the idolaters who think that they will be heard for their many words. Yet, Paul called on Christians to be sure that they are praying without ceasing in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Fourth, he reminded the congregation that one talks to God through prayer as an act of faith. He supported this reminder using Luke 11:9-10 where Jesus instructed disciples when praying to "keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." The project director pointed out to the congregation that the words keep asking, keep searching, and keep knocking imply waiting with anticipation and expectation for an answer. As such, the answer may not come today, and it may not tomorrow but the answer will come according to the will of God. Finally, the project director

reminded the congregation that prayer can reach out and touch the heart of their Heavenly Father. In driving home this point the project director pointed out a comparison that surfaces in Luke 11:1-13. The comparison occurs when Jesus compares the goodness of earthly fathers with the goodness of the Heavenly Father. This is a surprising comparison considering that earthly fathers are flawed yet still manage to know how to be fair to their children. Likewise, the Heavenly Father who is flawless never has and never will fail to supply the needs of His children.

With that said, the project director concluded the applied research portion of his project by calling on project participants to complete the post-project survey. Like the pre-project survey, the post-project survey was designed and published using the Survey Monkey subscription that had been purchased by the project director. Basically, in just a couple of clicks, the project director was able to duplicate the pre-project survey and rename it the post-project survey within Survey Monkey. However, in doing so several changes had to be made before publishing the post-project survey and collecting results from participants.

For example, two additional qualifying questions were added to the beginning of the survey. The purpose of adding these two qualifying questions was to disqualify and deny post-project survey access to anyone who answered “no” to either question one, two, or three of the survey. As with the pre-project survey, the first question of the post-project survey asked for participants to consent to participate in the study. The second question asked if the individual had completed the original pre-project survey as a part of the study. The third question asked if the individual had watched or listened to all four sermons that were preached as a part of the expository sermon series that corresponded with the study. If an individual answered “no” to either of these qualifying questions, then he or she was immediately denied access to the post-

project survey and redirected to a disqualification page. On the other hand, once the individual answered “yes” to the three qualifying questions then he or she was granted immediate access to the remaining thirty-six questions of the post-project survey.

To achieve this level of participation the project director targeted the same forty-four participants that were initially invited to participate in the pre-project survey. Because of the continued ban on mass gatherings due to the Covid-19 global pandemic these prospective participants were once again contacted via email requesting their participation in the post-project survey. The email contained an attached copy of the Internal Review Board’s approved recruitment letter. Within the attached recruitment email the prospective participants were instructed to use the newly embedded link found in the attached recruitment letter to access and complete the post-project survey. After clicking the post-project survey link participants were then redirected to the consent page of the survey. As explained in detail above only those participants who answered “yes” to the first three questions of the survey were given access to the remaining thirty-six questions of the survey. It should be noted that questions 4-39 were ordered the same as the pre-project survey to allow the project director to compare the validity of the applied research results using a paired t-test.

Thankfully, as with the pre-project survey, none of those who visited the survey link answered “no” to any of the first three qualifying questions. Therefore, the post-project survey had the same participation rate as the pre-project survey. A participation rate of eighty-two percent. Unfortunately, the participants were not as quick to complete the post-project survey as they were when completing the pre-project survey. Whereas the pre-project survey results were completed in twelve days the post-project results took fourteen days to complete. This was disappointing considering that the project director asked participants to complete the post-project

survey within a seven-day timeframe. In communicating with prospective participants the project director discovered that some participants were not completing the post-project survey because they did not watch the sermons when they were livestreamed on Facebook nor had they made an effort to watch the sermons via YouTube. In response, the project director sent two follow-up emails to prospective participants which both contained YouTube links specific to the four sermons and the order they were preached as part of the expository sermon series. As such, the first survey was submitted on June 16, 2020, which the last survey being submitted on June 30, 2020.

With the post-project survey complete the project director will begin the process of conducting a paired t-test. As previously explained a paired t-test is a type of test that researchers use when they need to compare two samples to determine whether the mean of a dependent variable is the same or different in two related groups. Specifically, the project director will use the paired t-test to determine if the mean difference between the two surveys is significantly different from zero. Put another way the project director will use the paired t-test to paint a before and after picture of the prayer life of select members of East Barbourville Baptist Church. As a result, the project director should be able to determine from those calculations whether the expository sermon series on prayer has had a positive impact on the way that believers pray. In conclusion, it should be noted that the results of the paired t-test will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

East Barbourville Baptist Church is an ordinary traditional Southern Baptist congregation. For example, there is a steeple that towers above the main sanctuary while the windows are adorned with beautiful decorative stained glass. Likewise, for the last fifty-seven years, East Barbourville Baptist Church has continued to utilize pew seating, Sunday school, and the standard eleven o'clock worship service hour. Also, the congregation prefers a primarily traditional worship style, and they are governed by a congregational form of church polity. Like most traditional Southern Baptist Churches, East Barbourville Baptist Church relies upon the senior pastor to oversee and carry out the bulk of the ministry responsibilities. Therefore, as the pastor of the church, the project director anticipates that the prayer life of his church's active members will closely resemble the prayer life of the typical member of most other traditional Southern Baptist churches.

With that said, the project director expects to find between thirty-three and eighty-one percent of participants being actively engaged in a regular and consistent prayer life. It should be noted that he is basing this assumption on data that has been made available from a Pew Research Center survey as discussed in Chapter One of this research project. In addition, he is basing this assumption on data that was discovered through a similar doctoral project completed in 2016 which was also mentioned above in Chapter One of this research project. The results of both of the aforementioned research projects highlight the fact that the typical Southern Baptist Church member struggles when it comes to prayer as nearly twenty percent or more are neglecting to pray daily.¹²⁹ Therefore, in light of this data the project director assumes his

¹²⁹ "Members of the Southern Baptist Convention - Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics," accessed July 31, 2018, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/southern-baptist-convention/#beliefs-and-practices>.

church will be no different. As such, the project director has sought to confront and correct the prayerlessness of his church by preaching a four-week expository sermon series on prayer to confront and correct the prayerlessness of his congregation as detailed previously in Chapter Three. Also, he relied upon a pre- and post-project survey to determine if his congregation's prayer life increased in response to his designed intervention. With that said, the project director will highlight data related to both the practical significance and statistical significance of the research project in the sections below.

Practical Significance

As mentioned above, in this section of the research project the project director will focus on project data pertaining to the practical significance of his research project. As such, practical significance has been described as an essential part of investigating meaningful educational interventions.¹³⁰ Therefore, practical significance should be understood as an important concept to researchers that moves their study beyond the realm of statistical significance and p values alone.¹³¹ It should be noted that in the realm of practical significance statistical results are a matter of judgment. A judgment that is based upon the numerical expression of how well an experiment group learned or performed when compared to the control group.¹³² With that in mind, practical significance may also be referred to by some as substantive or clinical significance.¹³³ Through this type of analysis, the researcher is expected to examine the outcome

¹³⁰ Michael J. Peeters, "Practical Significance: Moving beyond Statistical Significance," *Science Direct*, (2016), accessed June 5, 2020, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877129715200378>.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Joyce P. Gall, Meredith D. Gall, and Walter R. Borg. *Applying Educational Research: a Practical Guide*, (New York, NY: Longman, 1999), 167.

¹³³ Peeters, "Practical Significance: Moving beyond Statistical Significance," accessed June 15, 2020, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877129715200378>.

of the research project in order to judge whether an observed result has had implications within the context of a particular research setting and their relative practices.¹³⁴

With that said, as explained in Chapter Three of this research document the project director will determine the impact of the four-week expository sermon series on prayer by using a pre- and post-project survey. Naturally, the pre-project survey will suffice as the baseline measurement or score of each participant's prayer life before the preaching of the four-week expository sermon series on prayer. Likewise, the post-project survey will be conducted following the fourth and final sermon of the series. As such, the project director will conclude the applied research portion of the project by comparing both the pre and post-project survey scores to determine the effect of change that either has or has not been brought about by the project director's intervention plan.

Having said that, the project director scored the research project's surveys using what is called a Likert scale. In essence, this means that for each survey question there are five possible responses for participants to choose from. These responses range in ascending order from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree. In addition, each of these possible answers to a survey question was assigned a corresponding point value of either one, two, three, four, or five again in ascending order. In most cases the Strongly Disagree response would serve as the least favorable or least desirable response to a question. Therefore, this answer to a survey question would be given the lowest corresponding score which is a point value of only one. Likewise, in most cases the Strongly Agree response would serve as the most favorable or most desirable response to a survey question. Therefore, this answer to a survey question would be given the highest corresponding score which is a point value of five. The

¹³⁴ Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Applying Educational Research*, 168.

other remaining responses are then scored according to the order of their rank from the least to the greatest or somewhere in between given that the response is neutral. It should be noted that in some instances throughout the survey something called inverted scoring was used. This means that on specific questions the least favorable or least desirable response traded places with what had otherwise been recognized as the most favorable and most desirable response of each survey question. When this occurred, the responses were scored in descending order rather than ascending order according to their rank from the greatest to the least. Again the most favorable response which in this case would be that of “Strongly Disagree” is then assigned the highest possible point value which is five while the least favorable response which in this case would be “Strongly Agree” is assigned the least possible point value of one.

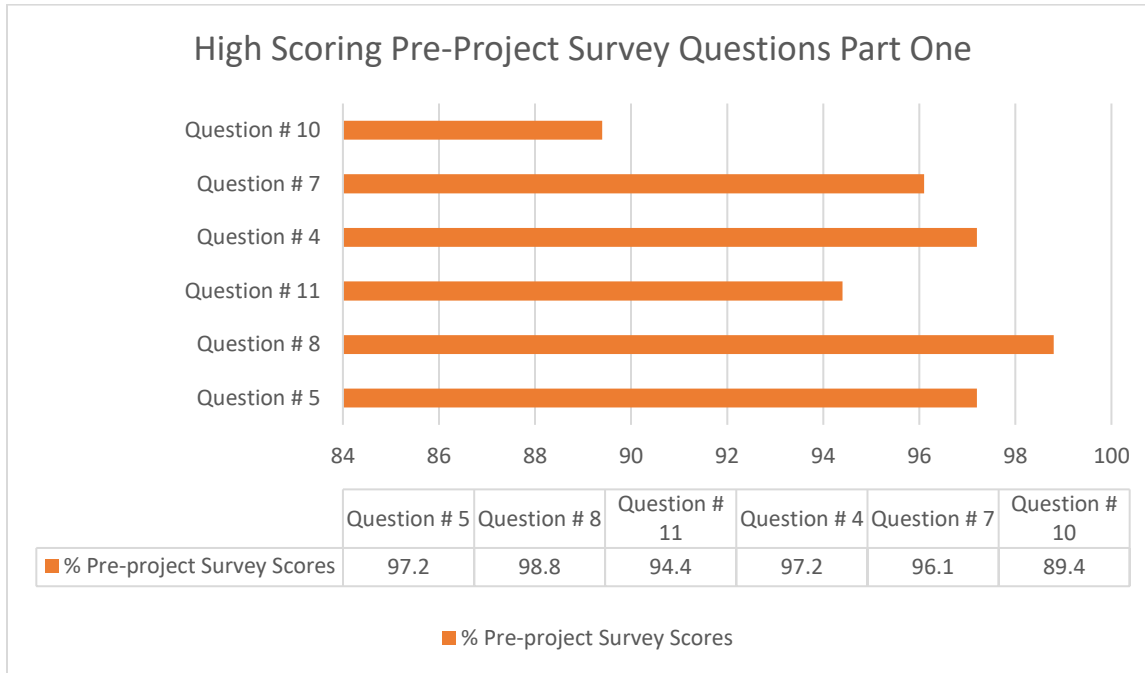
As noted in Chapter Three of this document the project director invited forty-four participants to take part in his research project. However, only thirty-six participants completed and submitted the pre- and post-project surveys. Therefore, the project director determined that there were thirty-six possible responses available per each question of the pre- and post-project surveys. Also, as discussed above the highest point value of each question was set at five according to the Likert scale. As such, the project director multiplied the possible number of responses which was thirty-six by the highest possible score of each question which was five, and determined that the highest cumulative possible score of on both the pre and post-project surveys was the equivalent of hundred and eighty points.

Pre-project Survey Percentage Scores Per Question

Using this formula, the project director was able to grade the responses of each survey question based on a percentage score which he used for initial observation purposes. For example, the percentage scores of the pre-project survey revealed that project participants scored

high when answering questions about their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs surrounding the subject of prayer before the sermon series as illustrated in the chart below. Specifically, according to the pre-project survey Question 5, participant responses scored a ninety-seven percent on the question of whether they believe that the Bible teaches God's people to pray. Furthermore, according to the pre-project survey Question 8, participants scored nearly ninety-nine percent when indicating their belief that prayer is an important part of the believer's relationship with God. In addition, according to the pre-project survey Question 11, participants scored a ninety-four percent as they acknowledged their belief that an active prayer life is evidence of personal spiritual growth. In the pre-project survey Question 4, participants were asked if they believed that Jesus is the mediator between God and man through whom believers have been given direct access to God through prayer. In response, participants scored a ninety-seven percent. Likewise, in the pre-project survey Question 7, participants were asked if they believed that the Bible instructs Christians to "pray without ceasing." In response, participants scored a ninety-six percent. Finally, in the pre-project survey Question 10, participants were asked if they believed that the Bible warns about sin hindering one's ability to pray effectively. In response, participants scored an eighty-nine percent. In light of these scores, the project director has determined that by and large participants in his project had a solid grasp of foundational truths related to the subject of prayer before ever taking part in the four-week sermon series on prayer.

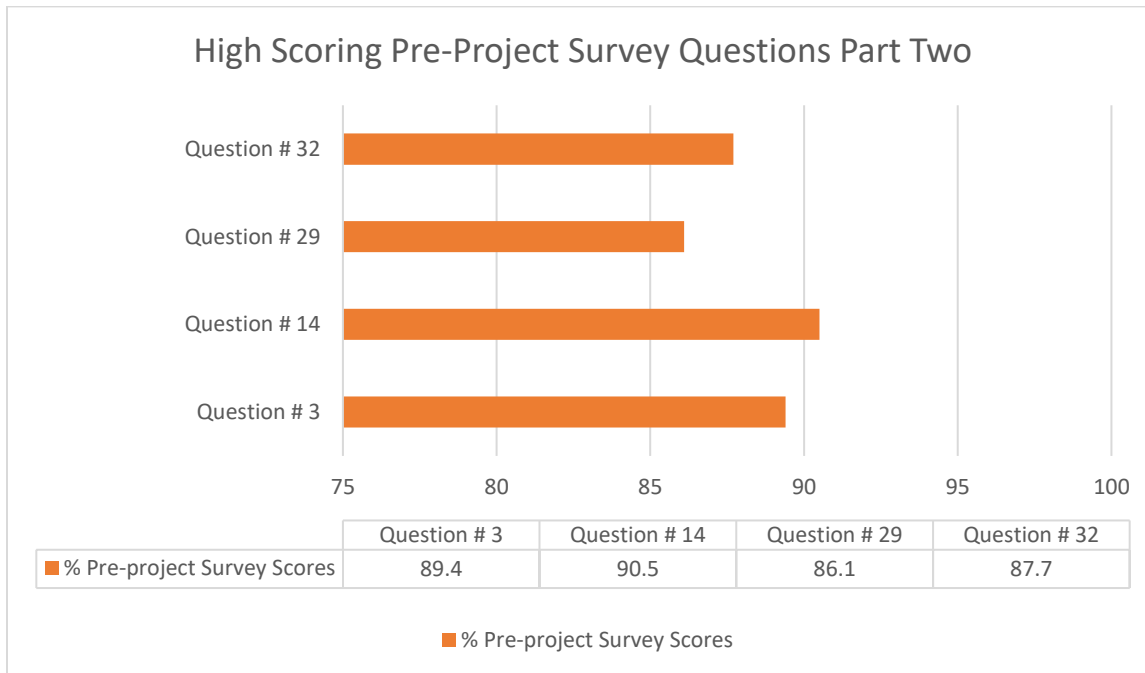
Figure 1. High Scoring Pre-Project Survey Questions Part One.



Using this formula, the project director also found that participants scored high on the pre-project survey when answering questions about their desired level of spirituality or commitment to the spiritual discipline of prayer as illustrated in Figure 2 below. In other words, the answers to these questions speak of the vision that the participants have for their own prayer life and their faithfulness to the Christian life in general. For example, in the pre-project survey Question 3, participants were given a score of ninety percent when asked if they submitted all areas of their lives to be lived according to the Bible. This is important to note considering the following scores and their correlation as it relates to the submission and participation of participants regarding their level of praying. As such, participants scored a comparable ninety-one percent on the pre-project survey Question 14 when asked if they thought it was important to pray at least once a day. Also, participants were given a score of eighty-six percent when asked in the pre-project survey Question 29 if they wanted to spend more time in prayer. Furthermore, participants were given a score of nearly eighty-eight percent when asked in the pre-project

survey Question 32 if they were willing to spend more time in prayer. With that said, the project director has determined that at least most of the participants in his project began his project with an appropriate vision and attainable goal of what their prayer life should look like.

Figure 2. High Scoring Pre-Project Survey Questions Part Two.



However, when using the above formula participants did not score as well when it comes to gauging the health of their own perceived prayer life as illustrated in Figure 3 below. As was discussed in Chapter Three of this document the project director intentionally triangulated and rephrased questions all belonging to the same category or type of questions to provide the researcher with multiple data points. Likewise, some questions required inverted scoring as explained in the opening section of this chapter. With that in mind, the project director discovered the following analysis regarding how participants view the quality of their prayer life in real-time. First, participants scored only sixty-one percent when asked in the pre-project survey Question 6 if they struggled to stay alert when praying. This low score is troubling because this is an inverted scoring question. As an inverted scoring question, the most desirable

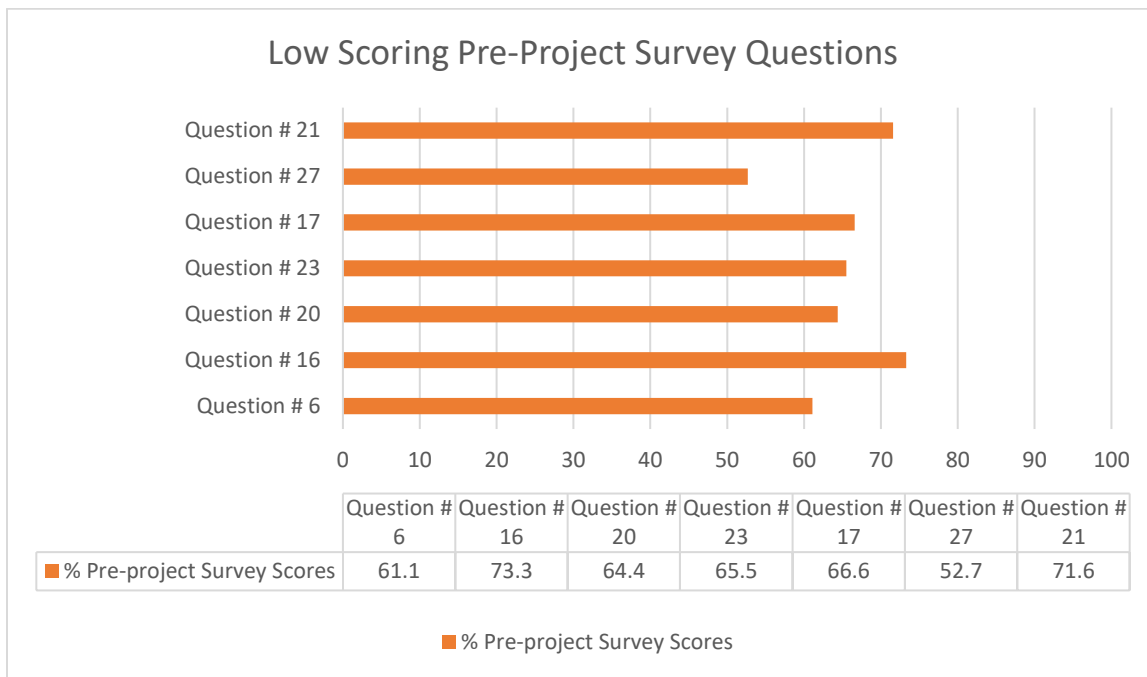
response would have been Strongly Disagree rather than Strongly Agree. With that said, the most desirable response would have received a high score of five points on each survey with a total cumulative point value for all completed surveys of one hundred and eighty points. Therefore, if participants answered using the most desirable response then their total score for this question should have been closer to the one hundred percent mark. Some might object because humility could lead some to answer less favorably. However, if this were the case then that would be reflected in the triangulation of other related questions as well. Therefore, this low score would suggest that before the sermon series was ever preached many participants were struggling to stay alert when praying.

Furthermore, the project director noticed a pattern beginning to emerge in additional questions related to the actual quality of the prayer lives of the participants in his project. As such, participants scored low within this category considering other inverted scoring questions as well. According to the pre-project survey Question 16, participants only scored a seventy-three percent when asked if they did not pray like they should because they were too busy. Likewise, participants only scored a sixty-four percent on the pre-project survey Question 20 when asked if their prayer life had been stronger in the past than it is today. Once more, participants barely scored sixty-six percent when they responded to the pre-project survey Question 23 which asked participants if they felt that they struggled with practicing the spiritual discipline of prayer.

Two additional questions lend further support to the thought that participants do in fact struggle when it comes to engaging in prayer. Those questions are number seventeen and number twenty-seven. In the pre-project survey Question 17, participants were asked if they felt that they were strong in prayer. In light of this question, participants received a score of sixty-six percent according to their responses. A score that is consistent with the inverted scoring of questions six,

sixteen, twenty, and twenty-three. In addition, participants received a low score of fifty-three percent when asked in the pre-project survey Question 27 if they prayed at a set time each day. A low score that the project director believes is indicative of an inconsistent prayer life on the part of believers who otherwise indicate that prayer is important and that they want to pray more but struggle to do so consistently. This is supported as well by the score of seventy-one percent that participants received on the pre-project survey Question 21 which asked if they pray several times throughout the day rather than at just one set time.

Figure 3. Low Scoring Pre-Project Survey Questions.

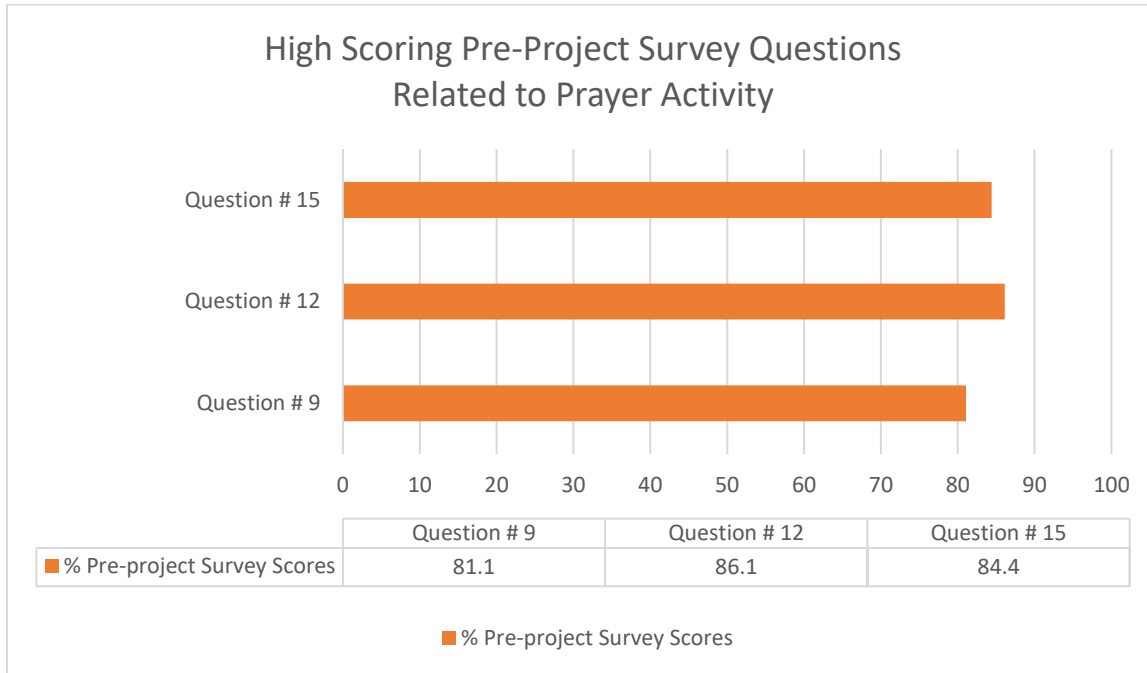


Yet, despite the low scores and the apparent struggle with prayer that was discussed in a previous couple of paragraphs the project director found it interesting that participants scored much higher when asked very pointedly about their specific level of commitment to prayer. For example, in the pre-project survey Question 9, participants were asked to respond to the statement “I do not have an active prayer life.” It should be noted that like some of the questions mentioned above this is an inverted scoring question. As such, the response to this question

received a surprisingly high score of eighty-one percent indicating that participants by majority disagree to some extent or at least remain undecided about that statement. In other words, participants for the most part want to believe that they have an active prayer life even though they struggle with it according to the multiple data points that were discussed above.

This is further indicated by the scores that were given to the pre-project survey questions number 12 and 15. In the pre-project survey Question 12, participants received a score of just over eighty-six percent when asked if they prayed daily. Likewise, in response to the pre-project survey Question 15, participants received a score of just over eighty-four percent when asked if they pray at least weekly. Given the small margin of difference between these two scores, the project director is led to believe that participants view an active prayer life as that which may or may not take place every day but at least occurs on a weekly basis. With that said, the project director has concluded from a comparison of these scores that while participants may claim to have an active prayer life they are not satisfied with their level of commitment to prayer at the outset of the research project.

Figure 4. High Scoring Pre-Project Survey Questions Related to Prayer Activity.

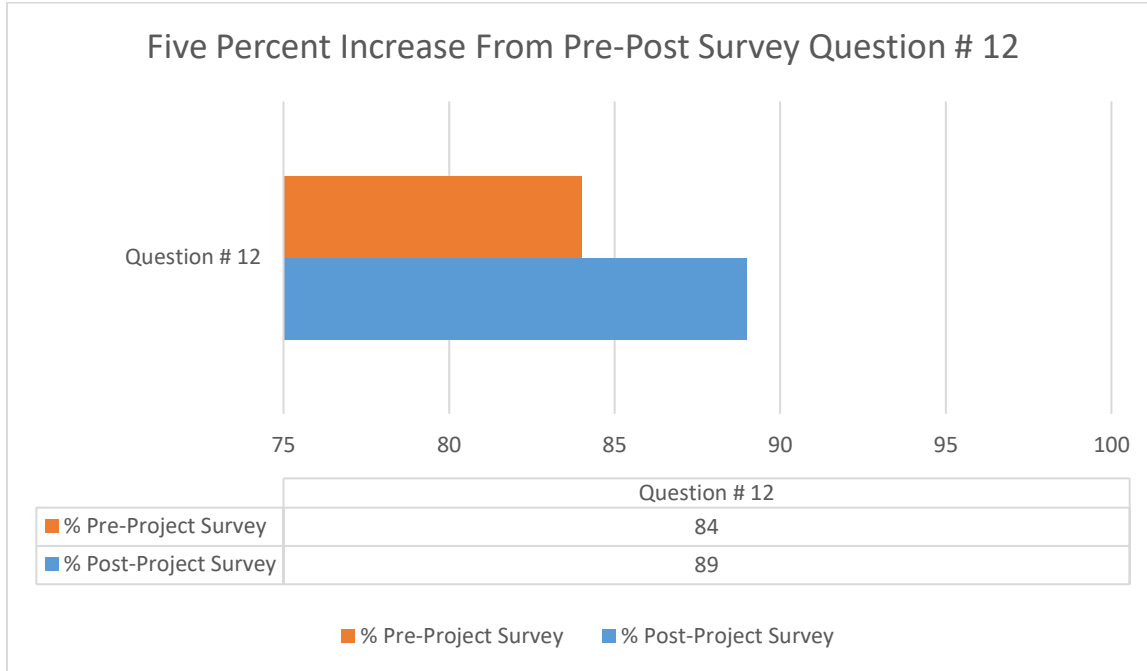


Effect of Change from Pre to Post Per Question

As explained above the project director entered the applied research portion of this project expecting somewhere between thirty-three and eighty-one percent of project participants to admit that they maintained an active and consistent prayer life. To validate this assumption, the project director looked to the pre-project survey Question 12 to determine if that was in fact the case within his pool of participants. It should be noted that the pre-project survey Question 12 states “I pray daily.” As such, he discovered that as many as eighty-four percent of participants in his study initially answered favorably that they either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to this question. Therefore, the project director was able to conclude at the outset of the project that he had slightly more praying participants taking part in his study than those who had taken part in the previously discussed Pew Research Center poll or the similar doctoral project mentioned above.

However, it should be noted that the project director did not observe the level of change in this number that he had hoped to see when he first launched this research project. For example, as stated at the beginning of this chapter the project director anticipated seeing as much as a two-hundred percent increase in the number of participants who would begin to embrace a renewed commitment to prayer as a result of his intervention design. It should be noted that he based this anticipated result upon the results of a similar doctoral project that was mentioned above. Nevertheless, the intervention design did result in an increased number of project participants favorably answering either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to the statement “I pray daily” in the post-project survey. An increase that directly followed the preaching of the four-week expository sermon series on prayer. As such, whereas eighty-four percent of participants responded to the statement favorably in the pre-project survey some eighty-nine percent responded to the statement favorably in the post-project survey. Therefore, there was a total increase of nearly six percent in the number of people who were praying daily according to the pre-project survey versus those who admitted to praying daily according to the post-project survey. An increase that is visibly evident in the following chart.

Figure 5. Five Percent Increase From Pre-Post Survey Question 12.



Even though the level of increase in the number of people who experienced a renewed commitment to prayer on a daily basis only proved to be some six percent instead of two hundred percent the project director was still encouraged by the level of growth that was demonstrated in other questions. Questions like number fourteen which states that “it is important that I pray at least once a day.” On this question there proved to be an increase in score of almost four percent between the pre- and post-project surveys. Similarly, on Question 17 which asks participants if they are strong in the area of prayer, there was more than a five percent increase between the pre- and post-project survey scores. It should be noted that the level of increase in these scores closely reflects the increase in the percentage of participants who chose the most favorable responses to Question 12 in the post-project survey when compared to the pre-project survey. Therefore, confirming that there was in fact practical growth within the prayer lives of participants.

With that said, one can also see a correlation between the increase in the above responses considering the increase that was observed in the following questions and their respective responses on the post-project survey. According to an analysis of Question 29 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I want to spend more time in prayer.” As such, the post-project responses to Question 29 reveal an increase of over seven percent. In addition, Question 32 asked participants if they were willing to spend more time in prayer. In response, there was an observable increase of over three percent between the pre- and post-project survey scores on this question. Furthermore, participants demonstrated an increase in scores between the pre- and post-project-survey when they were asked to respond to Question 35 which states “When I pray, I pray in faith without doubting.” As such, the score for the post-project responses to this question increased by nearly six percent.

Obviously, in light of the baseline data discussed above from the pre-project survey participants were not struggling to pray because they did not know they should. On the contrary, participants demonstrated in their baseline scores that they had a firm grasp of foundational truths related to prayer. Also, they demonstrated that they had a clear vision of what they thought their prayer life should look like. However, as was previously discussed they admitted that their prayer life was lacking and could use some improvement. Therefore, in light of the original baseline scores and the subsequent increase in responses in the post-project survey scores the project director was left to concur that the intervention design had at least caused some believers to want to pray more than they already were. An observation that is evident and illustrated in the percentage increases of these aforementioned scores.

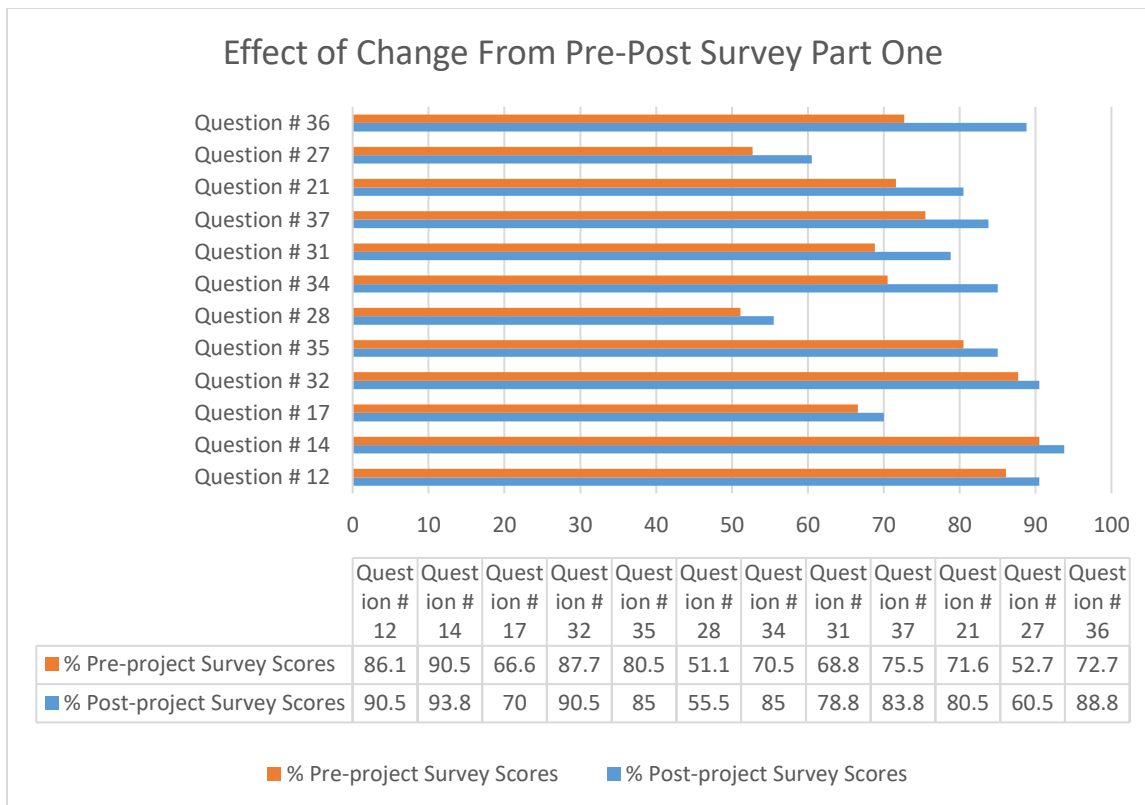
The project director also observed another pivotal factor that he believes played an integral role in the increased scores related to several of the post-project survey questions. For

example, when asked in Question 28 if they would pray more if their church preached or taught more on prayer participant responses experienced an increase of nearly nine percent between the pre- and post-project survey. Likewise, when asked directly in Question 34 if hearing a sermon series on prayer would change the way they pray participants demonstrated the second-highest percentage of overall growth in their response from the pre to the post-project survey. For example, their post-project survey score regarding this question increased by nearly twenty-one percent. Therefore, the project director determined that after hearing the sermon series on prayer some participants were more inclined to acknowledge the transformational power of the Word of God being preached from the pulpit than they originally were in the pre-project survey. It should be noted that preaching from the pulpit saw the greatest level of increase in scores when compared to other factors that sometimes serve as a catalyst for spiritual growth such as having a prayer partner or being involved in a Sunday school class. The former saw an increase in score of fourteen percent while the latter had an increase in score of only eleven percent. With that in mind, it is safe to say that after the sermon series on prayer was concluded there was more respect and appreciation among participants as it related to the power of the pulpit and its ability to effect change in their lives outside of the salvific experience and other public responses.

Furthermore, in light of the apparent impact of the sermon series the project director also noted three other relevant increases in post-project survey scores. These increases in scores were observed in questions twenty-one, twenty-seven, and thirty-six. First, in Question 21 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I pray several times a day rather than at just one set time.” In response, participant scores increased by a total of twelve percent. Second, when dealing with Question 27 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I pray at a set time each day.” In response, participant scores increased by a total of nearly fifteen percent. Finally,

in Question 36 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I make it a point to tell others when God answers my prayers.” In response, participant scores experienced their largest increase overall as their scores rose by a difference of twenty-two percent. Considering this data, the project director determined that thanks to the sermon series on prayer participants had experienced improved frequency regarding the number of times they prayed each day. Also, participants had experienced improved consistency regarding their effort to keep an appointment with God every day. Likewise, participants had experienced an improved passion for witnessing using the power of their testimony as they began to use answered prayers to brag on the supernatural power of God.

Figure 6. Effect of Change from Pre-Post Survey Part One.



Effect of Change from Pre to Post Per Question Section

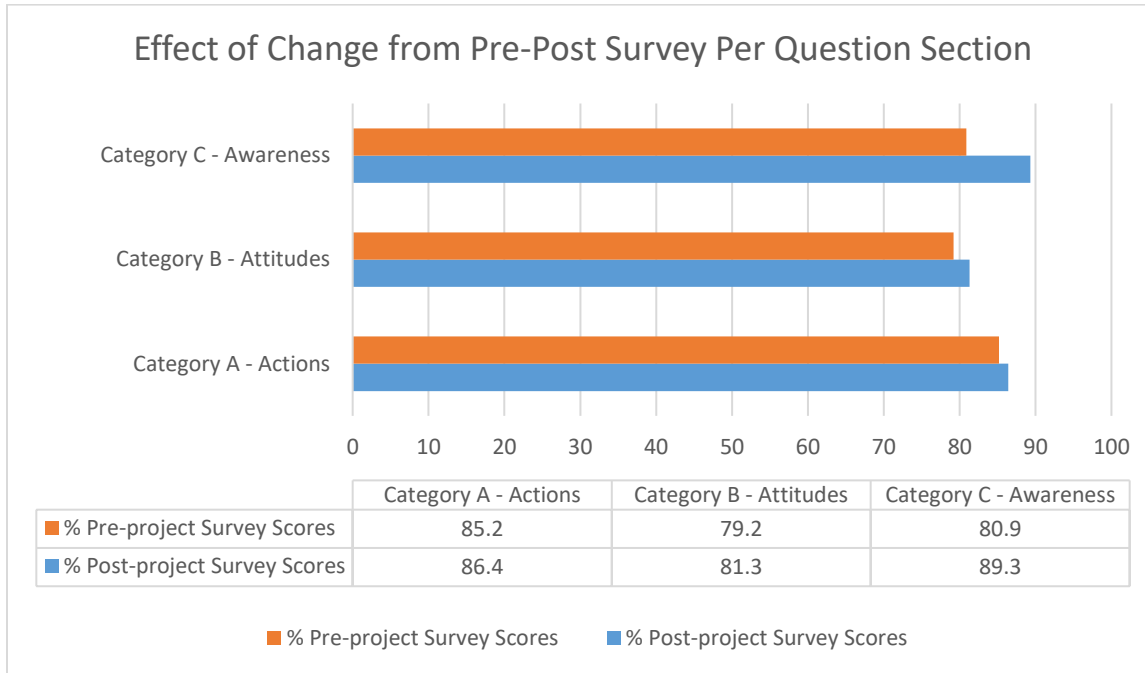
In Chapter Three, the project director explained that the pre- and post-project surveys would contain a total of thirty-six questions. As such, these questions were divided into three categories consisting of twelve questions each. It should be noted that the list of questions and their respective categories can be found in the appendix of this document. Therefore, there were twelve questions in category “A” which consisted of questions related to participants and their “Attitudes” towards prayer. Next, there were twelve questions in category “B” which consisted of questions related to participants and their “Actions” when it comes to praying. Finally, there were twelve questions in category “C” which consisted of questions related to participants and their level of “Awareness” when it comes to being equipped or prepared to pray.

With that said, the section that received the highest overall score on the pre-project survey was section “A.” The section dealing with participants and their “Attitude” towards prayer. According to the average score of this section participants originally scored eighty-five percent. This further supports the conclusion that was discussed above regarding participants having the right thoughts, feelings, and beliefs regarding prayer when they began participating in the research project. The second highest score was observed in section “C.” In this section, questions pertained to “Awareness” factors that play a role in forming one’s commitment to prayer. This section scored nearly eighty-one percent on the pre-project survey. This also further supports the conclusion discussed above regarding participants having a clear and firm vision of what they wanted their prayer life to look like. However, the third and final category which scored the lowest of all three groups of questions on the pre-project survey was section “B.” In this section, questions pertain to the actual “Action” of prayer. As such, this section scored only seventy-nine percent. As a result, the low score of this section supports the conclusion previously

discussed above that participants are not praying in line with their beliefs about prayer or their vision of what their prayer life should be.

These conclusions proved to be apparent in the changes which occurred between the pre and post-project surveys within each question category as well. For example, in category “A” the category dealing with questions that were focused on identifying participant thoughts, feelings, and beliefs toward prayer the project director observed only a small increase in scores registering slightly more than one percent. A result that is to be expected when one stops to consider how low the ceiling for growth was in this particular category of questions as participants appeared to demonstrate a healthy set of beliefs about prayer when first entering the research project. On the other hand, category “C” the category dealing with “Awareness” questions about factors that might ultimately impact one’s level of praying saw the greatest level of increase between the pre and post-project surveys. As such, this category saw an increase of nearly four percent. In light of this increase, the project director believes that the intervention helped participants to recognize the inconsistency that existed between their vision of what a vibrant prayer life should look like in comparison to their actual level of praying. Therefore, participants affirmed in the post-project survey that the intervention design was a vital factor that prompted them to pray more. Finally, category “B” the category dealing with “Action” questions which were intended to measure the actual prayer activity of participants saw the second-largest increase in score an increase that was to be expected. In this section, participant scores grew by as much as three percent. Once again this data affirms that while participants entered the research project with the right set of beliefs about prayer and a clear vision of what they wanted their prayer life to look like they were not otherwise praying at the level they should have been. A problem that was confronted and corrected in light of the four-week expository sermon series on prayer.

Figure 7. Effect of Change from Pre-Post Survey Per Question Section

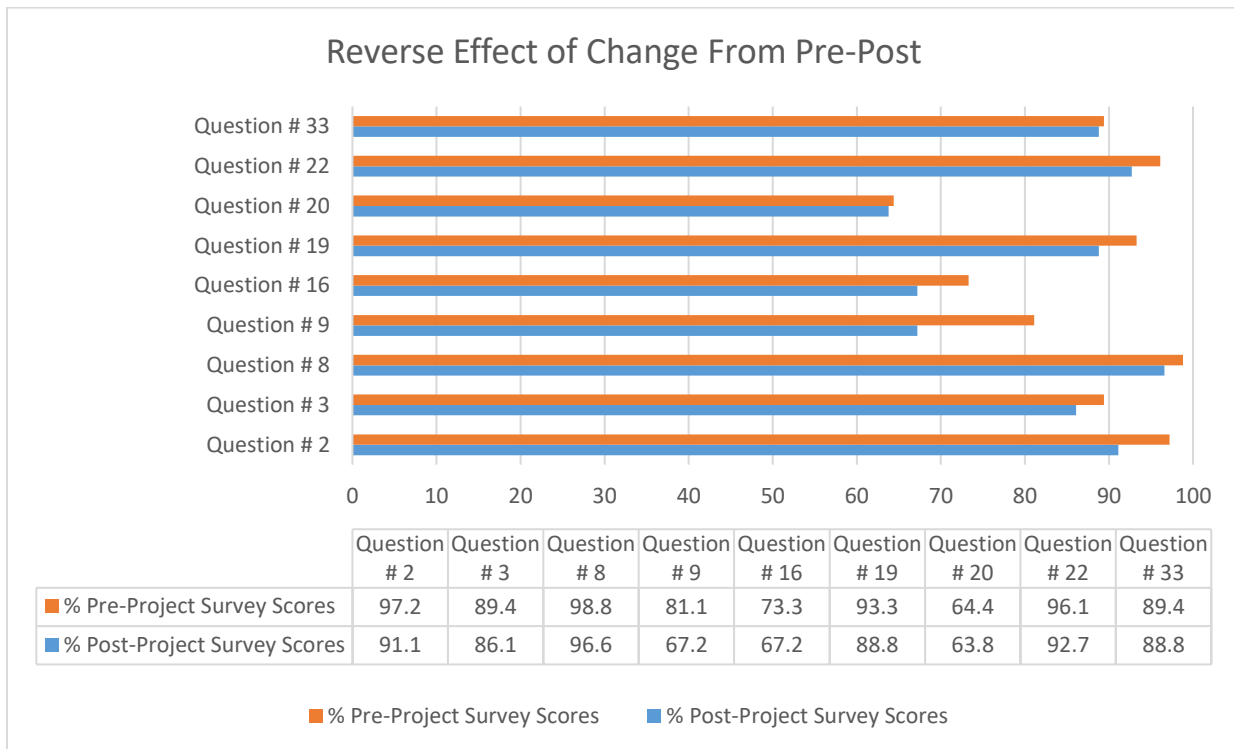


Reverse Effect of Change from Pre to Post

Unfortunately, some scores experienced a reverse effect in their level of change from the pre to the post-project survey. Put another way some participants decreased in score rather than increasing in their scoring between the pre- and post-project survey. A drop that the project director strongly believes is tied to the additional wording of the post-project survey questions. Question 2 serves as one of those questions. For example, in the pre-project survey Question 2, participants were asked “Do you believe the Bible is entirely true.” In response, participants scored better than ninety-seven percent. However, when responding to the same question on the post-project survey participant scores dropped by more than six percent. With that said, the project director is left to conclude one of two things. The first conclusion involves associating the decrease in scores with poor preparation and proclamation of the four-week expository sermon series. However, this would not make plausible sense considering the increase that was measurable in other areas. On the other hand, participants may have interpreted the change in

wording of the post-project survey literally. This means that participants may have provided a different answer on the post-project survey when compared to the pre-project survey because the sermon series did not change their view about the Bible being entirely true. It should be noted that this is an observation that also stood out to the project director in questions three, eight, nine, sixteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-two, and thirty-three as illustrated in the following graph.

Figure 8. Reverse Effect of Change from Pre-Post.



Statistical Significance

As previously noted, the results discussed above fall within the parameter of what is called practical significance. In other words, the above results are what the project director found to be true for a select group of participants from within his congregation. With that said, he will now discuss the results of the research project to determine whether or not the data should be considered statistically significant. As such, if a result is statistically significant then it should be

understood that the result probably did not occur by chance and would be realized outside of the sample group within the population that it represents as well.¹³⁵ With that said, the project director has compared and analyzed his research projects pre and post-project data using a procedure for conducting statistical analysis called a paired t-test. A paired t-test is a type of procedure that instructs the researcher on whether to accept or reject the null hypothesis. In educational research, a p-value of .05 is generally used to test the null hypothesis.¹³⁶ Therefore, the lower the p-value resulting from the paired t-test the more likely the result did not happen by chance which ultimately leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the assumption that the obtained results can be generalized among a similar population. On the other hand, the higher the p-value resulting from the paired t-test the more likely the result occurred by chance which ultimately leads to the acceptance of the null hypothesis and the assumption that the results will not be generalized among a similar population.¹³⁷ Therefore, using this procedure the project director looked for results from the paired t-test that produced a p-value which registered below .05.

As such, the paired t-test has allowed the project director to determine whether or not the results that occurred within his congregation should be understood as something that happened by chance or if the results can be expected to take place across ministry contexts in other congregations. It should be noted that the project director looked at the data using the paired t-test from three different perspectives. First, he ran a paired t-test using the cumulative mean data for all thirty-six questions of the pre-project survey and the cumulative mean data for all thirty-six questions of the post-project survey. Next, he ran a paired t-test for each question by

¹³⁵ Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Applying Educational Research*, 160.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

comparing that question's pre- and post-project survey data. Finally, he ran a paired t-test using the pre and post-project survey data that pertained to each section of questions to determine which if any set of questions proved to be statistically significant in their level of increase.

Paired t-test Comparing All Questions Pre-Post

With that in mind, the first paired t-test proved that the project as a whole was statistically significant. For example, when conducting this paired t-test the project director focused on comparing the cumulative mean of the pre-project surveys with the cumulative mean of the post-project surveys. As a result, the paired t-test concluded that there was a p-value for the overall project of .037 as displayed in Table 1 below. It should be noted that for the data to be considered statistically significant the p-value had to fall below .05 based on a ninety-five percent confidence interval. According to the Cambridge Dictionary of Statistics, a confidence interval is a range of values, calculated from the sample observations, that are believed, with a particular probability, to contain the true parameter value.¹³⁸ Typically, researchers set this confidence interval at either ninety-five or ninety-nine percent.¹³⁹ As such, determining statistical significance in quantitative research using a confidence interval of .05 allows the researcher to determine what results can be expected with a ninety-five percent degree of confidence if the same process were repeated again and again.¹⁴⁰ Put another way, when results are statistically significant then the researcher can say that he or she is ninety-five percent confident that the

¹³⁸ B. S. Everitt, & A. Skrondal, *The Cambridge dictionary of statistics, fourth edition* (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 99.

¹³⁹ C. Spatz, *Basic statistics: Tales of distributions*, Eighth ed., (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2005), 160.

¹⁴⁰ Everitt, & Skrondal, *The Cambridge dictionary*, 99.

results did not occur by chance and would be reproduced in other contexts where the same process is followed.

While the project director was looking for any number that fell below .05 the project director is nonetheless aware that the level of significance is low or close in number to the confidence interval threshold of .05. In other words, the statistical validity of this number does not reveal anything necessarily earth-shattering about the power or level of effectiveness of the intervention design. It does however confirm and reinforce the findings which have already been discussed above. Findings that indicate preaching is effective when used as an intervention method in addressing and transforming a discipleship deficit such as a lack of prayer. It should be noted that this proved to be statistically significant even among a spiritually mature pool of participants as the project director will discuss in the next chapter. Likewise, the project director believes that the small margin of significance is also understandable and explainable in light of some of the factors that the project director believes restricted the project which will also be explained in greater detail in the next chapter. Nevertheless, considering this data the project director can say with a ninety-five percent degree of confidence that the same results would be realized by applying the intervention process in another ministry context.

Table 1. Paired T-test of the Overall Project from Pre-Post

Pre-Project Mean	Post-Project Mean	P-value	p<.05 or p>.05
4.09	4.19	.037	p<.05

Paired t-test Per Question

The second paired t-test focused on examining individual questions to determine if the effect of the change on those questions should be considered statistically significant. As such,

nineteen questions proved to be statistically significant using the paired t-test while the remaining seventeen questions did not. Once again to be recognized as statistically significant, the p-value of a question had to register lower than .05 based on a ninety-five percent confidence interval. Therefore, the following questions and their results met the criteria and were recognized as statistically significant data. These questions include numbers three, nine, ten, twelve, fourteen, sixteen, seventeen, nineteen, twenty-one, twenty-five, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty-one, thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-six, and thirty-seven. Furthermore, it should be noted that among the question pool there were questions that saw a statistically significant increase and there were questions which saw a statistically significant decrease. The questions with a statistically significant increase will be highlighted first followed by the questions with a statistically significant decrease.

For example, Question 10 was among the group of questions that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 10 participants were asked to respond to the statement “The Bible warns that sin hinders my ability to pray effectively.” As such, the p-value for this question registered at .023 indicating a significant change took place between the pre- and post-project surveys. With a p-value under .05 it can be assumed that the effect of change did not occur by chance rather it can be assumed that this effect could be expected across ministry contexts as well.

Question 12 was also among the group of questions that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 12 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I pray daily.” As such, the p-value for this question registered at .003 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. Once again with a p-value that falls under .05, it can be assumed that the effect of change did not occur by chance. Instead, the researcher can

assume that this would prove to be an expected outcome experienced in other ministry contexts as well.

Question 14 also qualified as one of the questions that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 14 participants were asked to respond to the statement “It is important that I pray at least once a day.” As such, the p-value for this question registered at .032 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. Like questions number ten and twelve this question also had a p-value that was less than .05. Therefore, it is assumed once again that the effect of change did not occur by chance and the same positive result would be expected to occur in other ministry contexts.

Question 17 also qualified as one of the questions that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 17 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I am strong in the area of prayer.” As such, the p-value for this question registered at .032 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. As such, with a p-value that falls under .05, it can be assumed that the effect of change did not occur by chance. Also, because the p-value is statistically significant one would expect to see the same type of significant results in other congregations as well.

Likewise, Question 21 made the list of questions that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 21 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I pray several times throughout the day rather than at one set time.” As such, the p-value for this question registered at .001 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. Therefore, with a p-value below .05, it can be assumed that the effect of change did not occur by chance. Furthermore, should this intervention be used in another congregation the same type of significant results could be anticipated as an outcome.

Question 25 was also among the group of questions that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 25 participants were asked to respond to the statement “Within the last year I can recall my church offering instructions on how to pray.” As such, the p-value for this question also registered at .001 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. Obviously, given the nature of the project and the designed intervention one would expect to see this question experience significant change. Nevertheless, the question itself reinforces the significance of the other questions being discussed here and the overall project significance itself as discussed in the previous section above because it attributes the significant change of the project to the intervention design.

Question 27 was another question that qualified as a question that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 27 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I pray at a set time each day.” As such, the p-value for this question registered at .001 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. With that said, the p-value is below the threshold of .05 meaning it can be assumed that this change did not occur by chance. As a result, the same type of effect should be expected to occur in other congregations who use preaching as an intervention as well.

Question 28 was also one of the questions that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 28 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I would pray more if my church preached or taught more on prayer.” As such, the p-value for this question registered at .044 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. Once again, the p-value registered below .05 indicating that the change did not occur as a result of chance. On the other hand, it is expected that other congregations could see this type of significant change in response to preaching as an intervention.

Question 29 was also among the questions that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 29 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I want to spend more time in prayer.” As such, the p-value for this question registered at .001 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. As with the previous questions discussed above this question also had a p-value that was less than .05. Therefore, the effect of change related to this question did not occur by chance and should be expected as an outcome in other ministry contexts as well.

Question 31 was another one of the questions that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 31 participants were asked to respond to the statement “Having a prayer partner would change the way I pray.” As such, the p-value for this question registered at .001 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. With a p-value below .05, it should be understood that this result did not happen as an act of chance. Instead, one should have confidence the same type of effect would be experienced within another congregation.

Question 34 qualified as a question that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 34 participants were asked to respond to the statement “Hearing a sermon series on prayer would change the way I pray.” As such, the p-value for this question also registered at .001 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. Once again, this question and its level of change are pivotal to validating the legitimacy of this project and the effectiveness of the designed intervention. As such, with a p-value below .05, it is apparent that the effect did not occur by chance. Likewise, according to this data the project director can attribute the significant change in other questions and the overall project to the

intervention design itself. In addition, he and others can confidently assume that this type of result would be duplicated in settings other than his church.

Question 35 was also among the questions that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 35 participants were asked to respond to the statement “When I pray, I pray in faith without doubting.” As such, the p-value for this question registered at .003 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. Therefore, with a p-value below .05, it can be assumed that the effect of change did not occur by chance. Furthermore, should this intervention be used in another congregation the same type of significant results could be anticipated as an outcome.

Question 36 proved to be one of the questions that saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 36 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I make it a point to tell others when God answers of prayer of mine.” As such, the p-value for this question registered at .001 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. Likewise, with a p-value below .05, it can be assumed once again that the effect of change did not occur by chance. Furthermore, should this intervention be used in another congregation the same type of significant results could be anticipated as an outcome.

Finally, Question 37 rounded out the list of questions that ultimately saw a statistically significant increase in score. In Question 37 participants were asked to respond to the statement “Being involved in a Sunday school class or small group would change the way I pray.” As such, the p-value for this question also registered at .001 indicating a significant level of change between the pre- and post-project surveys. With that in mind, it is safe to say that with a p-value below .05 the effect of change did not occur by chance. Therefore, should this intervention be

used in another congregation the same type of significant results could be anticipated as an outcome.

Table 2. Paired T-test Per Question with Increased Scores and Significant Results.

Question	Number of Responses (N)	Mean Score (M) Pre-Survey	Mean Score (M) Post-Survey	Sig. (2-tailed) P-value	p<.05 or p>.05
# 10	36	4.4722	4.6111	.023	p<.05
# 12	36	4.3056	4.5287	.003	p<.05
# 14	36	4.5278	4.6944	.032	p<.05
# 17	36	3.3333	3.5000	.032	p<.05
# 21	36	3.5833	4.0278	.000	p<.05
# 25	36	4.0556	4.5000	.000	p<.05
# 27	36	2.6389	3.0278	.001	p<.05
# 28	36	2.5556	2.7778	.044	p<.05
# 29	36	4.3056	4.6111	.000	p<.05
# 31	36	3.4444	3.9444	.000	p<.05
# 34	36	3.6389	4.4444	.000	p<.05
# 35	36	4.0278	4.2500	.003	p<.05
# 36	36	3.6389	4.4444	.000	p<.05
# 37	36	3.7778	4.1944	.000	p<.05

With that said, the project director also observed several questions that saw a statistically significant decrease between the pre- and post-project surveys. As explained above, to be

recognized as statistically significant the p-value of a question had to register lower than .05 based on a ninety-five percent confidence interval. Therefore, the following questions and their results met the criteria and were recognized as statistically significant data. These questions include questions number three, nine, sixteen, and nineteen.

First, Question 3 was among the cluster of questions that experienced a statistically significant decrease between the pre- and post-project survey scores. In Question 3 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I submit all areas of my life to be lived according to the Bible.” As such, the p-value for this question was a .012 indicating a significant level of change took place between the pre and the post-project surveys. With a p-value that is less than .05, it is assumed that the effect did not happen by chance instead it is assumed that the significant result would occur in other congregations as well.

Next, Question 9 was also among the list of questions that experienced a statistically significant decrease between the pre- and post-project survey scores. In Question 9 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I do not have an active prayer life.” As such, the p-value for this question was a .001 indicating a significant level of change took place between the pre- and post-project surveys. With a p-value that is less than .05, it is assumed that the effect did not occur by chance instead it is assumed that the significant result would occur within the ministry of other churches as well.

Question 16 was another question that saw a statistically significant decrease between the pre- and post-project survey scores. In Question 16 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I don’t pray like I should because I am too busy.” As such, the p-value for this question was a .001 indicating a significant level of change took place between the pre- and post-project surveys. Again, with a p-value that is less than .05, it is assumed that the effect did not

occur by chance instead it is assumed that the significant result would also occur within other ministry contexts.

Finally, Question 19 saw a statistically significant decrease between the pre- and post-project survey scores. In Question 19 participants were asked to respond to the statement “I don’t pray like I should because I lack the faith to believe God can do what I ask Him to do.” As such, the p-value for this question was a .003 indicating a significant level of change took place between the pre- and post-project surveys. As a result, with a p-value that is less than .05, it is assumed that the effect did not occur by chance instead it is assumed that the significant result would occur in other ministry contexts as well.

Table 3. Paired T-test Per Question with Decreased Scores and Significant Results.

Question	Number of Responses (N)	Mean Score (M) Pre-Survey	Mean Score (M) Post-Survey	Sig. (2-tailed) P-value	p<.05 or p>.05
# 3	36	4.4722	4.3056	.012	p<.05
# 9	36	4.0556	3.3611	.000	p<.05
# 16	36	3.6667	3.36667	.001	p<.05
# 19	36	4.6667	4.4444	.003	p<.05

It should be noted that the project director primarily sought a significant increase in scores between the pre- and post-project surveys. In his estimation, a significant increase in scores would serve as evidence of the effectiveness of the overall project and the designed intervention. However, the project director is also pleased with the significant decrease in scores regarding questions number three, nine, sixteen, and nineteen. In his estimation, the decrease in

these scores indicates that the intervention design was effective in helping participants embrace the true reality of their prayer life. In other words, the intervention design helped participants to realize that they were weak in areas that they otherwise thought they were strong in pertaining to prayer.

Paired t-test Per Section

The third paired t-test focused on the effect of change within each of the three categories of questions that were asked as a part of the pre- and post-project survey. As has already been explained in Chapter Three of this document and in the previous section of this chapter the three question categories were divided into Attitudes, Actions, and Awareness. Also, each category consisted of twelve questions for a total of thirty-six questions altogether. It should be noted that the twelve “Attitude” questions focused on identifying what people think, feel, and believe about prayer. Likewise, the “Action” questions were intended to identify what the prayer lives of participants looked like at the beginning and end of the research project. Finally, the “Awareness” questions were intended to identify factors that have impacted or would potentially impact the way participants pray.

Unfortunately, the paired t-test did not reveal a statistically significant change in score within any of the three categories of questions. This means that none of the question categories registered a p-value below .05 with a ninety-five percent confidence interval. Therefore, the project director cannot say with certainty that the level of change experienced by his congregation in respect to these question categories did not occur by chance. With that in mind, some would suggest that other ministry contexts could not safely assume the same level of growth using the projects designed intervention. Admittedly, the project director is not surprised by the paired t-tests findings concerning each of the three categories of questions. He is not

surprised because in two of the three categories of questions many questions themselves were not statistically significant. On the other hand, the category with the closest p-value to .05 had more than half of its questions individually qualify as statistically significant. As such, the project director wishes he would have had the foresight to make some changes to his research instrument before executing the applied research portion of his project. In his estimation, he did not see a statistically significant result in these three categories of questions because there was a faulty design in his research tool as will be discussed further below. Namely, in regard to the number of questions and the number of categories of questions in his pre- and post-project surveys.

Nevertheless, the rank order of the paired t-test results from the least to the greatest does at least corroborate the change in each category of questions that were discussed in the practical significance section of this chapter. Therefore, question category “C” which contains “Awareness” questions and demonstrated the greatest level of change in overall survey scores from pre to post had the lowest p-value of all three sections with a .13. Likewise, question category “B” which contained “Action” questions and demonstrated the second greatest level of change in overall survey scores from pre to post had the second-lowest p-value of all three sections with a p-value of .24. Finally, question category “A” which contained “Attitude” questions and demonstrated the least amount of change in the overall survey scores from pre to post registered the highest p-value of all three categories with a .35.

Table 4. Paired T-test Per Section

Question Category	Number of Responses (N)	Mean Score (M) Pre-Survey	Mean Score (M) Post-Survey	Sig. (2-tailed) P-value	p<.05 or p>.05
A – Actions	36	4.2633	4.3216	.24	p>.05

B – Attitudes	36	3.965	4.0675	.35	p>.05
C - Awareness	36	4.05	4.2008	.128	p>.05

Conclusion

As illustrated above the research project proved to be practically significant as it relates to the ministry context of East Barbourville Baptist Church. This means the research project and its designed intervention did yield positive results in the prayer life of participants even though the level of increase may not have met or exceeded what the project director initially anticipated before conducting the applied research portion of his project. Likewise, as illustrated above the research project also met the criteria that are necessary for the project results to be recognized as statistically significant at least in terms of the project’s cumulative p-value and the p-value of a majority of the pre and post-project survey questions. Admittedly, as discussed above the project director would have liked to have seen a greater level of statistical significance below .05. Nevertheless, he is encouraged by these results considering the reasons he will discuss in the following section. With that said, the statistical significance of the data suggests that in addition to the intervention design yielding positive results within the congregation of East Barbourville Baptist Church it may also be expected to produce the same level of results in other ministry contexts such as other traditional Southern Baptist churches.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The project director launched this research project to improve the spiritual formation of his congregation specifically as it relates to the spiritual discipline of prayer. With that said, he entered the project with four goals or expected conclusions in mind. First, the project director believed that the pre-project survey data would reveal that maintaining a consistent prayer life was a struggle for the participating members of his church. Second, the project director believed that the data would also show that the participating members of his research project genuinely desired to improve the quality of their prayer lives. Third, the project director believed that the participating members of his research project would take the time to pray more if they were confronted, corrected, and challenged by a deeper level of understanding of the spiritual discipline of prayer. Finally, the project director believed that the overall experience of the research project would prove the value of utilizing expository sermons to effect change and transformation in the everyday lives of congregants beyond that of a public response.

Conclusions from the Research Project

As expected, the pre-project research data did reveal a disparity in regards to participants and their commitment to prayer as discussed above in Chapter Four. A conclusion that was apparent in light of the overall pre-project survey scores of Questions 6, 16, 17, 20, 21, 23, and 27. According to the pre-project research data resulting from these questions, participants registered scores that were numerically and visibly lower than other survey questions on the same research tool indicating that members were struggling in the area of prayer. For further insight into these findings, one should consult Chapter Four and Figure Three.

Likewise, as expected the pre-project research data revealed that participants in this research project genuinely desired and were open to improving the quality of their prayer lives as

discussed above in Chapter Four. A conclusion that was apparent in light of the overall pre-project survey scores of Questions 3, 14, 29, and 32. According to the pre-project research data resulting from these questions, participants registered scores that were numerically and visibly higher than other questions on the same research tool. An indication that members who admittedly were struggling to pray wanted to pray more. For further insight into these finds one should consult Chapter Four and Figure Two.

Furthermore, as expected a comparison of the pre and post-project research data revealed that participants did begin to pray more in response to being confronted, corrected, and challenged by a deeper level of understanding of the spiritual discipline of prayer. This conclusion was apparent in light of the change in responses that occurred between the pre- and post-project surveys regarding Question 12. According to the pre- and post-project survey data for this question participants registered a six percent increase in the number of people who began to pray daily in response to the designed intervention. With that in mind, the project director will be the first to admit that the effect of change was less than he desired. However, he believes that he can account for this lower than expected change which he will discuss further below. For further insight into these findings, one should consult Chapter Four and Figure Five.

Finally, as expected the overall experience of the research project proved to be effective in evaluating the impact of expository sermons beyond the visible and measurable results of a public response. In other words, given the overall results of this research project when comparing the pre and post-project surveys the expositor can preach with confidence knowing that the Word of God is working to transform the hearts and minds of his congregation in ways that will not be announced on the altar after a worship service. As is evident in confronting and correcting the prayer deficit of the active members of East Barbourville Baptist Church the project director

found that expository sermons are a useful tool in helping disciple Christians in the faith. A conclusion that is supported by both the practical significance of this research project and the statistical significance of the paired t-test as discussed above. Therefore, considering this discovery, the expositor will continue to plan a program of preaching that incorporates both sermons dealing with salvation and sermons dealing with sanctification.

Challenges of the Research Project

With that said, the project director offers the following conclusions as to why the level of practical significance and statistical significance were not demonstrably greater than that which was realized and reported according to the results of the applied research portion of his project. First, due to the adverse effects of the global pandemic, the project director found himself trying to carry out his project while simultaneously leading his church through a season of unprecedented change. A major part of this change as discussed in Chapter Three involved a ban on all mass gatherings that had been enacted by the governor of Kentucky. As a result, the project director and his church had to explore alternate options for holding worship services for an undetermined amount of time. With that said, the disruption of the weekly schedule caused the project director to be concerned about recruiting project participants who were not as observably committed to the church and the Christian faith when compared to others within the congregation. Therefore, rather than recruiting members of the congregation whom he felt would certainly benefit the most from the intervention of the project the researcher was left to choose from a smaller pool of participants who had proven to be faithful core members of the church. In one sense, the decision to focus on this group was probably best in light of completing the project itself. This is evident in the fact that even among this core group of church members there was only a participation rate of nearly eighty-two percent as only thirty-six out of a pool of forty-

four participants took part in completing the pre-project survey, watching the sermon series online, and completing the post-project survey. Yet, the project director feels this participation rate would have been much less if he had not have focused his attention on core members of his church. Nevertheless, the project director also feels that the level of increase would have proven to be more significant practically and statistically if the project could have focused and relied upon the participation of participants who were not already a part of this core group.

Likewise, the project director believes that the global pandemic presented another problem that negatively affected the outcome of his project considering there being a limited pool of reliable participants to choose from. For example, the participants who had proven their dependability to the project director were comprised of relatively spiritually mature believers. In other words, these individuals had all been saved and active in the church for most of their life unlike some in the church who had only been active for the better part of a year. As such, their lives had been heavily influenced by solid Bible teaching and preaching as they attended weekly worship services and participated in the Sunday school ministry of the church. In addition, they had seen other faithful saints' model spiritual disciplines like Bible study, fasting, and prayer. Therefore, these participants are believed to have entered the study with a strong appreciation and understanding of prayer prior to the implementation of the designed intervention. A fact which is supported by the high baseline scores in the pre-project survey as discussed above. Specifically, participants scored relatively high regarding questions related to their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs associated with prayer. With that in mind, it would have been difficult for the study to effect much of a change considering that the ceiling for growth was so small in this area among this participant pool.

An additional complication of the research project that was the direct result of the global pandemic involved changing the delivery method of the designed intervention. As explained in Chapter Three the project director originally intended to preach the four-week expository sermon series on prayer during four consecutive Sunday morning worship services. Historically, this weekly service is the most consistently attended service of the week at East Barbourville Baptist Church. However, as has already been discussed a ban on mass gatherings by the governor of Kentucky caused the church to move services online. Eventually, the church also added an outdoor drive-in service that utilized an FM transmitter on Sunday mornings while Sunday evening services and Wednesday evening services remained online. As such, the project director delayed preaching the sermon series on prayer until he felt he had a consistent delivery method that promised the least amount of possible interruptions. For reasons detailed in Chapter Three, the project director settled on a Sunday night online-only live-streamed service as the preferred delivery method of the sermon series.

Yet, this delivery method was not ideal for several reasons. First, preaching online robs the sermon of the personal connection that is enjoyed between the preacher and the congregation. Next, the possibility of a technology glitch interrupting the service, or the sermon could not be avoided. For example, the audiovisual system may lose internet connection or the sound feed to the system may malfunction. The latter was the case in one of the sermons preached in this series as detailed in Chapter Three. As such, the project director had to preach the sermon again in another service. Finally, people are not as committed to watching worship services online as they are to attend in person. On the other hand, people are more likely to attend when they know others such as the pastor will notice whether they are there or not. Naturally, a lapse in attendance is much easier to go unnoticed when services are being held only online. The Barna

Group validated this concern in recent weeks when they released data that suggests one out of three active church members have stopped attending worship services in person or online amidst the global pandemic.¹⁴¹ With that said, the project director would like to have seen how the series would have been received if it could have been preached without the threat of a global pandemic and the disruption of in-person worship services.

Positives Associated with the Research Project

While the pandemic provided the project director with his fair share of challenges, he is also mindful that there were positives associated with conducting the project during the pandemic as well. For example, as discussed above and in subsequent chapters of this document in light of the pandemic the church took the necessary steps to create a virtual platform for doing ministry by beginning to live stream the church's weekly worship services. A platform that did not exist before the spread of the pandemic. In addition, the pandemic created an atmosphere that caused church members to step back from the overwhelming demands of life and put them in a posture that left them wanting to know how to pray so that they could pray effectively and fervently. Furthermore, the project director was able to evaluate the spirituality of the core members of his church affording him an awareness of this group's spiritual health that he otherwise would not have had if the pandemic had not pushed him in their direction as participants. Finally, the project director found himself renewing his commitment to prayer as he had to balance completing the requirements of the research project while learning how to pastor during a pandemic.

¹⁴¹ David Kinnaman, "One in Three Practicing Christians Has Stopped Attending Church During COVID-19," *Barna Group*, accessed July 8 2020, www.barna.com/research/new-sunday-morning-part-2/.

Suggested Improvements for the Research Design

It should be noted that the challenges presented by the global pandemic are not the only factors that the project director believes prevented him from seeing the desired outcome of his research project. Looking back the project director also thinks that there were at least three problems related to the pre- and post-project research tool that he designed. The first problem is tied to the number of question categories that the project director chose to use when building his research tool and ultimately the number of redundant or irrelevant questions that were included in each survey. For example, question category C which is labeled “Awareness” was intended to deal with questions pertaining to areas that would guide the participant in praying more. Areas such as repentance, time management, a prayer partner, or more preaching and teaching on prayer. As such, the project director believes that the relevant questions contained in this category would have fit better within the research tool if divided among the Attitude and Actions categories. The questions that he would remove from category C and reassign to either question category A or B are questions numbers 13, 16, 19, 31, 34, and 37.

With that said, some questions appear to be either redundant or unrelated to the actual goal of the research tool therefore the project director would eliminate those questions from the pre- and post-project surveys. Those questions include question numbers 15, 22, 25, 24, 26, and 35. In the end, the survey questions would be triangulated using only two categories of questions with each category containing a total of fifteen questions each. Therefore, questions two, three, four, five, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, fourteen, seventeen, twenty, twenty-three, twenty-nine, and thirty-two would comprise category “A” dealing with “Attitudes” related to prayer. In addition, questions six, twelve, thirteen, sixteen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty-one, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, thirty, thirty-one, thirty-three, thirty-four, thirty-six, and thirty-seven would

comprise category “B” dealing with participant “Actions” related to prayer. As a result, the project director believes that this adjustment in his research instrument would provide a narrowed focus for him and his participants when interacting with the pre- and post-project surveys.

The project director also feels that the research instrument was lacking in the ability to compare the effects of the designed intervention among various groups of participants within in his study. In other words, the research instrument could have provided valuable insights into the impact of the project among the diverse group of participants if the project director would have utilized demographic type questions as identifiers in his research tool. It should be noted that he had this goal at the beginning of the intervention design, but it proved to be an element that he overlooked when creating the research tool. For example, the project director made it a point to recruit twenty-two males and twenty-two females for his study. He even this part of the Intervention design in Chapter Three of this document when describing his methodology. However, after analyzing the data he realized that he had not asked a question that would allow him to distinguish one group from another. As such, there was no way to identify how the project impacted the group of males when compared to the group of females.

Looking back, he would also have included a question that asked participants to identify which generation they belong too such as a young adult (those eighteen to twenty-nine), adult (those thirty-one to thirty-nine), middle-aged adult (those forty to fifty-nine), or senior adult (those sixty and over). In addition, the project director would like to have seen a breakdown of the project’s impact based on the year’s someone had been saved. With that said, he would ask for participants to identify how long they had been saved and in the church before agreeing to participate in the research project. The project director believes this question would have been

especially helpful because the participant pool was already limited to reliable members of the church due to COVID-19. By using this type of question, the project director could have determined if the project's intervention was most helpful for younger adults and younger believers or senior adults and seasoned believers.

Finally, the project director believes he erred in editing the wording of the post-project survey questions. While he did not change the content of the actual post-project survey questions, he did add a short statement to the beginning of each question. A statement that he thought would prevent confusion among members who might think they had mistakenly been directed to retake the same survey. Therefore, each question in the post-project survey began with the words "After listening to the sermon series on prayer" and finished with whatever the original wording was for that particular question. Nevertheless, this edit ended up adding an element of confusion rather than eliminating an element of confusion. For example, some answered the post-project survey questions with the understanding that the question was asking whether the sermon series had changed their minds regarding the specific area the question addressed.

Future Interest of Study

The baseline data from the pre-project survey indicates that participants approached the research project with the presupposition that little if any type of designed intervention would have an impact on their commitment to the spiritual discipline of prayer. This is apparent when one considers the data and the effect of change which occurred from pre to post-project surveys regarding questions number 28, 31, 34, 37. For example, in the pre-project survey Question 28, the project director asked participants if they would pray more if their church preached or taught more on the subject of prayer. As a result, participants registered a low score of just fifty-one

percent indicating that participants did not initially feel that additional preaching or teaching on prayer would impact the way they prayed. Likewise, in the pre-project survey Question 31, the project director asked if participants felt they would pray more if they had a prayer partner. As a result, participants registered another low score of sixty-eight percent indicating that participants did not feel that having a prayer partner would change the way they prayed. In addition, the pre-project survey Question 34 asked participants if they felt hearing a sermon series on prayer would the way they prayed. As a result, participants registered a low score of seventy percent further indicating that participants did not feel that hearing a sermon series on prayer would impact the way they prayed. Finally, in the pre-project survey Question 37, participants were asked if being involved in a Sunday School class would change the way they prayed. As a result, participants registered yet another low score of just seventy-five percent indicating that they did not believe that being involved in a Sunday school class or small group would change the way they prayed.

However, the applied research data resulting from the post-project survey suggests that the designed intervention did impact participants and their commitment to prayer despite their negative presupposition. For example, when asked in the post-project survey Question 28 if they would pray more if their church preached or taught more on the subject of prayer the participants scored fifty-five percent. It should be noted that this score increased by more than eight percent from pre to post-project assessment which confirms that the task of preaching and teaching more on the subject of prayer was recognized by participants to have a positive impact upon the prayer lives of participants. Likewise, when asked in the post-project survey Question 31 if having a prayer partner would change the way they prayed participants scored better than seventy-eight percent. It should be noted that this score resulted in an increase of fourteen and a half percent

from pre to post-project assessment confirming that the research project not only changed the way participants prayed but it also appears to have changed the way they perceived the potential impact of a designed intervention on their prayer life. This finding was further supported in the level of change that occurred in the post-project assessment of Question 34 and Question 37. In Question 34 participants were once again asked if hearing a sermon series on prayer would change the way they prayed. In response, participants scored eighty-five percent. A score that reflects an overwhelming increase of more than twenty percent from pre to post-project assessment. Furthermore, in Question 37 participants were once again asked if being involved in a Sunday School class or small group would change the way they prayed. In response, participants scored better than eighty-three percent. A score that increased overall by eleven percent from pre to post-project assessment.

With that said, one of the obvious outcomes of the research project resulted in changing not only the activity of participants and their prayer lives but also changing their minds regarding interventions that might be used to impact the way believers pray. As such, the project director anticipated seeing a change in this area as it related especially to the work of preaching and teaching which was reflected in the increase that was apparent in Question 28 and 34. However, he was surprised to see the increases that occurred from pre to post-project assessment regarding Questions 31 and 37. His surprise centered upon the fact that the designed intervention did not directly address or interact with the utilization of a prayer partner or the participant's involvement with a Sunday School or small group ministry. Yet, the significance of the increases in the scores of these questions cannot be overlooked. Considering this data, the project director has found himself being prompted to ask which of these three interventions would be the most effective in changing the way believers pray?

Therefore, as a future interest of study, the project director recommends a comparative research project that is focused on changing the way people pray using the designed interventions of preaching, pairing with a prayer partner, and being involved in a Sunday School class or small group ministry. In doing so, the researcher would need to recruit and enlist three separate experimental groups from within the project director's ministry context. It should be noted that these three experimental groups would need to be comprised of an equal number of participants. In addition, all three groups would need to utilize the same research tool as a pre- and post-project assessment. However, the project director would be wise to design three separate surveys containing the same questions to keep data separated and centered upon the intervention assigned to each experimental group. Furthermore, the length of the designated intervention would need to remain the same for each group of participants. In the end, the researcher should be able to analyze the data to determine which intervention promises to be the most effective in changing the way that believers pray.

Conclusion

With that said, this research project has operated from the theological and theoretical understanding that prayer is an important component in a believer's relationship with the Lord. Furthermore, this research project has proven that maintaining a consistent commitment to the practice of prayer can be a struggle for even the most spiritually mature child of God. Nevertheless, pastors have been put in a unique position in light of their ministerial calling. Thankfully, they have the privilege to stand and preach to members of their congregation every week. Likewise, in fulfilling their calling, they are ultimately responsible for using the pulpit to proclaim the Word of God in addressing areas of faith and practice like that of a commitment of

prayer. As such, this study has shown that preaching can help people grow in their relationship with God as seen in the example of prayer.

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Appendix A
Recruitment Letter

January 15, 2020

Dear Church Member,

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to evaluate the prayer life of our congregation and the impact that expository sermons have when it comes to changing the way that our people pray. Therefore, I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

The participants of this study must consist of active church members who are at least 18 years of age or older. The reason for this age requirement is twofold. First, as adults those 18 years or older should demonstrate the highest level of social and spiritual maturity. In addition, those 18 years or older are more likely to be able to control their level of participation and attendance of the accompanying four week expository sermon series on prayer.

With that said, should you choose to be a participant in this study you will be asked to complete a pre-project survey that will take approximately fifteen minutes to finish. In the weeks that follow you will be asked to faithfully attend a four-week sermon series on prayer. Afterwards you will be asked to complete the post-project survey which will take you approximately fifteen minutes to finish. In addition, it should be noted that your participation will be completely anonymous, as no personal, identifying information will be collected.

In order to participate please go to www.surveymonkey.com/r/prayersurvey. Complete that survey in a timely manner and await further instructions related to the upcoming sermon series on prayer and the post-project survey. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know. Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

A consent document is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please click on the button at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

Joshua Smith

Pastor

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

Prayerlessness: Using Expository Sermons to Change the way Believers Pray

Joshua K. Smith
Liberty University
School of Divinity

You are invited to participate in a research study that is seeking to measure the impact of expository sermons in relation to changing the way that believers pray. You were selected as a possible participant because you are recognized as an active member of East Barbourville Baptist Church who has demonstrated a public profession of faith by being baptized. In addition, you meet the criteria of being at least eighteen years of age or older. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Joshua K. Smith, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine whether expository sermons are an effective tool for training Christians to pray.

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

1. Complete a pre-project survey that will take approximately 10-15 minutes.
2. Commit to attend or at least listen to via recording a four-week sermon series on prayer.
3. Complete a post-project online survey that will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

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

Benefits: As a result of participating in this study participants are expected to increase in their understanding of and participation in the spiritual discipline of prayer.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. In addition, participants in this study will remain anonymous.

- Participant identities in this study will remain anonymous meaning that the researcher will not be able to link survey data with the identity of the participant that completed the survey.
- In addition to participants being anonymous, research data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

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

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Joshua K. Smith. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 606-627-8415 or jksmith5@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Jason Mitchell, at jmitchell78@liberty.edu.

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

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

Appendix C

Pre & Post-Project Survey Questionnaire

Personal Prayer Life Assessment

Question: What is the current condition and practice of your prayer life? Below is a list of statements pertaining to the attitude, actions, and awareness of your prayer life. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Survey Score Key: 1-Strongly Disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Neutral; 4-Agree; 5-Strongly Agree. Click on your answer to each question.

1. The Bible is entirely true? 1 2 3 4 5
2. I submit all areas of my life to be lived according to the Bible. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I do not pray like I should because I don't know how. 1 2 3 4 5
4. The Bible teaches God's people to pray? 1 2 3 4 5
5. I have an active prayer life. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I do not pray like I should because I am too busy. 1 2 3 4 5
7. Prayer is an important part of the believer's relationship with God. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I do not have an active prayer life. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I do not pray like I should because I lack the faith to believe that God can do what I ask Him to do. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I believe that an active prayer life is evidence of personal spiritual growth. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I pray daily. 1 2 3 4 5
12. Do you feel that you were ever taught how to pray? 1 2 3 4 5
13. It is important that I pray at least once a day. 1 2 3 4 5
14. I pray at least weekly. 1 2 3 4 5
15. What I know about prayer I learned on my own through personal study or a means other than the church. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I am strong in the area of prayer. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I only pray when emergencies arise in my life. 1 2 3 4 5
18. What I know about prayer I learned at church. 1 2 3 4 5
19. My prayer life has been stronger in the past than it is today. 1 2 3 4 5
20. I pray several times throughout the day rather than at just one set time. 1 2 3 4 5
21. Does your church regularly address the subject of prayer?
1 2 3 4 5
22. I feel that I struggle with practicing the spiritual discipline of prayer. 1 2 3 4 5
23. When I pray I private, I pray at least 5-15 minutes. 1 2 3 4 5
24. Has your church done anything in the last year to help you grow in your prayer life? 1 2 3 4 5
25. I need to spend more time in prayer. 1 2 3 4 5
26. When I pray in private, I pray more than 15 minutes. 1 2 3 4 5

27. Would you pray more if your church preached or taught more on prayer? 1 2 3 4 5
28. I want to spend more time in prayer. 1 2 3 4 5
29. When I pray in private, it is usually less than 5 minutes. 1 2 3 4 5
30. Having a prayer partner would change the way I pray. 1 2 3 4 5
31. I am willing to spend more time in prayer. 1 2 3 4 5
32. I most often pray in private. 1 2 3 4 5
33. Hearing a sermon series on prayer would change the way I pray. 1 2 3 4 5
34. When I pray, I pray in faith without doubting. 1 2 3 4 5
35. I most often pray at church. 1 2 3 4 5
36. Being involved in a Sunday School or small group would change the way I pray. 1 2 3 4 5

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 18, 2019

Joshua Kenton Smith

IRB Exemption 4097.121819: Prayerlessness: Using Expository Sermons to Change the way Believers Pray

Dear Joshua Kenton Smith,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

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