

You Think You're Called...Now What? Intervention for Discerning and Confirming a Call to
Ministry: A Study to identify interventions for gaining confirmation on the call of God.

by

Jacquelyn Elaine Powell

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

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APPROVED BY:

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ABSTRACT

You think you are called... Now What? The purpose of this research project is to guide those who feel they have been called to ministry into action—from the point where they sense a call to ministry, to gaining confirmation and moving them forward by answering the call. Selected participants have expressed a range of experiences, while still struggling with the confidence to embrace and walk in their calls. This research will assist leaders to encourage and nurture others to walk in their purpose—fulfilling the “Great Commission. The intervention will consist of: (1) an initial two-day conference designed to clarify and nurture their calls; (2) six weeks of spiritual coaching sessions focused on the practice of spiritual disciplines, specific scriptures to meditate, and journal reflections to be discussed once weekly with the researcher (3) and lastly a pre-and post-questionnaire to determine the effectiveness of the interventions. The research method used in this project was a meditation process that allowed individuals the time to hear from God through the testimony of others, practicing spiritual disciplines which includes scripture meditation, journaling, and one on one spiritual coaching sessions.

Copyright Page (Optional)

Acknowledgments

There are many I wish to thank and acknowledge. The first is the one I owe my life to, My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This would not be possible if it were not for Jesus who gave His life for me. Without Him, I can do nothing. My husband, Randy for his love and support. My mother for her love, support, and leadership throughout my life. I thank my children and all my family members especially my oldest sister who has been an example to all of us demonstrating the value of education and for sharing her expertise in helping with my research. I thank my church members for their support and encouragement. I could not have done this without their support.

Many of the teachers, mentors, and other staff members have also been a tremendous help to me. Particularly Dr. Harold Wilmington who has gone home to be with the Lord. I am appreciative to Eva Middleton who was his assistant for her encouragement and support throughout the program. I would like to thank Dr. Jeff Ward for sticking with me throughout this journey. I would also like to thank my reader David Wheeler. I appreciate all my professors, my reader, and proofreaders. I thank the participants in my program for their dedication and commitment to the project. They were committed to the process and were a joy to work with. Thank You for your help, this would not be possible without you.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Each of us is born with a divine purpose, and God has a plan for our lives. Seeking God for direction in that call is important because it leads us to the fulfillment of our life's purpose. Jeremiah 1:5 states, "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."¹ God is the source of direction and is the beginning of knowledge about our call and purpose. The word of God is to be accepted as a manifestation of His mind and will.

The word of God is the key to understanding and thereby a meaningful life. His word is as reliable as he. Hebrews 6:18 reads thusly, "...by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie"² Unlike oxymorons or paradoxes, that when investigated are oftentimes found plausible, God and untruths are absolutely contradictory. God and His word are one. In the book of John, it states, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the Word was God."³ There is nothing obscure about the language of this scripture. *The word was God* and still is. In the book of Numbers, chapter 23, verse 19 it is stated, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"⁴ To trust God is to trust his word. "Thy word is truth."⁵ as recorded in John 17:17. God is a God of integrity and His word is trustworthy. Dr. Harold Wilmington often spoke about the integrity of God's word and how the authentication of God's work is proven within his holy word. The bible is accurate and self-sustaining; it does not need to be proven, because it is of the highest authority.

¹ Jer. 1:5 KJV

² Heb. 6:18 KJV

³ Jn. 1:1 KJV

⁴ Num. 23:19 KJV

⁵ Jn. 17:17 KJV

God has a unique plan for all of us and we must seek His direction to fulfill this purpose. This purpose is fulfilled through identifying our calls specifically for the sake of this project—the call to ministry. Jeremiah 29:11 states: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”⁶ This passage lets us know God has a plan. God knows that plan and as we journey through life, we know God has an expected end to our Journeys. As we journey through life understanding we have a purpose, we must seek God to gain clarity about His plan for our lives. This researcher focuses on an intervention plan to seek God deliberately for His guidance to our purpose. One concerning issue is complacency along our journey. Many individuals become complacent, with no plan to pursue God’s purpose. Becoming comfortable even knowing there is something the Lord wants them to do. We sometimes lack the passion many of our founding fathers speak of. When pursuing purpose, roadblocks are a certainty, so to avoid getting stuck, we must learn to circumnavigate along the way. Assistance to do so comes from God, but if one cannot hear His instruction with clarity, one can easily get off track from their purpose. The discernment process helps us to focus on the call and hear God for direction in fulfilling that call.

As Spiritual guides, leaders called by God, we have a responsibility to build the Kingdom. Spiritual Leaders who have answered the call have experienced their journey to answer that call. The most important aspect of a call to ministry is being able to discern the voice of God. If we are unable to discern God’s voice, we could remain in complacency or disobedience for many years. As an experienced ministry leader, this researcher has encountered an overwhelming number of people who have shared the belief, they are sensing a call to ministry but remain in this state indefinitely.

⁶Jer. 29:11 KJV

The bible tells us “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few Matthew 9:38.”⁷ In class, Dr. Wilmington (MLA) spoke proposing the belief that we are co-laborers with God, and we have a responsibility to fulfill our purpose in building the Kingdom. In Luke 10:2 the word states “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few.”⁸ There is much work to be done and for us to move forward in the call we must be confident the call.

This researcher theorizes that if individuals sensing a call to ministry are provided an intervention plan to help them navigate through their call journey, it serves to move from complacency or stagnation to serving a role in building the kingdom. Individuals who answer a call to ministry have shared various stories of their call to ministry and for the majority, it helped to ascertain that additional support was needed by many to clarify their call. Individuals have shared spending time in prayer and learning, reading, assessing the word of God without gaining clarity. These efforts have proven unsuccessful for many of them, while others have shared being mentored and encouraged by other leaders and some simply attribute it to deciding to pursue a second career.

This program will be used to help individuals sensing a call to ministry move from sensing a call to answering the call. In the current geopolitical and social climates, there is much work to be done to address the needs of humanity. Individuals who gain confirmation to their call can begin operating in their calls to address social needs according to their God-given purpose. Some are called to feed the hungry, others to provide homes or shelters for the homeless, and still, others to preach the Good News to name a few. This program will aid in individuals fulfilling their purpose meeting the needs of individuals for Christ’s sake. This researcher believes as we respond to the call the least of these will experience the love of Christ.

⁷Matt. 9:38 NIV

⁸ Lk. 10:2 KJV

The bible states in Luke 4:18, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,”⁹ for his followers to operate in this call we must first know we are called, and this happens through our call experience. This call has been expressed as hearing the voice of God and gaining confirmation of our God-given purpose. As acknowledged by this call experience for this researcher the call was a journey to understanding what the Lord wanted me to do with my life, to serve Him and serve others.

This project is a vehicle to aid individuals sensing a call to gain the confirmation necessary to begin their work of Kingdom Building. As stories over the years reflect, it is posited that a program to assist individuals were needed to help disciples called considering community and world needs, it is apparent there is a need for such a project to help individuals move forward in answering the call.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of participation in spiritual disciplines, spiritual coaching, and attending the “Now What” conference to discern a call to ministry. The techniques used in the project include practicing spiritual disciplines (prayer and meditation), journaling their experiences, attending a two-day conference, and participating in six weeks of individual spiritual coaching sessions to reflect on the participant’s experiences weekly for thirty minutes to an hour a week. The journal entries and participants' self-reflection will be discussed during the spiritual coaching sessions. The participants will be allowed to reflect on their lives as they consider the call of God on their lives. They will have the opportunity to work through fears and other challenges they are experiencing.

⁹Lk. 4:18 NIV

It is posited that individuals participating in this discernment process will gain clarity and will be encouraged to actively pursuing a call to ministry. The participants will gain confirmation and assurance leading them to move forward in answering the call and proceeding to build the Kingdom, fulfilling the "Great Commission" by participating in an encompassing program consisting of spiritual disciplines, prayer, and journaling.

This study hypothesizes that participating in specific spiritual disciplines and spiritual coaching over a six-week period and participation in a two-day conference to reflect on the participant's experiences will be effective in helping individuals gain clarity in discerning their call to ministry. Spiritual disciplines include scriptural reading, meditation, and prayer which are expected to promote and enhance communication with God. This program intervention is to aid in discerning and clarifying a call to ministry for individuals feeling uncertain of their journey and must proceed to their perceived outcomes. It is posited that individuals participating in this discernment process will gain clarity and be encouraged to actively pursuing the call to ministry. The participants would gain confirmation and assurance leading them to move forward in answering the call and proceeding to build the Kingdom, fulfilling the "Great Commission."

Ministry Context

When praying for direction as to how to assist others in their plight for answering the call, I was led to the word of God. In Ephesians 4:11-16, it was stated

“¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: ¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: ¹⁶ From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”¹⁰

In this text, Paul gives a model for equipping individuals for serving and building the Kingdom utilizing the Body of Christ. Together we are to equip the saints to serve and build the body of Christ until we become united in our faith and in our knowledge of Jesus Christ. This will allow us to mature and not fall for the tricks of the enemy and no longer be confused and following the latest fads, tricked by men but growing in our love for one another fully mature matching the fullness of Christ. As the body of Christ, we are to grow and mature until Christ returns. The plan Paul gave us is to be the plan for building the Kingdom until that time. In equipping the body of Christ, it is necessary to have an intervention plan to prepare leaders to move forward in “The Call”. This allows us to build up the body of Christ creating unity of faith. It also allows us to increase our knowledge about God, Jesus, and the Kingdom. This will help us to aid Believers to grow becoming mature in their faith to be able to become victorious, not defeated by the enemy growing and maturing in love for one another to continue to work of Christ.

¹⁰ Eph. 9:11-16 KJV

Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believest on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father”.¹¹ Greater Works than these shall we do.”

There are many roles for those sensing a call to serve. The start of this call is realizing God has a plan for us and to identify God’s plan for our lives we must seek the word of God. As we seek to fulfill the “Great Commission” there are many opportunities to serve. We have one goal which is to make disciples of all nations. Christ gave the five appointed ministry callings mentioned above to carry out His mission for the church. The ministries all work together in unity to achieve God’s command of making disciples. As indicated above, there are offices in the church to carry out God’s plan. The five ministry roles of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher in the book of Ephesians is the plan leaders were given to build the Kingdom. Each of us is given a role to play in carrying out the “Great Commission”. These roles begin with being able to discern the voice of God. This is a need in the churches to help those sensing a call gain validity that a Call Discernment Intervention Program would assist others in gaining confirmation to the call since the word of God is the most credible source. This writer prayed and meditated on various scripture related to various words related to the call. Some of the terms were, call, discern, the voice of God, and other themes. Meditation on various scriptures, six specific scriptural texts, led to the determination of passages for meditation and journaling for six weeks, as a part of the discerning process. As a ministry leader, there has been an overwhelming number of people who have shared their belief they are sensing a call to ministry, but many remain without confirmation indefinitely. The bible tells us “the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Matthew 9:38.”¹²

¹¹ Jon. 14:12 KJV

¹² Matt. 9:38 KJV

There is much work to be done and for us to move forward in the call we must be confident in the call. The premise is that if an individual senses a call to ministry and is provided an intervention plan this will help them progress through their call journey, moving them from complacency or stagnation to serving in building the kingdom. To help others answer the call to Ministry is a passion of this researcher. The participants in this study are individuals eighteen years or older who are sensing a call to ministry and attending members of three congregations located in Indianapolis, Indiana. They have been recommended by their leaders as individuals sensing a call to ministry.

This program idea was introduced to this researcher during her studies at Liberty University. Liberty University exists to train leaders to serve God and build the Kingdom of God fulfilling the “Great Commission”. To carry out this assignment, we first must have leaders to train. This is only possible when individuals are called and answer that call to ministry. Over the years this researcher has encountered countless individuals who spoke about sensing a call to ministry, but not the call. Many of those called did not pursue the call because they needed direction on how to hear God and they needed a process for how to clarify and journey through to receive confirmation. The premise is that once one has gained confirmation, one is ready to respond and serve. When the call is answered, they will seek an understanding of that call and begin identifying opportunities to be trained as Champions for Christ as identified in the model/vision statement for Liberty University.

As a student at Liberty University, this writer gained more confirmation and was exposed to information that helped shape this writer’s personal experiences with worship and serving. Dr. Wilmington continuously shared information about the identity of Christ and the integrity of scripture.

Dr. Elmer Townsend nurtured and encouraged an understanding of the value of prayer and worship in the call to leadership. For example, one assignment included 30-days of prayer and meditation to help develop focus and calmness. This meditation was over various ways to practice spiritual disciplines one method was meditating and journaling over the Lord's prayer. These meditation experiences led to the development of this concept for discerning "The Call". Both Dr. Wilmington and Dr. Townsend helped to strengthen an understanding of the Holy Spirit.

This profound awareness was also instrumental in aiding in the identification of a process to help others discern and ultimately answer the call of God in their life. Dr. Wilmington posited the passion for the word of God reinvigorated the passion for worship and the word of God.

Situation to Self

I remember feeling stuck in a place not knowing what to do to move forward in my call. My brother-in-law came to me which was a complete shock and said the Lord told him to tell me, that He wanted me to preach His word. I was stunned, I asked him, what else did he say. He said he did not say anything else. I was paralyzed, not knowing how to respond. The last thing I wanted to do was to disappoint God. At that same time, I did not know where to start. I knew enough to pray and fast to hear God. I fasted all week and on a Friday afternoon, I heard the voice of God say, "I want you to preach my word". After hearing His voice, I knew I needed to find a way to be trained to give God my best. The Lord introduced different people in my life to confirm this researcher's call, unsolicited. Again, the bible says His word will be confirmed by two to three others. In 2 Corinthians 13:1 is stated, "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."¹³

¹³2 Cor. 13:1 NKJV

This researcher also recalls in the past always asking people how they knew they were called to the ministry. One of the call stories this researcher was told during one of the interviews, came from an uncle who shared his story of how he knew he was called. He said his father died and he was in the home with his siblings, and they did not know what to do. Someone suggested they read scripture. He picked up the bible that had mainly been on display in the home and began to read it aloud. To his and his sibling's amazement, it was an exact word for the moment. It was a scripture that was so appropriate everyone heard God and he (my cousin) knew this was significant.

Years later a remarkably similar experience happened to me. One of our closest friends died, he was killed by a train accident. I picked up the bible and began to read and it was exactly what I needed to receive to comfort me during this time. The Peace this researcher experienced did not seem possible because of how distraught the writer and family were after hearing the tragic news. This researcher knew then God was telling her, He called her. This researcher just pushed that thought to the side because she did not know what else to do with that information. Years later, this researcher was confronted with this again by her brother-in-law. God reminded this researcher of that incident to give more confirmation He (God) had called her. Along the journey of serving, this researcher was exposed to five-Fold Ministry. This understanding helped this researcher understand the plan for the various gifts and how God wanted to use these gifts in the church. As this researcher helps to encourage individuals sensing a call to ministry, it is important to understand God's plan for nurturing and encouraging "The Called". This approach to ministry is God's plan and will aid leaders in fulfilling the great commission by utilizing the body of Christ to accomplish the "Greater Works" Jesus spoke about, helping to equip believers for service by investing in them and training them to invest in others.

This will allow us to grow, build and mature the Body of Christ to continue to work of Christ. This researcher's program will provide opportunities for individuals to gain confirmation to their individuals' calls. This researcher believes there is a need to help individuals hear God's voice.

There were people this researcher encountered over the years who shared their struggles to hear the confirmation regarding their call. Many of these encounters were during the time this researcher unknowingly was also on a journey to hearing and answering the call. One of these testimonies happened as this researcher was getting her hair washed at the beauty salon.

A pastor came over and shared with this researcher, how she had gone to law school, graduated and practiced law for 6 months, and was led by the Lord to attend seminary. This was so amazing because at that time this researcher was contemplating law school, attending classes weekly to prepare for the LSAT exam.

The researcher was grateful for the pastor's story because she believed it was the Lord sparing her that unnecessary detour of going to Law School and then seminary. This researcher heeded the voice of God and decided to pursue seminary which led this researcher to relocate to Indianapolis and complete her D, Min, at Christian Theological Seminary. This researcher has attempted to include everything from her call journey experience in this process. There are many twists and turns as one pursues a ministry call. This researcher wanted to be able to make the journey easier for individuals sensing a call but feeling lost with what to do next. This is how this project was birthed. Understanding the need for equipping and nurturing leaders and preparing for the call utilizing the gifts which include the gifts in the five-fold offices.

Problem Presented

It is proposing that individuals participating in this discernment process would gain clarity and would be encouraged to actively pursuing the call to ministry. To take the Gospel to the Nations, we must be able to gain confirmation. Once we have confirmation, we can aid in fulfilling the command given as we walk in our calls and fulfill our purpose.

The participants would gain confirmation and assurance leading them to move forward in answering the call and proceeding to build the Kingdom, fulfilling the "Great Commission" and their ultimate purpose. The problem this project will address is that many leaders are faced with not having the manpower to fulfill "The Great Commission."

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age Matthew 28:16-20." ¹⁴

Religious Leaders or Spiritual Advisors will be better equipped to do as we were commanded in the Great Commandment, making disciples to help carry out the mission. We will be able to empower individuals to serve and contribute making a positive contribution to society. Individuals who accept a call to ministry can move forward in serving others.

¹⁴ Matt. 28:16-20 NIV

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of participation in a structured intervention program including the practice of spiritual disciplines, journaling, and scriptural meditation, spiritual coaching, and attending a two-day conference for discerning a call to ministry.

As leaders called by God, we have a responsibility to build the Kingdom. Anyone who has answered the call has experienced a journey to answering that call. There are various ways individuals experience a call. As we identify and train the called, we must utilize the plan put forth in Ephesians 4:11-16 as previously discussed. This researcher understands as this journey begins, one of the most important things about a call to ministry is being able to discern the voice of God. If we are not able to discern God's voice, we could remain in complacency or disobedience for many years. Throughout the years as a ministry leader, there has been an overwhelming number of people who have shared their belief of sensing a call to ministry, have expressed they have no method for moving forward. There is much work to be done and for one to move forward in the call one must be confident in the call.

The call to ministry is a call by God that must be answered by man. This can only happen when we discern the voice of God and obey His command. Leaders in the church need to establish a plan to help all leaders work through their call journey. Once a validated program has been established and verified to be effective, leaders in the church will be able to nurture and encourage the members who are sensing a call to step into their God-given assignments leading to them operating in the five-fold office fulfilling the command of Jesus in the "Great Commission".

Following the plan suggested by Paul in Ephesians chapter 4 will allow us to become more effective in fulfilling the “Great Commission” as identified in Matthew 28:18-20 as written “18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”¹⁵ If we are to grow leaders in the church, there must be ways to help leaders identify and answer their call. By identifying the leaders, we will be able to help equip them, and they will be able to assist in serving the body.

There are enormous needs in a world currently facing a pandemic with COVID19, many individuals have no food or shelter and other issues such as unemployment. To face these crises, we need to have confident leaders who can address the needs of the congregation and the needs of those we encounter as we seek to serve others. Leaders of religious institutions must identify and implement programs to help leaders move forward in answering the call.

This intervention program will help to advance the progress in Building the Kingdom. Leaders will have an intervention process to aid individuals in moving forward in meeting the needs of the least of these. Many leaders are awaiting instruction from God in fulfilling their purpose. There is a need for this program to help others identify their gifts and move forward in the plan and purpose God has for them, utilizing their gifts and building the Kingdom as they gain an understanding of God’s and God’s ultimate plan for their lives and the world.

¹⁵ Matt. 28:18-20

Basic Assumptions

The basic assumption is, to make disciples as commanded, leaders need an intervention program to aid in making disciples by helping them discern a calling moving future leaders from stagnation to serving. This study hypothesizes that participating in specific spiritual disciplines and spiritual coaching over a six-week period and participation in a two-day conference will help individuals gain clarity in discerning their call to ministry.

The benefits to society: Religious Leaders or Spiritual Advisors will be better equipped to do as we are commanded in the Great Commandment, making disciples to help carry out the mission. We will be able to empower individuals to serve and contribute making a positive contribution to society. Individuals who accept a call to ministry can move forward in serving others

Definitions

Discernment – “1. The faculty of discerning; discrimination; acuteness of judgment and understanding. 2. The act or an instance of discerning.”¹⁶

Spiritual Disciplines- “Spiritual disciplines are habits, practices, and experiences that are designed to develop, grow, and strengthen certain qualities of spirit- to build the “muscles” of one’s character and expand the breadth of one’s inner life.

They structure the “workouts” which train the soul. Some spiritual disciplines are personal, inward exercises that are practiced in community.”¹⁷

Phenomenology – “1: the study of the development of human consciousness and self-awareness as a preface to or a part of philosophy

¹⁶ Random House *Webster’s College Dictionary: Second Revised and Updated Random House Edition* (New York 2000), 377

¹⁷ Brett McKay, and Kate McKay, “An Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines,” (2017), 2

2 a (1): a philosophical movement that describes the formal structure of the objects of awareness and of awareness itself in abstraction from any claims concerning existence

(2): the typological classification of a class of phenomena // the *phenomenology* of religion
b: an analysis produced by phenomenological investigation”¹⁸

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations in this study included some logistic details such as one of the presenters showing up late to present which altered the schedule. Also, a couple of the presenters did not do exactly what they were instructed to do. This included the expectation for them to present information from the “Call Journey Questionnaire” as their guide when presenting. Another limitation is the inability to connect the pseudo names with the individual spiritual coaching sessions to connect some of the confirmation discovered in the program. Another limitation would be the inability to confirm or clarify information recorded on the pre-and post-questionnaires. Some of the information was not clearly written. Also, this researcher did not include in the proposal for the project, the participants would write an evaluation after the two-day conference which included significant comments that would aid in proving the study was effective. The participants did write some of this information in their journals, but the additional information shared was not included in this report.

The delimitations included the selection of the participants lacked diversity. All the participants were African American and except for one, all the participants were women. Another delimitation would be the time constraints for concluding the program. Two participants voiced they could have used more time with spiritual coaching because they did not make the progress they desired. After all, it took them a little longer to receive the confirmation to the call.

¹⁸ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/phenomenology>. Accessed (9 Mar. 2021)

This researcher would like to have explored to a greater degree the role family played in participants answering the call. The research made some inferences about the process of answering the call and the impact having family support and participating in the church as youth and children impacted the participants. Some of this was shared in the journals.

This researcher would like to have explored this area more. The other delimitation is related to a qualitative study. The gathering of information is time-consuming and the fact that gathering the information is labor-intensive. It was time-consuming to analyze the data subjectively. Another delimitation is the wording of the questions. This researcher would consider adding additional questions or alternate the questions to gain additional clarity.

Thesis Statement

Through an intervention program utilizing spiritual disciplines, spiritual coaching, and a two-day conference designed to clarify and nurture the call, participants will gain confirmation in responding to the call.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the process of understanding, discerning, and answering the call to ministry. As leaders, we must be prepared to aid our parishioners through the call process. The bible says, “The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few.”¹⁹ There is much work to be done in the Kingdom. One of the most significant ways to respond to our calls as leaders is to be able to identify and nurture a call in the individuals we serve. When exploring the call, individuals have two paths to take in responding in obedience. One may be called to lay ministry or ordained ministry. The authors quoted throughout this research project explore variations of the call even debating about the different views of a vocation versus the call.

In the article “*The Call to Ministry*” by Edward Hayes, he analyzes the concept of calling and vocation to identify the difference between clergy and laity. Hayes shared views of the call from various theologians. According to Hayes, Lightfoot, one of the theologians in his analysis, he did not believe in a separation between laity and clergy. Hayes wrote, the minister is a priest as well as each member of the congregation and they should be called by God.

As indicated in the article by Evans and Harbaugh, God will direct us to a specific assignment as the unique, even a call to pastoral nursing. Hayes explored the call by examining scripture from the Old and New Testament on the call. He spoke specifically related to a Call to service and a call to salvation. Hayes shared scriptures in the bible from various perspectives and discussed whether there are two views, called to service or salvation. Hayes shared one theologian’s views, Bromiley rejects the idea of two separate calls.

¹⁹Matt. 9:37 NKJ

Hayes further shared about a specific call of God to ministry revealed through the will of God and described as an overwhelming sense of God's leading. According to Hays, many are reluctant to accept the call due to feelings of unworthiness. This was a common theme from this researcher's project. Several of the participants voiced feelings of unworthiness when considering the call. As reflected in the journals, Pseudo name Naomi 60 recorded, "I sense God calling me to have faith in Him, He won't let me fall." Participants recorded working through some issues from childhood. One Participant wrote a letter to her father stating: the shame, guilt, condemnation, unforgiveness, anger, and more is no longer a part of my life. I choose to forgive you, myself, and Mom. The participant further wrote in her journal, "I know my past and present. Why would he use me? Why would I think God Almighty would show me things or tell me things?" "Lord forgive my unbelief. You have placed my sins in the sea of forgetfulness. I am open to you."

Participants Deborah 58 recorded in her journal, "God starts depositing into us when we yield to God, He will make a way, makes provisions. My yes to God is my obedience." Participants shared stories of heartbreak, depression, anxiety, and abandonment. For many years I drifted away from God. At one point I lost or allowed myself to doubt my calling because of being divorced, what could I say or offer to people, so I dropped the pursuit, even though I had been accepted to Seminary. I pursued education but the desire stayed with me." This participant held a view of a calling to pastor and saw her pursuit of education as an educator as God's permissive will and still had a desire to be totally obedient to the Lord. She is now pursuing her call to ministry instead of a vocation in education. Many individuals who serve in a vocation in the marketplace also work in Lay ministry in the church.

The article *Thinking About Ministry: A Layperson's Experience of God's Call* by Kay Evans, provided a theological view of the role of his journey to understanding his call and his experience as a child. Evan sought to understand his relationship with God through various experiences describing how his journey to answering the call evolved through his childhood experiences, into a call to the ministry of healing. Evans explained one of the ways he gained confirmation is through the Gospel of John and described how he was able to relate to the healing stories in the book of John. The fact that the word of God confirms the call for us allowing us to gain confirmation to the call. Evan described specific turns that happen throughout his journey and shared, during his initial experience of a Baptist tradition and how it evolved for him. Evan also shared how it felt to be called a nurse and the struggle to identify his unique call to combine Clinical Pastoral Education and pastoral nursing. Evans incorporated various experiences including writing about authors he admired who helped him to gain perspective on his call. These stories are examples of the difficulty one experiences when trying to identify and respond to a call. As indicated in this article, everyone has their personal experiences that will hopefully lead them to their ultimate purpose. Many people are in search of purpose but have no idea where to start. In this article, the writer shares his call journey.

One of the authors, referenced by Evans was Gary Harbaugh, and how his writings challenged, Evan's theological beliefs and allowed him to gain more perspective. Many of the articles this researcher read spoke of the impact of individuals growing up in Christian homes. Evan's article is another confirmation of the fact that those who experience a community of believers as a child have an easier time identifying the call on their lives. Evans also experienced a variety of things that impacted his journey to answer the call.

Evans shared, on the journey to confirming the call one must deliberately encounter and piece together the experiences to gain confirmation and clarity of the call. In this article by Evans, John Benton jr., an Episcopal pastor who has done extensive studies, posed that seminaries need to foster environments that provide intellectual growth in the areas of warmth, genuine interest in people, acceptance of other practicing tolerance flexibility, and a having a genuine willingness to listen to problems. The goal of these programs is to nurture individuals in finding their purpose. Many programs lack the support necessary to help individuals identify and answer the call of God in their lives.

In the article *Discerning the Gifts that God has Given*, Yoder shares her call journey where the goal was to address the question of vocation, seeing her work or the purpose of her work as a call. Yoder identified herself as a person of faith and shared her process of understanding what she was called to do, and she shared others' attempt to direct her journey. Yoder shared the exploration of various opportunities afforded to her such as licensed ministry and further shared often being plagued with feelings of fear and reported asking herself along repeatedly, “What does God want me to do?”²⁰ Believing that God has a specific plan for her, and if she trusted God enough, there would eventually be a detailed plan.

Yoder spoke of the difficulty of discerning whether God wanted her to go to one school or another, and of desperately needing a clear directive from God as to what to do. Yoder became stuck, unable to make decisions, and shared an experience of traveling to the Middle East with a group of fellow students where she met a woman who introduced her to a new way of viewing vocation.

²⁰ Rebekah Yoder, “*Discerning the Gifts that God Has Given*,” (Brethren Life and Thought 3-4 Sum-Fall 2001),153

It was suggested by the woman, for Yoder to answer the question about her service differently. Instead of asking, what God wanted her to do? she asked the question, is what she doing reflective of God's nature? Yoder found this new way of asking to be empowering. Gaining understanding that maybe God did not have one specific plan for her, discovering there were many opportunities through which one could express who God called her to be. Yoder spoke of feeling no longer crippled, waiting for direction from God to decide, able to make decisions knowing she would still reflect God through various decisions and opportunities, has the option of keeping her options open to different types of ministry. Because of her new understanding, Yoder was open to experiencing opportunities to serve, and fear was no longer a barrier. Yoder shared a couple of opportunities experienced once she had a renewed view of experiencing ministry and shared that while experiencing these opportunities, she would periodically meet with her pastor to talk about ministry. Yoder spoke of the significance of this opportunity to talk with her pastor and was assigned to share her reflections about the discernment and the struggles she addressed in her own life. Yoder spoke of the value she placed on the various opportunities to serve while exploring the call. Yoder shared, her pastor walked her through various experiences, offering support and encouragement and her pastor assisted her in reflecting on the opportunities allowing her to explore her feelings afterward. This call journey is like stories told by those who were finally able to hear the voice of God. Unfortunately, many do not get to this place. The feelings of being crippled Yoder expressed in a feeling many can relate to. Like Yoder, individuals sensing a call need someone to help them reframe the question to move forward. They do not have the direction or support to pursue the call. This is exactly what this researcher's intervention program is meant to do, help the participants become uncrippled and find their purpose.

According to Yoder, life becomes more meaningful when you discover your calling and identify your gifts and seek to maximize these gifts. Yoder shared how difficult the discernment process is for most people. It was suggested by Yoder, the voices, the fears, and apprehension all play a role in the difficulty of gaining confirmation about your calling. Yoder believes, once one is released from these distractions, they are better able to hear the voice of God and fulfill their purpose. Yoder encouraged one who is in search of their call to live in a way that everything is reflective of the nature of God. This researcher agrees with this statement while being aware that many will not be mature enough or may not have the wherewithal to identify what is needed to walk out the call. Some will need intervention and mentors to assist them in their journeys.

The article *Seasons of Joy and sacrifice, rediscovering a call to ministry* written by Paul Sangree provided some interesting information to help those responding to a call. Sangree shared his experiences of teaching a class on theology and the meaning of a call and surmise a healthy call involves both joy and sacrifice. After about ten years of service as a pastor, Sangree discovered his church was declining and he was no longer excited about the ministry. This state of uncertainty led to the decision to interview fifteen experienced veteran pastors. The interview was to extract how they knew their call was from God, what they most enjoyed about ministry as well as what made ministry difficult for them. This is a much-needed area to be addressed in the churches.

Sangree wanted to clarify if anyone had ever questioned their calls to ministry and how they had rekindled their passion when they felt uncertain. Sangree uncovered that several of the pastors had struggled with uncertainty. Some of the pastors shared they had done things to rediscover their calls and others shared they had not experienced this as a struggle.

The clergy that did not have struggles shared the habits that contributed to their positive mindset about ministry. Some noted habits clergy exhibited was to seek out, such as mentors to encourage them at various points and had regularly set aside time to share laughter and other experiences with clergy colleagues in different settings. The clergy had also set aside time with their families and other interest outside the church, so as not to let the church work consume them. One pastor stood out to Sangree; in that, he shared his calling to ministry was to be as happy as he could. Sangree spoke of how this ideology influenced him, and he decided to change his views and adopt some of the healthy habits as well as to have more fun. Sangree had previously viewed ministry as a sacrifice. Because of his research, Sangree decided to organize mission trips based on his love of travel and thus allowed himself to do ministry and have fun. Sangree requested time off, a time for a sabbatical, although he had not previously requested one as a part of his contract. During reflection, Sangree discovered he loves to explain his Christian faith and was led to develop a Discipleship class for his members. In this class, participants reviewed the basics of Christian life and belief and thus members became more filled with the spirit more anxious to do God's work in the world. Sangree's eventually developed a healing ministry that God used to touch people, and this gave new meaning to his life and the life of the church. He shared how these new activities were a sacrifice that left him feeling both joy and fulfillment.

After discovering sacrifice and fulfillment are interdependent in a healthy call and joy leading to a new view of ministry when accepting his ministry was God's ministry. Sangree sought to be faithful rather than successful, this made all the difference in his life and ministry. He concluded that maintaining a healthy call means asking tough questions and finding out, the answer is still yes.

Sangree asked, whether his ministry was sacrificial? Whether he was taking a risk and going out to new places and experiencing new things? He also asked the question, of whether he was experiencing Joy? The writer stated when we can truly answer “yes” to these questions, this would affirm God’s call is life within us. This article is an additional confirmation of the need for a program such as the discernment intervention program used in this researcher’s project. Many have inquired about the program since this researcher has taken the participants through to respond to the call. There is a need for leaders in the church to cultivate the call on the lives of our potential leaders. Gaining understanding about their personal calls can be the exact thing that sustains them when they begin to have difficulty and question “the call”. We know many begin the journey answering the call sometimes even before they gain surety. This, this researcher believes contributes to the number of individuals who accept the call and later decided to quit. This researcher believes, when we truly hear the voice of God about our purpose, it is impossible to change our minds. This researcher would like the opportunity to help those sensing this call to gain that surety that would help sustain the leader that decides to answer, “the call”.

This is also confirmed in the article *Cultivating a culture of the call: A model for lay theological education* by Susan Willhauck is an article about a lay-education program. Wesley Theological Seminary developed a program, Equipping Lay Ministry with an overall emphasis on partnerships with congregations. The ELM program is one of the things Wesley Seminary is doing to aid individuals in acknowledging and exploring a call to ministry for both lay and ordained ministers. According to Willhauck, the culture of the call is a way of being that encourages all God’s people to consider, they do have a call from God, and it prevails upon them to pray, study, and reflect upon what they may be called to do.

Willhauck shared a study on theological seminaries conducted by John C. Fletcher. The study included sixteen Protestant seminaries with shared goals striving to offer professional degree programs, continuing education for clergy, theological education to the lay leaders of the churches. Also, they wanted to support seminaries affiliated with the seminary, to become the center for theological and ethical reflection for churches, denominations, and the communities where the seminaries were located. Wesley Theological Seminary developed a study in 2000 of a new way to enact the objective of extending theological education to the laity by establishing the Equipping Lay Ministry (ELM) program. This program provided opportunities to lay people to study and gain discernment. This program has several of the same goals as this researcher's program focused on helping those who are sensing a call gain the confirmation necessary to begin serving.

Willhauck shared how the Fletcher article gave the information about the alterations of the continuing education for clergy theological education and lay leaders and transitions with congregations that needed reform. Fletcher shared information about the different phases of Wesley's seminary programs and the changes in the vision and purpose over the years. He also shared how the objectives and focus changed over time that identifies their commitment to the life-long process of spiritual formation. These alterations were created to address the needs facing the church and the world. Wesley's well-thought-out plan was to provide direction for the seminary planning process to move from being a church-related seminary to a church-centered seminary. This plan was identified as a future goal of the seminary as they strategized to accomplish the objectives set to address the needs of the churches and Lay leaders.

Wesley's campaign spearheaded the Wesley Partners program to work together with churches to encourage ministry, to ensure that people would be able to hear and answer God's call. "Wesley began by sensing, identifying, and talking about a culture of the call."

Willhauck quoted David McAllister-Wilson, "God is calling people into ministry."²¹ Wesley stated, what we have discovered in our work is that the church forgot to talk about the call. In a previous generation, pastors would hold ministry Sundays once a year and talk about their call to ministry. Sunday school teachers would encourage young people to think about Christian vocation, and then they would go off to camp where many made decisions about Ministry."²²

Willhauck believed the program was a system the church used to channel God's call to ministry. He indicated the call culture has been lost over forty years. Willhauck stated they wanted to recreate the culture of the call by fostering an awareness of ministry among people of all ages. Many seminaries including Wesley seminary were forming networks with churches.

This article differs in some ways from this researcher's program in the sense that the individuals involved have already gained a level of confirmation to be involved in a religious institution. This researcher found that much of the literature available on the call is written for individuals who are teens, preteens, or individuals already pursuing a call. This researcher's program is geared toward those who are employed full-time in some vocation but still have a voice in the back of their minds stating, God has something else for them. This was illustrated in the case discussed earlier with one of this researchers' participants who pursued a degree in education but could not rid herself of the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

²¹ Susan Willhauck, "Cultivating a Culture of the Call: A Model for Lay Theological Education," (*Theological Education* 38/2 2002), 113-114

²² Ibid., 113-114.

Willhauck shared additional information on how the seminaries are addressing the needs for trained lay leadership alongside ordained leaders. Wesley and partner churches encouraged churches to hold what was called “Ministry Sunday” where congregations would celebrate the call to ministry.²³

Willhauck shared why laypeople want to receive a theological education in the book *A lifelong Call*, the necessity to learn approaches to Continuing Education for Church Leaders, edited by Robert E. Reber and D. Bruce Roberts. Reber et al. shared, the Bible is filled with call stories, further that God calls some to work in the church in professional ministry and others to work in the world, to connect the church and Christianity with the world. As further stated in the article, Fredrick Buechner’s stated, vocation is “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meets.”²⁴

The writer also shares James Fowler, in *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*, “talks about vocation as the response a person makes to address God, calling to a partnership to use our gifts to bring about God’s vision for the world.”²⁵ It was also stated, *Equipping Lay Ministry* declares one way people can determine how to live out their faith as leaders in the community of faith. As indicated in the article, God is directly involved in the vocation of all Christians, the call encompasses more than ordained ministry. The laity and the clergy work as partners bringing the message of the church to the world.

According to Willhauck, laypeople seek theological education for two reasons, laypeople of all ages and cultures are searching for meaning and purpose while seeking to find meaning in their lives. People are seeking purpose and have a desire to find meaning in serving.

²³ Susan Willhauck, “*Cultivating a Culture of the Call: A Model for Lay Theological Education*,” (Theological Education 38/2 2002), 114.

²⁴ Ibid., 115.

²⁵ Ibid., 115.

Wesley suggested, the equipping of the lay ministry model to address the different concerns of forming and preparing lay leadership for ministry. The ELM program is to provide a curriculum of biblical and theological foundations for formation and information.

The author shares Wesley's curriculum for the program includes a Congregational Development track and a certificate lay ministry program. Studying in these programs gives the students in the program the opportunity to discern a possible call to ordained ministry by moving from the Equipping Lay Ministry program to a degree program. The ELM classes are graduate-level courses also available to degreed students with permission from the academic dean. Individuals in the program come from a variety of professions including lawyers, teachers, government workers, retired physicians, among others.

Wesley believes it is about the drive within the human spirit toward God, toward answering the call and the benefit of having the ELM program is being able to fulfill their call and mission to strengthen the church while receiving a wealth of insight and wisdom from the laity. Corporate worship, devotion, and prayer are a part of the curriculum taught in the ELM program. According to Wesley, several challenges needed to be noted, the scope of the program needed to stay on the cutting edge, they needed to remain on the pulse of the laity to find out what is needed, they needed to avoid being faddish, they also needed to keep connected with the needs of Wesley's denominational requirements.

The ELM's program hoped to continue touching lives to broaden hearts and minds and to cultivate a culture of the call. Many of the programs in seminary and other educational programs have some type of call discernment program. This researcher believes we can gain insight into the call process by reflecting on memorable church fathers.

David Davis in an article published in *Theology Today* shared information about the role and responsibilities of the minister wrote of how he occasionally turned to John Chrysostom. Davidson reflected on Chrysostom's *Treatise Concerning the Christian Priesthood*.

The premise of the Davis article was of how one of the most notable of the church fathers, of John Chrysostom's experienced ordained ministry. Chrysostom's ancient voice revealed a fresh perspective on the discussion of discerning the call and serving in ordained ministry. Davis shared Chrysostom's vocational journey and how he made efforts to avoid ordination all together and how the struggle was wrapped up in relationships with his mother and his best friend Basil. John in comparing himself to his friend, Basil, did not think he was suited for the call because of his lack of commitment and feelings of being too connected to his earthly concerns.

As indicated by Davis, "one's call to ministry must be discerned and worked out within the context of relationships with family and friends. The writer shared the struggles that one experiences when considering a call to ministry."²⁶ According to Davis "God continues to call women and men to serve in the church, a call that must be discerned within the community and lived out in relation with others. Some will go to great lengths to avoid God's call."²⁷

Davis proposed that individuals will go to great lengths to avoid the call and he explored the varied concepts of ministry and shared Chrysostom's views about the task of ordained ministry. Davis spoke of the assignment of preaching and the danger of the minister being overly accommodating to people.

²⁶ David A. Davis, "*St. John Chrysostom on Ministry, Discernment, and Call*," (*Theology Today* 62 2005), 410

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 410.

Davis indicated, that in his twenty years of ordained life he can attest to the fact that education is only the beginning of the experience needed to answer and prepare for the call. This too validates this researcher's theory that leaders need a method for helping those discerning a call to move from sensing a call to doing the work of the Kingdom. With some adaptations, this program can be used in churches or religious institutions.

This researcher believes the call journey involves others who help to support and nurture those sensing a call. Those sensing a call need mentors and the support of family and other religious leaders to aid in the journey to confirmation. Another memorable and notable church father, Dietrich Bonhoeffer shares in Schneider's article valuable information about discerning the call.

In the article "*The call was not meant for you alone*" Dietrich Bonhoeffer on discerning the call by Laurel C. Schneider shares information about Bonhoeffer's question of God's call and its relationship to vocation. Bonhoeffer was a young theologian and pastor in the German Christian Church. Bonhoeffer did not feel called by God to theology, however, he chose to study theology. He was interested in the experience and reality of human beings. Bonhoeffer a famous scholar, teacher, and preacher of the gospel although he did not pursue theology from a place of belief and did not have an unclouded sense of call like many others who sense a call. Bonhoeffer was famous because he was against the Nazis, taught in illegal seminary, and wrote about faith and discipleship being killed. Before his death, he intently wrestled with the question of what it meant to be a Christian. He eventually figured out his identity as a disciple of Christ. It was indicated in the article, Bonhoeffer's mentor was Karl Barth and they both saw the deception and false beliefs in churches they believed intentionally ignored the brutal customs, in their compliance in supporting Hitler and the brutality practiced in the Nazi military.

Bonhoeffer refused to adhere to Hitler's practices, he organized the "underground Confessing Church,"²⁸ where he became the only instructor in this seminary until it was closed. Bonhoeffer's focus was discerning the call to pursue Christ. Bonhoeffer lived by his own set of rules, He said "Dare to do what is just, not what fancy may call for; Lose no time with what may be, but boldly grasp what is real. The world of thought is escaping; freedom comes only through action. Step out beyond anxious waiting and into the storm of events, carry only by God's command and by your faith; then will freedom exultantly cry out to welcome your spirit."²⁹ Through this journey, Bonhoeffer's call was validated.

Bonhoeffer did not see God's call as a profession. Bonhoeffer taught his students about the challenge of discerning a true divine call. He stressed, "the call" is not only about the individuals but about the community, and to be authentic, it will not lead to an individual undertaking. He says the call is not to lead, to ordination, or accomplishment but to follow. According to the writer "if Bonhoeffer is right, God's call today is as hard to hear as it was in 1930's Germany".³⁰(20) This researcher agrees with this and therefore this researcher believes it is necessary to develop a program to assist individuals in their call journeys. According to Bonhoeffer, "God calls the solitary heart into the actual community and in so doing, thereby, calls the community.

²⁸ Laurel Schneider, "*The Call Was Not Meant for You Alone*": Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Discerning the Call," (Chicago Theological Seminary Review 94 no 2-3 Sum-Fall 2007), 19

²⁹ Ibid., 20.

³⁰ Ibid., 20

There is no genuine divine call that can manifest in isolation from others in the community, whether the community is one recognized by the authorities, or deemed illegal by them.”³¹ (20) He further shared, by being involved in the life of the community, the call of God can be confirmed. According to Bonhoeffer, God does not call one to an ordained pastor or prison chaplain but to the community to love the least of these who may not know you are called to serve them. He believed loving, imperfect people are the way to come to comprehend the call.

Bonhoeffer’s views regarding a divine calling are still a challenge, and he realized the Godly calling is an individual journey through life one must face. This researcher agrees with the fact that one’s call journey must be pursued individually because God values each of us and uses our unique gifts to meet the needs of his people through service. On this individual journey, we need the support of many on this journey of pursuing the divine call. As individuals pursuing the call there are different perspectives on which to view our experiences.

An article on Cross-cultural perspective on the call to ministry by Maurice Martin, a pastor from 1974 to 2010 shares interesting information of several individuals pursuing the call. Martin served in a Mennonite Church in Eastern Canada when he wrote the article Martin was teaching Anabaptist history and thought for a certificate program for pastors in Canada for different countries and denominations. The Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) was changing, becoming more diverse with people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds came to Canada from different churches joining the local congregation.

³¹ Ibid., 20.

Martin stated, every Sunday the Mennonite church organized and executed worshiped in twelve languages. The MCEC was able to license, give credentials or ordain pastoral leaders in the various congregations. Martin wrote about engaging the pastoral leaders in dialogue about the call journey. He stated Pastors of Asian origin came from within the Christian Church, while some came out of the spiritual traditions of Buddhism or Animism.

As Christians, they have experienced life, faith, Christian vocation, and ministry in denominations such as Alliance, Baptist, Church of Christ, and Presbyterian, with some drawing from a diverse heritage as the ministerium in MCEC.

In 2010, MCEC offered a program called “Growing in Faith Together, in which five English as a second language pastors and an elder were paired with six Caucasian pastors for five Saturdays of sharing, study and fellowship.”³² Martin shared the vision of attempting to dismantle cultural barriers and discover the giftedness of the pastors and their congregations. Martin shared five of the pastor’s call journeys. Martin indicated “The Mennonite Church’s polity statement states, as a church committed to God’s vision of reconciling all persons in Christ and breaking down all dividing walls of hostility, we affirm that God bestows ministry gifts and God calls persons to leadership ministries without regard to gender, race, ethnic/cultural origin, or social standing. We, as the community of God’s people, call out persons in the same manner.”³³ Martin indicated, they pursued pastors for the “GIFT program” and found out the churches of Asian origin had no female pastors; however, the Hispanic churches were invitational to women leaders.

³² Maurice Martin, “*Cross-cultural Perspectives on The Call to Ministry*,” (Vision Fall 2011, Presbyterian 34/1 Spring 2008), 71

³³ Maurice Martin, “*Cross-cultural Perspectives on The Call to Ministry*,” (Vision Fall 2011 Presbyterian 34/1 Spring 2008), 71

Martin shared the Mennonite church believed in “the priesthood of all believers.”³⁴

Martin shared in his article, Anabaptists decline to welcome the connection between church and state. The belief was that the authority exercised came through the power of God. Martin shared a couple of views on Christian calling, one of which was by Snyder. Snyder stated “the office of the pastor was instituted among Anabaptists and their spiritual descendants, the Mennonites.

Snyder notes that the Scheltema confession (adopted by swiss Brethren in 1527), and finally Menno Simons himself was clear that the only true pastors would be those chosen by the elders and/ or the congregation.”³⁵ Anabaptist groups allowed a greater number of participations of the lay leaders in church life. Martin stated “The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite view believes in the priesthood of all believers and empowers them for service in the church and the world. It is believed that God calls persons to specific leadership ministries and offices.”³⁶ The perspective on Christian vocation according to Martin, debated and the congregations connected to MCEC for varied reasons. The author shared various call stories and their views about the call. One of the participant’s Bock Ki Kim reflected on his identity in coming to Canada describing himself as Korean Canadian-Christian-anabaptist-Mennonite. As reflected in Kim’s call story he noted that he was first called by God to be a follower of Jesus Christ eventually realized becoming a pastor is another way of following Jesus. He studied for seven years in Mennonite settings and was able to connect it to a passage in the bible remembering for the love of Rachel, Jacob served seven years. He decided to study theology for seven years. Before studying at associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, he indicated some friends pointed him to the passage of scripture in Isaiah 58:1-12: “You will be called Repairer of Broken Walls”³⁷

³⁴ Ibid., 71.

³⁵ Ibid., 72.

³⁶ Ibid., 77.

³⁷ Isa. 58:12 NIV

Bock Ki believed people may find life and healing through the gospel. When invited to work in a Korean ministry in Toronto, Bock Ki struggled with the sense that he was the pastor identifying with Jonah: He kept asking God why he was there and running away four years later. God spoke to him again and he was encouraged by his pastor at the time to be his successor.

Bock Ki felt the best way to minister is as a lay minister. Bock Ki struggled with responding to the call, but various people, which included his missions minister at MCEC, continued to nudge him to accept the call to ministry. The journey of Bock Ki utilizes the assistance of his pastor to pursue his journey in the call. This also affirms this researcher's approach to the intervention project in this researcher's study. This researcher assumes the role in the form of spiritual coaching to aid them in their call journeys.

Bock Ki shared from his experience that initially, the call came through the views of others. Bock Ki's father hoped he would become a pastor, and in time he experienced what he called an inner sense of call he called God's Work. Bock Ki accepted his call to ministry in MCEC and valued the Anabaptist way, which is not based on a formalized order system's view of the pastor's position. Bock Ki wanted to hide his identity as he did not like the view of being within a hierarchical system.

He shared that many people in Korea identified themselves as pastors with no position concluding that God's call, including lay and ordained, is what was important.

Another journey shared in the article was of Kommola, a native of Laos, who came to know Christ from an animist background and considered himself a servant related. This scriptural text states, "hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."³⁸

³⁸ 2 Cor. 5:18 KJV

Kommola wrote “I serve God any time, any place. I don’t hide myself.”³⁹ While in a Laotian refugee camp, Kommola served as a youth pastor and evangelist among the people even though in a communist country knowing his declaration could cause him to be incarcerated.

Kommola also identified with Moses’ realizing that it is God’s mission that we are called to, and we are not our own. According to Kommola, the called are not to take things into our own hands as Moses did when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it to call forth water for the people believed it is the word of God that speaks to people. As an Evangelist, Kommola felt a strong call to plant churches back in Laos, and simply to love.

In the Laotian culture, family values were important, Kommola views family support as critical stating: “Be faithful to God, your family, and people around you and adds: “know your mission, as a pastor, evangelist, and Mennonite.”⁴⁰ Another pastor’s call journey shared in the article was Quan, a Chinese Canadian, the pastor of the English-speaking portion of Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church serving a congregation whose pastor asked him repeatedly, if he was going to seminary.

Quan shared a story that he believed confirmed his call, stating he attended a dinner for Christian professionals and the guest speaker shared his life story as a Christian as a seminary-trained Pastor. This pastor spoke on the importance of an authentic call of God. Quan won a prize and thought this was confirmation to a call and that night decided to enter full-time seminary. Quan entered the ministry in the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church where he sought ordination.

³⁹ Maurice Martin, “*Cross-cultural Perspectives on The Call to Ministry*,” (*Vision* Fall 2011 *Presbyterian* 34/1 Spring 2008), 74.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

After ordination Quan resided with the Chinese, where he was referred to as pastor, A title which he found uncomfortable. Quan shared, honor and respect are described as strong Chinese values. During the spiritual coaching session, two of the participants shared they faced challenges with how they would be viewed as a Christian leader. They each voiced having a negative image of those who were in the office of a leader at their churches.

They did not want to be viewed as anyone but themselves and feared their relationship changing with their peers. Both individuals accepted their calls to ministry and began sharing their call stories with friends and family.

The final call story shared in the article was of Trakoon Yoel Masyawong. Pastor of Grace Lao, a Mennonite church in Kitchener, Ontario. Trakoon shared he grew up in a religious family in Thailand, in a small Baptist church. Trakoon's experienced growing up in a religious family, where he assisted his father in the music ministry. He also completed a one-year internship to test his call and came to the Mennonite Church in Canada through the International Visitor Exchange Program (IVEP) where he worked part-time in the Mennonite Church. Trakoon returned to Thailand for a couple of years to assist in student ministry in the Tao-Poon Mitrijit Church where he was licensed as recommended by the congregation.

Tao, who was mentioned earlier, was called back to Canada to serve at Grace Lao through IVEP, he preached several times and was licensed for ministry in MCEC and ordained at a young age where ordination was considered a high honor. Yoel, in reflecting on a call to ministry in Thailand, felt a stronger sense of God's call with less emphasis on a call to church or the community believing the call is highly personal and that ordination is for the church not to a specific congregation.

The author summarizes the testimonials from people in the Christian churches by saying God calls a person to ministry and the congregation receives that person as their pastor. It was reported several times the views of the pastors interviewed for this article, they were beginning to understand that Anabaptism emphasized the gospel of peace and reflects a different sense of what it means to be gifted and called into ministry.

Martin summarized the article with one of the scriptures used in the body of the article stating “the priesthood of all believers”⁴¹ suggests that ministry belongs to the whole people of God, with less emphasis on the special status of pastors. As indicated by Martin, these men are still sorting out what this idea means in practice as they own their call to ministry. These call journeys are all individualized and are a process all who answers must go through in the process of fulfilling the “Great Commission”.

To fulfill the “Great Commission” as leaders, we are to be able to produce leaders determined to fulfill their calls Jeter Basden, studied students that were exploring factors that contribute to individuals deciding to pursue a call to vocational Christian Ministry. Basden indicated congregations and family ministries must do all they can to assist families and parents with the responsibility to help their children hear and respond to the call of God.

Basden stated, “The supply and quality of future leaders of congregations and community ministries is dependent upon diligent efforts.”⁴² He further shared this can be fostered through Christian homes because this helps foster the transmission of spiritual values to shape lives and influence people as they respond to the plan God has for their lives.

⁴¹ Maurice Martin, “*Cross-cultural Perspectives on The Call to Ministry*,” (*Vision* Fall 2011 *Presbyterian* 34/1 Spring 2008), 74.

⁴² Basden, Jeter, “*The Influence of Christian Parents and a Christian Home on Persons Who Respond to a Call to Vocational Christian Ministry*,” (*Family Ministry* 14 1 2009), 71.

This school of thought relates to the author Davis previously mentioned in which the influence of family and friends on accepting the decisions of answering the call as a vocation in ministry. According to Basden, Christian homes help the called, hear, understand, affirm, and clarify God's call. Christian parents serve as models for a Christian lifestyle and their children usually are involved in the life and ministry of the church.

Christian parents characteristically are open to God's direction and purpose in the life of their children and Christian homes are the instruments for the transmission of spiritual values from generation to generation. This was also confirmed in this researchers' study. Many of the participants who accepted their call without much difficulty, shared a similar background. Many of them grew up in Christian homes and had family members who modeled a Christian life.

As a result of the findings of the Basden study, it can be concluded that leaders intentional in nurturing and strengthening families are generally able to hear and respond to the call. Basden suggested that leaders examine methods that help encourage parents to be Christian role models, that develop the child's spiritual disciplines, thus sharing their faith stories. The Basden study is designed to nurture, encourage, and strengthen individuals who have expressed they are sensing a call to ministry.

According to Basden leaders should provide opportunities for families to be together in ministry and mission projects, and family members could be encouraged to consider God's call to vocation ministry. Another point made by Basden in his article about discerning a call pointed out the fact that individuals who came from homes of Christian parents were more open to God's purpose for their children. The study showed individuals who experienced family members who were able to share stories of their Christian service encouraged them to explore a vocation in Christian Ministry.

Based on Basden's study, leaders are to encourage the sharing of spiritual journeys, share the stories of spiritual journeys as this is a way values are transmitted, and how faith is shaped and formed in children. Basden stated, "Congregations and family ministries can be facilitators of such sharing by providing opportunities for family members and congregational members to share their stories."⁴³ These aids in understanding and clarifying God's call to vocational Christian Ministry.

This researcher agrees with the fact that those who have experienced opportunities to explore their faith as a youth have less difficulty in responding to the call. This researcher discovered from the journal entries and discussions in the spiritual coaching sessions, the individuals who were active in the church were able to reflect on different situations that became confirmation to the call. These individuals were able to accept the call and began exploring what they were called to do. They were given instructions from the scriptures assigned that entailed them doing something for others.

Meaning, instead of them being given more confirmation on their call process, they were given instructions to do specific things for those who needed to be ministered to. One situation was a participant who was told to show more compassion toward others.

The participants continued to stress the fact that they were being given instructions such as "Feed my Sheep" The calls had been confirmed, now it was time to apply the word to the lives of others. Their childhood experiences in the church contributed to their call journeys. The participants did not know how much confirmation they had received until they reflected on the past and took the time to reflect on the word of God.

⁴³ Basden, Jeter, "The Influence of Christian Parents and a Christian Home on Persons Who Respond to a Call to Vocational Christian Ministry," (Family Ministry 141 2009), 70-71.

The speakers who shared their call stories intertwined incidence from childhood as a part of their call journeys. One speaker spoke specifically about knowing he was called from the age of six. As he shared his story, many of the participants who had grown up in the church had similar incidents. They did not realize how significant the incidents were until they heard the speakers reflect on their childhood experiences and connected them to the call journey.

In the article, *Discerning Spiritual Discernment: Assessing current approaches for understanding God's will* by author Dennis J. Horton discussed how critical the decision-making process is for high school students. Horton speaks of the process the Christian youth face when they do not have the desire to decide if it lines up with the will of God. He said these students are open to God's direction but confused about how to discern what God would have them do. He shared they need leaders to help them by equipping them to think through how to spiritually discern and make decisions. The purpose of the article was to provide ways to gain clarification on the decision-making process. The author explains approaches to spiritual discernment, decision-making factors important to specific groups of Christians, and gives some guidelines to help in educating others on discernment and decision making.

The author quoted Garry Friesen's approaches to spiritual discernment from his book, *Decision Making and the will of God*. Friesen identified two primary schools of thought. The "bullseye and wisdom" approach. The Bullseye is described as a traditional view that God has a specific plan for all individuals and seeks to reveal this plan to us. The individuals are to discover God's detailed plan and then follow it. The goal is for Christians to hit the Bullseye of God's will by praying for specific guidance from God and feeling an inner peace granted by Holy Spirit.

The wisdom approach advocates a decision-making process that does not look for details.

The individuals are to rely on their God-given reasoning abilities, wise counsel, and an assessment of strengths, talents, and abilities. This school of thought emphasizes Christian wisdom from the bible is understood as a factor of the spiritual discernment process. Decisions are based primarily on guidelines revealed in the bible and emphasize the rational aspect of the decision-making process. This approach highlights the importance of wise counsel, common sense, and the use of gifts, talents, and abilities. The belief is that God has a detailed plan but chooses not to reveal as God is sovereign, and all things have been predestined.

In the “Biblical wisdom approach to spiritual discernment, Christians should make decisions based on guidelines revealed in the bible.”⁴⁴ Another approach discussed in the article was pragmatic Christian Wisdom, the school of thought prioritizes the use of wise counsel emphasizing, we are to be the kind of people who practice the “Golden Rule” in all circumstances.”⁴⁵ Prayer for wisdom is viewed as vital providing guidance for spiritual discernment. In this view, one seeks to follow God’s general will instead of following a specific plan. This approach does not feel the need to pray for specific guidance or answers from God.

Another approach mentioned by Horton is the Relationship-Formation approach which argues God is actively involved in our decisions, although He does not have a specific plan. This thought is a Christians have great liberty because God has not predestined a specific plan for their lives. Decisions are based on a connection with Christ and maturity in Christ. The scriptures are a key part of the formation, but decisions are made based on our relationship with God and how He works in our lives.

⁴⁴ Horton, Dennis J, “*Discerning Spiritual Discernment: Assessing Current Approaches for Understanding God’s Will*,” (Journal of Youth Ministry 7 no 2 Spring 2009), 9

⁴⁵ Ibid., 10.

The belief is that God wants us to grow in maturity and become capable of making decisions, although God may prompt us to move in a certain direction, He does not have a predestined path for us. The author discusses various spiritual discernment practices and explored various studies, but none of these studies explore how theological understandings influence the ways Christians seek to discern God's will for their lives. A survey was conducted and revealed that ministry students follow diverse approaches to discernment.

It was reported that all the students placed a high priority on prayer to make their decision. The factor's varied according to the individual's choice of approaches. This is like the way each call journey is explored. Individuals tend to find their way through the call journey based on the beliefs they have been taught. The problem is some have not been taught anything about how to proceed in that journey. As indicated previously, most call or discernment programs are designed for individuals who are in their teen years or have already determined they would like to be educated on the call journey because of exposure to the possibility of pursuing a call as a vocation.

One of the ways individuals have discovered their purpose has been through practicing spiritual disciplines. This researcher utilized spiritual disciplines to aid the participants in gaining knowledge of their call. According to this researcher's project, documented in chapter four, by practicing spiritual disciplines, the participants were able to gain confirmation of the call. The paper entitled "The Spiritual Disciplines and Christian Ministry" by Beverly Vos spoke of several spiritual disciplines and the benefits gained through each practice. Vos was a master's level student at the Australian College of Ministers in Sidney, Australia in church leadership, an assignment was given by her professor Dallas Willard was to write this assignment.

Vos shared in her article, how Jesus commanded his followers to “go into all the world and make disciples” Mt. 28:19-20 quoting the “Great Commission.”⁴⁶ sharing that one of the primary activities we have is to grow disciples of Jesus. Vos spoke of the need for us to be disciples ourselves to fulfill this duty. The writer explores the role of the spiritual disciplines for Christian Believers. Vos quoted her professor, Willard stating the call to Christ today is the same as it was when Christ left and we are called to be His followers, leading others into apprenticeship teaching them how to do what He has commanded, further, to do this one must spend time with God to make every effort to foster Christ-like characteristics. Vos shared this is accomplished through practicing spiritual disciplines. According to Willard, “spiritual disciplines are tried and true activities to give our spirits more control over our bodies, this will help us grow in the spiritual life and ministry.”⁴⁷ Information was shared from Foster’s Celebration of Disciplines explanation that spiritual disciplines place us in a position to be transformed by God. This transformation allows us to minister to others effectively and spiritual transformation which according to Vos, should be our goal. Willard states we must be intentional about spiritual transformation for this to happen. Foster says to become spiritually formed in Christ we must know what it means and intentionally try to achieve spiritual transformation. Vos indicated; Spiritual disciplines put us in a place where God’s grace can change us.

Written in the paper, disciplines of prayer, meditation, and study of scripture are thought to be indispensable to the journey of faith. Referring to such disciplines, Bonhoeffer believed prayer was an essential responsibility for the pastor and the entire ministry is dependent on this.

⁴⁶ Beverly Vos, “*The Spiritual Disciplines and Christian Ministry*,” (Evangelical Review of Theology 36:2 2012, 39.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 102.

Vos quoted Ortberg describing a spiritual discipline as any activity that can aid us in gaining the power to live as Jesus taught and demonstrated. Ortberg did not believe there is an exhaustive list of spiritual disciplines.

Vos shared information about several spiritual disciplines in her article including prayer, Solitude, Silence, meditation, study, simplicity, fasting, worship, celebration, service, and confessions. Vos spent time sharing the importance of these spiritual disciplines and scriptural references to validate each of them. Vos quoted Foster in prayer in the article as the best way for God to change us.

According to Vos, Willard says prayer is a vehicle to spiritually strengthening us. She shared how Jesus himself teaches us to pray and she quoted the scripture from Mt. 26:41 in which Jesus is encouraging us to “watch and pray so we will not fall into temptation.”⁴⁸ Willard stated prayer builds our faith and confidence in God and to do it well, it will most likely be linked with other disciplines such as study, worship, meditation, solitude, and fasting.

Vos also stated, John Wesley believed, God does not do anything except respond to our prayers. Vos quoted Brother Lawrence, “The Practice of the Presence of God with Spiritual Maxims 1958, We must deal with our psychological barriers to prayer, speaking of prayer as continual conversation with God.”⁴⁹ The second spiritual discipline Vos discussed was solitude, spending long periods alone with God, sharing how Jesus regularly spent time in solitude. Vos shared how Jesus spent time at the beginning of his ministry in the desert and the end in Gethsemane with time in solitude.

⁴⁹ #Beverly Vos, “*The Spiritual Disciplines and Christian Ministry*,” (Evangelical Review of *Theology* 36:2 2012), 105.

Vos spoke of the benefits of solitude as confirmed by Willard, Foster, and Bonhoeffer, sharing, spending time in solitude enhances our connection with God. Willard believes solitude is one of the most significant disciplines practiced.

The third spiritual discipline shared is Silence. Foster believes solitude and silence are inseparable and that the ability to be silent and to listen to others may be the greatest witness and testimony to our faith. The next discipline in the paper was Meditation. Vos shared the fact that meditation is mentioned over fifty times in the Old Testament and Christian meditation aims to empty our minds and fill them with thoughts and works of God. She shared examples of Jesus studying the scriptures and expounded on the study as the next spiritual discipline.

The study is engaging our minds with the word and the study aims to replace old negative habits with new life-giving habits. According to Vos, study transforms us using the scriptural reference of Romans 12:2, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. She shared, one of the greatest benefits of studying God's word is that it increases our faith. The sixth spiritual discipline discussed in the paper was Simplicity and how it is underestimated further that the discipline of simplicity challenges our sinful cravings and affluent lifestyles.

According to Vos, Jesus's life was the perfect example of living a simplistic life and was not concerned with wealth or prestige and simplicity relies on receiving all we have as a gift, entrusting God with what we have, and being willing to give it to others. The seventh spiritual discipline discussed is fasting as depicted in the word of God, abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. According to Willard, the purpose is about learning to be free from the desire for food and experiencing how God directly nurtures us. Vos mentioned characters in the bible as examples of fasting including Daniel, David, Ester, Elijah, and Paul, and Jesus who fasted forty days.

Vos shared that fasting affirms our dependence on God and that God is our source of substance and through fasting. We can truly learn it is not just food that gives us life but every word that comes from the mouth of God as shared, Mt. 4:4 indicating, fasting allows us to practice self-denial which is required of us by Jesus. Mt.16:24.

Vos also shares how fasting helps us with possessing self-control and temperance. The eighth spiritual discipline shared was on worship, a response of our heart to the love of God. Vos reports, Foster says, “worship is a spiritual discipline that propels us towards greater obedience, deeper compassion for others and causes us to release resentment, it transforms us.”⁵⁰

Foster also said to worship is an important spiritual discipline for effective ministry. it is building our faith and strengthening the believer. The ninth spiritual discipline discussed is a celebration. Vos shared the bible is full of examples of the celebrations and when we celebrate, we are filled with joy which gives us strength. Paul commands us in Philippians 4:4 to rejoice in the Lord always.”⁵¹

According to Vos, Celebration makes our problems and sorrows appear small. The tenth spiritual discipline discussed is service which can train us to rid ourselves of negative characteristics speaking of several scriptures including Jn. 13:1-17 Jesus' example of washing the feet of the disciples and spoke of the benefits we receive in serving others. Vos spoke of how true service builds community and a sense of intimacy. The final spiritual discipline discussed in the paper is confession. James 5:16 says “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other. Vos also stated our sins need to be confessed so we can begin to heal and to change.

⁵⁰ #Beverly Vos, “*The Spiritual Disciplines and Christian Ministry*,” (Evangelical Review of Theology 36:2 2012), 110

⁵¹ Phil. 4:4 KJV

Bonhoeffer states that “in confession, we affirm and accept our cross.”⁵² According to Vos, confession builds our faith in God’s provision for our needs through his people, and through spiritual discipline we build character. Vos believed the disciplines go hand in hand with the power of God demonstrated in one’s life.

Vos closed the paper sharing the impact of practicing spiritual disciplines and the importance of practicing spiritual disciplines for training in Christian ministry. According to Vos, it is plain to see that spiritual disciplines are essential in the growth and development in the ministry of making disciples. Making disciples is the goal of the spiritual leader. We are commanded to make disciples and a part of making disciples is to identify those called and help them by nurturing and encouraging them to walk in their calling.

Pamela Dilmore’s article *Being and Making Disciples of Jesus Christ* the assignment of making disciples posited that the calling is to make disciples and to inspire and encourage others to make disciples. While exploring the meaning of the “Great Commission”, Dilmore shared that in a response to make Disciples, we do not have to have all the answers.

During more than 30 years of serving, Dilmore recognized the need for humility and a willingness to learn, believing this opens one to the activity of God’s Spirit. Dilmore shared, God, empowers us to do the work stated in the “Great Commission”, we are called to make disciples, to inspire and encourage others to follow Jesus, and to live according to his teachings. The Great Commission reads: Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go.

⁵²Jas. 5:6 KJV

When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. Jesus came near and spoke to them, “I’ve received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. Look. I will be with you every day until the end of this present age Matthew 28:16-20.⁵³ Dilmore stresses the fact that we fulfill the assignment of being and making disciples through His spirit and being a disciple and making disciples means continuing to learn from Jesus who is always with us.

As we respond to this command the writer is helping us to understand it is by His Spirit, we can carry out our assignments. This includes the process of the call. We must rely on the spirit of God to help us discern the call of God on our lives. This is done through us practicing spiritual disciplines as mentioned in Vos’s article. This researcher encouraged the participants to listen for the instructions of God during their prayer and meditation time and to journal what the Lord was saying to them.

This practice was beneficial in helping them discern the call. Once we have received the instructions from God, we begin to understand our call journeys. As we move beyond the confirmation of the call, we work to build the Kingdom fulfilling the “Great Commission.” As we determine our purpose in answering the call, we need greater understanding. Tucker, in his article shares information from another memorable Christian father in Christianity, John Calvin.

The article Calvin and the call to ministry by Craig Tucker explore the teaching and understanding of the call using the work of John Calvin. In this article, Calvin spoke of two calls, the inward call, and the outward call.

⁵³Matt. 28:16-20 KJV

According to Calvin, a person is truly called based on the outward call of the church not by self-appointment. It was stated that circumstances of life aids in determining their earthly call, however, the exception is the call to ministry which is a new kind of service.

The call to ministry is treated as a higher calling, but according to Calvin, the inner call cannot be tested by others, the outward call must be tested, and it comes in the form of a church. According to Calvin, the minister is accountable to God for their words, actions, and their motives. Calvin indicated “The outward call consists of four objectives criterion. These are 1. The giftedness of the candidate, which is important, although Calvin is quick to caution that giftedness is not a sufficient criterion; 2. Also needed are possession of sound doctrine; 3. A holy life; and 4. and skills are necessary for the discharge of their office.”⁵⁴ Calvin spoke of an inward and outward call. Calvin expressed ministers should be outwardly called to a particular part of ministry to serve in a specific congregation. In this article, the inward call was associated with one’s desire to serve which in his opinion did not need to be tested.

Much of the Calvin article was focused on the outward call, the call to the church and through trials and challenges of the ministry, the pastor’s call would be affirmed.

As indicated by Calvin, it is important to recognize the giftedness in one’s call to the ministry, but this is only part of walking in the call. The other area mentioned is that the called need have sound doctrine. Those called need to understand the word of God and understand the plan of God. Calvin also spoke of the need for the called to live a holy life as leaders must operate with integrity and represent the Kingdom.

⁵⁴ Craig Tucker, “*Calvin and The Call to Ministry*,” (The Reformed Theological Review 76:2 August 2017), 107

As we prepare leaders for the call, we must stress the importance of not only being gifted, understanding sound doctrine, but we are to live lives representing Christ. Calvin spoke of an inward and outward call. In the call project for this research study, the participants are working on the inward call.

The outward call will be realized as they continue through the journey after gaining confirmation. In further exploring the call, Edwards shares the difference between a divine office and a profession. He speaks of the ministry of the word spiritual formation. As ministers, we need to be the light. During the spiritual coaching sessions with the participants, this researcher was aiding them in becoming the light by helping them process past hurts. Many of the participants shared difficult things that had taken place in their lives causing them to feel stuck, and unable to process the possibility that God wants to use them.

In this article written by Sean Michael Lucas, *“Divine Light, Holy Heat”: Jonathan Edwards, The Ministry of the word, and spiritual, Formation* speaks of Edward’s view of the ministry of the word and how it relates to spiritual formation. The author shared various views from philosophers and theologians emphasizing the goal and expectation of excellence.

The writer shared information on Edward’s view on the task of ministry. Edwards spoke of the responsibility of the minister which included caring for souls and preaching the word of God which should reflect the light of Christ. Edwards spoke of how ministers are to be a light to the souls by imparting a divine and supernatural light to the heart of man transforming and shaping them to be more like Christ. Edward speaks of “spiritual formation, the development of truly holy affections as he put it, occurs through theological, thoughtful, religious devotion and biblically aligned ministry of the word”.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Hayes, Edward, *“The Call to Ministry,”* (Bibliotheca Sacra 157 January-March 2000), 8.

Edwards spoke highly about the minister's call viewed as a divine office as opposed to a profession. Edwards shared that both his father and grandfather held high views of ministerial calling and authority. In the article, Edwards gave several analogies of describing the ministry.

Edwards reported an analogy of the position of ministry calling is similar to a marriage, married to their congregation. Edwards encourages the minister to care for the church as one would their spouse on behalf of Christ. Edwards also used the analogy of the minister as a servant and farmer. Edwards spoke of the need for the minister to hold on to the promises of God and the need for us to have ongoing personal formation and spiritual formation. Edwards further indicates the minister must study the word of God and completely depend on God, encouraging us to depend on God to bear fruit. This is a common theme for the called, to totally depend on God as previously shared. By depending on God, we can fulfill the assignment commanded in the "Great Commission,".

Edwards indicated Ministers must have the spirit of Christ in their hearts and passion to walk out the Kingdom Agenda by loving having a desire to win souls and to love men, stirring their affection toward God. Edwards stressed that reading, studying, and preaching the word, and imitating Christ. Edwards shared it is possible to accomplish these goals through the power of God. Ministers are to be used by God to preach the word and give Glory to God.

As previously mentioned, several of the writers have stressed the fact that individuals who have experience in organized church tend to be able to respond to the call of God easier than those who had no experience in church. This researcher found that many of the studies available were written about either the youth or those in institutions of higher education who are still in need of gaining insight about the call.

According to Lee, there was a decline in students in religious activity during their college experience which was attributed to the student's separation from familiar belief and practice. The purpose of Lees' study was to connect the gap between institutions of higher education and churches, the desire was to better understand the impact of higher education and for churches and the impact of religious participation on students at a faith-based institution. The goal was to obtain insight into the influence and impact of church involvement experienced by students at a religious institution.

Lee's study showed congregational belonging had a positive impact on those having success and those that participated in prayer saw it as beneficial and considered it a source of strength. According to Lee, this also contributed to greater crisis management and spiritual rejuvenation. The participants were impacted positively through a network of fellowships in faith-based institutions. These students had a clear desire to serve and were motivated to be involved. Lee found that faith development impacted religious participation. This is another confirmation of the benefits of spiritual disciplines. This writer reported on the benefits the students experienced by practicing prayer as a source of strength. Memorable religious fathers have the keys to understanding the call and the discernment process. As leaders, we must understand ways in which those sensing a call discerns the call. Mayes's article shared similar views about Luther's vocation and Baptism and ways of discerning the call.

This section on discerning God's call is of primary importance. *Luther on vocation and Baptism: A correction to Charismatic and situational ways of Discerning God's call* by Benjamin T.G. Mayes assistant professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary explores the doctrine of vocation by exploring Luther's baptismal sermons and his understanding of the call.

Mayes (2018) shared Luther's view on the call and reflections from other theologians and scholars. Mayes shared the origins of the call pointing out vocation means calling in Latin also shared different understandings on the call and how to discover one's call. According to Luther, God's call allows one to choose career choices. Gustaf Wingren in his book *Luther on Vocation* gives views related to vocation from different times during Luther's life. Wingren shares how individuals enter a vocation and the inquisition of whether we have the option to alter or reject one's vocation.

Mayes (2018) shared Gene Edward Veith's view that every career is or can be a divine vocation. As shared by Mayes (2018) Luther's perspective is that God does not require people to enter occupations, his callings are specifically to the areas of life that are confirmed in scripture. Mayes examined the area of discerning a call inquiring about how one knows they are called. According to Luther, we must discover the call of God call considering your gifts and what you enjoy doing, and vocation is not chosen by us.

Mayes shared the view; one must discern God's call from their circumstances and receive revelation through the power of the Holy Spirit. Mayes went on to review other perspectives on the call and how we gain confirmation. One of the views shared was of Rick Warren and his *forty days to discern what God wants us to do?* Luther relies on the scriptural word of God to explore the call.

Gustaf Wingren brings forth Luther's emphasis on our responsibility to practice holiness and the responsibility of those discerning a call to move relying on the Holy Spirit daily. Wingren also indicated clarity of the call is acquired through prayer and rationale because prayer provides strategies for making moral decisions in one's vocation. Mayes (2018) shared in the article, *Luther on Baptismal Vocation*, confirmation of the call must come from the word of God.

Luther stressed forgiveness and living a life of good works confirmed and identified in scripture. Mayes shared information about the power of Baptism. Luther stresses the responsibility of believers committed to good works. Prayer is a part of the spiritual formation needed to gain an understanding of the call.

According to McRay et al. in the *Spiritual Formation and Soul Care Project*, this article gave an example of formation in higher education committed to spiritual formation as it relates to education. The goals were to create a desire for students, men, and women to love God and their neighbor with a dedication to service for Christ and building the Kingdom of God. McRay et al., went to great lengths to share the journey to develop an effective program that includes spiritual formation and soul care. One of the statements made in the article is that “information is incomplete without formation.”⁵⁶

The Spiritual Formation was focused on equipping individuals with experiences to nurture the call and foster the spiritual formation and spiritual maturity of the participants. McRay, et al. shared that the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, prayer, and how small group discipleship formulating the educational experiences to prepare the students.

McRay, et al. shared a review of Richard Foster’s literature based on spiritual formation and the spiritual discipline and found soul care is seen in the revelation of the scriptures which is the ultimate authority for our understanding of Christian practices. This article focuses on college students and their journey to understand and walk in their purpose. For us to be nurtured in the call, we practice spiritual discipline which includes the authentic word of God.

⁵⁶ Barrett W. McRay, Laura Barwegen, Daniel T. Hasse, Muhia Karianjahi, Mimi L. Larson, Rob Ribbe, Tom Schwanda, David P. Setran and James C. Wilhoit, “*Spiritual Formation and Soul Care in the Department of Christian Formation as Ministry at Wheaton College*,” (Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care 11, no 2 2018), 295.

This researcher utilized the word of God to aid the participants to gain confirmation of the call. The participants meditated on the word of God and allowed them to receive revelations through the power of Holy Spirit. The bible, the inerrant word of God is needed to authenticate the word. Many spiritual fathers have spoken of the importance of spiritual disciplines. One of those fathers is Richard Foster.

In Foster's article "Becoming Like Christ", Foster speaks of the goal of the Christian life is for us to be transformed and conformed to the image of Christ, and our trials, persecutions, and tribulations are a part of our discipleship used to shape and form us. According to Foster how we respond to these challenging life situations shapes us into who God intends us to be. Foster states, "The formal means of grace refers to well-recognized disciplines of the spiritual life: disciplines like prayer, study. Fasting, solitude, simplicity, confession, celebration, and the like. I call these "formal" means because they involve formal ways of arranging our lives for training in the spiritual life. We simply must understand that we will never grow in Christlike habits and disposition without intense, well-informed action on our part".

Foster speaks of the need for us to practice spiritual disciplines to grow."⁵⁷ The experiences we have in life helps to shape us, but it is also necessary for one to be intentional about connecting intimately with God. Foster believes spiritual disciplines are a must.

This researcher also agrees with this thought. As the individuals practiced the spiritual disciplines they were transformed in their thinking about the call on their lives. Foster further indicated what he called "inward disciplines like meditation, prayer, fasting, and study, cultivate our heart and mind toward the way of Christ"⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Foster, Richard "Becoming Like Christ", 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid 5

In the essay *Resilient Readers: Spiritual Growth and the Bible*, the author Marion L.S. Carson shared how we can equip Christians as individuals and communities to have a healthy, genuine view of scripture that will enable them to endure difficult times. The essay suggests pastors should be taught biblical hermeneutics that enables them to have a mature reading of scripture in the pastoral setting. Although this essay did not relate directly to this researcher's project there were a couple of points that affirms views shared by other writers in this review of the literature. Carson introduced the concept of faith development theory the trouble experienced in his life which contributed to him challenging his beliefs. Carson shared how his views about God and the Bible he knew at the time he believed had let him down. Carson shared how he viewed the word of God and God as being unreliable due to the difficulty previously faced.

Carson and his mother experienced several deaths in a short period leaving the writer feeling as though his view of scriptures failed him. Carson spoke of the need for us as leaders to be able to read the word of God and preach the word in a way that is not misleading the people. Carson shared how his mother's faith journey was shaken due to the lack of understanding of the word of God. Carson's mother became discouraged and turned from the church.

The writer shared as leaders; we must move away from a childish understanding of faith to a mature religion. Carson spoke about James Fowler, whose book stages of faith, Jean Piaget, and Erik Erikson, suggest the nature of our faith changes as we develop from childhood to mature adulthood experiencing various stages in faith development. Carson stated, "How we read, and our response to what we read, should change as we develop psychologically, educationally, and spiritually and as we are influenced by life experience."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Carson, Marion L. S. "Resilient Readers: Spiritual Growth and the Bible" (*Journal of European Baptist Studies* 19:1 2019), 83-94.

The writer spoke of the need to equip Christians to withstand times of crisis and retain a prophetic voice rooted in biblical tradition. Carson argues there is a pastoral responsibility to help people grow their faith and withstand spiritual crises. This researcher has similar underpinnings as the research of Carson. Carson raises a great point about helping those we lead in a mature interpretation of scripture and how important it is to be able to respond to crisis and grow in trusting God and maturing as a leader. Leaders need to be able to trust the word of God and know the importance of helping others interpret the word of God and grow to trust God despite the crises they face.

Elton shares in a Confirmation Project designed to help strengthen the faith of individuals desiring to confirm a call. In the article, *Encountering the Gospel through Confirmation: Learning from The Confirmation Project*, Elton and Osmer talked about a national confirmation project and other practices used in five different denominations. Confirmation is a ministry that is meant to strengthen the understanding of young people's faith and help them experience the Christian community. Confirmation is meant to help them to discern their calling to serve and encounter the Gospel to become more open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Osmer was speaking about the importance of confirmation to help the youth cultivate their faith. Much of the information available about the call, also described in this article, focuses on a younger population, to help them to identify and cultivate a call to serve. Osmer reported the most important findings of the youth confirmation project was that the youth were already highly involved in their church communities. Youth involved in programs such as vacation bible school, Sunday school, church camps, retreats, and worshiped with their families regularly are better able to cultivate a call.

Furthermore, no other factor came close to faith as the greatest influence on the youth regarding confirmation. Faith formation in the home is a common aspect in the research for discerning the call. This was also confirmed by this researcher's project, individuals who were involved in religious activities were better able to nurture the call. This article also is focusing on the youth and the call which is one of the things this researcher discovered when doing this research. Many of the resources focused on the youth and their discernment process. This researcher believes there is a great need for the information gathered in the research done for this study. Osmer shared information regarding the confirmation project.

Osmer discussed the dynamics of the confirmation projects and their desire to create a meaningful experience. In the article, the confirmation project leaders shared their faith journeys with the youth. The strongest characteristic identified among the faithfulness the writers spoke of the significance of relationships which according to Osmer and Elton gave the confirmation process momentum they further stated, "Embracing our call to share the gospel and cultivate faith within young people not only serves the church today, but it also invests in the future."⁶⁰

In the article written by Elton and Osmer confirmation is a ministry that will strengthen young people's knowledge on faith which will strengthen their faith and their experience in the Christian faith equipping them to be able to discern their calling preparing for God's mission in the world. As previously mentioned, each of our call journeys are unique. As we continue to explore information on the call, this researcher found information such as this program to help individuals in a formal educational setting to aid in the call process but not for the population addressed in this researcher's study.

⁶⁰ Elton, Terri Martinson, and Richard Osmer, "Encountering the Gospel through Confirmation: Learning from the Confirmation Project," (Theology Today 761 2019), 17.

In the article *Ministry in Light and Ministry in Darkness, discerning a Vocation*, Worsfold, a hospice chaplain, shared a scripture from the bible identifying what constituted a ministry of light and ministry of darkness for those exploring the call. Worsfold specifically identified stories of God's conventional relationship with His people describing two types of ministries, ministry of darkness and ministry of light, both of which are needed to make known the life and witness of Christ.

The article shared a method for helping Christians discern what specific path is right for them. Also shared is how ministry in the dark comes through various experiences, some intentional and deliberate, and some which may appear insignificant but have a profound impact on the individuals encountered. Worsfold described a ministry in the dark witnessing to the presence of God in the present moment and as one of our most profound gifts. Worsfold described various experiences as darkness and light. Situations that appear to be dark at one time or another are sometimes actually situations of light. She spoke of the need for the one called to be attentive listeners and to be present with individuals they are called to.

Furthering the premise that being with people in their journey is about identifying where God is in the situation and determining God's plan for inviting us into the situation. As the participants in Worsfold's study experienced the spiritual disciplines, they were learning to hear God's voice and how to apply the scriptural context to what they were hearing as a continuous process on their journey through the call. This was similar to this researcher's project. Another similarity the Worsfold study to this researchers' project is a focus on the importance of meditation in discerning our vocation through the linkage of scripture with meditation.

According to Worsfold, all the passages used in the article are food for meditation. Worsfold stated, “The purpose of meditation is to praise God and to place oneself at the Lord’s disposal so that His Divine Majesty can make use of their persons and of all they possess in whatsoever way is in accord with his most holy will.”⁶¹ Worsfold’s main point is the differences in the light and dark aspects of ministry as reflected in scripture may offer a framework for helping Christians to discern what specific path is right for them. Worsfold shared, Ministry in the light is concerned with telling a specific story of God’s covenantal relationship with God’s people further. It is about making disciples and building up the Church. There is an element of teaching and establishing the community of believers. Whereas the stories that happen in the dark tell of momentary, but significant encounters with people from whom we never hear again. Worsfold spoke of teaching and establishing the community of believers and shared stories about birth, suffering, death, and what lies beyond.

Worsfold was attempting to make sense of the ministry for those who are called to minister to others and help them make sense of biblical stories and real-life situations. All the articles discussed in this chapter were confirmation of the Call process. The writers shared several common issues for anyone discerning a call. The youth, as well as adults, need to have their calls confirmed to move forward.

⁶¹ #Caroline Worsfold, “*Ministry in Light and Ministry in Darkness: Discerning a Vocation*,” (The Way 58/1 January 2019), 100.

Theological Foundation

The theological structure for this thesis project will be to build upon the Holy Scripture. This theological foundation lays the groundwork as it pertains to making disciples, fulfilling the “Great Commission”. This is an intervention for discerning and clarifying a call to ministry. This writer believes individuals participating in this discernment process will gain clarity and will be propelled into actively pursuing the call to ministry. The participants will gain confirmation and assurance leading them to move forward in answering the call and proceeding to build the Kingdom, fulfilling the "Great Commission". This will include a foundational and scriptural basis for nurturing and encouraging individuals sensing the call of God on their lives.

Scriptural Basis for A Call Intervention Program

The bible is the final authority for everything, and it is the way God provides principles for living. In John 6:38, Jesus states, For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him who sent Me.”⁶² The people were struggling to understand what Jesus was teaching them. He had shared with them that His Miracles were meant to point toward a greater truth. He was encouraging them to take their focus off material things and to focus on heavenly things. In this verse, Jesus mentions His obedience to God the Father. His will and the Fathers will always be in alignment. He made references about He and the Father being one. John 10:30. Jesus was consistently obedient to the Father.

As leaders, we know the sacrifice Jesus made for all mankind. Jesus never focused on His agenda; he was always living a life of obedience. As a leader called by God, this researcher has difficulty not trying to model after Christ. Since Jesus was about His father’s business, it is this researcher's belief we too should be about the Father’s business.

⁶² Jn. 6:38 NKJ

In John 14:12 Jesus said these words. “12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father. This verse speaks of the Believers would be empowered to do good works as Christ returned to the Father.”⁶³ Holy Spirit would empower us to do this greater works. Jesus had spoken to the disciples about the power of Holy Spirit that would be available for us to do these greater works. These greater works were to carry out Christ's work through the Believers.

Most people agree that John, Jesus’ disciple, wrote the gospel of John although few still debate this. John wanted his readers to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, God’s Son. John points out the fact that Jesus was fully human. We are to feed the souls with the word of God.

This work is to do the work of Christ as Jesus said to do the work of the Father. We are to do the work that Jesus did. We are to be about our Father’s business. To do that we must first respond to the call. Those who are called to raise up leaders need to do what is necessary to train the leaders, helping them discern and walk out the call on their lives.

For people of faith, the question of what God wants us to do is a mystery and for some, it causes frustration and confusion. This leaves many in a position of stagnation in responding to or pursuing the call in their lives. Many have asked the question, does God have a specific plan for my life? God, creator of the universe has called us to be part of his work to bring justice and kindness to his creation. Many individuals have moved beyond asking the question, “Does God have a specific plan for my life?” to make the statement, “I know God has something he wants me to do”, but many do not know how to find out what it is.

⁶³ Jn. 14:12 KJV

As this researcher reflects on the foundation of this research, the first thing to consider is the calling that is on this research life. This researcher believes one of the primary responsibility's leaders, particularly this researcher, is called to do, is to make disciples, helping identify their calling to walk in obedience to "God's call". To do what we are commanded to do we must identify our call and help others to fulfill their calls, their God-given purpose in life. Those who are called have a command from God to fulfill the "Great Commission". The bible states "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few."⁶⁴

In Matthew 9:37 Jesus said these words after seeing the multitudes of people and the needs they had of healing and salvation. In vs. 38, Jesus encourages the disciples to pray to the Lord of the Harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest. We must ask the Lord to send workers into his fields.

The book of Matthew is the first book of the New Testament and one of the three synoptic Gospels. It has been reported by scholars, Matthew and Luke used information from Mark's Gospel. The views are still being debated due to the dates the information was recorded. It is believed "The Jewish nature of Matthews Gospel may suggest that it was written in the Holy Land, though many think it may have originated in Syrian Antioch."⁶⁵ It tells how Israel's Messiah, rejected, and executed in Israel's pronounces judgment on Israel and its leaders and becomes the salvation of the gentiles. In Matthew 37 and 38, "³⁷ Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." This verse helps us to understand the importance of making disciples.

⁶⁴ Matt. 9:37 KJV

⁶⁵ Henry, Matthew's Commentary 1706 Matthew Henry Commentary on the whole Bible (Complete Vol. 5 [http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew.henry-complete/matthew/.](http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew.henry-complete/matthew/))

There is plenty of work to be done for the Kingdom. The state of the world is in a difficult place today. There is more need to make disciples carry out the “Great Commission” than ever before.

Many of us have relatives, friends, and co-workers who are losing loved ones every day. We must win souls for the Kingdom. As people are going home to be with the Lord, we certainly do not want to miss the opportunity to lead a soul to Christ. There is also a great need for individuals with the gift of counseling for grief, anxiety, family issue, and more. Training disciples and nurturing calls to ministry are of most importance these days.

Those answering the call will be able to step into their assignment and aid in meeting the needs of the people of God. As we are ministering to them through counseling and spiritual coaching, we are fulfilling the call on our lives. As we are identifying the calls and encouraging the leaders to respond to the call, the hungry are getting fed, the homeless are being cared for and souls are coming to Christ.

The leaders we nurture and encourage can step into their called position and prepare to help as we continue to help more and more individuals identify and answer the call. As we respond to the call, we must focus on the command of God to fulfill the “Great Commission” written in ‘Matthew 28:18-20. It is written in Matthew verses 18-20, “¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen Matthew 28:18-20.” ⁶⁶

⁶⁶Matt. 28:18-20 KJV

In these verses, Jesus came and spoke to the disciples saying, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. This commission was given to the disciples in the authority of Jesus. Jesus has the authority to command us. We are commanded to God. By His authority, we are guided and empowered to go and make disciples not just converts but to make disciples.

By making disciples we are spreading Christianity. We are to Baptize them and teach them to observe all things Jesus has commanded. Jesus sent the disciples with a mission. Jesus tells them, Lo I am with you always even to the end of the world. Jesus is with us as we are responding to the command to make disciples. In this researcher's project, the individuals involved in the intervention plan, the focus is making Disciples. The participants had been baptized and had a relationship with the Lord but were not actively pursuing what God commanded them to do.

These participants in response to answering the call will be encouraged to carry out the commands in the Great Commission by going with authority to and power given by Christ, to teach all nations, to baptize, and to teach them to observe everything we have been commanded what has been commanded and remembering they are not alone, they have the presence and power of God to carry out His command. As leaders called by God, we respond to each of the steps of the command in Matthew. For the sake of this thesis project, this researcher is focusing on the specific step of making disciples by aiding other pastors in training and encouraging their leaders.

The “Great Commission” is a collective assignment. All leaders and ministries are called to fulfill. We are one church, with one faith and one baptism. In the word of God, the word “call” is used mostly to refer to God’s plan to bring people to Christ and to work in his redemptive work in the world. This calling is mentioned in the letters of Paul. The word “Call” is not always used, but we will explore these scriptural texts.

As indicated in Ephesians 4:1, like Paul we are to walk worthy of the vocation of which we are called. Ephesians 4:4 states,⁶⁷ “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”⁶⁷ Paul writing from prison requesting we walk worthy of the vocation we are called to. He was willing to suffer and die for this cause and he was asking the church members to be willing to walk worthy of this call. Paul was not asking for anything personally although he was in prison, he was asking for them to be passionate about the doctrine he was willing to die for. He identified himself as a prisoner, one of Christ’s prisoners. He wanted them to approve themselves “good Christians”. He urged them to live up to their calling, their “profession”.

He urged them to act like Christians, “called to God’s Kingdom and Glory”. He went on to speak about the unity, love purity and holiness Christian should have. Paul stressed, “Love is the law of Christ’s Kingdom”. As Paul spoke of in this text, we are to walk worthy of the vocation we are called to. Like Christ, we are to do the will of our Father and carry out the “Great Commission”.

⁶⁷ Eph. 4:1-4 KJV

In the word of God we see, God calls people to a work and gives us directions for our work. We will explore biblical accounts of the call. Scripture does not usually use the word “call” to describe God’s direction to a particular vocation, occupations, or tasks, they are written in the bible. The work we do is important to God. We must ask the question, what work does God want me to do? God leads us to jobs and occupations. God calls us to unite with one another. This occurs when we respond to the call of Christ to follow him.

The calling to follow Christ is the core of every call. Each of us is called by God, believing in the priesthood of all believers. However, all are not called to work, specifically in the church. As we answer the call, we infect the world with the love we have been encouraged to share. The love of Christ. As we answer our calls, we respond by doing what we are gifted to do, meeting the needs of humanity. As we answer the call, the hungry are fed, the orphans are housed, the least of these are cared for. The calling is about us sharing the gifts God has given us with His people.

This call project is an intervention program designed to help individuals move into their assignment of building the Kingdom. When we realize we are called we are not motivated by selfish gain, our priority is to make a difference in the lives of the least of these. To make the world a better place. People in every walk of life are called to follow Christ.

Theoretical Foundations

This study hypothesizes that participating in specific spiritual disciplines and spiritual coaching over a six-week period and participation in a two-day conference will be effective in helping individuals gain clarity in discerning their call to ministry. The techniques used in the project include practicing spiritual disciplines (prayer and meditation) and journaling their experiences, attending a two-day conference, and participating in six weeks of individual spiritual coaching sessions to reflect on the participant's experiences.

This researcher conducted a qualitative study due to the need to ascertain multiple methods for gathering data on sensitive topics. This research approach allowed the researcher to learn directly from the participants. This approach allows the researcher to explore the problem and allows this researcher to describe complex variables. This approach allowed this researcher to observe and collect data directly from the participants. This approach allowed this researcher to explore why individuals sensing a call have not made progress in answering the call.

Many of the participants had been sensing a call for several years but had not moved toward answering the call in any way. This research approach helped this researcher identify the correct things to measure to determine the effectiveness of interventions. This area of research has not been heavily researched thus it was difficult to ascertain a research methodology. The researcher in this project is tilling new ground in the fact that intervention programs to nurture a call for individuals eighteen-year-old and older who are not currently studying in a religious institution is almost non-existent.

This researcher found similar studies involving a different population. Much of the research surrounded discerning and nurturing the call involved either youth or religious institutions whose primary focus was to address the needs of beginning seminary students.

Several themes arise from analyses and conclusions of the information reviewed by this researcher. One of the themes identified in this researcher's study is the fact that individuals who had experience as young adults tended to respond more favorably to the call. This experience was in the form of bible studies, vacation bible school, summer camps, etc. Another theme this researcher was able to identify in the researcher literature was one that included the influence of family and friends as it relates to the call. Many of the individuals who had family members who were also in ministry seem to have a favorable impact on those considering a call. The reasoning for this favorable response varied. Some attributed it to the fact that this was more acceptable as a career choice when individuals had witnessed individuals operating in this vocation. Yet another discovery identified is the fact that the call was considered more seriously when individuals who sensed the call had mentors or spiritual leaders who were willing to aid them in the discernment process. Another theme connecting the researcher's study and the literature reviewed is the common theme of the practice of spiritual disciplines in discerning the call to ministry. Due to the limited research available on the subject, this researcher attempted to explore other angles such as participation theory, but it appeared to veer from the importance of the researcher's area of interest.

The study for this research project is qualitative. The research method was determined as a phenomenological research method. This is an approach to qualitative research focusing on the commonality of lives within a particular group. The goal of this approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the phenomenon. It is not unusual for qualitative studies to not have a clearly defined theoretical framework.

Based on the lack of published research and the small number of participants selected for the study, it was determined that a qualitative research study would serve as a foundation to ascertain incremental changes in acquiring clarity. A qualitative study would allow the researcher to discuss aspects of clarity that would not be ascertainable using quantitative methods.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This study was to determine the effectiveness of participation in spiritual disciplines, including scripture, meditation, prayer, spiritual coaching, journaling, and attendance at the “Now What” conference. The practice of these spiritual disciplines would be used to promote communication with God. It was believed the Participants would gain confirmation and assurance leading them to move forward in answering the call and proceeding to build the Kingdom, fulfilling the "Great Commission.”.

This study hypothesizes that participating in specific spiritual disciplines and spiritual coaching over a six-week period and participation in a two-day conference will help individuals gain clarity in discerning their call to ministry.

When praying for direction in developing this project this writer led to the word of God. Dr. Wilmington, one of the professors this writer most admired and respected, and Dr. Townsend both heavily stressed the value of the integrity of scripture and the importance of relating our experiences to the word of God. Prayer and meditation on various scriptural texts resonate through various words associated with the call searching for answers. Some of the terms used are the called, call, answering, discern, the discerning voice of God, and other themes in connection with responding to a possible call.

Meditation helped discern the six scriptures identified to be most valuable to the research and matched the proposed hypothesis for the study. This writer settled on six scriptural passages to be used for meditation weekly and journaling the six-week discernment process. The scriptures are identified as follows along with instructions given to the participants.

In meditating on the scriptures, the goal for participants was to hear the voice of God and determine their response to His voice. They were also asked to Pray through the scriptures by asking God what he wanted to specifically say to them. They were to ask the Lord through Holy Spirit to help them hear His voice and instructed to Journal any responses received. This instruction was to include that even if they were not certain it was God speaking, they were to write down the responses and meditate on them to apply God's truth in their lives and share during their weekly coaching sessions. Journals were provided for the participants and they were asked to record all their related experiences. This instruction was to read the scripture text in all three versions KJV, NIV and New Living translations aloud then select the version that speaks to them. The various versions of scripture were provided for them and given to them as labels with specific weeks assigned to be placed in their journals before their weekly journal entries.

The participants were selected after being referred by several pastors who identified individuals sensing a call to ministry. An invitation was extended to selected participants providing them with specific details of the project and expectations. Once the individuals agreed to be a participant in the project, they were given the dates for the two-day conference which was the initial step in participating in the project. The researcher spoke with everyone to determine if the participant met the qualifications needed to participate in the study. These qualifications were: the participants were required to be at least 18 years of age and proffered sensing a call to ministry. The participants' names were submitted by three pastors through email and personal phone calls. Several weeks before the study, a phone conversation was held with each pastor. And followed with a conversation, emails, and flyers indicating the criteria for possible candidates. (Appendix B) After the names of the participants were provided, and it with the pre-screening phone call. (Appendix A e-mail)

Those meeting the criteria were invited to the orientation meeting which was the beginning of the two-day conference on Friday evening on July 31, 2020, from six o'clock in the evening until nine o'clock in the evening.

Friday 's schedule was as follows:

At Six o'clock in the evening, this researcher gave a welcome statement and introduced herself. The participants were given an overview of the project and the researcher briefly share information about the study. The participants were then asked to introduce themselves giving their church affiliation and anything else they wanted to share about themselves.

Six-thirty in the evening, the participants could fellowship over a light buffet that included finger foods.

Seven o'clock in the evening the researcher provided a more detailed overview of the research study "You Think You're Called...Now What? The participants were informed of the expectations and requirements to participate in the study and allowed to ask questions.

Seven-thirty in the evening, the participants were given the Pre-Questionnaire with enough time to complete it. Upon completion of the questionnaire, (Appendix G) the participants were given a fifteen-minute break. After resuming the orientation, participants were allowed an opportunity to ask any additional questions and we concluded the evening with a meditation exercise using scripture. During the orientation, the participants were given a questionnaire to determine their understanding of "the call", their current level of discernment about the call, and opportunities to ask clarifying questions of the speakers about their call experience. The questionnaire was completed at the end of the first day (Friday night) and again at the end of the project at the closing ceremony.

The participants were given the scripture Jeremiah 29:11-14 for the meditation exercise. The participants were encouraged to read the scripture and follow a specific meditation process (Appendix H). The participants were instructed to read the text aloud several times using each version of the bible. The same scripture was assigned to each participant for the weekly journaling and meditation. They were also told to reread the bible version they felt spoke more clearly to them and to note which version in their journals. Participants were to allow time after reflecting on the above questions and the text they read. They were told could allow themselves more time for reflection if desired. After a period of meditating utilizing the questions, they were to begin to write their reflections in their journals. They were told this information would be used to discuss reflections in our weekly spiritual coaching sessions.

This process was to be used throughout the 6 weeks of the project. The participants were issued journals and asked to journal their responses to the meditation process in their journals. Participants were told to continue to meditate on this same scripture the remainder of the week in the same way practiced on the evening of the orientation / first evening of the conference. The participants were given instructions on each step of the intervention they would be required to do over the next six weeks. It was explained participants would be given a specific scripture to meditate on over the next six weeks. Each of the participants was given sticky notes labeled week 1, week 2, week 3, etc. They were instructed to place a sticker at the beginning of each week. During the Friday evening orientation, the participants placed a sticker at the beginning of their journals and were encouraged to write their reflections on the pages to follow. They were to reflect on this scripture for the remainder of the week, with the instructions of placing the second sticky on the following Friday which was to begin a new week of meditation.

The participants would attend weekly spiritual coaching sessions that would last thirty minutes to one hour allowing each participant to share the information they journaled and any reflections they had to share regarding their calls. The participants were given folders with the agenda provided for day two of the conference before the end of the evening on Friday. The orientation concluded with reflections and an overview of Saturday's agenda, day two of the conference. Also, during the orientation, the participants could choose a pseudo name and number to be used when completing the pre-questionnaire. These names were to be used for the journals and the pre-and post-questionnaires.

This questionnaire is to ascertain the effectiveness of spiritual discipline techniques to discern a call to ministry. The spiritual techniques encompass scriptural study, meditation, prayer, journal keeping, spiritual coaching, and attendance at a two-day conference over a six- week timeframe. The questionnaire will take approximately thirty minutes to complete.

Questionnaire results will be kept confidential and kept in a secure location. Please use an anonymous number on both the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire that only you know. By filling in the anonymous number on both pre-and post-questionnaires it would allow the researcher to assess any differences obtained because of the intervention.

Day two of the conference began on August 1st at Nine o'clock in the morning and ended at Six o'clock in the evening.

Nine o'clock in the morning: The morning was started with opening prayer, fellowship followed by a continental breakfast.

Nine-thirty in the morning: The participants were able to share any additional reflections from the scriptures provided for meditation on Friday evening.

Participants shared additional reflections from their experiences to encourage one another to enhance their journal writing experience. This researcher encouraged the participants to further express revelations they received to help them understand what is needed to practice the spiritual disciplines to be used to hear the voice of God.

This researcher invited five individuals who have varied experience in ministry to share their call journeys. The Presenters were selected based on diversity and their individual call experiences. Once they agreed, to present a questionnaire was sent to them by email with specific questions to help them tell their call stories. The presenters utilized the questionnaire to help them deliver their call stories. They expressed the information from the questionnaire as well as any additional information they wanted to share with the participants they deemed beneficial in discerning and answering a call. They shared a variety of ways each of them walked into their calling.

Each of the guests received invitations a couple of months in advance of the conference. Presenters all agreed in a verbal conversation. Upon agreeing to come and share, Presenters were sent a questionnaire to describe their call journeys. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix G. Presenters were asked to use the questions from the questionnaire to guide their presentation with the participants. The presenters/speakers consisted of three males and two females whose presentations were intentionally diversified. The guests were strategically scheduled at specific times and in a specific order to accommodate their schedules, taking into consideration their personalities and varieties of experience.

Ten o'clock in the morning: The first speaker was scheduled at Ten o'clock in the morning. A Caucasian male in his 50's who was soft-spoken and deeply passionate about obeying the call of God in his life.

This presenter held a range of experiences in ministry, which includes pastoring for several years and now as a ministry leader in the community as an Ambassador for the Universal Peace Federation. In this ministry call, the presenter is a leader who does not preach regularly on Sundays, although he does lead several bible studies and organizes events to build the Kingdom. The presenter visibly became emotional during his presentation which greatly impacted the participants. The presenter expressed his call journey with authenticity and his passion for obeying God and answering the call on his life. This presenter spoke until Ten-forty-five in the morning after which participants could ask questions about his experience to clarify or expand upon his presentation. This was followed by a fifteen-minute break.

Scheduled for Eleven o'clock in the morning was the second speaker, an African American male, also in his fifties who has served as a pastor for over thirty years of an Indianapolis Megachurch. A role in which he continues to serve. He arrived a little late, so the participants were able to have approximately twenty minutes of fellowship before he began his presentation. In reflecting on this, this researcher learned something valuable from this situation, the need to be flexible with the schedule so it does not negatively influence the atmosphere. This unplanned break presented the researcher with a dilemma that resulted in an opportunity for the participants to fellowship and become more comfortable with one another.

The other revelation this researcher gained was about scheduling the speakers. It was determined, communication had not been conducted directly with the presenter, although it was done a couple of months in advance. Communication with anyone other than the presenter could create some issues leading to some miss communication regarding the research protocol. The researcher had communicated with the speaker's wife regarding the engagement.

Although he agreed to speak his wife had not provided him the questionnaire, nor had she clarified the time. Several communications had been sent through text and email, but the presenter still had not received the information. Although the presenter did not have the questionnaire, nor had he known about the context, he was able to speak eloquently and passionately about his call. The Presenter spoke about his call journey and covered all the information requested in the questionnaire. The presenter shared many stories from childhood allowing the participants to see how God speaks in a still small voice. The participants were able to receive confirmation from his call journey because of his vivid descriptions of his call. After the presentation, the group was followed by a ten-minute break.

Noon Participants and speakers were allowed time to fellowship and share in this meal together, lunch catered by volunteers.

One o'clock in the afternoon: Our third presenter was scheduled to arrive to share her call journey. An African American female shared about her nontraditional ministry in Muncie, Indiana. This presenter is considered a millennial and most of her leaders and members are young adults, several recent graduates from college. The Speaker does not offer a traditional worship service on Sundays. This presenter is the founder of a dance ministry and the ministry offers a special area for prayer as well as an area of worship called a revival hub. The Speaker shared information about her call journey including her struggles with leadership and things she had to overcome on the journey to answering her call. The Speaker was very transparent, and the presentation was very well received. This Speaker was specifically chosen by this researcher and strategically placed in this order to present following lunch because of her high energy and animated personality. This personality does not fit the mold of a traditional pastor or spiritual leader.

This speaker has bright red hair mainly on the top and very colorful eye shadow and colorful apparel. She is sold out to the Lord and was able to passionately communicate this through sharing her call journey. Her presentation was extremely well-received.

Two o'clock in the afternoon: Speaker number four was scheduled, another African American male who is a pastor of a traditional church of approximately One hundred fifty members. He is in his late forties and has been pastoring for approximately ten years. This pastor shared his call story through utilizing a scriptural text in a preaching style, not what this researcher desired but again, was beneficial to several of the participants who spoke highly of his time of sharing. Although the Speaker covered much of what was requested through the call questionnaire, he did not use it as a guide as requested. This was rectified by this researcher asking the participant to review the questions from the call journey and share any additional information he had not shared. This seemed to work relatively well. Again, it is important to maintain a positive atmosphere during the conference, so the experience of the participants is not hindered.

After each of the speakers/presenters, the students could ask questions and gain additional understanding about each of the participants' call journeys. The participants could ask questions they perceived would benefit them personally following each of the presenters. After the time allowed for questions and answers of the fourth speaker, the participants were provided a brief break.

Three o'clock in the afternoon: The final speaker arrived as scheduled. This speaker was a female in her late forty's early fifties, who served as an associate pastor of a large congregation for over ten years before becoming a pastor of a church she founded. This pastor's call journey included examples of God directing her path since being a college student.

The speaker shared all the vital information as requested from the questionnaire and was also very well received. At Three-forty-five participants were given take a fifteen-minute break.

Four o'clock in the evening: Following the final presentation and the break the group reconvened for the conclusion and review. Participants could ask additional questions about the presenters or the project and share their experiences.

The participants were asked to sign up for their spiritual coaching appointments for the next six weeks. The participants were provided the opportunity to select appointment times every hour on either Saturday or Sunday maintaining the same appointment time for each week. The participants proved to be diligent in maintaining their scheduled appointments over the six weeks. One challenge this researcher faced was individuals needing to reschedule or change their appointment to a virtual appointment due to the pandemic, possible COVID cases. This researcher conducted two appointments for three individuals on Zoom due to their need to quarantine due to possible COVID exposure. Unfortunately, the zoom spiritual coaching sessions did not possess the same fluidity as face-to-face interactions. The participants did not seem to flow as well in their sharing during the appointment as the face-to-face meetings nor did they seem as engaged as they were in the previous face-to-face appointments. Also, there were a couple of appointments with these participants that they appeared to have neglected the required meditation on scripture and journaling although they did not verbalize this as the case.

There were minimal times each week set for individuals who missed their appointments. One of the participants worked every other weekend and this appointment was adjusted accordingly to accommodate him since this researcher was made aware of this before accepting him as a candidate for the project.

The COVID 19 Pandemic influenced structural and interactional processes. During the six-week intervention, two participants were required to quarantine for 14 days after being exposed to the virus. To accommodate this quarantine status, the researcher utilized an online software program. This online software, zoom, utilizing various settings such as a corporation, telehealth providers, and physical. It was obvious as the individuals who had plenty to share were unable to provide much input and they repeated themselves often.

To address this issue, several reminders were sent out by text reminding them to stay faithful to the process and to come in prepared as not to hinder their progress. As previously shared, during the Spiritual Coaching sessions specific scriptures were being addressed. The participants were asked if there were things from the first week that is connected to the following week's text and if so note them in their journals.

The participants were required to meditate on the scripture assigned and journal things they felt were significant. The scriptures assigned to be used in the meditation process were:

Week 1: Jeremiah 29:11-14 which was used in the orientation and was to be meditated on during the orientation and over the first week.

Week 2: Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:18 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week's text? Is so note them)

Week 3: Matthew 28:17-20 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week's text? Is so note them)

Week 4: Romans 10:13-15 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week's text? Is so note them)

Week 5: 1Corinthians 9:16-19 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week's text? Is so note them)

Week 6: 1 Peter 5:1-7

KJV 5 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

² Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

³ Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.

⁴ And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

⁵ Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

⁶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

⁷ Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

NIV 5 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

⁵ In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

“God opposes the proud

but shows favor to the humble.”

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

NLT **5** And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: ² Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. ³ Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. ⁴ And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.

⁵ In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

⁶ So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. ⁷ Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

These scriptures were chosen with much deliberation and prayer. The researcher reviewed scripture dealing with "The Call", Discerning the voice of God, Obedience, etc. The process was this researcher would pray and was led to various scriptures. The researcher also interviewed several leaders asking them what scriptures helped them in their call journeys which served as confirmation to the scriptures selected. Many of the scriptures were ones that the Holy Spirit confirmed through various means such as ones previously mentioned, through random conversation involving someone speaking of the scripture, and some based these researchers' call journey.

The bible says, “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.” 2-3 others. (2 Corinthians 13:1) This researcher was led to use scripture based on what was believed to be confirmation from God. Several of the scriptural text was very instrumental in this researcher’s call journey.

This researcher found, there are plenty of programs for children and teens to help them discern the voice of God and gain confirmation to a call. This population is continuously provided the opportunity to explore a vocation involving answering the call of God. There is also assistance for those who are already pursuing training or attending seminary because they feel confident, they are called. This project is for those who are not certain enough to move forward in pursuing formal education, but they know God is beckoning them to do something.

The participants shared a range of reasons for not answering the call. The reasons expressed were feelings of inadequacy. Feelings of unworthiness, feelings of self-doubt. Some just simply did not know how to take the time to hear God. Many of them lack the confidence to respond to the call. They felt ill-prepared. They did not know how to respond to what they thought they may have heard from God. Some shared they had negative impressions of clergy and they did not want to answer the call for fear they would let people down or let God down. Some did not feel ready. They did not have anyone to help them embrace the call. Some just were not sure about the call. Some have preconceived notions about the call. They did not recognize the voice of God. The individuals I invited to share their call journeys were able to help many overcome things they believed about the call. Many shared they were able to see themselves in the call stories of the speakers. Some also gained clarity about the call simply because they understood everyone’s journey is unique and it was about many things adding up to confirmation from God.

They seemed to think there would be a big momentum event that overtook them like a lightning bolt. They expressed how enlightening it was for each person to share small things that lead them to embrace their call. Each participant brought their authentic experience out by telling their story. Many of the participants were able to articulate some of the same experiences of those who were currently operating in their call.

Many people do not answer their calls because they are not certain about the call. They do not have anyone to encourage them and help them seek understanding. They do not feel worthy. They are not confident; they do not feel worthy etc. There are many reasons individuals do not pursue a call even though they may sense a call for several years.

This project helps address many of the reasons one would not be able to move forward even when they are sensing a call. The design of the program is to answer some of their questions that are hindering those sensing a called from moving forward. During the spiritual coaching sessions, many of the participants worked through their hurdles. Participants were able to get information from others who have also struggled in the same areas they struggle to aid the participants in obtaining answers. The participants were all able to identify with the call stories of the presenters and were able to work through some of their challenges through the spiritual coaching sessions and by allowing themselves to become available to hear the voice of God through meditation and journaling.

This researcher identified several spiritual disciplines to help the participants hear God regarding their calls to ministry. It is a common belief spiritual disciplines should be practiced by every Believer. Spiritual disciplines are things we do to connect with God. They are habits we should develop as Christians that help us to grow, spiritually mature.

Spiritual disciplines in this researcher's opinion always include prayer, scripture reading, and meditation, and deliberate time spent with God. Spiritual disciplines can also include a variety of other practices such as spending time with God through different forms of prayer such as centering prayer, silent prayer, reading prayers, or other means of focusing on and communicating with God. This researcher was able to grow spiritually over the years through the practice of spiritual disciplines. This researcher was also able to gain confirmation of the call through the practice of spiritual disciplines. The spiritual disciplines used to aid this researcher in gaining confirmation to the call included prayer, meditation on scripture, journaling, and fasting. For this project, this researcher included the spiritual disciplines of this project this researcher included the spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation on scriptures, and journaling.

Spiritual Coaching Sessions: The Spiritual Coaching Sessions began on Saturday, August 9th, and Sunday, August 10th and continued weekly for six weeks. Except for three participants, the participants attended their appointments as scheduled. The three participants that missed appointments were rescheduled on Zoom due to being quarantined due to being exposed to COVID. These appointments were all made up and the participants were able to keep the remaining scheduled appointments. We began each spiritual coaching session with prayer. After prayer, this researcher would begin the conversation by recapping the prior week's notes after which the participant would share his or her journal entries for the week.

During the spiritual coaching sessions, each participant shared information from their weekly practice of spiritual disciplines. They used their journals to talk about their daily entries and any revelations they felt they had received from the Lord. The participants were encouraged to meditate and journal on the scripture assigned each week. They would give reflections on the time they spent meditating on these scriptures.

The participants were usually prepared for each appointment which was evident by their reflections of the scriptures. The participants were reminded to reflect on the scriptures since this was a part of the agreement for the spiritual coaching sessions. When the participants did not have much to say from their journal entries or other spiritual disciplines, they practiced that week, this researcher would ask questions about other ways to reflect on the week by using the questions each participant was given in the orientation meeting along with their journals. If the participants voluntarily shared information during the appointment, this researcher simply listened and took notes. This researcher took notes during every appointment and this information was used to reflect on the following week which helped keep the sessions on track and helped to connect the dots made from one week to another. Once the participants expressed, they have confirmation to their calls, the remaining spiritual coaching sessions were used to gain further confirmation.

Each week of the sessions was spent reflecting on a particular scripture as well as whatever revelations the participants received from spending time daily with the Lord. The participants were required to spend thirty minutes to an hour with the scripture and the Lord, journaling whatever they were led to document. This researcher called them “Aha Moments”. The scriptures were given to the participants in print. They were given three versions of the bible text, already printed for them, and given to them during orientation. They were instructed to read all versions and reflect on what they received as they meditated on the scriptures.

The participants were given Journals, the scriptures in three versions of the bible, sticky tabs with each weeks’ assigned scripture to be torn off weekly before beginning a new reflection. Participants were told to skip two pages between journal entries to allow space for reflections after each spiritual coaching session.

Participants were given instructions to use for the meditations as suggestions, they were given folders for all their materials. They were given an outline for the conference Friday and Saturday. On Friday, July 31st the participants were given the pretest. The final spiritual coaching session was on September 13th was the last appointment for Spiritual Coaching. On Friday, September 25th from six to eight p.m. was the closing celebration.

Week 1: Jeremiah 29:11-14 KJV This scripture was used in the orientation and was to be meditated on during the orientation and over the first week. The scriptures were as follows:

¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

¹² Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

¹³ And ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

¹⁴ And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive. KJV

Jeremiah 29:11-14 NIV For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

Jeremiah 29:11 NLT **11** For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

12 In those days when you pray, I will listen.

13 If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.

14 I will be found by you,” says the LORD. “I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land.”

Week 2: Isaiah 61:1-3 KJV and Luke 4:18 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week’s text? Is so, note them) **1** The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;
2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;
3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

NIV 1: The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,

2 to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,

3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

NLT 1: The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released, and prisoners will be freed.

2 He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies.

3 To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the LORD has planted for his own glory.

Luke 4:18 **18** The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted*, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

NIV 18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,

NLT 18 “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free,

Week 3: KJV Matthew 28:17-20 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week's text? Is so note them)

17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

NIV 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

NLT 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!

18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Week 4: KJV: Romans 10:13-15 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week’s

text? If so note them)

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!

NIV **13** for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

NLT **13** For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”

14 But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

15 And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!”

Week 5: KJV 1Corinthians 9:16-19 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week’s text? Is so note them)

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

NIV 16 For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

17 If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.

18 What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

NLT 16 Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News!

17 If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment. But I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust.

18 What then is my pay? It is the opportunity to preach the Good News without charging anyone. That's why I never demand my rights when I preach the Good News.

19 Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ.

Week 6:1 Peter 5:1-7 KJV 5 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

² Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

³ Neither as being lords over God's heritage but being examples to the flock.

⁴ And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

⁵ Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

⁶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

⁷ Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

NIV 1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed:

2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve.

3 not lording it over those entrusted to you but being examples to the flock.

4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

NLT 1 And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you:

2 Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God.

3 Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example.

4 And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.

5 In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.

7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

After the completion of the six weeks, there was a closing celebration that began at 6:30 p.m. and continued until 8:30 p.m. There were finger foods served, a time of reflection, and testimonies from each of the participants voluntarily. The participants also were required to turn in their journals, complete the Posttest and ask any additional questions. Each of the participants requested their journals back. They were told they will be notified when they can pick them up after the completion of this project.

Pseudo Names were chosen by the participants on Friday evening at the orientation. The names chosen were:

Ester 44, Ester 41, Deborah 55, Deborah 58, Vashti 65, Elijah 23, Aquila 60, Jerusha 42, and Cloe 99, The participants used these names for their journals and to complete the pre-and post-questionnaire.

During the closing celebration, the participants were given a post-test. The spiritual coaching sessions were for six weeks and each participant met with this researcher six times. Each session was focused on a different set of scripture. Although each of the participants were given three versions of each scripture, this researcher will share the KJV of each of the scriptures to share the constant of what the participants meditated on each week.

This researcher strategically put these scriptures in order based on personal experience and prompting of the Holy Spirit. The participants shared positive feedback regarding the scripture as well as the sequential order of scripture. This researcher does not believe the outcome would change if the scriptures were not in this order. This writer believes it is the content of the scripture that contributed to the outcomes.

Design

This researcher gave a pre-questionnaire and a Post-questionnaire that consisted of nine questions for the pretest and 10 for the post. The pre-test was administered during a conference. And the post questionnaire was administered during the closing ceremony. Another part of the Call Discernment Intervention Program is the spiritual coaching sessions. These sessions consisted of six weeks of one-on-one sessions that lasted thirty minutes to one hour. In these sessions, This researcher documented notes as the participants shared their experiences.

The participants also kept notes about the sessions and about their experiences with practicing spiritual disciplines. They meditated on the scriptures and wrote responses in their journals of any revelation they received or what they believed they heard from God during the time of their participation in this project. (See scriptures Appendix H) Below are some of the comments recorded in the participants' notebooks.

The participants chose Pseudo Names for the purpose of journaling and for the pre-and post-questionnaires. (See Appendix F for sample Pseudo names)

Journal entries recorded from journals:

Ester 44 Week 1: Wednesday: "I trust you. I trust you enough to use you. Surrender to me. Let it all go. Not your ways, but mine. Rest in my presence.

Thursday: In this season, doors will be opened to you. Desires of your heart. Praise me in advance. Suddenly. No distractions. Move forward. Do not look back. Close the doors that need to be closed. I will open the correct ones.

Friday: Seek me while I am yet to be found. I will give you directions. Take my hand. Let's go higher. Higher dimensions. Breakthrough the heavens. Get Ready."

Saturday: Deliverance is coming. Breakthrough is here. Prepare for the road has been paved."

Week 2: He desires for us to be used in whatever way necessary to save souls. You will be like a tree branch, unmovable, planted with, by Christ, and have many testimonies to be used to bring out others and give Him glory.

Week 2: Reflection on Luke 4:18 This is the last entry of week 2. "He is blessing me with the gifts of healing, impartation, miracles, signs, wonders, and needs a "Yes". Move forward. Release and don't look backward."

Week 3: "There are many unbelievers that fail to believe in me and believe that I am real. Even though I am there for them and I make a way for them. I am real, and I make a way for them. I am real, and I need vessels to use to convince unbelievers. Even with signs and wonders, some will still be failed to believe, however, do not allow that to stop you from pressing forward. Train them up after finding willing hearts, meet them where they are. Send them out accordingly, but not until I tell you to. I will ordain them. I will release them. You send them out."

"I will save many through you."

Week 4: "You can't have faith without believing and trusting in me." "I send them out in numbers, but many are led astray. Bring them back to me."

Week 5: "When I call you by name, when I send you out, you are to preach what I give you, nothing more, nothing less. Obedience is key.

I will allow you to train others in time, however, you need to train first. Humble yourself and be a mere vessel. Allow me to have my way concerning you. You were created for me, and molded by me, for my use. Consecrate yourself for higher levels.”

On week 5: Ester 41 made an entry in her journal as follows: “When I call you by name, when I send you out, you are to preach what I give you, nothing more, nothing less. My words are to come out of your mouth, less you be called a false prophet. Preach what I say, when I say it. Timing and delivery mean everything. I will train you up in the way you need to go so you do not depart from it. Obedience is key. I will allow you to train others- in time, however, you need trained first. Change not the followers for they will never understand why you would do so. Don’t contaminate your anointing by mixing in with the ways of the world. It will not be your will, but my will that needs to be done. Humble yourself and be a mere vessel. Allow me to have my way concerning you. You were created for me, and molded by me, for my use. Consecrate yourself for higher levels.”

Ester 44 Week 3: Day 2 The participant wrote the words Trust God, Surrender and supernatural

Week 3 Day 4: “We are all called to this, still yearning for an ease to why I feel called differently to act.”

Week 3 Day 6: “Know and bask in God’s promises”
“Moving into position”

Week 4 Day 1: This participant recorded wrestling throughout her journal. On this day she stated, “I am trying”

“I previously asked for signs to be obvious and not missed. NEON LIGHTS-DISCO CITY...”

“I just want to know exactly what I am supposed to be doing. This is important to be because direction would be known. The incubation stage, “I also know that I have adopted, chosen and called by You”

“Recess is over, and I am ready to mature.” This participant wrote several times in the journal”
Trust Me.”

Week 4: Day 5 “These weeks have been intense. A lot of info...”

“I just want you Lord, walk and talk with you. Be used as your guide.”

Week 5: Day 1 The words were written:

“Do this willingly”

“Preach voluntarily”

“I am compelled by God to do it”

“I will be utilized for corporate movement”

“I have to know and believe what is written to be 100 % sold out” (The words written next to this comment was “Repeated”)

“It is vital that I respond to the tugs and pulling...”

Week 5: Day 3 “Lord, I do not want to continue being rebellious. I realize that I feel different than words uttered, please match me up as you see me.”

Day 4 “Movement is required, expected”

“I have been changed with responsiveness, never operate without Him when under His umbrella and I will avoid His wrath”

Week 5: Day 5 “Slow motion with me is no longer acceptable, Be willing and ready.”

Week 6: Day 5 “Lord I want to go willingly anywhere that you want me to go. Please help me surrender to you.

I lost everything multiple times since 2000, All I want is you. I have no attachments to anything else. Lord, I truly believe that you will use me within family links and your glory will be seen, heard and your words will be known and summoned. Use me Lord!

The participant taped a puzzle piece on this page of the journal stating, “Where does this go?”

Week 6: Day 6 “Lets get busy incorporating everything that you have equipped me with.”
“Thank you, Lord, for being my partner.”

“I anticipated daily to know without doubt what my calling is. “I know that I am called/ Chosen and adopted. I am not titled yet. I will be used in various settings and ways,”

“I forgot how clear I could hear. I must still my own ways. Thank You”

This was the last journal entry.

Deborah 55 Week 1 “This was written after reflecting on Jeremiah 29:11, I know the plans I have for you... “I am encouraged now, just knowing the plan God has for me, regardless of what times may look like or appear to be and have to understand that “I am a work in progress. Because God himself is telling me today that he knows the plan he has for me. His plan is already mapped out. It’s already worked out.” I take full responsibility “Accountability”.
“God-showing and telling me that even though things have happened or not happened because of mine own doing, “ALL IS NOT LOST! ALL IS NOT LOST! At my age now 55, knowing there are things which I should be doing. God is the redeemer of time.”

Week 2: “I am feeling a sense that God has called me, His spirit has caused an awakening, I am anointed to do, go, be. I feel a push, a prompting. Go the anointing is already upon you!” “I feel a Rush within my inner man. My spirit is within you. Trust me, obey, move, no more doubting me or yourself. “reflecting on Luke 4:18 the participant wrote “You will proclaim the word of the Lord!

The captive will break free, Open blinded eyes I am called; therefore, I am equipped. God has a plan for my life, already mapped out. I am sent therefore I cannot be stopped. Go boldly without fear. “I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me. I am the sent one.”

“Increase my kingdom. Teach disciples obedience, trust and obey.”

“All you need to do is to start moving. Trust and Obey because I am with you everywhere you place your feet.” You cannot fail. He has anointed me to bring the “Good News”. “I am a righteous oak tree, tall, strong, resilient, planted with deep roots for the Lord's own Glory.” “I have given you power to go, power to make, build / create a Kingdom (disciples), power to produce, power to do Greater Works, I am with you always, it is up to me; I will receive the task he has called me to. He has made it so plain. So many lives are waiting for me. If you don't go, although I have chosen, called you, then my message will have been in vain. Sending you! Do not hear and just walk away. I felt a strong sense of guilt after reading Romans 10:13-15 “And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them”

Week 5: “This call is serious business. The call is real. You may run but I cannot hide what God has placed in me to do. Do not fight, do not resist- just go with the how. Obedience is better than sacrifice. God picked you! God chose me! Chosen vessel! You will go and you will preach the gospel. Called to service! I am anointed to bring the “good news” God has entrusted me to do greater works. Be totally committed, sold out.

“God has given me a responsibility and with this, he has equipped me with specific tools. Failure is not an option! Fully Loaded. I am more than a conquer through Jesus Christ. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world. Go do it!”

“You will not be alone in the journey for I am with you.” “He is with me.”

“I must do the will of Him who sent me. Yes, I can, Yes I will!”

Week 6: Reflecting on John 21:14-20 The Lord asking Peter if he loves him and tells him to “feed my sheep. It is up to me. Follow His example-give service as He gave for us,”

“The call has gotten stronger, Louder. You can no longer resist. “This is the time of show and tell. Actions speaks louder than words. I am called of God to be the example of Jesus Christ.

“when you answer the call, your life will never be the same, forever changed in the Glory of God. The voice of God has made it plain. He has continued to call so that I know and understand that I am not just thinking this thing. The call is real.”

Last entry of Week 6: “I possess the spirit of Christ. I have the anointing. I am anointed. I am called. I am equipped. Tall Oak that I am. “Go and may the Lord be with me. The Lord is with me wherever I go!”

Chloe 99: week 1 “He knows everything the good, bad and the ugly. Because I looked for him in my time of silence and darkness. He saw me and carried me away from it. Come out of yourself, come out of your comfort zone. Don’t be hard on yourself, you did nothing wrong.”

Week 2: “You found me again when you thought you couldn’t handle things on your own. I was always with you in those days that felt dark and alone. They will hear and see me. Come out your shell. Come out your comfort zone. Come on out now. It is time to do what you are called to do. You have it in you for good and not harm. Time to come on out.”

Week 3: “Take your time to heal what has bruised you. So, you are able to help heal and tell other.”

Week 4: “Come through this darkness you have placed on yourself so you able to be sent, able to be sent, able to be heard. Concentrate only on my voice, do only what I tell you to do. Your steps have already been ordered.”

Week 5: “You will preach, you will teach, you will speak, you will evangelize, you will tell others of my goodness. You will be who I have called you to be, who I have ordained you to be”

“Prayers you have prayed years ago will be answered and seen. Take this time to become absorbed in me.”

Elijah 23 Week 1: “My destiny and God-given purpose is tied into my willingness to submit to and seek God the more I seek, the more of Himself He reveals.”

“I’m seeing or realizing that God is rescuing, coming to the aid of and defending His treasured love, mankind.

“While mulling over the scriptures, God’s word, Holy Spirit began to say, “Make it more personal when you read Jeremiah 29:11-14. I realize in a deeper way that my approach to the scripture must not be confined to an assignment only, but that this is merely a vehicle God is using to reveal Himself more to me concerning me. “Seeking Him with all my heart is key to finding Him, unlocking His plans for my life, and being able to be used by God in unexpected ways, ways beyond my understanding and expectation.’ ‘Seek me, seek me, seek me.

Week 2: “God is building, shaping, and molding, giving me the blueprint of my assignment. It’s like He is saying ‘I want you to do the work and get familiar with being on the frontlines of ministry. It is ironic that part of the anointing and mission is to reach others who have been taken captive by the enemy into a lifestyle of sin, people that may have strayed away from their faith and calling, like myself at one point did. Through Christ and because of Him, I can and called to do what He did while here on earth, He has called me to do for others, or rather, be used by Him as I walk in my calling. The Lord’s Spirit and anointing is what enables me to do all that God desires of me.”

Week 3: “The experience of being familiar of who God is, how He operates and used by Him to fulfill His will allows disciple and equip others in their callings. The scriptures in this project in my opinion, are divinely placed or sequenced in that order All God! In reflecting on Luke 4:18 and Matthew 28:17-20 the participant wrote: “God equips me, tells me how to fulfill His directives or commands and then He sends me out to do Father’s will. I love how He reassures and comforts me by telling He is with me always, even to the end of the age. Today Holy Spirit has made this passage of scripture very personal and alive for me.”

“Holy Spirit is saying to me move forward and not contain the work God has done in my life, but to show others, be the living, walking, and talking example and display of what God can do for the broken-hearted. He wants me to use the gifts that He bestowed upon me to fulfill the mandated Father has given me in His word.”

Week 3: “I hear in my spirit, Go, begin, start, you have officially been mandated and commanded to your calling, the calling of scripture. No hesitation, no delay, no delay, and no contemplation, whatsoever. Just submit and be committed to the leading and guiding of Holy Spirit. Take a leap of faith as God launches me into my calling and assignments, trust that Holy Spirit will lead and guide me as I soar to new and different heights.

Jesus promised and assured me that He is always with me, even until the end of age. I see the calling of Christ Jesus over my life and His purpose for me. However, there is the choice to move forward in confidence with Christ, or to be apprehensive, unconfident and doubting Jesus after all I have seen Him do in my life and others even using me as His own vessel.”

Week 4: “I must be Holy Spirit led and realize that I am sent by God to serve His purposes, not my own.”

Week 5: In reflection of scripture this participant writes “For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. This passage speaks volumes as the effect of how God’s calling on a person’s life beckons you and pulls you toward its fulfillment. I feel that when Paul truly knew who he was in Christ and began the ministry to resist would have given him no rest. I feel as though God wants to address the reoccurring theme of all the weekly scriptures given thus far: The simple meaning but rarely explored meaning of the word “preach”

Week 6: “Jesus wants me to really understand the cost, understand the importance and magnitude of what He is conveying, or to give me the push I need in order to go forth. It is so powerful in John 21:20 Jesus sums everything up and ties all of the weekly scripture, one through six together with a very simple but impactful visual of what it is all about. This scripture hits home and nails it with Peter seeing one of the sheep whom Jesus loved dearly, as he turns to the command of Jesus to “Follow me. That’s what my calling is all about, others whether it is the lost, hurting, and captive, or the young, hungry new to Christ or those who love Jesus but need understanding and direction. I must serve Christ by serving them also.”

Naomi 60 Week 1: “I sense God is calling me to have faith in Him, He won’t let me fall. He said he would never leave me.”

Week 2: Participant recorded working through some issues from childhood. Participant wrote a letter to her father stating: the shame, guilt, condemnation, unforgiveness, anger, and more is no longer a part of my life. I choose to forgive you, myself, and Mom.”

Week 3: “I had an encounter with Christ like never before, shortly after that is when Holy Spirit gave me a sermon title “Call to preach.”

Week 5: “Be ready to give a word, preach, love on someone, you never know when you will be call on or what you may run into. Give God’s word freely to others.”

Week 6: “While studying this text the Holy spirit spoke “You will minister to those who don’t understand, who needs someone to explain it to them where they will understand.

Jerusha 42

Week 1 “God wants my whole heart no matter where I am at any time in my life.”

“I will be found by you continue to seek and search for God for your calling, for what you are supposed to do with each moment.”

“God is telling me to trust Him. Walk this thing through. Don’t’s be scattered in thoughts, seek me, search me. You will find me. Expect me to open you are calling and seek after it whole heartedly. It’s a message to be encouraged.”

Week 5: Participant spoke of her Sunday School teacher planting seeds about hearing from God. She helped her understand the importance of bringing the word so others can hear and know and believe.

“The cost of answering the call. Feeling a little afraid, wondering if this is really something I want to do. My life has it’s challenges.”

“Reminder, to be called is an honor. It’s not something to take lightly.”

Vashti 65: “I know my past and present. Why would He use me? Why would I think God Almighty would show me things or tell me things?”

“Lord forgive my unbelief. You have placed my sins in the sea of forgetfulness. I am open to you.”

“If you answer the call- Can your friends stand with you?”

“Yes Lord I have sought you- but not fully. Forgive me.”

“This Class is eye opening and life changing! What Now?”

Participant wrote notes about childhood memories of prayer.

“He has delivered me from fear- He broke off and shattered it- Shake it off! Just shake it off!”

Week 4: “He called me when I was a little girl-He showed me some things long past.”

“He said. I have called you!”

Week 5: Participant journaled “God has been saying the same thing to me all my life. Participant reflected on several things in her journal. “I was born with my twin brother. He was still-born. Mother died when I was 17, I dreamed about her death for years before it happened. My daughter was still-born, I also had abandonment issues. All of this was preparation. I am not my own! You are mine. I have CALLED you by my name. I have CALLED you. I have CALLED you. I have CALLED you. You are MINE! Reassurance!”

Week 6: Participant also wrote these words: “The class was: Eye opening, Life changing, purpose driven, ministry confirming, peace giving, Love abounding, Prophetically Affirming, Gently Correcting, Biblically Based, Absolutely Anointed, Holy Spirit Driven, Creative and Relevant, Result based exercises, A blessing to my life and my now affirmed and accepted Calling.

Deborah 58 Week 1: “God starts depositing into us when we yield to God- He will make a way, makes provisions. My yes to God is my obedience.”

“In this season, God is preparing me. People can confirm what God has already put in us. We must be confident when God speaks.”

“I remember from a young age people coming to me with their problems/challenges for advice., comfort, confidence.”

“I related to Apostle T presenting on her call story. The fact that when I said yes to the Lord in college, I truly had a desire to be obedient. What I later realized that I was saying yes to God, not “Man’s traditions.”

Participant shared several stories in her journal about her childhood experiences in the church and the desire to please God.” She also shared stores of heartbreak, depression, anxiety, and abandonment. “For many years I drifted from God.”

“I woke up before 5 a.m. with pure joy and excitement knowing what I am called to do.” The title Pastor has scared me from the very beginning, this was because of my lack of knowledge and understanding. At one point I lost or allowed myself to doubt my calling because of being divorced, what could I say or offer to people, so I dropped the pursuit, even though I had been accepted to Christian Theological Seminary. I pursued education, but the desire stayed with me. I convinced myself God wanted me to use my counseling skills in the school system. My journey would have been called, “Derailed. (But God) Now on Track.”

“It is necessary for me to give God’s word- because “Everyone deserves to hear the truth. Lord let me be the daughter that you’ve called me to be. I am a vessel to be filled and emptied at God’s will for the edifying of His people to the glory of God.”

“I feel refreshed for the 1st time in (Maybe years). I feel full-like I have my purpose- Out Loud!”

Week 6:” Before I begin with this week’s scripture, I am sharing my acceptance into the ministry. This is only with a very close and select few. I have begun to tell others about my calling. I continued to share the fact that I have been called to my family members.

I don’t want to stand before God, and He ask me, Did you feed my Lamb? Did you feed my sheep? I want to be able to say yes Lord God I fed your lambs, yes Lord God, I fed your sheep! Yes Lord God I FED your sheep to the very best of my ability.”

Aquila 60: “It seems throughout our lives we hadn’t took the time to ask God, What is your plan for my life.”

“God has the plan, He anoints us for the plan, Now He’s giving directions towards the plan.”

“There’s a harvest out there waiting for the women and men of Christ to come teach them even at the place they are at, everyone is not able to come to the building.”

“I am compelled to do the work of Christ, guiding others to Christ. I am compelled to walk worthy of the calling in Christ Jesus.”

“God is calling me to take action.”

“I never really looked into this as I have today, but I believe I really need to learn to care for others on a higher level.”

Jesus shows Himself, Jesus asked, Jesus reveals, Jesus has risen: Feed my lambs, sheep. I love you Lord.”

“The directive is to follow me, you’re not on your own a continual seeking Me! (God). Amen”

Research Questions

This study hypothesizes that participating in specific spiritual disciplines and spiritual coaching over a six-week period and participation in a two-day conference will help individuals gain clarity in discerning their call to ministry.

Setting: The setting for the conference was in the sanctuary of a church. This is where all the speakers shared and where everything took place except for the spiritual coaching sessions. The spiritual coaching sessions were conducted in my office at their scheduled times every week except for the zoom meetings. The zoom meetings took place with the participants in their home and this researcher in her home as well.

Participants

The participants included one male and the remaining nine were female. All the participants were over the age of 18. The youngest participant was in her mid-thirties while the oldest participant was in her early sixties. All the participants were African American.

Transferability- The results of this study are limited to results involving African American females. The study did not include a significant number of males nor any other ethnic or cultural groups. Limiting it is transferability that would apply to groups.

Ethical Considerations

Meals will be provided during the two-day conference and closing celebration. No other direct benefits are expected.

Summary

The data will advance my research hypothesis by showing that participating in specific spiritual disciplines and spiritual coaching over a six-week period and participation in a two-day conference will help individuals gain clarity in discerning their call to ministry. In short, it will support the belief that participating in specific techniques will help in discerning the voice of God allowing one to respond to the call of God.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of participation in a structured intervention including the practice of prayer, journaling, and meditation on scripture, spiritual coaching, and attending the “Now What” conference for discerning a call to ministry.

This chapter presents the findings of the research conducted to determine the effectiveness of spiritual discipline techniques to discern a call to ministry. The spiritual techniques encompass scriptural study, meditation, prayer, journaling, coaching, and attendance at a two-day conference experienced over a six-week period. It was proposed that individuals participating in this discernment process would gain clarity by moving from sensing a call to pursuing the call to ministry. The participants would gain confirmation and assurance leading them to move forward in answering the call and proceeding to build the Kingdom, fulfilling the “Great Commission” and their ultimate purpose. The researcher collected data from ten participants using a pre-and post-questionnaire, spiritual coaching sessions, the practice of spiritual disciplines, and journaling their responses. This chapter focuses on examining and analyzing the data with a goal to establish answers to qualitative research questions. The research findings are presented and discussed concerning each area of the study. This researcher chose to do qualitative research.

Overview

This qualitative research allows a better understanding of the nature of the issues surrounding a hindrance to answering the call. This approach was used because of the need for observation techniques, interview strategies, and additional data collection methods that are necessary to answer the research problem.

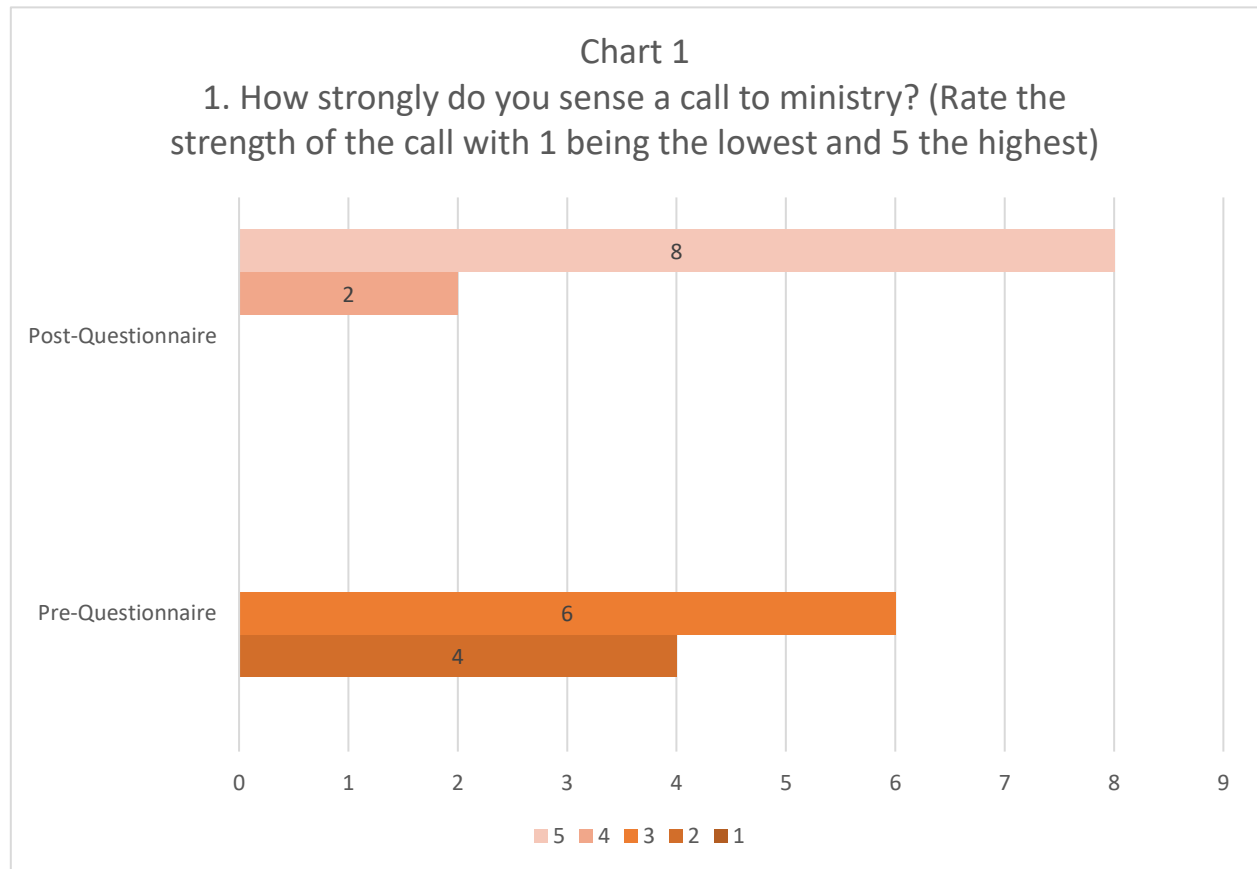
Qualitative research was used to allow this researcher the opportunity to interpret a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the interventions and the results of practicing. A qualitative study was this researcher's choice because it lends itself to religious influences and accommodates the size of a small study of ten participants. This researcher is looking for overall statistical differences and overall ideas and themes integrated with a qualitative study to this method and to easily show outcomes. This researcher will use a narrative qualitative approach to tell the story of participants' experiences. This approach is going to be used because it allows the researcher to explore the problem and the need to identify factors to solve the problem. This researcher will tell the story by sharing the stories of the participants identify themes and clarify observations. This researcher will share the experiences of the individuals to explore and understand their experiences.

Participants

The participants in this research intervention consisted of ten African American individuals. There was one male and nine females, between the participants, were between 35 and 60. The individuals had a range of experiences, educational, and professional backgrounds. All participants were selected for sensing a call to ministry and were all recommended or referred by their pastor or a leader in the church. The participants are residents in Indianapolis, Indiana. The study findings will be important to pastors and ministry leaders.

The following charts depict the results from the Pre- and Post-questionnaire administered to the participants at the beginning and end of the Intervention Program. Below I the results of the pre- and post-questionnaire. Much of the findings from these questionnaires were also shared in the spiritual coaching sessions as well as in the participants' journals.

The criterion for chart 1 was based on a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 means a strong sense of agreement with the correct representativeness, whereas 0 indicates the lowest possible response.



A total of ten participants were given a pre-and post-questionnaire to determine how strongly they sensed a call to ministry. Question 1 asked “How strongly do you sense a call to ministry” on the pre-questionnaire. Based on the participant's responses on the continuum of a scale from 0 to 5, the pretest indicates six of the participants sensed the call at 3 on the Likert scale, which is a little over mid-way, four of the participants sensed the call at two on the Likert scale which is lower than mid-way.

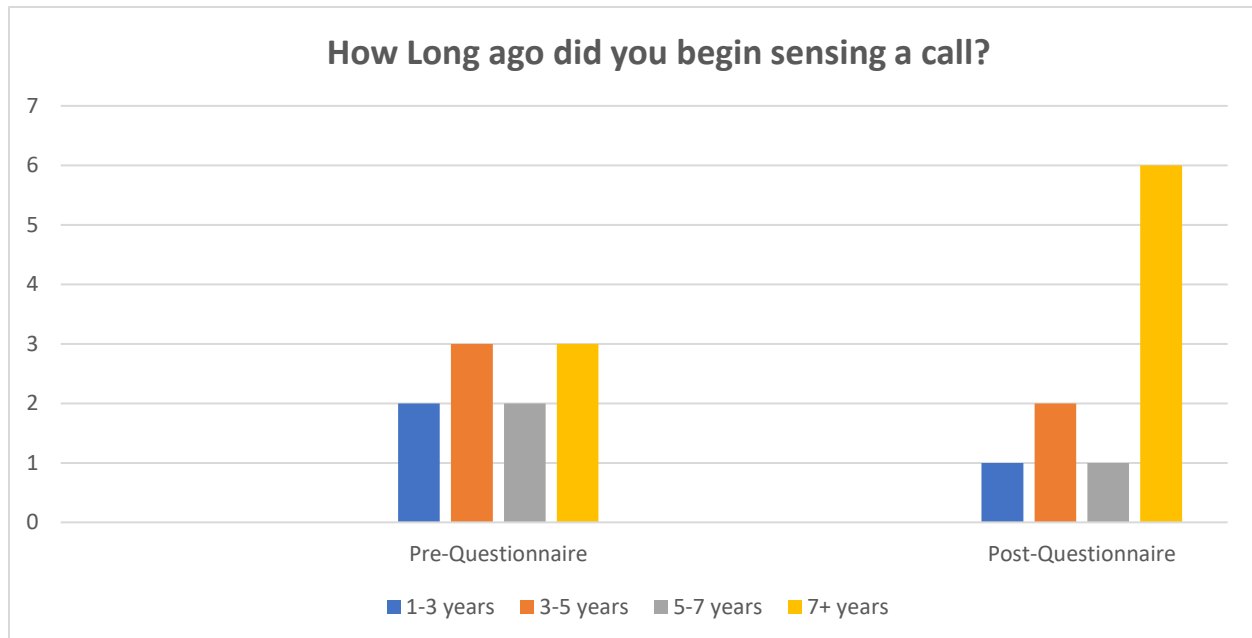
Based on the Post Questionnaire eight of the participants sensed the call at a five on the Likert scale which is the maximum possible choice on the scale. Two of the participants scored a four on the Likert scale which is next to the highest possible choice for the Likert scale for sensing the call. This is an indication the program helped all the participants sense a stronger call. All ten of the participants have a stronger sense of a call based on the pre-and post-questionnaire and all participants increased their place on the scale by at least two places.

In observation of the pre-and post-test results responses, there was an increase on the continuum of how strongly the participants sensed the call as well as the number of people who sensed the Chart 1 is an illustration of how strongly the participants sensed a call to ministry on a Likert scale from 1-5.

This researcher attributes this to the fact that the participants were able to listen to at least five (5) "call stories" and this contributed to the participants' understanding of how to gain confirmation of the call. This was also shared during the spiritual coaching as many of the participants shared, they received a revelation about sensing the call because they were able to relate in similar things happening to them. There were childhood stories they now see as relevant to a call experience. Eight (8) of the participants sensed a call at the greatest possible level on the Likert scale continuum.

The second chart question asked the participants “How long ago did you begin sensing a call?” They were given four choices: 1-3, 3-5, 5-7, and 7 + years. On the pre-questionnaire, two of the participants chose 1-3 years. Three of the participants chose 3-5 years, two chose 5-7 years, and 3 chose 7+ years.

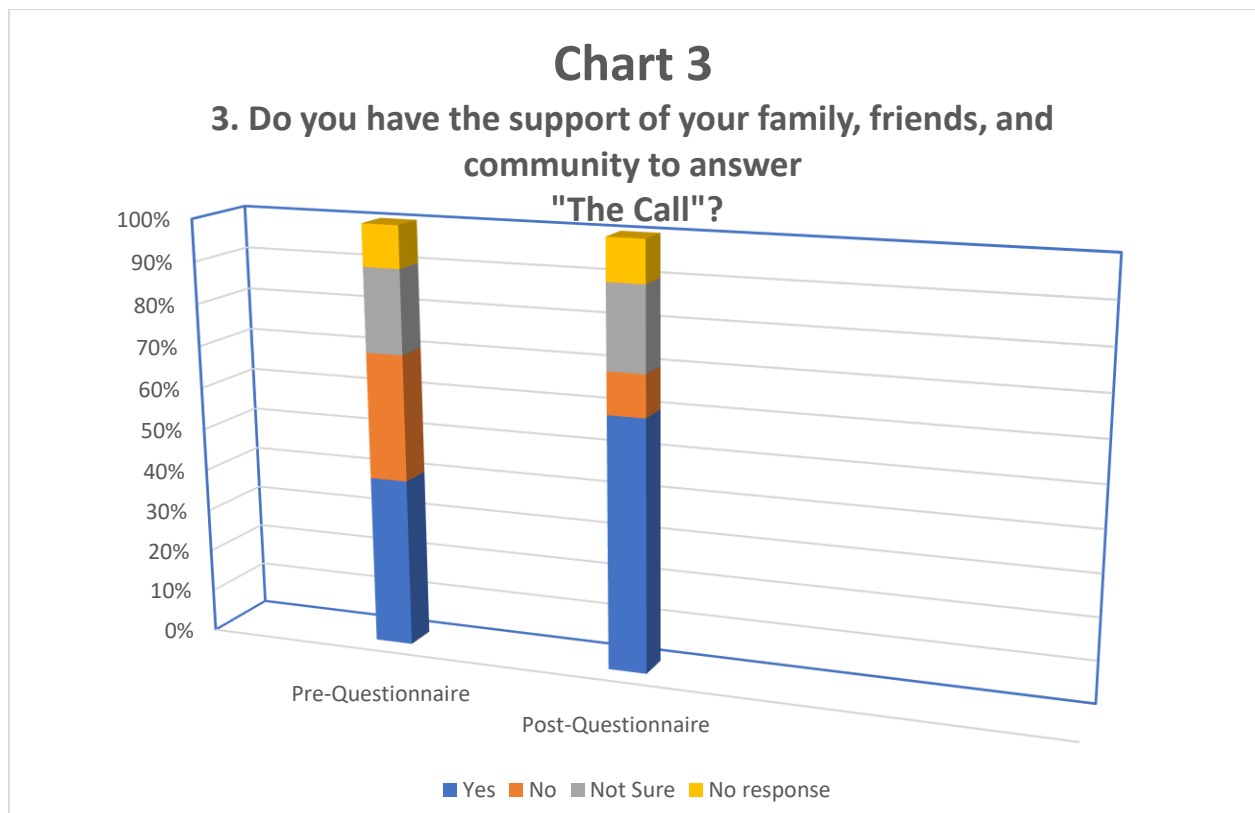
CHART 2:



On the post questionnaire one person chose 1-3 years, 2 chose 3-5 years, 1 chose 5-7 and 6 participants chose 7+ years. This researcher attributes the change in responses to the fact that participants became more aware of experiences related to an earlier call than they admitted due to the interventions from the study. As the presenters shared their stories, they spoke about how they knew they were called? The participants shared stories from childhood that confirmed the call for them. Many of the individuals in the spiritual coaching sessions shared they did not realize different things that happened in their lives that they now consider it a confirmation to the call.

Participants heard the stories shared and this led to a greater understanding of the call journey. One of the presenters spoke of an incident from the age of 6 as a part of their confirmation story.

Based on the responses from the pre-and Post-Questionnaire, the following graph shows there was a significant increase in the belief that the participants had the support of family, friends, and community to answer the call. The area of uncertainty did not change much, nor did the area that had no response. The percentage goes from 40% to 70%, a 30% increase in perspective.



The pre-questionnaire asked participants to ascertain how helpful would the spiritual disciplines be in sensing the call. On the pre-test, two believed it would be somewhat unhelpful while participants were neutral.

Two participants believed spiritual disciplines would be somewhat helpful and one believed it would be very helpful. There were no participants that believed it would be extremely helpful in their pre-questionnaires.

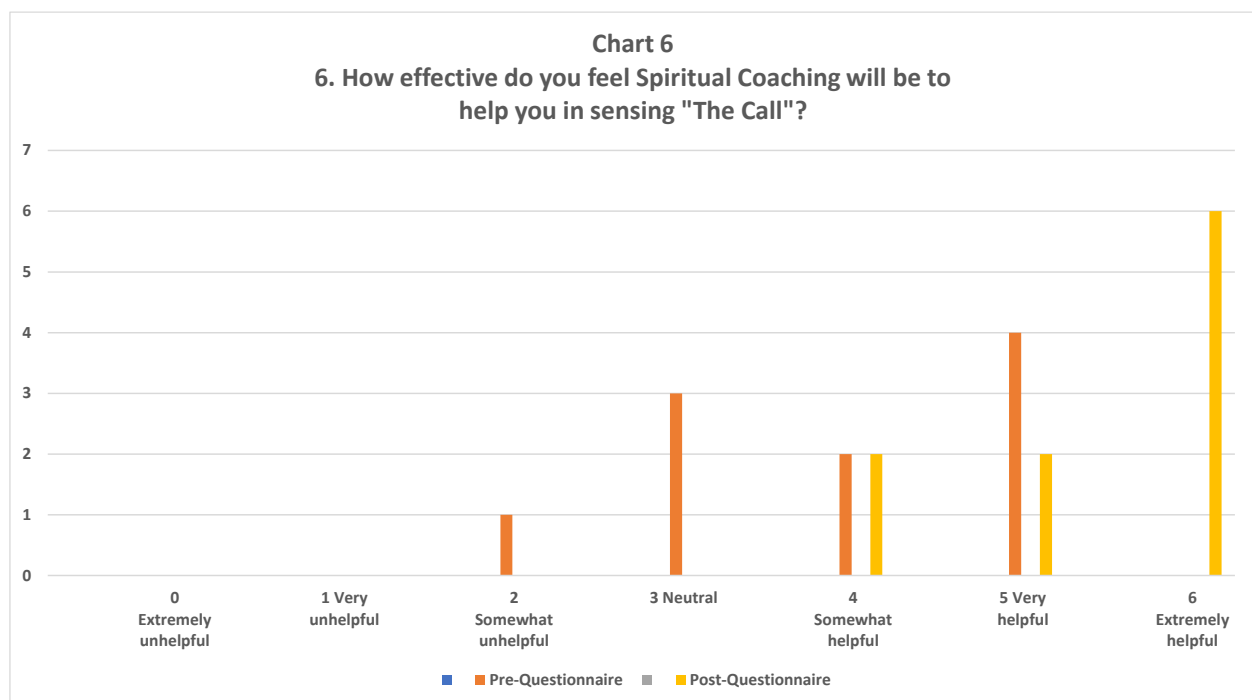
The participants were administered the pre-questionnaire questions chart four indicated two participants believed the spiritual disciplines would be somewhat unhelpful. Five of the participants were neutral, two of the participants believed participating in the spiritual disciplines would be somewhat helpful and one participant believed it would be very helpful. In the Post questionnaire, there was one participant who was neutral in believing the spiritual disciplines were helpful. Three participants believed spiritual disciplines were somewhat helpful, while five participants believed the spiritual disciplines were very helpful. One participant believed spiritual disciplines were extremely helpful. This indicates the participants did benefit from the spiritual disciplines.



The participants were administered the Pre-questionnaire and Post-questionnaire asking the question “How helpful do they think journaling would be in helping them sense the call.” On the chart above, the pre-questionnaire number is displayed on the top and the Post-questionnaire on the bottom. The Pre-questionnaire revealed two of the participants felt that journaling was somewhat helpful, and two individuals believed journaling would be very helpful. In reviewing the Post-questionnaire results revealed, six of the ten individuals found journaling to be extremely helpful, four found journaling to be somewhat helpful and five participants journaling to be very helpful.



In reviewing the pre-and post-questionnaires, Chart 6 reports how effective the participants felt spiritual coaching would be. There were zero who believed it would be extremely or very unhelpful. One person believed it would be somewhat unhelpful. Three of the participants were neutral in believing the spiritual coaching would be helpful, while two believed the spiritual coaching would be somewhat helpful. Four participants believed the spiritual coaching would be very helpful. Zero participants believed the spiritual coaching would be extremely helpful.

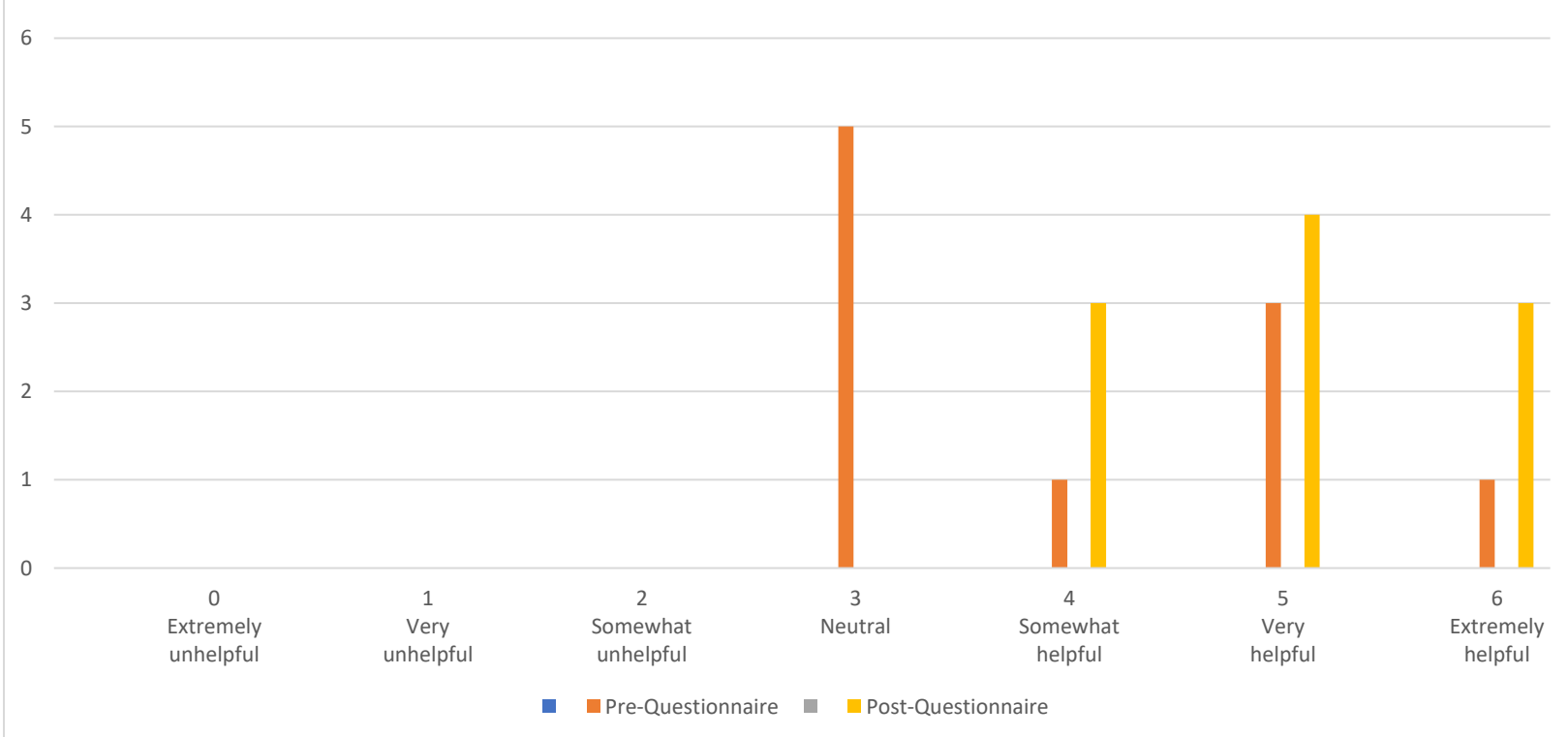


In the post questionnaire, two participants said spiritual coaching was somewhat helpful and two believed it was very helpful. Six believed it was extremely helpful. This was a major increase in the belief the spiritual coaching was helpful to them. Zero participants believed it was not helpful.

In reviewing the pre-and post-questionnaire regarding how helpful the participants believed the two-day conference would be in helping them sense “the call” on the pre-test five of the participants remained neutral in whatever the conference would help them in sensing the call. One believed the conferences would be somewhat helpful and one believed it would be extremely helpful.

Chart 7

7. How helpful do you believe the two-day conference will be in helping you sense "The Call"?



On the pre-test five of the participants remained neutral in whether the conference would help them in sensing the call. One believed the conferences would be somewhat helpful and one believed it would be extremely. On the post-questionnaire, three people believed the conference was somewhat helpful. Four believed the conference was very helpful, and three believed it was extremely helpful.

None of the participants were neutral on the post questionnaire. The number of participants that believed it was somewhat helpful doubled. All the participants found the conference to be at least somewhat helpful.

In reflecting on the results of the intervention this researcher discovered there was a distinct difference in the attitudes and thoughts about their call after the third session according to the journals and spiritual coaching sessions. The last three sessions solidified their results and participants were requesting additional sessions to help them to apply what they had discovered in the program. Participants were ready to act on their commitment to answering their call and begin receiving directions along with this researcher on how to proceed. However, it would have been a deficit in their understanding if we had stopped the sessions before the 6 weeks.

The researcher suggested that each participant begin their meditation with a prayer asking for the Holy Spirit to speak to them today about their purpose ask the Holy Spirit to be present and to give revelation. Repent as you commune with God and be prepared to obey His commands. Seek to understand the application God wants you to make and rely on his grace to live according to his truth. Meditate to better understand, to apply it, and be transformed by it, pondering contemplating questioning, reflecting, and thinking.

In reviewing the literature on discerning the call to ministry and nurturing the call it was determined there is not much information on the subject. Much of the material available focuses on either young people who are under the age of 18 or individuals who are pursuing an education to prepare for answering the call.

The literature does not address individuals over the age of 18 who are in the discerning phase of their journey. Therefore, a gap in the literature shows a need for research supportive of intervention methods for those who are not sure they are called to the ministry.

The researcher of this study identified several intervention strategies to help those sensing a call to gain confirmation. The conclusion of the research shows the intervention program effectively resulted in the expected outcome.

The evidence of the effectiveness is demonstrated in the charts earlier in the chapter. Revealed in the pre-and post-questionnaire is that all intervention strategies proved to be beneficial. The two-day conference involved presentations of five individuals who had answered the call and were working in the area of which they felt called. The participants shared in the questionnaire, the journals, and in the spiritual coaching sessions, resulted in helping determine their call. The spiritual coaching sessions were also reportedly beneficial to the participants as well. This was also documented in the notes of this researcher and the journals of the participants. Also proved to be beneficial was the journaling. Although some shared their lack of desire to journal daily, they were able to see the benefit of the efforts they made.

For future studies, this researcher recommends a follow-up program to help the individuals who strongly feel called to take their response to the next level by allowing them to do some hands-on projects fulfilling the “Great Commission”. The direct benefit the participants were expected to receive from taking part in this study was gaining confirmation to “The Call” of God, which would allow them to fulfill their purpose. This program showed evidence in effectively accomplishing this goal.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Overview

Summary of Findings

Many individuals have reported they spent many years in the discernment phase unable to move forward and begin their work, their “God-given” purpose. Therefore, it was easy to identify that there was a lack of sufficient supportive programs available for people feeling stuck between the call and successful clarity. It is this researcher’s belief by participating in this project, the participants were able to take the time to hone in on their individual experiences in the church and to explore their feelings about the call and exploring Christian ministry as a vocation.

The initial meeting on the first day of the conference set the tone for the entire project. Individuals were able to witness others who were like them and this began the initial connectedness that remained throughout the process. One of the most significant things that occurred in this project was the individual’s response to the voice of God. As participants came to the place of accepting their calls, they began to share in the spiritual coaching sessions instructions they were receiving from God. Many of them shared specific things they were told related to how to meet the needs of individuals as they walk out their calls. Several of the participants specifically shared that the Lord spoke to them about having compassion for His people. The instructions at the beginning of the spiritual coaching sessions were related to solidifying the call. They were hearing affirming words about being called by God and their specific instructions on how to respond. This lasted for the most part for at least three sessions and after the third session, participants' focus turned from themselves to the needs of others.

As leaders in the church, we can intentionally encourage and strengthen our families which will result in developing leaders who will be able to operate in their calls and fulfill their purpose. This researcher, because of this knowledge, will be intentional about nurturing the most important institution in the world, the family. This relates to this researcher's study in the fact that this project is also about making disciples and building up the church.

The Worsfold article is related to the researcher's project in seeing the writer's role as a mentor and spiritual supporter to individuals discerning their vocation. This researcher also is serving in the role of a mentor and spiritual supporter for the ten participants in the study. This researcher also did this for the participants during the spiritual coaching sessions. The scriptures used for meditation and the revelations the participants used were explored in the individual assignments helping to solidify the voice of God to help the participants discover the vocation to which they were called. This population of individuals was illuminated in the screening process before becoming a part of this community. Individuals in this group had to agree to sense a call to ministry to even be considered.

In the "Great Commission," we are commanded to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, teaching them to obey what he has commanded and the final statement stating He will be with us until the end of the age. The participants in this researcher's study were able to come to this realization through the spiritual coaching sessions. At the beginning of the spiritual coaching sessions, the participants appeared to focus on their own ability to carry out the "Great Commission". Throughout several sessions, the conversation changed. The focus changed from sensing the call to the participants being given instructions from God on how to carry out the assignment of those called.

This researcher did not look closely at the individual participants' childhood affiliation with the church. This article does relate to this researcher's study as it relates to the community. The purpose of the confirmation is to strengthen the youth's faith. These writers spoke of the advantages of youth growing up in the Christian community and indicated those who have church affiliation as children are more open to the possibility of responding to a call. This is like this researcher's study in that they were motivated to be involved and a strong desire to serve particularly after spending time in the spiritual coaching sessions. Although this study but causally related to this researcher's study there were several things that this researcher was able to extract from as it relates to this researcher's study. This researcher believes this is attributes to the fact that the students were out of the network of family and the influence of them connecting with their religious community.

To discern the call there are many things that one considers. As this writer reflects on the participants in the program, there were varied reasons why each of them did not respond to the call. One of the greatest of which they were not certain about the call. Some of the other reasons were fear of failing or disappointing God. Some shared it was because of their views of ministers and the role of ministers. Several of them had to overcome their understanding of the requirements and responsibilities of a minister. Many of the articles speak of the support and encouragement needed in answering the call. The ten participants become that family support by their common experience beginning with the first night of the orientation. Once agreeing to become a part of this project the participants were included in a common experience that challenged them through the commitment to practice certain behaviors and complete various tasks to move forward in their purpose. This developed into a common community involving individuals with common experiences.

The participants met and grew to become a community through their shared experiences. They each knew one another was experiencing the same experiences and they could in the beginning and the end of the six-week journey. They each had the shared experience of witnessing the call journeys of five presenters, they shared several meals and time of fellowship and shared in the responsibility of agreeing to complete the task agreed upon to participate in the program. Each participant expressed a desire to gain confirmation in sensing a call to ministry.

If we can strengthen the family and help those in our congregations by allowing them to serve together, we would be able to help them in the development of identifying their purpose. The writer Basden's article is also relational to this researcher's study as it relates to their support systems. One of the areas discussed in this research project is the support of family members and friends in answering the call. The participants were asked about their support in pursuing the call. (Research results on what individuals said about their support) (Speak about what percentage of the individuals answering the call had support. What was their rate on the question?) This was also a similar thing done in this researcher's project. By having the various leaders share their call journeys individuals through their spiritual journeys were able to relate to each of the participants. This helped them to identify with their personal experiences as it relates to responding to the call.

One observation made is that several of the participants expressed receiving confirmation to the call by the fourth appointment. Except for two participants, all the participants moved from sensing a call to gaining confirmation of the call. Two of the participants shared they felt surer of their calling, but they felt they needed more spiritual coaching time to explore this further. All the participants were interested in continuing to meet weekly to respond to their revelation about their calls.

This researcher believes an additional program would be beneficial to prepare the participants to begin exploring various aspects of ministry such as preaching, leading worship, etc. Each of the participants shared an interest in continued nurturing and encouragement and even adding specific training to become familiar with serving. Another observation made was the fact that once the participants received confirmation their reflections of the scripture changed. They began to share information they received from the Lord for others. At the beginning of their reflections, it was all about the Lord speaking to them about their call. Affirming he had called them to the ministry. After the confirmation, they were hearing words from the Lord about feeding His sheep. They were being given instructions on how to care for His sheep. They shared specific things that were unique to them in the process of responding to the call. For example, one of the individuals in her spiritual coaching sessions informed this researcher, God was speaking with her about having compassion for his people. For example, some participants shared for two weeks examples of how she responded to situations on her job and how she had to change her response. Her natural response was to correct the patient, she was now being led to have more compassion. She would share her normal response and her new response once she received the revelation to show compassion.

This researcher witnessed major changes in the attitudes of these in the study. The participants shared how some versions of the bible spoke to them one week, and another version another week. This researcher saw the benefit of having the different versions printed out and given to the participants to make it easier to follow the directions. The study could have a different outcome with different dynamics such as diversity in the participants. There were one male and nine females, and all the participants were African American. Also, the participants were between the ages of 35 and 65.

The individuals in the group seemed to find comfort in connecting to one another's experiences. During the times of fellowship and food, they shared information about their backgrounds and where they were attending worship services. Although this was not a scheduled or guided activity, this researcher witnessed many connections being made. After the program at the celebration, many of the participants agreed with those who spoke openly about their experience. It was obvious to see the difference in how they related to one another in the conclusion. The shared experience contributed to the building of a community that enhanced their overall experience in the program. This researcher agrees with this statement. Not only is this true for young people, but it is true for all. This investment is what is needed to aid individuals in understanding and answering their call. As the calls are answered the Kingdom is Built. We are called to Build the Kingdom.

It is this researcher's opinion we all have a responsibility to walk in the call on our lives. The calls are unique to God's plan for our lives. Some are called to leadership in the church, and some are called to represent Christ in the marketplace. The call has to do with doing what we are called to do with giving priority to building the Kingdom. God's agenda is our primary focus regardless of the profession.

Many of the participants did not answer the call due to feelings of unworthiness which was expressed by Hays. The writers overall shared the various views of the calling and brought to light the need to examine the concept of the call. As I reflect on a study focused on the motivation and impact of religious participation among undergraduate students at a faith-based liberal arts institution, I saw a few similarities in this researcher's study. They were both qualitative studies and focused on a small pool of individuals.

As indicated in this researcher's study, spiritual disciplines are a vehicle to getting in a position to hear God's instructions. These practices provide an opportunity for Holy Spirit to speak and for spiritual formation to develop or advance. This project seeks to address the population of individuals who are sensing a call to ministry but do not have a religious institution to direct them nor do they have the connections or understanding to identify what is needed to pursue their purpose or call although they identify with that purpose that feels like a void or that there is a greater cause for which they were created. This is one of the things the participants were finding out as they asked questions about their callings. They were being told by God to have and show compassion toward others.

This research project was designed to aid the participants in gaining confirmation of the call. The next phase for these individuals would be to know how they can further pursue their call assignments. The participants during the final celebration were requesting assistance with the next steps for walking out the call. This researcher believes the common community created in this researcher's study contributed to the high level of participation. This researcher even sees the fellowship with food and the unplanned times of fellowship such as the time when the speaker was late, this created more time for them to bond and hear each other's reason for participating in a study such as this. Each of them committed to sign up for the session and complete the requirements to hear the voice of God and come together with a celebration of the results of this time and effort spent at the end of the study.

This researcher believes each of the participants' knowledge of sharing this journey, although they will not see each other until the final celebration, contributed to the motivation to work diligently with the intent of sharing the results at the celebration. The celebration provided evidence of this belief based on the responses of the participants.

The participants shared their individual experiences with excitement giving detailed information about the discoveries made during the intervention process. This time of sharing was after the participants completed their final assessment to be certain the responses would be their individuals' thoughts without the influence of other participants. The participants shared their testimonies and were pleasantly surprised when many of them shared the same experiences. Several of them shared by the third spiritual coaching session they had gained confirmation to the call. This was the ultimate indication of the committed community.

The consistent faith development of this researchers' participants was evident in the spiritual coaching sessions. The combination of meditating on scripture and coming in weekly to share the discoveries made and impact on the development of the participants' faith. The faith that already existed was nurtured and encouraged in the sessions. As they reflected on their experiences, they were discovering their level of faith and their ability to hear God. The sessions aided them in putting things in perspective and it allowed them the time to connect the things the Lord was speaking to them.

Many of the individuals sensing a call are unable to hear God because they have not allowed the time to listen and are not intentionally applying the things they are hearing from God. As encouraged in the call intervention project. As the participants meditate on scripture and their experiences the dots are connected and they are having to make sense of the still small voice of God confirming their call and identifying their purpose. This researcher's project incorporated many of the elements shared in the various articles as helpful tools in discerning the call.

This is the entire Premise for identifying a call. We find rest in our connection with purpose in God's plan for our lives. According to Romans 8:28-30, we were predestined by God and our purpose is connected to god's original plan. It is stated: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to (his) purpose. There was no gender difference.

All the participants are over the age of 18. Age did not appear to be a factor in the results. The participants were from ages 35 to 48. The participants utilized the instructions well. Each of them appeared to benefit from the instructions given and they each also took advantage of their journaling. They bought the journals for each appointment and shared information from inserts they had written. It was obvious when one of the participants did not fully utilize the instructions which included scripture meditations and instructions. Although it was aware for one to show up at the coaching sessions ill-prepared, it did happen a couple of times over the six weeks.

The participants seemed to benefit greatly from the chosen scriptures. Many of them voiced their amazement with how the Lord spoke through the text and how each week flowed and helped them gain more and more confirmation. One of the things I would recommend in future research would be to have a program that would help to advance the knowledge the participants received building on their knowledge. Also continuing to provide spiritual coaching as they explore their calls. I have many of the participants who are requesting this project continue to include training in practical ministry. They have gained the confirmation and now are wanting help in moving forward. There is no doubt anymore about the call, they are no longer sensing they are ready for the "Now what?"

The Benefits to society include that we will be better equipped to do as we were commanded in the Great Commandment, making disciples to help carry out the mission. We will be able to empower individuals to serve and contribute, making a positive contribution to society. There is a need for future research which would include a more diverse population as the participants.

In a future study, I would stress the speakers utilize the journey questionnaire sent several weeks ahead. I would communicate directly with them to be certain they receive the questionnaire and stress the fact that I would like for all this information to be covered in their presentation. I would still allow the presenters to share whatever additional information they wanted. This writer believes it is vital to the process for certain things to be shared as they speak to the people. This could potentially be a problem if the speakers do not cover information that would be helpful to the participant's journey.

One aspect this researcher would change to gain more input for the study is to inquire more about their experiences in the Christian faith. Although the participants shared information about family and the impact their childhood experiences had on them, this area could have been explored to a greater level. For example, this researcher would like to know if any of the participants had close relatives that are operating in a call to ministry, or if they have in the past. Several of the participants spoke of a childhood experience where someone spoke over their lives about a call to serve. This researcher would also include a section in the journaling assignment that asked them to specifically share their thoughts about the program. And lastly, this researcher would require the participants to evaluate the two-day conference to be used as part of the documentation to evaluate the various parts of the intervention plan.

The participants shared some powerful statements in their journals about the speakers, but this area could also have been explored on another level. This researcher believes having the various ways to share their thoughts about the interventions were extremely helpful in determining whether the program works. An additional interest this researcher feels would be helpful is to find ways to aid the participants in identifying their specific calls and offering a future practicum experience to help them begin to move into action.

Again, this is the focus of much of the material found when this researcher attempted to find material to include in this research project. Much of the material is written for adolescents or individuals who were already identifying with a call to ministry. This writer believes the overall idea of the participants going through this journey together contributed to the positive outcome in that they had a common goal. Each of the participants knew nine other participants who were also committed to the process. It is this researchers' belief, this caused the participants to follow the guidelines, motivating them to want to finish the project and share in the celebration at the conclusion gathering. The participants were a shared community with a similar goal of hearing God and starting the journey to serve together. The fact that they were able to hear the call journeys of seasoned servants of God also contributed to the desire to complete the program and get results. The participants were able to experience their journeys coming together as they participated in the spiritual coaching sessions and the other spiritual disciplines. The participants were discovering their call journeys and could see themselves as ones telling their stories in the future. This writer believes all the parts of the process were necessary and strategic.

We are called to build a community of people who are willing to serve and contribute to meeting the needs of others. Individuals who answer the call can change the circumstances in the world, making the world a better place.

As the call is answered we serve and meet the needs of one another. The individuals in this researcher's project could deliberately look at their life and piece together the experiences to make sense of the call. Their journeys will continue after the project but as indicated by the participants, they are at a point of no return. Meaning they will not go back to not being certain of the call, they are now seeking to complete the journey.

Recommendations for Future Research

One thing this researcher would recommend is to alter in future studies is to add fasting as one of the spiritual disciplines. This researcher would also conduct teaching specifically on the Holy Spirit and the spiritual disciplines so participants would understand the purpose and advantage of including these practices. This researcher believes this is good information for not only identifying the call but for those who are operating in the call to be refreshed. These researchers believe it would be beneficial during the process of discovering the call that participants have a healthy view of ministry and how to remain in a good place as they serve. It is also okay for them to question the call periodically to examine their feelings and to discover new ways to serve. Each of the participants needs to have an image of what a healthy perspective on the call and service to God looks like. It is okay to have questions and doubts in the process of answering the call and during service.

It is this researcher's belief Holy Spirit is the biggest contributing factor to hearing the voice of God. This is one of the areas this researcher would alter in conducting this project in the future. This researcher would do teaching on who the Holy Spirit is and how He operates in the lives of those that are called. This important message was, in fact, a part of the conversations in the spiritual coaching sessions, but this researcher believes this area could enhance the outcome of the project in the future. The process involved in this researcher's project was, in fact, spirit-led and human-led. To advance in the revelation given through the Holy Spirit in scripture,

meditation and journaling the participant had to be willing to be obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

As the participants shared in the spiritual coaching sessions, the Holy Spirit was giving them instructions such as things to affirm their calling or instructions to prepare them for the call. One of the comments made by one of the participants was for them to show more compassion.

This person shared in various appointments how they applied this command from Holy Spirit. She also shared how her spirit grieved when she was not showing compassion as instructed. Another revelation shared was the words from Holy Spirit affirming the fact that he has called them. Each of the participants felt compelled to move forward by accepting the call and listening for further instructions. Several of them shared their dialogue with the Holy Spirit as they meditated on scripture and journaled instructions. The writers of the article shared the fact that our formation is a lifelong journey. This was communicated clearly for the participants in each of the call stories and the speakers shared their call journeys. Each of the participants shared from the beginning of their journey of sensing a call, to the journey through the call and the implications of how they arrived at the place which they were at present. It was clear in their presentations the journey continues.

Summary

The participants specifically shared throughout the program how helpful the practice of spiritual disciplines, prayer, journaling, and meditation on scripture was in helping them to gain the confirmation to the call. The participants also shared how beneficial the spiritual coaching and participation in the conference were in helping them to gain their overall. The participants were able to move from sensing a call to gaining confirmation to the call to

The conference that was attended by the ten participants was proven to be beneficial based on the information reported. Based on the pre-and Post- Questionnaires as well as the information shared from the spiritual coaching sessions and journaling this intervention program was very helpful in helping the participants sense a stronger call and move forward in answering the call.

The next phase in preparing these leaders to serve is to conduct teaching on the Five-Fold Ministry plan shared by Paul in Ephesians 4:11-16. As previously mentioned, understanding Five-Fold Ministry is essential to carrying out the “Great Commission. The Intervention Program serves the purpose of nurturing and identifying the call. What is needed to move forward in responding to this revelation of being called is to identify the participants’ gifts. These gifts are identified in the text along with a plan to carry out the plan of God which includes equipping the leaders for service by building them up, creating unity in the faith aiding them in increasing their knowledge about God, Jesus, and the Kingdom, aiding them in spiritual maturity in their faith through exposing them to sound doctrine. This will help them to become strong and secure in their faith and their relationship with one another. Preparing them for the attacks of the enemy as they practice the commandment to love one another carrying out God’s plan to do “Greater Works. As leaders are able to nurture and encourage individuals sensing a call to walking in their office, utilizing their spiritual gifts, we continue to reproduce ourselves, evangelizing and transforming the world to reflect the kingdom of God. The intervention program is the beginning of the journey to walking in one’s ultimate purpose utilizing their God-Given Gifts!

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Appendix A

Email for study Recruitment

Praise the Lord Pastor _____

I am writing to you to find out if you have individuals in your ministry who are sensing a call to ministry. As I serve as a pastor, I find individuals often who are sensing a call to ministry and do not know how to gain confirmation to move forward in building the Kingdom. We know the Harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. I am conducting research as a student at Liberty University and am in need of participants. The benefit to your ministry is the individuals gaining confirmation to their call to ministry and moving forward in answering the call. I will be glad to share additional details with you if you would like to explore this further. I am excited about the opportunity to work with individuals who have expressed an interest in discerning the voice of God. Please email me or call me if you would like more information. May God continue to richly bless you, your family, and ministry?

Jacquelyn E. Powell, Senior Pastor

My contact information is (317) 258-1033 or email me at jepowell3@liberty.edu.

Greetings.

My name is Jacquelyn E. Powell, and I am a student at Liberty University. I am conducting a research study to determine the effectiveness of practicing specific spiritual disciplines to discern a call to ministry. I am emailing to ask if you would be interested in participating in this research project. Participation is completely voluntary. If you are interested, please email me at jepowell3@liberty.edu. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can also be reached by phone at (317)258-1033. Thank you for your time.

- The email list will be received from various pastors who believe the individual may be sensing a call to ministry
- The targeted population of the email is individuals who would like to explore the voice of God by participating in this study
- The email or flyer will be sent once to pastors in the community and the total number of emails that will be sent will be approximately 10.

Research Participants Needed

You Think You're Called.... Now What? Study to identify interventions to gaining confirmation to the call of God

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
 - Are you sensing a “call of God” on your life and would like clarity?
 - Would you like to be better able to discern the voice of God to discover your purpose?
- If you answered **yes** to either of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in an intervention research study.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of participation in specific spiritual disciplines including scripture, meditation, prayer, spiritual coaching, and attending the “Now What” conference for discerning a call to ministry.

The techniques used in the project include practicing these spiritual disciplines and journaling their experiences, attending a two-day conference, and participating in six weeks of individual spiritual coaching sessions to reflect on the participant’s experiences. The practice of these spiritual disciplines will be used to promote communication with God. This is an intervention for discerning and clarifying a call to ministry. This researcher believes individuals participating in this discernment process will gain clarity and will be propelled into actively pursuing the call to ministry. The participants may gain confirmation and assurance leading them to move forward in answering the call and proceeding to build the Kingdom, fulfilling the “Great Commission”.

The study is being conducted at Powerhouse International Ministries
3445 West 71st Street
Indianapolis, In 46268

Jacquelyn E. Powell, a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Please contact Jacquelyn E. Powell at (317) 258-1033 or jepowell3@liberty.edu for more information.

Liberty University IRB – 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515

Appendix C

CONSENT FORM

You Think You're Called. Now What? An Intervention for Discerning and Confirming a Call to Ministry

Jacquelyn E. Powell
Liberty University
School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study to determine whether practicing a specific set of spiritual disciplines will allow one sensing a call to ministry to gain confirmation to the call. This study will be an essential part of one discovering or clarifying the voice of God and responding to His voice. You were selected by your pastor or a leader in your church as a possible participant because you are 18 years of age or older and you have expressed you are sensing the call of God on your life. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Jacquelyn E. Powell, 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 the effectiveness of participation in specific spiritual disciplines including scripture, meditation, prayer, spiritual coaching, and attending the “Now What” conference for discerning a call to ministry. The techniques used in the project include practicing these spiritual disciplines and journaling one’s experiences, attending a two-day conference, and participating in six weeks of individual spiritual coaching sessions to reflect on the participant’s experiences. The practice of these spiritual disciplines will be used to promote communication with God. This writer believes individuals participating in this discernment process will gain clarity and will be propelled into actively pursuing the call to ministry. The participants will gain confirmation and assurance leading them to move forward in answering the call and proceeding to build the Kingdom, fulfilling the “Great Commission”.

This study hypothesizes that participating in specific spiritual disciplines and spiritual coaching over a six-week period and participation in a two-day conference will help individuals gain clarity in discerning their call to ministry.

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

1. Attend Orientation / Initial Meeting. The initial meeting will last 2 hours.
2. Attend a 2-day conference beginning on Friday from 6:00 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. and on Saturday from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m.
3. Attend 6 Spiritual Coaching Sessions that will last 1 hour per week for a total of 6 hours.

4. Practice spiritual disciplines keep a daily journal and meditate on scriptures 1 hour daily for 6 weeks. The scriptures will be given for weekly meditation. The journal entries will be discussed in the spiritual coaching sessions,
5. Openly provide weekly feedback 30-50 minutes per week
6. Complete questionnaire/interview at the beginning and at the end of the project that will take about 30 minutes each.
7. Complete feedback after completion of the two-day conference. This will take 15 minutes.
8. Submit all journals which include weekly journal entries in the final project completion celebration at the end of the 6 weeks. The final gathering will be 1-2 hours after the completion of the 6-week coaching sessions.

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

Benefits: The direct benefits participants may expect to receive from taking part in this study is gaining confirmation to “The Call” of God which will allow them to fulfill their purpose.

Benefits to society include that we will be better equipped to do as we were commanded in the Great Commandment, making disciples to help carry out the mission. We will be able to empower individuals to serve and contribute making a positive contribution to society. Individuals who accept a call to ministry can move forward in serving others.

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

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- Participants will be assigned a journal which will be kept in my locked office with access to the researcher only. The spiritual coaching sessions will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym.
- 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 to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

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

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Jacquelyn E. Powell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 317 258-1033 or jepowell3@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Jeff Ward, at jdward2@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.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix D

Conference Agenda

On Friday evening, the first day of the conference we will complete an orientation to give an overview of the purpose of the research and to answer any clarifying questions. They will have a time to meet and greet and break bread together. They will be given detailed information about the process and expectations which includes the time commitment. The participants will be issued their journals and given all necessary paperwork listed in this application.

The first day of the conference will begin at 6 p.m. on Friday and will end at 9:30 p.m. Food will be provided because of the time of day we are gathering. We will end the evening with a meditation exercise to get them accustomed to utilizing the reflection questions they will be using over the six-week period.

On day two, we will meet from 9:00 a.m. until 6 p.m. There will be 5 guests who are currently walking in their calling come and share their journey to answering the call.

Saturday Agenda

9:00 a.m. We will gather and begin with prayer. Following prayer, we will fellowship and eat a continental breakfast provided by this researcher.

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. we will allow time to share about the meditation from Friday night and give reflections.

10:00 a.m. We will have our first guest come and share about their call journey. Participants will be allowed to ask questions throughout this session.

11:00 a.m. - 12:00p.m. Our second guest will share about their call Journey. Participants will be allowed to ask questions.

12:00 p.m. until 12:45p.m. We will have lunch and fellowship with the morning guest.

12:45 p.m. -1:45. Our third guest will share about their call Journey. Participants will be allowed to ask questions.

1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. . . . Our fourth guest will share about their call Journey. Participants will be allowed to ask questions.

We will break from 2; 45 p.m. until 1:00p.m. Break

1:00 p.m. until 2:00 p.m. Our fifth guest will share about their call Journey. Participants will be allowed to ask questions.

2:00p.m. - 2:30p.m. Participants will be allowed time to reflect on the days' activities.

2:30 p.m. -3:300p. Break and Snacks

3:30 p.m. – 4:30p.m. The participants will be given the opportunity to complete the pre-questionnaire.

4:30p.m.-5:00p.m. The time allowed to share feedback in the suggestions box. (Note cards)

Questions:

What was most helpful so far?

What was least helpful?

Do you have any additional comments?

5:00p.m. – 6:00p.m. Finger foods provided and time to fellowship and meet with the researcher about any questions or concerns. Fellowship with one another and with presenters who are still available.

Appendix E

You Think You're Called. Now What? An Intervention for Discerning and Confirming a Call to Ministry

Research Code Sheet

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of participation in specific spiritual disciplines, including scripture, meditation, prayer, spiritual coaching, and attending the Now What conference for discerning a call to ministry. The practice of these spiritual disciplines will be used to promote communication with God. This is an intervention for discerning and clarifying a call to ministry, building the Kingdom, and fulfilling the Great Commission.

As a research participant, you are being asked to select a pseudonym that you will use throughout the study. The pseudonym will specify only your gender and age. Please use this name on all documentation except for the pre- & post-questionnaires. In addition, please use the two-digit number that most closely represents your age. Each name will be used only once and will not remain available.

For example: Elizabeth 30 or John 57

Please be aware that the records of this study will be kept in a locked storage area. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; any information shared will not identify subjects.

Please identify your chosen name by checking the box.

Female/Age

- ☐ Abigail_____
- ☐ Aquila_____
- ☐ Naomi_____
- ☐ Deborah_____
- ☐ Vashti_____
- ☐ Jael_____
- ☐ Chloe_____
- ☐ Ester_____
- ☐ Jerusha_____

Male/Age

- ☐ Abraham_____
- ☐ David_____
- ☐ Elijah_____
- ☐ Ezekiel_____
- ☐ Timothy_____
- ☐ Zion_____
- ☐ Peter_____
- ☐ Isaiah_____
- ☐ Hezekiah_____

You Think You're Called...Now What? Intervention for Discerning and Confirming a Call to Ministry

A Study to identify interventions for gaining confirmation on the call of God

Directions:

This questionnaire is to ascertain the effectiveness of spiritual discipline techniques to discern a call to ministry. The spiritual techniques encompass scriptural study, meditation, prayer, journal keeping, spiritual coaching, and attendance at a two-day conference over a six- week timeframe. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Questionnaire results will be kept confidential and kept in a secure location. Please use an anonymous number on both the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire that only you know. By filling in the anonymous number on both pre-and post-questionnaires it will allow the researcher to assess any differences obtained as a result of the intervention.

Please complete as many of the questions that pertain to you. If you need more space, feel free to use the back of the questionnaire. If you require assistance, please contact the researcher.

You Think You're Called...Now What? Intervention for Discerning and Confirming a Call to Ministry

A Study to identify interventions for gaining confirmation on the call of God

Pre-Questionnaire

1. How strongly do you sense a call to ministry?

(Rate the strength of the call with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest)

1 2 3 4 5

2. How long ago did you begin sensing a call?

1-3 Years 3-5 Years 5-7 Years 7+ Years

3. Do you have the support of your family, friends, and community to answer "The Call"?

Yes No Not sure

4. How helpful do you feel the practice of Spiritual Disciplines will be in sensing your call?

Extremely Very Somewhat Somewhat Very Extremely
unhelpful unhelpful unhelpful helpful helpful helpful

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

5. How helpful do you think Journaling will be in answering "The Call"?

Extremely Very Somewhat Somewhat Very Extremely
unhelpful unhelpful unhelpful helpful helpful helpful

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

6. How effective do you feel Spiritual Coaching will be to help you in sensing "The Call"?

Extremely Very Somewhat Somewhat Very Extremely
unhelpful unhelpful unhelpful helpful helpful helpful

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

7. How helpful do you believe the two-day conference will be in helping you sense "The Call"?

Extremely Very Somewhat Somewhat Very Extremely
unhelpful unhelpful unhelpful helpful helpful helpful

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

8. Overall, what do you think will be most helpful in helping you sense “The Call”?
9. What suggestions would you have to help individuals sensing a call to gain confirmation?

You Think You're Called...Now What? Intervention for Discerning and Confirming a Call to Ministry

A Study to identify interventions for gaining confirmation on the call of God

Post-Questionnaire

1. How strongly do you sense a call to ministry?

(Rate the strength of the call with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest)

1 2 3 4 5

2. How long ago did you begin sensing a call?

1-3 Years 3-5 Years 5-7 Years 7+ Years

3. Do you have the support of your family, friends, and community to answer "The Call"?

Yes No Not sure

4. How helpful did you feel the practice of Spiritual Disciplines was in sensing your call?

Extremely unhelpful	Very unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Neutral	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

5. How helpful did you think Journaling was in answering "The Call"?

Extremely unhelpful	Very unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Neutral	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

6. How effective did you feel Spiritual Coaching was in helping you in sensing "The Call"?

Extremely unhelpful	Very unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Neutral	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

7. How helpful do you believe the two-day conference was in helping you sense “The Call”?

Extremely unhelpful	Very unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Neutral	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

8. If you found the conference to be helpful, what was most helpful in helping you sense “The Call”?

9. What suggestions would you have to help individuals sensing a call to gain confirmation?

10. Do you have any additional comments or recommendations to provide regarding your experiences with the research study and interventions?

Thank you for participating in the intervention. We value the time and input you provided as a participant in this study. Please note that your input will remain anonymous. The aggregate data will be used to help future participants to discern their call to ministry.

Appendix G

Scripture Meditation Recommendations

Reflect on the following questions:

What does the passage say to me?

What questions come to mind?

What is God saying to me through this passage?

What does this text teach me about my pursuit?

What do I gain from the text that helps me keep God and his glory at the center of my life?

Where do you sense God calling you to act?

What words or phrases from this text reveal to me about God and myself?

Ask Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to you and permit Him to instruct you.

Week 1

Jeremiah 29:11-14 KJV

This scripture was used in the orientation and was to be meditated on during the orientation and over the first week. The scriptures were as follows:

¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

¹² Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

¹³ And ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

¹⁴ And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive. KJV

Jeremiah 29:11-14 NIV

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

Jeremiah 29:11 NLT

11 For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

12 In those days when you pray, I will listen.

13 If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.

14 I will be found by you,” says the LORD. “I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land.”

Week 2

Isaiah 61:1-3 KJV and Luke 4:18 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week’s text? Is so, note them)

61 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

²To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

³ To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

NIV

1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,

2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,

3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

NLT

1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released, and prisoners will be freed.

2 He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies.

3 To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the LORD has planted for his own glory.

Luke 4:18

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted*, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

NIV

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,

NLT

18 “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free,

Week 3

KJV

Matthew 28:17-20 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week’s text? Is so note them)

¹⁷ And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth.

¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost:

²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

NIV

17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

NLT

17 When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!

18 Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Week 4

KJV

Romans 10:13-15 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week's text? If so note them)

¹³ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!

NIV

13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

NLT

13 For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”

14 But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

15 And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!”

Week 5

KJV

1Corinthians 9:16-19 (Is there things from the first week that is connected to this week’s text? Is so note them)

¹⁶For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

¹⁷ For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

¹⁸ What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

¹⁹ For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

NIV

16 For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

17 If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.

18 What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

NLT

16 Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News!

17 If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment. But I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust.

18 What then is my pay? It is the opportunity to preach the Good News without charging anyone. That's why I never demand my rights when I preach the Good News.

19 Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ.

Week 6 1 Peter 5:1-7

KJV

5 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

² Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

³ Neither as being lords over God's heritage but being examples to the flock.

⁴ And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

⁵ Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

⁶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

⁷ Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

This researcher strategically put these scriptures in order based on personal experience and prompting of the Holy Spirit. The participants shared positive feedback regarding the scripture as well as the sequential order of scripture. This researcher does not believe the outcome would change if the scriptures were not in this order. This writer believes it is the content of the scripture that contributed to the outcomes.

NIV

1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed:

2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve.

3 not lording it over those entrusted to you but being examples to the flock.

4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

NLT

1 And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world.

As a fellow elder, I appeal to you:

2 Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God.

3 Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example.

4 And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.

5 In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.

7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

Call Journey Questionnaire

Thank You for being a part of my Doctoral Thesis Project. I appreciate you sharing your time and expertise.

1. What does “being called” mean to you?
2. What made you think you were called to Ministry?
3. Were there any key people in the process of you answering your call? If so, who were they and what was your relationship?
4. How did you know? / What was it that gave you confirmation?
5. Can you share specific things that helped you hear from God?
6. Do you have suggestions for ways to discern God’s voice?
7. Do you have any suggestions for someone sensing a call to ministry?
8. How long did it take for you to answer and what were the steps you took once you began sensing a call? Share your call journey from sensing a call to walking in your call:
9. Do you have anything else you would like to share with individuals who are sensing a call to ministry?