

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

The Biblical Teaching of Health among Pakistani Evangelical Pastors

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

By

Benish Masih

Lynchburg, Virginia

June 2021

Copyright © 2021 by Benish Masih
All Rights Reserved

Acknowledgments

I thank YHWH for bringing me this far into the DMIN program. Without El-Shaddai, this journey would not have been possible. Throughout this voyage, YHWH appointed His men and women to support me, namely my parents, Imran, Zerish, Mehwish, Danish, Asher, Dr. Albert Sarno, Dr. Earnest Shannon, and Yat Por. I pray that through this paper, the readers will understand the importance of biblical health. May all the words in this study glorify HIS name. Amen.

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

Albert Sarno, PhD, LPC, LCPC, BCPC
Associate Professor
Department of Community Care and Counseling
School of Behavioral Sciences

Dwight C. Rice MDiv., DMin., PhD., AHBC
Associate Professor/Department Chair/MAPC Director
Department of Community Care & Counseling School of Behavioral Sciences

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

Benish Masih

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity,

Date Completed: June 2021

Mentor: Dr. Albert Sarno

The purpose of this study is to counsel Pakistani evangelical pastors on the importance of the biblical teaching of health. Pakistani pastors do not consider healthy living as an important factor of Christian living, even though the Bible clearly preaches on living a physically healthy life. Because of the cultural expectations, personal hindrances, lack of biblical teaching on health issues in Pakistani seminaries, and several other obstacles, Pakistani pastors are not well equipped to guide the congregation about the biblical norm. Because Pakistani pastors deem health concerns as unimportant, they do not teach these truths to their congregation, which does nothing to assist them either physically, psychologically, or spiritually. Lack of knowledge regarding health-related issues keeps both the pastors and the congregational members unaware of God's plan for their lives concerning healthy living, causing them to miss out on His blessings. The researcher will communicate with the willing participants virtually, as an in-person study was not possible due to the pandemic (Covid-19), geographical, and time hindrances. This research will show that the researcher's hypothesis regarding the Pakistani pastor's lack of understanding of biblical, healthy living was supported by the findings.

Word Count: 190

Contents

List of Figures.....	x
Chapter 1	1
Introduction.....	1
Ministry Context.....	2
Rituals.....	2
Activities.....	3
Symbols	3
Member Expectations	3
Cultural background	4
Social Interactions	5
Financial Support.....	6
Persecution	6
Problem Presented.....	7
Purpose Statement.....	8
Basic Assumptions	9
Definitions.....	9
Limitations.....	11
Delimitations	11
Thesis Statement	11
Chapter 2	13
Literature Review	13
Be Holy, for I am Holy.....	13
God’s Design for Human Body	16
Benefits of Healthy Living and Consequences of Unhealthy Lifestyle	18
Disagreements, Hurdles, and Temptations	22
Ways to Avoid Temptations.....	23
Theological Foundations of Victory	28
Theoretical Foundations of Research	32
Chapter 3	35
Methodology.....	35

Participants and Settings.....	35
Plan.....	35
Electronic Form.....	36
Information Packet.....	37
Confidentiality.....	39
Benefits to the Participants.....	39
Questions & Concerns.....	40
Intervention Design.....	40
Survey.....	40
Frequently Asked Questions.....	41
Chapter 4.....	42
Results.....	42
Participant 1.....	46
Participant 2.....	47
Participant 3.....	49
Participant 4.....	50
Participant 5.....	51
Participant 6.....	53
Participant 7.....	54
Participant 8.....	55
Participant 9.....	56
Participant 10.....	58
Chapter 5.....	60
Conclusion.....	60
Bibliography.....	71
Appendix A Questions in the Survey.....	74
Appendix B Thank You Letter.....	80
Appendix C Researcher’s Contact Information.....	81
Appendix D Sample Recipe.....	82
Appendix E Frequently Asked Questions.....	83
Appendix F IRB Approval.....	86

List of Figures

Figure 1. Age Range of Participants	44
Figure 2. Marital Status of Participants	44
Figure 3. Has anyone ever provided counseling for food addiction or health?	45
Figure 4. Is healthy living discussed in the congregation (sermons)?	45

Chapter 1

Introduction

Christians are commanded to obey the Great Commission, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28: 19-20 ESV). The first action in the Great Commission is “Go,” which, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, means “to move on a course” or “to travel to a place.”¹ Going somewhere requires movement from one place to another. According to this verse, believers are to “make disciples of all nations,” meaning travel around the world to preach the gospel.

Traveling to different cities and countries requires energy and a healthy mind and body. A New York Times article by Sandra Blakeslee describes the connection between the stomach and the brain. She says that the main reason for frequent emotional experiences like “butterflies in the stomach, intestinal cramps before a job interview,” or the antidepressants that are used to treat the brain causes nausea is because there are two brains. She refers to the duo of the brain and gut as “Siamese twins,” where one gets disturbed, the other feels it too.²

¹ *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. “Go,” accessed Nov 2020, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/go.

² Jordan Rubin, *Patient Heal Thyself* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc, 2018), 38.

The body is made to become an “instrument for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work” (2 Tim 2:20-21)³. Therefore, this chapter addresses the importance of maintaining good health among Evangelical pastors in enabling them to fulfill their responsibilities towards their ministry and families wholeheartedly. This chapter will describe the impact of rituals, activities, symbols, member expectations, cultural background, social interactions, financial support, and persecution in this area.

Ministry Context

Rituals

The rituals that are more predictable and central to the congregation include baptism upon conversion, demonstration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and consistent toiling for the Lord without any rest. “If they practice Sabbath at all, they do so inconsistently, believing they need to first finish all their work or work hard enough to ‘earn’ the right to rest.”⁴ Pentecostal Christians have many rituals and traditions, such as the belief in the Bible's inerrancy and the importance of accepting Jesus Christ as one’s personal Lord and Savior. In addition, they claim to be born again. This term is mainly used to refer to a spiritual rebirth or regeneration. They believe in Romans 10: 9, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Therefore, if a person believes in his heart and confesses with his mouth that Jesus Christ is his Savior, he is saved and hence born again. Soon after, this new convert must partake in water baptism as an outward expression of dying to the world and living in Christ. Baptism is a significant part of a Pakistani evangelical Christian’s

³ 2 Timothy 2:20-21, Unless otherwise stated, all biblical passages referenced are in the New International Version, (NIV).

⁴ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015), 32.

life because it helps him or her live a spirit-filled life. Additionally, the use of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and divine healing are also prominent in this group. Members are encouraged to strive towards sharing the gospel, whether it be through preaching or getting involved in their community; evangelicals voluntarily work towards sharing the good news.

Activities

Many activities are instrumental in the shaping of the congregation, including but are not limited to the memorization of the Scripture, which is usually tackled early in a child's life. These children are also encouraged to use their voice in the glory of God and, therefore, are encouraged to sing hymns and Christian songs on Christmas, Easter, and various other events. Moreover, the youth is also asked to actively participate in church or ministry activities. Often, they shadow the elders and the congregation's pastors to learn how to live a holy life and reach the people for Christ.

Symbols

Furthermore, there are no symbols associated with this group. Even the symbol of the cross or art depicting Jesus is not displayed around the church or meeting place. This is because they firmly believe in the Ten Commandments. Under the second commandment, the evangelicals do not have any religious icon, painting, or statue in their place of worship. Pastors wear regular clothing and generally carry a Bible with them. While not a symbol, a pastor is generally expected to be overweight and have a potbelly.

Member Expectations

Additionally, the congregation values being a part of the church and community as they not only focus on excelling in their spiritual lives but also focus on excelling in school and at

work. By living a life that is pleasing to God, a Christian is praising and worshiping God publicly. Therefore, a Christian need to be mindful of how he lives his life.

Consequently, a practicing member should ideally attend church services regularly. The member should not only be a listener of the Word of God but should also be a follower and a doer of the Word of God. They believe in the inerrancy and reliability of the Bible. Being the Word of God, the Bible has the power to transform lives through faith. In addition, the born-again believer of the practicing member states that he is a new creation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice who took away the sins of the world, and because of His sacrifice, believers are added to the family of God. Thus, even though it is not expected that all members of the congregation should speak in tongues, they are certainly encouraged to seek these gifts. They are expected to be without sexual immorality. Young adults and unmarried couples are usually encouraged to marry early to avoid any sexual temptation and live in the will of God. While many evangelical pastors encourage sexual purity, discussion about sexual responsibilities in marriage is often not discussed, as cultural limitations make it a taboo topic. In addition, filthy and foul conversation should not be the norm of Pakistani Evangelical Christians. Instead, continuous praise and worship should be their way.

Accordingly, the congregation is expected to dress modestly, with men praying with bare heads and ladies covering their heads during the service. They believe, according to 1 Corinthians 11, that every man who prays with head covered dishonors his head and every woman who does not cover her head dishonors her head.

Cultural background

Considering that these evangelists come from the part of the world that is heavily influenced by Islamic or Hindu traditions and culture, many rituals and beliefs that come from

those cultures have seeped into their everyday lives without them realizing it. For example, continuous chanting of biblical verses, as evident in many denominations, was adopted from Hinduism and Islam, as there is no biblical reference encouraging such behavior. Both the followers of Hinduism and Islam encourage repetitive recitation of their holy mantras, as it is believed to bring them closer to their respective gods. In addition, the followers of both religious groups have not treated their women with kindness and respect, and this attitude has also seeped into the church. Some of these Christians argue that woman was responsible for the sin in the Garden of Eden and that women are the reason for their hardship. Consequently, women do not deserve to be praised or honored. In societies where the birth of a male child is celebrated while female children are treated as a burden, words of wisdom coming from the mouths of women are disregarded.

Social Interactions

While there are many negatives that are threatening the integrity of Christians, positive attributes like hospitality are also part of that culture. Both Islam and Hinduism focus on treating their guests well, as it pleases god. The host is expected to revere guests over themselves, as they could be angels or gods in disguise.

Therefore, in accordance with the culture and keeping Genesis 18 in mind, this group often showers the guest with lavish food and drinks to honor the guest. When the pastor visits the home of the congregation member for a sick or prayer visitation, the pastor or the pastoral staff visiting is offered food or drinks as a courtesy by the house members. The host usually would bring snacks (savory or sweet), tea, or cold drinks for the pastor. If the pastor's visits coincide with mealtime, then the meal is presented too. Pastors usually partake in the meal as a courtesy to the host and as a sign of respect.

Most significant activities or events hosted in the church require long hours of congregational participation and involve full course meals; when a pastor is a part of these Christmas dinners or other meal events, they partake in these meals with their congregations as well.

Financial Support

While in the USA, Pakistani Evangelical pastors are supported by friends and congregation members residing here. However, during their trips, they are financially supported by transferring money to their bank accounts. In addition, they are supported by qualified members updating their Facebook account and uploading their ministry work and sermon videos on other social media platforms.

Persecution

According to OpenDoorsUsa, Christian Pakistanis are the victim of violence 99% of the time.⁵ The escalating persecution of Christian minorities in Pakistan is not a hidden matter, and many instances have received international attention. For example, in 2009, eight Christians were killed in the Gojra riots; Asia Bibi was falsely accused of blasphemy and imprisoned in 2010; Huma Younis, a minor, was abducted in 2019 is now pregnant; and more recently, the forced conversion of 13-year-old Aarzoo Raja, in 2020.^{6 7}

By educating the Pakistani Evangelical pastors on the importance of health and fitness, these pastors will be able to strengthen their bodies and motivate the congregation to do so too.

⁵ Open Doors, “What does persecution look like in Pakistan?” accessed Nov 2020, <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/pakistan/>.

⁶ Presler, Titus. “A Toll on the Soul: Costs of Persecution among Pakistan’s Christians.” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 39, no. 2 (April 2015): 72–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/239693931503900204>.

⁷ Persecution.org, “Family of Abducted Christian Girl in Pakistan Claims Missing Daughter Now Pregnant,” 07/26/2020, <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/26/family-abducted-christian-girl-pakistan-claims-missing-daughter-now-pregnant/>.

Early fitness education could equip young Christian boys and girls to understand their bodies and possibly defend themselves from sudden physical attacks. However, this study does not guarantee the cessation of persecution after ensuring strong bodies.

Problem Presented

The problem is that Evangelical pastors attending USA/Pakistani Christian conferences tend not to understand the biblical teaching of health. These pastors are not setting a good example for their congregation. The congregation depends more on medicines and less on the holiness mandated by the Holy Word of God. Since health is not a priority focused for these churches, congregations are not aware that gluttony is considered a sin according to the Bible. With health at stake, mission work suffers. These pastors usually quote Luke 10:7 (KJV), “And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire.” and other similar verses, for example, 1 Timothy 5:18, Matthew 10:10, Lev 19:13, Deut 24:15. Many of these pastors are overworked and under-appreciate the vessel that they need to glorify Him. In addition, in South Asian cultures, guests are greatly honored and revered. As a result, whenever a pastor visits one of the members of the congregation, they are obligated to shower the pastor with the choicest foods and drinks, which are often laden with fats and sugars. To respect the culture of the host, pastors are obligated to partake in the foods, thus, gaining weight as a result. While a large belly is a sign of wealth and a good life, and therefore, highly respected, pastors are usually at risk of developing coronary heart diseases, diabetes, and hypercholesterolemia. When afflicted with issues arising from years of consuming an unhealthy diet, pastors are unable to fulfill their obligations to their ministry and their family, diminishing their purpose.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN research is to educate Pakistani Evangelical pastors on the importance of health in light of the Bible. These pastors will be counseled to create awareness about the significance of health among their congregation. Being a Muslim country, Pakistan is among the many nations where persecution of Christians prevails. Christians with healthy and active bodies will not only glorify the Creator who made them but will also be able to defend themselves from the attacks of the enemies. In addition, by striving to maintain healthy bodies, pastors exhibit self-control, which is a quality of a good leader. A neglected body demonstrates to the world that the person has no control over his emotions, feelings, and thoughts, and he is relying on food or other sources for comfort. Through this study, the pastors will be reminded of the source of their power and will be counseled on the importance of nutrition, exercise and fitness, stress reduction programs, and the significance of health according to the Bible. This will not only encourage them to lead a lifestyle that can help avoid expensive health issues like diabetes, obesity, and heart disease but can also set a good example for the congregation to honor their bodies as a living temple of Christ. In addition, mental health will also be addressed as there are many underlying causes of overindulgence, which may include depression. Programs that emphasize the importance and the unbreakable relationship of mental, physical, and spiritual health could benefit these pastors too. These programs can teach them that if homeostasis is disrupted in their physical health, their mental and spiritual health would be affected too. They will also be introduced to healthy cooking classes, where the hands-on approach and taste testing of their created meal can help them understand each ingredient and its respective benefit for their bodies.

Basic Assumptions

It is assumed during the study that the Pakistani Evangelical pastors who visit USA conferences will answer the questions asked honestly. The reason for their sincerity would be their family ties with the interviewer. In addition, their morality and religious beliefs would not allow them to be dishonest and misguide the interviewer. Moreover, there have been instances where these Pakistani Evangelical pastors had to cancel their mission trips due to compromising health; therefore, they might be opened to discuss the related setbacks.

Definitions

Facebook Messenger - Social Media applications, Facebook, where users can share photos, update their friends to their location and situation. Facebook Messenger is similar to Viber and WhatsApp, where the user can text, make video calls, and send voice messages.⁸

Gluttony - According to Gary Thomas, gluttony is “Excessive eating (in all its forms).”⁹

Islam – A monotheistic religion where believers (Muslims) believe in Allah as the only God and Mohammad their prophet. They believe the Quran to be their holy book.

Pakistani Evangelical Conference - This is an annual conference held in Maryland, USA, every year on Labor Day weekend. Evangelical Pastors from all over Pakistan come to this conference to preach and share their testimonies.

Sloth - According to Gary Thomas, sloth is “Laziness when it comes to caring for our bodies.”¹⁰

Treatment of Women in Pakistan - In Pakistan, women are looked down upon. Because of the influence of the major religion, Islam, many views and beliefs have found their way in the lives

⁸ Messenger.com, “Hang out anytime, anywhere,” accessed October 2020, <https://www.messenger.com/>

⁹ Gary Thomas, *Every Body Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen your soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 21.

¹⁰ Ibid.

of Pakistani Christians. One of the views includes male dominance and unequal rights. Islam teaches that most hell's residents are women as not only are they deficient in intelligence; they are the object of lust. Therefore, men can abuse women physically, emotionally, psychologically, and sexually. Their portion in inheritance is half of that of men.¹¹

Viber - This is a messaging and a calling application, freely available to download on android phones, iPhones, and computer devices. The user can access mobile data or a Wi-Fi connection to send text messages, make international calls using audio and video, and open group chats.¹²

Western Union Money Transfer - Western Union Money Transfer is a service which is both physically and digitally available. Money can be transferred locally and internationally to family and friends.¹³

WhatsApp - Like Viber, WhatsApp is an application that is freely available on Android devices, iPhones, and computer systems. This is used over the internet, and the users can share messages, photos, videos, voice messages, and documents.¹⁴

Zoom Meeting - Zoom is a video communication application that can be used to conduct conferences, training, and classes.¹⁵

¹¹ Shahid Javed Burki, "Treatment of women in Pakistan," *Tribune*, September 25, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1515421/treatment-women-pakistan>.

¹² Rakuten Viber, "Free and Secure Calls and Messages to Anyone, Anywhere," accessed October 2020, <https://www.viber.com/en/>.

¹³ Western Union, "Send Money 24/7 around the World," accessed October 2020, <https://www.westernunion.com/us/en/home.html>.

¹⁴ WhatsApp, "Simple. Secure. Reliable Messaging," accessed October 2020, <https://www.whatsapp.com/?lang=en>

¹⁵ Zoom, "Zoom for You," accessed October 2020, <https://zoom.us/>.

Limitations

Some factors that are not under control and might affect the research include the poor living conditions of these Pakistani Evangelical pastors. Because of the lack of resources, both physical and monetary, these pastors might not even have access to fresh food and water. Such conditions, over a period, can negatively affect the pastor's health in the long run. In addition, these pastors might be fearful of telling the truth about their situation as either they may be embarrassed to reveal their poor conditions or might be uncomfortable to share their vulnerability with the interviewer because of her gender. This might cause them to either answer vaguely or entirely exit the study. In addition, because these evangelical pastors are in different parts of the world, the interview will be conducted using communication apps like WhatsApp, Viber, Zoom meetings and Facebook, and phone calls. Internet connection and phone signals must be optimal to conduct seamless interviews; however, as this is not a guarantee, it might hinder the interview process.

Delimitations

Because of long travel times and the distance between the interviewer and interviewee, the interview will be held over the phone and the internet. As these evangelical pastors are in different parts of the world, for example, Canada, United Kingdom, and Pakistan, the internet and long-distance calling would be the best communication solution, as in-person meetings would be difficult.

Thesis Statement

If Pakistani evangelical pastors can be counseled on the importance of a healthy diet and exercise from a biblical perspective, then they can be good representatives of God's standards for their lives by being good stewards of their bodies. Indirectly, they can also help others live a holy

life and motivate them to think about their health with a holiness mindset. The problem should be directly related to conditions present or absent in the ministry context. By understanding the importance of health as portrayed through the Scriptures, these pastors will be good stewards of their body and benefit spiritually, psychologically, and financially. In addition, their general good health would enable them to pursue projects that they would not consider otherwise. Moreover, their quest for good health will build in them the virtue of self-discipline, essential in both the ministry and within their families. Furthermore, they not only will be able to influence their family and friends but will be able to motivate the congregation to be good stewards of their bodies.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Be Holy, for I am Holy.

“Be holy, for I am holy” 1 Pet 1:16 (NKJV); this command was initially directed towards the Israelites in the book of Leviticus, but it is equally relevant for Christians who profess to be the people of God. Like a celebrity admirer who tries to mimic the celebrity’s moves, habits, skincare routine, speech, and micro-expressions, Christians who profess to be God’s people ought to mimic the one whom they revere by building their character in accordance with His. Moreover, it is easy to assess the character of the worshiper by examining the characteristics of the gods he worships. Like impure pagan gods will impute their unrighteousness into the character of the worshiper, Holy God will impute righteousness and holiness in the character of His worshipers, as in the case of Moses, where his face was illuminated by being in the presence of God, and the whole Israel noticed (Exodus 34:35). Just like the moon reflects the sunlight, so was Moses’ face, for it reflected His Glory.

Similarly, Lysa Terkeurst agrees that the more a Christian grows closer to God, the more he starts to act like Him as if he is participating in His divine nature.¹⁶ Jesus is an excellent example of this communion, for not only the religious leaders of the time noticed him, but they were also intimidated by him. Troy Roberson urges his readers that the daily life of a true

¹⁶ Lysa Terkeurst, *Made to Crave: Satisfying your Deepest Desire with God, not Food* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 72.

Christian should create an impact on the life of others in the same way.¹⁷ However, the requirement of such closeness and fellowship was holiness, as mentioned in the Old Testament. In the Pentateuch, God sets up commandments and regulations that compelled his people to be Holy so that He can dwell in their midst. This mandate was even more imperative for the clergy, as they are to exemplify God, being His vessels. How would they be considered God's representatives if they do not implement the standards set by Him when acting otherwise would create confusion amongst the congregation. However, the pursuit of holiness does not imply that one has to confine oneself from the society, lest he profanes himself; rather, Victor Hamilton affirms that holiness is evident by the relationship a person has with his family and peers, including his body.¹⁸

Moreover, being God's representatives, the pastors are commissioned to not only conduct themselves in a manner worthy of being a follower of Jesus, but Gary Thomas agrees that they are supposed to persuade others to forgo sin and surrender themselves to God's will.¹⁹ The only way a representative of God can persuade the world is by leading by example. He must look the part, just like the military personnel, when he is expected to be well-groomed and physically fit, exhibiting his readiness for duty. Similarly, Troy Roberson mentions that God expects His people to present themselves spiritually, physically, and emotionally ready to tackle the travails of life.²⁰ Like the military personnel are not born with the aptitude to walk, salute, march and fight, Allison Bottke states that Christians are not born with good habits; instead, they need to

¹⁷ Troy A. Roberson, *Understanding Spiritual and Physical Health: A Biblical Perspective* (Bloomington, IN: West Bow Press, 2017), 92.

¹⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 289.

¹⁹ Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 140-141.

²⁰ Roberson, *Understanding Spiritual and Physical Health*, 6-7.

make a conscious decision to grow and seek holiness.²¹ In addition, by realizing that their life is a gift of God, Christians would be able to become good stewards of God's blessing. Living in conformity with the will of God concerning their bodies, not only will Christians be able to show the world what a child of God looks like, but through their growth, development, and skills, they will be able to play a major role in the redemptive process and benefit the world at the same time. John Ortberg states that when Christians fail to become the person God designed them to be, not only them but the world misses out on the gifts that they were made to share.²²

Furthermore, while trying to help people reconcile with God, the pastor should also emphasize that it is not only the reconciliation with God that is important but also with oneself. It is God who created the mind, body, and soul, and while separate, one cannot be honored more than the other; instead, taking care of each of them would mean living life fully, in a way God has designed. Erik Dailey describes that physical fitness can serve as a spiritual exercise that can bring Christians closer to God.²³ Tracey Greenwood and Teresa Delgado also point out that it is a Christian's responsibility to take care of his physical bodies in order to live his life to the fullest.²⁴ The development of healthy temples of God is a commendable task, and a Christian shows his obedience to God's will by taking care of his body. Alyssa Bergmann expounds on this and states that by taking care of his body, a Christian shows the world that he agrees with

²¹ Allison Bottke, *Setting Boundaries with Food: Six Steps to Lose Weight, Gain Freedom, and Take Back Your Life* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2012), 17.

²² John Ortberg, *The Me I want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 14, 31-32.

²³ Erik Dailey, *The Fit shall Inherit the Earth: A Theology of Sport and Fitness* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 44.

²⁴ Tracey Greenwood and Teresa Delgado, "A Journey Toward Wholeness, a Journey to God: Physical Fitness as Embodied Spirituality," *Journal of Religion and Health* 52, no. 3 (September 2013): 941-54, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1372178672?accountid=12085>.

God's mission for him, and the fruits of his labor are the positive side effects of His obedience.²⁵ The biblical purpose behind the importance of taking care of one's body and engaging in physical activity is not for aesthetics; therefore, the motivation behind losing weight and getting fit physically should not be for physical beauty but better health so Christians can serve God the best they can. Lynn Gerber further illustrates that Christians should not appear unhealthy but practice total health; they should not be self-consumed or self-conscious but should be fully conscious of the gift that is given to them by God.²⁶ The body is a gift of God; as 1 Corinthians 6:19 informs, "you are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body." Brian Allred elucidates that the ultimate purpose of the Christian life is to take care of everything entrusted to them by God, including their bodies, and use it in the glory of God and in serving others.²⁷ Jude Cole states that it is by taking care of the body, mind, and thoughts that a Christian will be able to best take care of himself and, in the meantime, rely on God for his well-being.²⁸

God's Design for Human Body

According to the Jewish and Christian traditions, God created the human body so it can be physically active. As Cara Murphy states, "we aren't taking in the nourishment and rest for

²⁵ Alyssa Bergmann, "Healthy Temples and a Christian Ethic of Fitness," *Lutheran Forum* 53, no. 3 (2019): 52-56, <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAIg0V200131000743&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

²⁶ Lynne Gerber, "Fat Christians and Fit Elites: Negotiating Class and Status in Evangelical Christian Weight-Loss Culture," *American Quarterly* 64, no.1 (March 2012): 61, 84, 181, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1013809069?accountid=12085>.

²⁷ Brian Allred, "Working out Your Salvation and Just Working Out: Toward a Biblical Perspective on Physical Fitness," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 29, (2018): 173-81. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAI14190520000293&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

²⁸ Judy Cole, "Take Care of Yourself," *Christian Science Monitor*, (August 2015): accessed June 1, 2020, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A424613217/ITOF?u=vic_liberty&sid=ITOF&xid=996fbfc4.

which we were designed. We lack energy and vitality. We lack life. In this void, we see hibernation as a better option than the hard work it takes to wrestle with and sincerely question our lack.”²⁹ Furthermore, “God invites us to a fulfilled and prosperous life as he intended us to live in the Garden of Eden before the fall. Because of the fall, we have a lack in our hearts, and God invites us to be filled with his goodness.”³⁰ In addition, the most vital organs of the human body, the heart, lungs, spinal cord, and skeletal muscles, demand that the human body should regularly move to function properly. Exercise has a positive impact on all parts and processes of the body. Tracey Greenwood and Teresa Delgado illustrate that exercise also compliments the body as it helps in releasing fear and anxiety and also becomes a means of developing the right relationship with God.³¹ The question arises, how can physical activity aid in getting closer to God. Gary Thomas calls life without physical activity a cheap forgery and cannot compare to the blessing of being a good steward to one’s body.³² It was not God’s intention to make a human being into a creature that exists without the body. According to the book of Genesis, God created Adam and Eve with bodies, and they were not mere spirits floating in the garden of Eden. Brian Allred describes that their bodies were regarded as being very good.³³ These physical bodies are made up of organs and cells and connect with the outside world through five senses, while the personality is the result of a person’s soul that also establishes a relationship with God and others. Tracey Greenwood and Teresa Delgado state that body, mind, and soul together assist a

²⁹ Cara Murphy, *The Inquisitive Christ* (New York, NY: Faith Words, 2020), 52.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 196.

³¹ Greenwood and Delgado, “A Journey Toward Wholeness,” 941-54.

³² Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 21-22.

³³ Allred, “Working out Your Salvation,” 173-81.

human being in becoming a person. When one component is faulty, it has a negative impact on the others.³⁴

In addition to the Jewish and Christian tradition, Jesus also emphasized the importance of being a good steward of the blessing bestowed upon a person. Judy Cole expounds that by saying that one has to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, Jesus automatically implied that God intends that human beings should take care of their bodies as it is part of God's plan.³⁵ Moreover, there is a reason that God wants His people to be healthy, grow and thrive, because healthy Christians become part of his redemptive process more than they can ever imagine. John Ortberg states that a healthy Christian would actively participate in helping the sick or his company, plant gardens, and write music. Compared to an inactive and unhealthy Christian, one failing to become the person God designed him to be, he deprives others of the gifts that he was equipped with.³⁶ It is mind-boggling that people can pamper their cars, houses, or boats yet ignore their bodies, even though, being the temples of God, human bodies should get more attention than vehicles. Allison Bottke illustrates that human bodies deserve high-quality food like cars need high octane fuel to ensure proper operation of the engine, and there is a plethora of natural, healthy, and delicious food that can calm anxiousness and stress that is good for the body too.³⁷

Benefits of Healthy Living and Consequences of Unhealthy Lifestyle

There are many benefits of practicing healthy eating habits, and Allison Bottke states that illnesses including stress, fatigue, and obesity can be combated with the help of natural foods,

³⁴ Greenwood and Delgado, "A Journey Toward Wholeness," 941-54.

³⁵ Cole, "Take Care of Yourself."

³⁶ Ortberg, *The Me I want to Be*, 30-32.

³⁷ Bottke, *Setting Boundaries with Food*, 140.

herbs, and supplements, and in many instances, the damage can be reversed.³⁸ In addition, eating healthy will bring a Christian to grow closer to God by denying oneself things that could prove harmful in the long run. Lysa Terkeurst expounds that living a life where a person denies himself unhealthy food is a spiritual journey with more significant physical benefits.³⁹ Diana Anderson elucidates that a diet of healthy foods enables the body to function properly with the Holy Spirit's help, while a diet comprised of processed and unhealthy food sets the body up for disease and sickness.⁴⁰ Troy Roberson also states that living a healthy life enables a person to live life to its full potential and focus on their dreams and ambitions too.⁴¹

In addition to healthy eating habits, regular exercise should also be incorporated, and there are plenty of examples where an individual increased exercise and their sleep cycle improved; they woke up energized. Gary Thomas further illustrates that they were even able to pursue God more enthusiastically.⁴² Many individuals who practice regular exercise state that it makes them feel more energetic, with a healthy spine, toned muscles, and flexible joints. It gives them increased willpower and the pride that truly they are made in the image of God. Some say it is not just about working on their bodies but working on their whole being. Exercise increases one's positivity and self-respect, as one does not feel embarrassed, guilty, and fatigued anymore. One does not feel angry towards oneself, others, and God. Tracey Greenwood and Teresa

³⁸ Bottke, *Setting Boundaries with Food*, 139-140.

³⁹ Terkeurst, *Made to Crave*, 66-67.

⁴⁰ Diana Anderson, *Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2011), 13.

⁴¹ Troy A. Roberson, *Understanding Spiritual and Physical Health: A Biblical Perspective* (Bloomington, IN: West Bow Press, 2017), 17.

⁴² Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 31.

Delgado further annotate that even with injuries, regular exercise enhanced the sense of togetherness and connection between their mind, body, and soul.⁴³

While it is evident that healthy eating and exercising are important, there are many misconceptions set forth by the culture and religion that lead to non-adherence to such a lifestyle. Nevertheless, regardless of the confusion, the human body is essential to accomplish the work of God. Tracey Greenwood and Teresa Delgado describe that the body, mind, and soul together make a whole person, but the true essence of human health is when thoughts are directed towards God and agree with Him.⁴⁴ Judy Cole expounds that by focusing their attention on God, human beings experience mental and physical health and well-being and the positive consequences of being in harmony with God.⁴⁵

While there are many positive outcomes of living a healthy life, there are many negative side effects of living an unhealthy life. In a study, sociologist Kenneth Ferraro discovered that according to religious practices of the United States, obesity corresponds to positivity, and Christians are the most obese.⁴⁶ Many Christian conferences are less of revival meetings and more like food festivals. This religious and spiritual indifference is catastrophic; when the heart gets spiritually lazy, a person does not delight in God anymore, and even the menial tasks become tiring and frustrating. However, Gary Thomas describes that when tasks like laughing, playing, eating, or drinking is done with God first, life is brightened with the light of holiness and reverence towards God.⁴⁷

⁴³ Greenwood and Delgado, "A Journey Toward Wholeness," 941.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 941-54.

⁴⁵ Cole, "Take care of yourself."

⁴⁶ Thomas, Every Body Matters, 100.

⁴⁷ Ibid.,108.

While obesity has crept into the church, it is also important to realize that preachers who are unhealthy are usually unaware of the condition inside their bodies. Emotions like anger are harder to recognize and process, as these preachers tend to ignore emotion-related signals the body is sending them, for example, headaches, ulcers, weight gain, and other illnesses. They tend to avoid tackling emotions like fear, anger, sadness, or depression, as being a Christian, they should not be feeling such emotions. They fail to realize that God might be trying to communicate with them through these signals, and Peter Scazzero states that these pastors might overreact when emotionally triggered, without realizing that their reaction might be the result of their past experiences they failed to resolve.⁴⁸ John Ortberg also adds that such unstable Christians may begin to fake spiritual experiences and speak as if their encounter were more profound than they were and behave as if their sin bothers them more than it truly does, and pray with voices filled with fake emotions.⁴⁹ This is detrimental to the sanctification process.

Even though they ignore the warning signs their body is sending them, Christians know that the Word they believe states that their bodies are the temple of God. However, the majority of the time, their outer appearance does not give that testimony. Lynn Gerber paints a picture of a teacher of the word of God who weighs over 400 pounds and eats an entire pie in one sitting. He huffs and puffs and can hardly breathe while talking and walking; his organs are stressed beyond measure. How can such a self-indulgent Christian be a good testimony of being a disciple of Christ when his lifestyle is advertising abuse of his liberty and debauchery?⁵⁰ Over and over, Christians are taught, and they know what they were made for, but Satan seems to

⁴⁸ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How transforming your inner life will deeply transform your church, team, and the world* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 100,108.

⁴⁹ Ortberg, *The Me I want to Be*, 38.

⁵⁰ Gerber, "Fat Christians and Fit Elites," 76.

scatter and dematerialized this truth; “we do not overindulge every day,” they would claim. Lysa Terkeurst states that when they fail to realize how to fill their souls with proper spiritual nourishment, they satiate their hunger with meaningless and temporary physical pleasures.⁵¹

Disagreements, Hurdles, and Temptations

There are many disagreements on the topic of healthy living among Christians, and this is the reason that there is not much discussion about living a healthy eating lifestyle and losing weight in the church. Many preachers believe this will distract the congregation from the true message of the Bible, while others state that as the majority of the Christians are obese, the congregation members might be offended if the pastor tackles the issue of weight on the pulpit. Another reason for not openly discussing this topic is because many of the pastors are overweight themselves. Johanna Hinman, Iris Alcantara, Karen Glanz, Ann Addison, Cam Escoffery, and Michelle Kegler state that church and Christian tradition focus on being big eaters, and this is not a priority for pastors as they believe choosing a healthy lifestyle is a personal issue. In addition, it is hard to tie it in with the sermon.⁵²

While pastors provide many excuses to avoid the topic of healthy living, they fail to realize that the main issue is the struggle with self-restraint. People might think that the culprit is food as they have a problematic relationship with their food, but in fact, the problem is in a person abusing his/her privilege. Allison Bottke states that they use their food as a sedative and a numbing agent to dull their feelings.⁵³ However, human desires are normal, for it is God who created them. Like God created birds with an urge to fly, dolphins to swim, and bunnies to hop,

⁵¹ Terkeurst, *Made to Crave*, 102, 129.

⁵² Johanna Hinman, Iris Alcantara, Karen Glanz, Ann Addison, Cam Escoffery, and Michelle Kegler, “Perceptions of Social and Environmental Support for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in Rural Southern Churches,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 51, no.3 (2012): 799-811, doi:10.1007/s10943-010-9394-z.

⁵³ Bottke, *Setting Boundaries with Food*, 46.

similarly, eating is a basic instinct that human beings must fulfill. However, Elizabeth Swan states that food brings pleasure, and there is a fine line between the satisfaction of a need and gratification of a sensual desire, and the aftereffects of a momentary pleasure could be horrifying.⁵⁴ They direct their desire towards the wrong thing. Human beings were created to earnestly, enthusiastically, fervently, actively, longingly, and zealously yearn, and plead for God. Nevertheless, Lysa Terkeurst states that it is Satan's work to confuse human beings and replace their cravings for God with something else.⁵⁵

Ways to Avoid Temptations

While human beings struggle with self-restraint, it is essential to create boundaries, as God mandates it. Evidence being the boundaries set up in the garden of Eden when God commanded Adam and Eve to eat from everything of the garden but avoid the tree of knowledge of good and evil. However, Allison Bottke states that the first and easiest step towards implementing this boundary is the word "no," as it tells others that a person is in control of himself.⁵⁶

In addition to actively working towards overcoming self-denial, it is important to realize that when Jesus was faced with temptation, he did not hesitate to quote Scripture. Therefore, when cravings are directed towards God, He is the only one who can deflect the attack. Christians have liberty, but as the Bible states, "Everything is permissible --but not everything is beneficial" (1 Corinthians 10:23). Moreover, in spiritual warfare, it is important to have an accountability partner who would not only hold each other accountable but also pray. Lysa

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Swan, "From Gluttony to Enlightenment: The World of Taste in Early Modern Europe," *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 72, no. 1 (January 2018): 113-114, <https://web-a-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=1d8551c1-815d-4db5-9200-72330bc3b131%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZZY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=EIS127080732&db=mlf>.

⁵⁵ Terkeurst, *Made to Crave*, 20-21.

⁵⁶ Bottke, *Setting Boundaries with Food*, 52.

Terkeurst states that it is important to control oneself and be watchful, as Satan aims to lure one away from ideals one set for oneself, in turn humiliating them in their own eyes.⁵⁷ The accountability principle is an important way a Christian can avoid temptation and even address active sin. Gary Thomas expounds that family and friends of the victim of such temptation can talk to other Christians, church leadership and confront the sin with love while actively refusing to let the person be led by deception.⁵⁸

While addressing ways to avoid temptation, it is also essential to consider the personality of the person involved. Some people are extroverts, and others are introverts. Meaning some people have a very rich inner life and can be motivated by memories and words within, while others need external motivation. These people need to either resort to TV, music or other online resources to keep themselves sane. However, one of the most powerful ways to avoid spiraling into the whirlpool of anxiety and worry is by confiding in a friend. John Ortberg states that reassurance from another human being could help a person cast out the spirit of fear and help the spirit of peace move in.⁵⁹

The road filled with temptation does look dark and dreary, but there is a ray of hope, as Troy Roberson states that one of the positive aspects of going through trials and temptations is that God matures the Christian, and they learn the way of doing things properly, with confidence so that they will be able to exhort others facing the same trials too.⁶⁰ In addition, Candance Cameron-Bure and Darlene Sachact describe that by participating in self-discipline, not only are Christians able to get rid of bad habits, but also be constantly reminded that Holy Spirit is in

⁵⁷ Terkeurst, *Made to Crave*, 24, 42.

⁵⁸ Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 141-142.

⁵⁹ Ortberg, *The Me I want to Be*, 110-111, 122.

⁶⁰ Troy A. Roberson, *Understanding Spiritual and Physical Health: A Biblical Perspective* (Bloomington, IN: West Bow Press, 2017), 16, 85.

charge, and they are to follow the spirit of truth and surrender to the plans that God has for their life.⁶¹

Even though the cost of a fast-food meal, a burger, drink, and a side is cheaper than the cost of the consequences of unhealthy lifestyles, such as heart attack, diabetes, cholesterol yet, pastors choose to live unhealthy lives instead of considering the cons. Although overeating is not directly rebuked in the Bible, compared to sexual sin or idolatry, there is a clear warning about overindulgence where the Bible does tackle gluttony indirectly. It is fair to assume that because the people living in biblical times faced dangers like famine, and starvation, therefore, this would not have been an issue worth debating. However, Christians in the early church are warned against gluttony as the ancient church leaders believed that gluttony and laziness weaken the human mind making them more vulnerable to other sins. For if a person is unable to control his appetite, he will be most likely to stumble when tempted with the sins of lust and power. Only by growing oneself in a virtue like self-control, a person would be able to tackle the sins where self-control is required. François Fénelon eloquently puts this problem in perspective when stating that “the soul, by the neglect of little things, becomes accustomed to unfaithfulness.”⁶² According to Thomas, many church leaders even suggest that in order to be victorious in the war against anger or lust, one has to show humility on the dinner table and reduce the amount of food they eat, as it will help them tame their passions.⁶³

If a Christian gives complete reign of his heart to the desires of his flesh and ignores the slow but gradual corroding of the heart, it will be harder for him to be under complete

⁶¹ Candance Cameron-Bure and Darlene Schacht, *Reshaping It All: Motivation for Physical and Spiritual Fitness* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 62.

⁶² Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 82.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 84.

submission to Christ. Therefore, it is fair to say that while being overweight is not considered a sin, being consumed with food and overindulgence is.⁶⁴

Terkeurst mentions that even though it is established that being overweight is not a sin but rather overindulgence, one might feel that food is the culprit, as it causes one to sin. However, this is not true, for food is not sinful, as it does not have the capacity to sin; it is the thought process and the culture that promotes overeating. The portion size in American restaurants is way bigger than in other Western countries like France. Even the TV culture promotes the type of food that adds to the problem, as these items are laced with processed sugars, excessive salt, and unhealthy fats and are made with inexpensive ingredients. When one is bombarded with tempting deals and commercials, it becomes harder to say no. This does not mean that one should starve themselves; it is about learning to make wiser choices. If someone is consumed with the thought of food and absolutely cannot deny himself that unhealthy choice, that means he is ruled by this food, which makes him grow morally irresponsible.⁶⁵

The availability of food is not the reason for over-indulgence, but lack of self-restraint is the culprit. People are often not even hungry, and they merely want to munch on something while bored. They want to fill their time with pleasurable food, not realizing that it cannot fill their emptiness. Other times, when a person is rushing home because he is hungry, he would look at a billboard poster with a picture of a big juicy burger, and in his weakness, forget about his diet in order to appease his roaring hunger. He could rationalize his cravings by saying that it will take him time to reach home, and even when he reaches home, he would have to invest time and energy to cook dinner; therefore, it is better to buy this fat and juicy burger. However, after

⁶⁴ Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 75-89.

⁶⁵ Terkeurst, *Made to Crave*, 59-66.

consuming the burger, the drink, and the side, he would feel extremely guilty. Therefore, he needs to train his mind to stop thinking about what he does not have and instead, focus on being thankful for what he could have. He could start thinking about the benefits of eating a healthy dinner that would not only be beneficial for his body but also give him strength. He must realize that food does not have power over him. In addition, he has to actively remove himself from the temptation when he is considering a compromise and realize that these boundaries are not to torture him but free him from the bondage of his food. He must do this continuously and repeatedly, with all his might and with the power of God.⁶⁶

Furthermore, Thomas mentions that when people realize that overindulgence is a sin and targets the mind, and then see an overweight preacher, they might get confused. For when they see a pastor who preaches about the rain of hellfire on people who participate in fornication, adultery, homosexuality, consciousness, lust, alcoholism, witchcraft, and idolatry, yet is visibly obese, they will be forced to think that even though this pastor overcame other vices in his life, it seems that he is numbing the pain of withdrawal from other vices with food. It is only by confronting his problem and acknowledging his weakness, brokenness, sinfulness, and lack of discipline, that he would find a way to fight back against it. He would also have to realize that he would not be able to overcome his struggles but engaging in a continuous battle against his struggles would benefit not only his body but also his soul. This is the only way he would benefit his God as he will be prepared to do more works. Being a pastor, he is an instrument to be used in the service of God, and if he is absent from work because of his health, not only is he not a good steward of his blessings but he will be ill-prepared to do any good works. In addition, his purpose of attaining a healthy body should not be to garner God's favor, for the Scriptures say

⁶⁶ Terkeurst, *Made to Crave*, 147-153.

that Christ has already accomplished that, but it is to run the race of Christian life with ambition, enthusiasm, and concentration.⁶⁷

Theological Foundations of Victory

Apostle Paul, in his letter to Timothy, prays that Christians may become “a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.” (2 Tim 2:20-21, NIV) This verse emphasizes the importance of readiness, and a Christian has to be prepared to live a life God has designed for him and overeating and overindulgence can lead to deprivation.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5, Paul addresses the subject of overindulgence; whether it be marriage or food, there should be a balance, and denying the unnecessary is good practice whether it be in marriage or food.

Even though there is pastoral hesitation in discussing the topic of healthy living, many Christians use biblical references to shun this idea. With both the Christian and Jewish scriptures accentuating and confuting the duality of spiritual and physical bodies, “The physical body goes back to the dust from which it came” (Ecc 3:20), and “the Spirit is united to the Spiritual body and goes to be with the Lord” (1 Cor 15:35-38), and “At death, God gives us a Spiritual body” (1 Cor 15:44-46). They do agree that there are two types of bodies; however, many Christians conclude that because God is going to give them a new body, there is no point in taking care of this physical body, as it is going to deteriorate anyway.⁶⁸

In addition to the view that seeking healthy bodies is vanity, it is also important to note that the Bible does not explicitly discuss the topic of gluttony, but there are biblical verses that

⁶⁷ Thomas, *Every Body Matters*, 22-24.

⁶⁸ Greenwood and Delgado, “A Journey Toward Wholeness,” 941-54.

denounce it. It is not the Pentateuch, but verses in the Wisdom literature warn against excessive eating. In addition, in the New Testament, apostle Paul does mention that the Cretans should be chastened for being gluttons in Titus 1:12-13, “One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true, therefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.” Paul is grouping the undesirable qualities of the Cretans together, and these are the same qualities, namely, slothfulness, drunkenness, and gluttony, that he mentions when he describes false prophets and teachers. He says in Philippians 3:19 that such men are headed for destruction whose god is their belly and as they are its slaves, as they are not submitted to Jesus. In addition, because of their sloth and idleness, they burden others.

Because overindulgence can cause a Christian to be counted among false teachers, a pastor must realize the importance of self-control. It is mentioned in the Scriptures that the fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Gal 5:22). Like every tree is known by its fruit, for figs cannot be gathered from thornbushes, nor grapes are picked from a bramble bush; similarly, the character of a Christian can be judged by how they conduct their conversations and live their lives. A person’s actions are a testimony of his righteousness, for the heart of an unregenerate man is revealed by the hypocrisy of his conversation and lifestyle. Considering, when Jesus on His way back from Bethany got hungry and saw a fig tree with luscious leaves from a distance. He approached the tree but found it without fruit, which was strange as in the life cycle, the fruit accompanies and sometimes precedes the leaves, and a fruit-bearing tree has no purpose without fruit. Similarly, a Christian who fervently professes that he is a child of God and the Holy Spirit dwells in him, yet the tree of his life bears no fruit but has mere leaves; he is simply deceiving and lying, for he is

not fulfilling his calling. In the same way, a pastor who urges the congregation to refrain from sin, yet is caught in the sin of overindulgence, is a false teacher for he is not practicing what he preaches. For if the Holy Spirit were within him, he would practice self-control. Albeit, no one is perfect, and sanctification is a lifelong process, but Jesus reminds the Christians that a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, and neither can Christians unless they abide in Him (John 15:4).

However, relying on Jesus to assist in this battle for self-control means that a Christian should diligently and actively seek God and confront this issue. Romans 8:11 declares that the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in Christians, and He does not only dwell in them but also gives them power. It is by utilizing this power that they will be able to say no to unhealthy dietary choices. However, this does not mean that God is insensitive and would not understand the travails of a human body and its desires and cravings. On the contrary, God was aware that food would be a stumbling block for humanity, and therefore, He tackled this temptation in the wilderness. The words used in Matthew 4:4 by Jesus come from the words written in Deuteronomy 8:3, where the Lord says that He humbled the Israelites and let them hunger that He might make them know that a man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. So, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, God states that His words would be enough for His believer. He should not be dependent on food but rather be dependent on the One who provides him with this blessing. For it is not food that can satisfy his cravings; only Jesus is able to fill that void. By seeking the continual help of the Holy Spirit to assist in overcoming the power of food, Christians will be able to pursue His calling. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that willingly denying oneself from overindulging humbles a person and makes him desire spiritual food. As even Jesus said in Luke

9:23 that “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Healthy living is a continuous lifestyle, and Christians must make daily healthy choices to maintain the gift God gave them in the form of their bodies; otherwise, they are not a faithful follower of Christ.

In addition to denying oneself of overindulgence, it is important to live healthy if one professes to be a Christian. For Apostle Paul says in Titus 1: 16 concerning Cretans who claim they are Christians, that “they profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.” Their works and outward appearance did not testify that they are Christians. However, apostle Paul was a fine example of living a self-controlled life, as he constantly denied worldly pleasures in pursuit of holiness. This is evident from his statement in his first letter to the Corinthians when he is encouraging them, saying,

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So, run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we are imperishable. So, I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified. (1 Cor 9:24-27).

In the letter, he was telling the Corinthians that he was zealous to do the work of God to the point that he would not hesitate to strike a blow to his body in order to bring it into submission. Paul compares himself to an athlete and wants other Christians to run the race for the pursuit of holiness in a way that a runner runs, for he does not join the race untrained, but practices hard, day and night, not yielding to the desires of his flesh in order to win. Like the athlete is motivated to train by looking towards his reward, similarly, seeking holiness and closeness to God should be the motivation for Christians to pursue healthy living. A Christian’s life should be a living testimony to the rest of the world, and he should work hard to maintain his health, lest he is deemed detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work by the world and God.

Theoretical Foundations of Research

The theoretical framework of this thesis will provide some of the methods that can be used to counsel the Pakistani evangelical pastors on the importance of the biblical teaching of health. The primary theoretical approach that would be used to educate the Pakistani evangelical pastors would be by counseling them through the biblical principles about health in the Bible.

First, the Bible emphasized Sabbatical rest in Genesis and Deuteronomy.

¹ Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on its God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Gen 2:1-3)

Not only does the Bible introduces the concept of rest in Genesis, but it also emphasizes the need to rest after a week of hard labor. In addition, it is also the responsibility of a Christian to seek rest because God mandated it. The significance of rest is also reiterated in Deuteronomy, where Sabbath was observed to remind the Israelites how God delivered them from 400 years of slavery. They are reminded that they were once slaves and, as they are free now, and therefore, should not voluntarily sign up for slavery. One historian on religion, Dorothy Bass,⁶⁹ states that by observing the Sabbath, one is exercising his freedom and is declaring that he is neither a tool to be employed nor a beast to be burdened. Rabbi Abraham Herschel's views were similar too as he stated that "The Sabbath is a day for the sake of life. Man is not a beast of burden, and the Sabbath is not to enhance the efficacy of his work."⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Margaret Diddams, Lisa Surdyk, Denise Daniels, and Van Duzer Jeff, "Implications of Biblical Principles of Rhythm and Rest for Individual and Organizational Practices." *Christian Scholar's Review* 33, no. 3 (Spring, 2004): 314.
<http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F201311211%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

In addition, the importance of rest on Sabbath reminds a Christian that he is made in the image of God and is given a gift in the form of Sabbath to cease from work. In the article written by Diddams et al., it is mentioned that it is not wise for a Christian to allow work to rule him, define his existence or become a god over him. Christians are commanded to rest and can choose so. By choosing rest, a person recognizes he has the power to choose and can control his time and responsibilities. Resting would not mean that a person is neglecting his responsibilities; instead, it allows the individual to attain balance so that the person's work does not control his life.⁷¹

In addition to seeking rest, the Bible also talks about the importance of a good diet, which is evident in the Book of Daniel. Campbell mentions in his commentary that Daniel's fast or Daniel's diet is based upon the spiritual and physical experience of prophet Daniel while on a restricted diet. A study was conducted where 43 participants did a 21-day Daniel fast. It was determined that these participants experienced a decrease in blood oxidative stress, an increase in antioxidant capacity, and an increase in nitric oxide. Even though further research is needed but the finding for these 21 days gives an insight into the ability of this biblical-based fast to improve human health.⁷² Moreover, the Bible repeatedly exhorts the reader and encourages him to not worry, as anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down (Prov 12:25). In addition, in 3 John, the writer is also praying for good health. The writer's prayer is not only for Gaius to enjoy good health but is also concerned for his spiritual health.⁷³

⁷¹ Diddams et al., "Implications of Biblical Principles of Rhythm and Rest," 314.

⁷² Richard J. Bloomer, Mohammad M. Kabir, John F. Trepanowski, Robert E. Canale, and Tyler M. Farney. "A 21 Day Daniel Fast Improves Selected Biomarkers of Antioxidant Status and Oxidative Stress in Men and Women." *Nutrition & Metabolism* 8, no. 1 (2011): 17-17, <https://nutritionandmetabolism.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1743-7075-8-17>

⁷³ Constantine R. Campbell, *1, 2, and 3 John*, (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2017), accessed October 4, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central, 214.

Furthermore, additional measures that can be utilized to counsel and guide the pastors include health seminars too. Many studies indicate that health awareness seminars prove to be successful. For example, in a study mentioned by Lewis et al., an event was arranged in Bristol, England, focused on breast health, clinicians and breast care nurses conducted educational lectures and focus-groups in a relaxed setting, where participants were given a questionnaire to rate their knowledge and understanding of breast health. Out of the 40 women who attended, 25 completed the survey and reported that their understanding of breast health increased from 32% pre-event to 84% post-event. Among these women, 14 already completed a breast screening prior to the event, And the rest planned to complete the screening after the event. With this knowledge, they plan to educate and encourage friends and family members to participate in breast screening.⁷⁴

In addition to hosting health seminars, it is important to remind the pastors that Bible also affirms the medical profession. Wolter says that the author of the Gospel of Luke, a Syrian and an Antiochene, student of apostle Paul, and served God wholeheartedly, was a physician by occupation.⁷⁵ Colossians 4:14 also confirms that Luke was a physician. Moreover, Jesus also confirms the importance of the medical professionals in Mark 2:17 when he states that “Those who well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

⁷⁴ Caroline Lewis, Caroline Oates, Rachel Ainsworth, Sherif Wilson, and Philippa Jackson. "P033. the Impact of Community Outreach Black and Ethnic Minority Breast Health Awareness Seminar: Addressing Healthcare Inequalities." *European Journal of Surgical Oncology* 45, no. 5 (2019): 894-895, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/science/article/pii/S0748798319300800?via%3Dihub>.

⁷⁵ Michael Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke: Volume I (Luke 1-9:50)* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), accessed October 4, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central, 6.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Participants and Settings

Due to COVID-19 Pandemic, this study was conducted virtually. Platforms like Zoom meetings, WhatsApp texting, FaceTime were used for communication purposes. The number of participants involved in the setting was ten Pakistani Evangelical pastors. Most of these pastors are family friends of the student researcher, and the researcher has access to them either on social media or has physically met them in the USA in Pakistani Christian conferences. The researcher is aware that the study could be a setback because of the limitations, including internet connection issues, minimal access to healthy food, participant's bias towards researcher's gender, and vice versa.

Plan

1. Each pastor will be asked to download the communication application called WhatsApp. If they currently do not have the application on their devices, this is a free application available on the Google Play Store for Android devices and the Apple Store for Apple devices. Through this application, the user can call or text internationally without any charge. Pastors will be contacted by WhatsApp calling individually. They will also be asked to go online and join a Zoom meeting with the pastors to discuss the study.
2. The time, date, and access information of the Zoom meeting will be sent via WhatsApp messaging to each pastor separately.
3. At the Zoom meeting, ten pastors will be present, and the study will be discussed.

- a. The researcher will start by introducing herself.
 - b. She will give background information and the purpose of the study.
 - c. The researcher will provide the information on the questions, tasks, forms, and other documents needed to ease the research process.
 - d. Each pastor will be given a deadline to respond to the invitation of the study. They have a choice to drop out of the study or continue. An online form will be sent to them to obtain their consent to participate in the study.
 - e. Everything that the researcher will discuss in the Zoom meeting will be available in the information packet emailed to the pastors for reference.
4. After the pastors have agreed to participate in the study, they will be asked to live a healthy lifestyle for six weeks. The participants will also be advised to consult their primary care doctor or nutritionist regarding making healthy choices.
 5. At the beginning of each week, they are to record their emotions with friends and family, their behaviors with the congregation of their respective churches, their energy levels while working in the ministry, and the things they are unable to do because of low energy levels.
 6. In the six weeks, they are to exercise, follow a healthy diet plan, sleep for at least 8 hours a night.

Electronic Form

The platform used to complete this survey is created by Google Drive. This online form is a consent form to determine whether they agree or not to participate in this study. If the participant chooses to leave the study, then all they must do is exit the survey. If the participant

decides to stay in the study, they will complete the questionnaire asked by the form. The questionnaire will include the following questions in detail:

1. Information on the current physical, mental, emotional, and psychological health status of their congregation.
2. Is the church doing anything to remain healthy? If yes, then what are the results? If no, then how is the church doing in missions, and their emotional health,

This form will be kept for evaluation to compare with the results of the study.

All the participants will be reminded to submit their survey at least five days before the deadline. If the participant chooses to submit in the printed survey, the data received will be entered in the online version of the survey to complete an electronic copy. The survey will assist the researcher in developing a training plan to educate the participants and future students on the importance of healthy living.

Information Packet

The information packet will be sent to the participants via email. Even though the participants will be contacted via Zoom meetings and WhatsApp, an introduction packet will be emailed to formally invite them and introduce them to the survey. As the pastors will be located across the globe, they will be asked to email queries regarding the survey. However, to meet the researcher on Zoom meetings, they will be asked to arrange contact between 9:00 am and 3:00 pm Eastern Standard Time, with urgent queries. This timing will coincide with Pakistan Standard Time of 6:00 pm to 12:00 am, considering they might be busy during the daytime. They will be encouraged to call if the need arises so that they would not have any difficulty during the process.

In addition, the participants will be expected to complete the survey before the deadline. They will also be informed that once they decide to participate in the study, they are to engage in a healthy lifestyle for about six weeks. Questions regarding the kind of food they should be consuming, the amount of food, mode of exercise, and a few even recipes will be provided to jumpstart their healthy lifestyle. At least one recipe will be included as a sample. See Appendix D.

Furthermore, they will be informed that they will not be charged nor compensated for their time and participation. The program is voluntary and aims to find out the current physical, emotional, mental, psychological condition of the Christian congregation. The goal is to educate pastors on the importance of healthy living based on biblical teaching.

In addition, there will also be a list of frequently asked questions to reduce any confusion or anxiety caused by the whole process. At the end of the information packet, the participant will be thanked for reading through the packet and encouraged to contact the researcher if they have any questions. After going through the information packet, they will be directed to complete the survey on Google drive as the first immediate step.

Once they agree to participate in the project during the initial WhatsApp call, they will be sent an email containing a link to the google drive survey, a consent form, FAQs, one sample recipe, and a weekly journal template. The link provided in the email will take them to the survey website. Participants will be contacted via WhatsApp, thanking them for their participation in the project. A final WhatsApp call will request them to give their feedback and ideas about the study and room for improvement. Additional information on obesity, diabetes and mental health will be available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

website.^{76 77 78} A recipe that will be introduced to jumpstart the healthy living process is provided in the email sent to the participants. A copy is attached in Appendix D.

Confidentiality

The information of the participants will be kept confidential. The contents of the research will be kept private, and only the researcher will access it. The information used in the study will not jeopardize the confidentiality of any of the participants. The participants will be provided with a basic non-disclosure agreement between the participants and the researcher located at Liberty University to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information. The only information that would be disclosed would be the survey results that does not disclose any name, occupation, or location of the participants. No confidential information will be disclosed by the researcher that would jeopardize the safety of the participants. There will be an expectation of mutual respect from both parties entering into the confidentiality agreement.

Benefits to the Participants

The nature of this study is strictly voluntary, and no benefits or compensation are promised to the participants. The participating individuals will gain knowledge on how to live healthy in the light of the Bible, which can be implemented in their respective congregations. If the participants choose not to participate in the study, their relationship with the University or the researcher will not be affected.

⁷⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Overweight & Obesity: Adult Overweight & Obesity,” CDC.gov, accessed October 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/adult/causes.html>

⁷⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Diabetes: Diabetes Risk Factors,” accessed October 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/risk-factors.html>

⁷⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Mental Health: Learn about Mental Health,” accessed October 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/>

Questions & Concerns

For additional questions or concerns, the participants are free to contact Benish Masih, the researcher conducting the study. They may call at [REDACTED] or email

[REDACTED] If they have additional questions regarding this study, they are encouraged to contact Institutional Review Board at Liberty University's email [REDACTED] or Dr. Albert Sarno, Faculty Sponsor, at [REDACTED]. Refer to Appendix C.

Intervention Design

Survey

The purpose of using a survey as a part of this study is to gather information on individual participants in a sizeable group. Instead of asking multiple questions to gather as much information as possible, each question is designed to be direct and coherent to reduce any confusion. The methods of data and survey collection will include telephonic and electronic data collection.⁷⁹

A telephonic survey allows the ability to simplify any questions or concerns and resolve any issues while on the call. It is economical and does not take a lot of time. The researcher can gather the data immediately, and the feedback is instantaneous. However, as both the researcher and the participants cannot see each other face to face, it is difficult to develop a good rapport.⁸⁰

Electronic Data collection, on the other hand, will let the participant have something visible in front of their eyes. The participant's response will be quick electronically, and the researcher will be able to gather and organize the data instantly. However, unlike the telephonic

⁷⁹ T L Jones, et al., "A Quick Guide to Survey Research," *Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*, Royal College of Surgeons, Jan. 2013, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3964639/.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

data where the researcher and the participant will be able to reach each other immediately, electronic data collection will not have this benefit.⁸¹

Survey questions will help the researcher understand the position of the church with respect to health and counseling. A survey will provide the researcher or the reader with sufficient data to be able to conduct a study. Surveys also help understand any lack in the areas of counseling that will help the researcher educate the participants on the importance of the topic. Online surveys are more classified and less daunting, which will help the participant answer these questions than a face-to-face survey. Collecting Survey questions also help future researchers to conduct studies with a similar topic. This survey will provide a basis for future researchers to test and even build on the findings in this research. A copy of the survey questionnaire is attached in Appendix A.

Frequently Asked Questions

The FAQs will provide information on concerns that the participant might encounter. This will help improve the participant's experience by providing instant instruction and advice about a particular issue. The FAQs are time efficient and will trim the time needed to look for answers needed either on the internet or by calling the researcher. These FAQs will not only be beneficial for the participants but will also be helpful for any future studies. A copy of the FAQs is attached in Appendix E.

⁸¹ T L Jones, et al., "A Quick Guide to Survey Research."

Chapter 4

Results

The researcher initially interviewed 18 potential candidates. Ten participants showed interest and were eligible to participate in the study. The data was collected by the researcher and stored in a password-protected computer. The researcher provided the participants with a weekly log to monitor their health, energy levels, and mental concentration. This log was provided to the participants so that the researcher could use it to compile the result for the thesis. In order to protect the privacy of the participants, the researcher will be referring to them as Participant 1, 2, 3 till 10.

These participants responded to the flyer that the researcher shared with acquaintances and churches. In response to their interest, the participants were interviewed in the first WhatsApp call to determine their eligibility. Some participants were not eligible for the study because they were unwilling to participate in a six-week study, did not find the study useful, or did not meet the eligibility criteria. Later, those who qualified were given a survey questionnaire and a consent form to fill out. They were then advised to eat healthy and do 30 minutes of any physical activity for six weeks. After the six-week duration, the researcher conducted an exit interview.

The first interview questionnaire revealed that the churches under the participants did not focus on the importance of physical, emotional, and mental health in the ministry. There is no concept of physical wellbeing in church congregations. According to these leaders, the issues of

emotional, mental, and physical health can only be taken to a physician in a hospital setting, as God should not be bothered with such trivial matters. Addressing health issues in the congregation is seen as a sign of weakness, as many of them neglect issues and engage in habits that exacerbate their condition. Only one out of the ten participants had some understanding about the importance of health in the ministry. However, his concerns were directed more towards hygiene rather than overall physical health. He began his research on the importance of hygiene health recently because of the COVID-19 outbreak in his area. He was diligent in teaching his congregation about the usefulness of handwashing and proper sanitation but did not address the value of physical health, as he did not feel it was meaningful for his congregation.

The consent form was returned to the researcher via email, with the participant's first and last name initials. Most of the participants have easy access to a smartphone, and they preferred communicating using one. Using a computer to scan a document, fax, print, and email was undesirable because the participants who live in Pakistan experience higher than normal disruptions in the flow of electricity. Due to these electrical malfunctions, the majority of the time, proper internet function is impaired; therefore, they prefer conducting their business on smartphones which has internet data.

The survey questionnaire had 48 questions that revealed the following demographics and some surprising results on food and health issues. Refer to Appendix A.

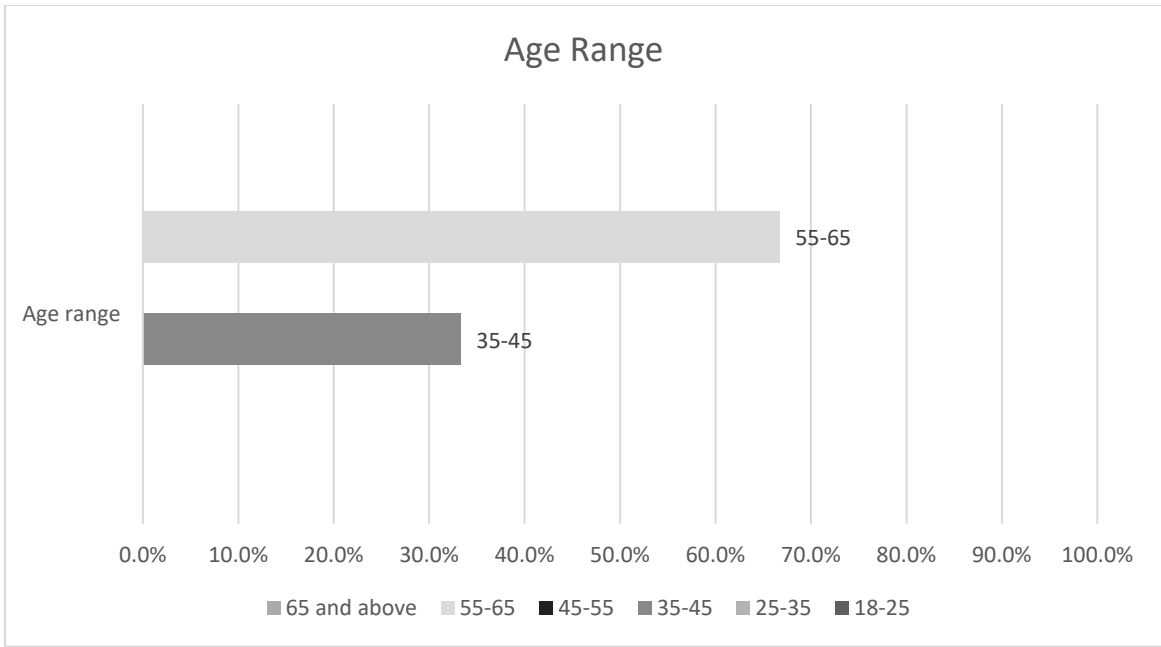


Figure 1. Age Range of Participants

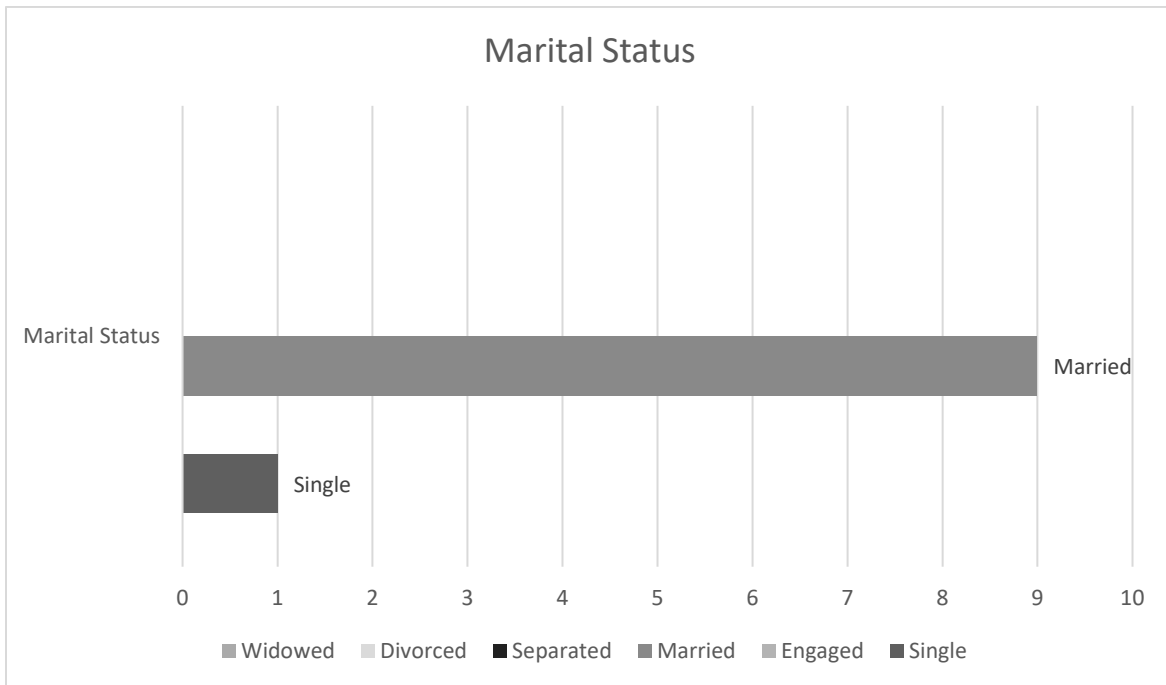


Figure 2. Marital Status of Participants

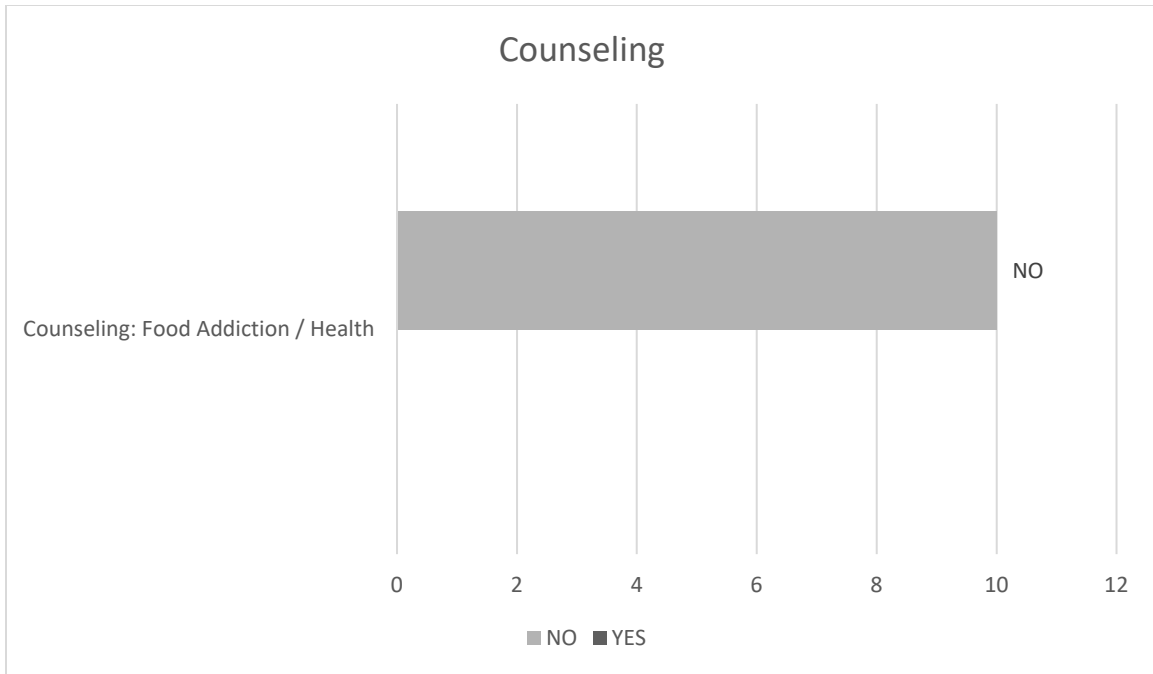


Figure 3. Has anyone ever provided counseling for food addiction or health?



Figure 4. Is healthy living discussed in the congregation (sermons)?

Participant 1

Participant 1, a 57-year-old pastor whose ministry focuses on reaching out to non-believers and planting new churches, was enthusiastic about the study and was ecstatic to participate. He began by inquiring about the study and asking about the researcher's affiliations, the reason for the study etc. The participant was in weekly check with the researcher. During this time, the pastor did not counsel his congregation regarding any health issues. Even though he was willing to focus on his diet and exercise regularly, many hurdles stopped him from doing so.

The participant stated that the majority of the time, he is on the road, as he travels into tribal remote areas in order to reach the nonbelievers. He has to be mindful of the culture and surroundings of the individual to avoid offending them. For a man of God to leave with an empty stomach from one's house is not only disrespectful in that culture but is also considered a bad omen. As a result, being careful about food while traveling not only becomes a hassle but is a waste of resources. Therefore, the participant could not follow a healthy diet routine strictly as he would eat whatever he was presented with.

In addition to the inability to maintain a proper diet, the pastor could not follow the regular exercise routine either because of the unpredictable schedule. He would sometimes have to get up early in the morning to leave for another town and travel for long periods, in turn disrupting his sleep patterns, and as a result, affecting his energy level. Furthermore, this participant contracted the COVID-19 virus, further depleting his energy resources.

Moreover, he was unable to follow the proper diet and exercise program, and he also explained that he does not counsel his congregation regarding health issues. He explained that he had not been taught in the seminary school to focus on his health but to be selfless and use his

body as a living sacrifice, which is a temporary abode. In addition, he does not have much knowledge about leading a healthy lifestyle, nor does he know how to cook as he relies on his wife for food.

In any case, the participant does not offer counseling on health issues in his congregation. However, this is not a strange occurrence as many Pakistanis do not seek counseling at all because they associate counseling with mental issues. Mental health issues and seeking professional help are identified as a sign of weakness and precariousness that results in instability; therefore, it is taboo in their culture, where stability is a sign of maturity and is highly honored. Consequently, many shy away from seeking help and rely on the internet or a close circle of uninformed individuals. Oblivious to the many side effects of unstable physical, emotional, and psychological health, including obesity, the members of the congregation openly welcome obesity as a part of the normal aging process of a healthy and financially stable individual.

Participant 2

Participant 2, a 38-year-old associate pastor, has a ministry that focuses on reaching the non-believers while traveling throughout the country, in addition to assisting his senior pastor. He was ecstatic about joining the study, as he is passionate about working out and healthy eating. The participant was diligent in keeping in touch with the researcher and updating her weekly. During this time, the participant did not counsel his congregation about healthy living even though he was eager to focus on his diet and exercise because there were many setbacks.

The participant stated that as he is constantly traveling, he does not have a set schedule to dedicate time for meal prepping and working out. Sometimes he must leave the house late at night to travel to another town, in order to reach his destination on time. Therefore, he often

relies on fast food or meals offered to him by the people receiving him in their homes, and other times he had to go on an empty stomach, depending on the situation at hand. In addition, as he does not want to offend others by not accepting the food they offer, he eats whatever is presented by the people visited even if it is contrary to what he usually eats. This included high sugar, high carbohydrate, and high-fat foods, as the participant did not want to be a stumbling block for these new converts. Therefore, preparing a meal beforehand is useless, and the participant could not follow a strict healthy diet routine.

In addition to not following a healthy diet routine, the pastor could not exercise due to his changing and unpredictable schedule. As a result of his disrupted sleep patterns and unhealthy diet, the majority of the time, he did not have enough energy to get up and work out. Even though he constantly felt lethargic after every mission trip, he understood the need to work out and eat healthily to gain more energy and stamina. In addition, he contracted the COVID-19 virus, further influencing his schedule and energy levels.

He further explained that while being a strong proponent of working out and eating healthy, he does not counsel his congregation regarding health issues. He argued that since he could not strictly follow a healthy diet and workout plans, he should not urge others to follow the lifestyle he cannot demonstrate, as it would be hypocritical. In addition, he was not taught, whether in school or under the wings of other pastors, to focus on his physical body and, therefore, is uncomfortable to recommend others to do so, as it might be categorized as vanity.

Moreover, his congregation is not offered the option of counseling for health issues, as he believes that the congregation members should seek a doctor for health issues. Because mental health issues are looked down upon in Pakistan, anyone who has a mental illness is automatically deemed unstable and unfit for society. As such, he believes that it is improbable that any

Pakistani congregation member would actively seek help. In addition, obesity is not considered a disease but a part of a normal aging process.

He also mentioned that his responsibilities are overwhelming, which also causes him to neglect his exercise routine and dietary plans. The researcher suggested that he should share his responsibilities among other mature church members, alleviating him from any extra stress. He responded that he is unable to share his pastoral responsibilities for fear of division.

Participant 3

Participant 3 is a 38-year-old pastor who is not only a health care worker but is also a Bible teacher for children. His ministry focuses on children and teens influenced or overwhelmed by their surroundings, resorting to destructive behaviors, such as drug addiction. And being a health care worker, he values the importance of health in ministry. The participant actively kept in touch with the researcher and updated weekly. During the study, the participant did not counsel his congregation regarding any health issues; however, he did discuss hygiene.

The participant elaborated that he often travels in order to reach out to the struggling youth. He stated that his energy level is usually high as he not only takes care of his diet, he also works out regularly. However, as the gyms have been closed during the pandemic, the participant has not been able to work out like before. Nevertheless, he has been strongly encouraging and educating the children and the teens to practice good hygiene.

Furthermore, while he practices eating healthy and working out, he does not counsel his congregation regarding health issues. As mentioned earlier, he has educated his congregation and their families on the importance of good hygiene, but he has never addressed healthy eating and working out deliberately. However, he regularly conducted and organized classes and events where children and teens are physically active. For example, Bible-based musical chair

competition, where a person who occupies the chair has to say a Bible verse in order to keep his position, otherwise he is disqualified. In addition, relay races, soccer matches, and other such activities were also organized. He believes that engaging the children and teens in physical activity not only helps them to de-stress, but godly supervision encourages them to not stray to the path of drug addiction and alcoholism.

While there is some form of physical activity, his congregation is not offered counseling for health issues. Even though he appreciates the importance of physical activity, he believes he has to be a good role model for the children and teens in order for them to listen to him. Although there is awareness of the dangers of a busy and its link with mental health, he makes sure that the children and teens are fed a nutritious diet. When in his care, these children are fed simple Pakistani food like *daal* (Lentils) and *chawal* (Rice). In addition, he was diligent in following the 6-week diet plan and walked around the neighborhood. He felt energetic and focused throughout the study.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is a 38-year-old children's ministry pastor who is working full-time and takes care of her elderly in-laws. Her ministry focuses on children and their Bible studies. Knowing the consequences of living an unhealthy lifestyle, this participant was very receptive to the concept of glorifying the Lord by living a healthy lifestyle. During the study, the participant reported that she did not counsel her congregation regarding any health issues.

The participant explained that she tries to eat healthily and work out as she suffers from migraines, fogginess, body aches, fatigue, and is often overwhelmed due to her circumstances. While she is taking care of her elderly in-laws, she often neglects to prepare healthy food for herself and skips meals. Because of that, she is often too exhausted to work

out. However, while following the six-week plan, she did work out and reported that her energy level and mood enhanced dramatically. Besides, on the days she is unable to work out, she experiences migraines and body aches.

While she was persistent in following the six-week healthy lifestyle, she did not counsel her congregation regarding health issues, nor is this issue addressed in her church. Obesity is not frowned upon, and many of the members of her congregation are either overweight or obese. She stated that being overweight is also considered a sign of prosperity.

However, even though she experienced a drastic change in her health, physically, emotionally, and mentally, she stated her church does not offer options for counseling related to physical, mental, or emotional health. As these ailments are not spiritual in nature and, therefore, the church does not address them, medical doctors are considered a better choice for such problems. However, due to the stigma associated with mental illness, people seldom seek a doctor. Furthermore, even if a person finds healing through a doctor, he or she will shy away from discussing their experience lest they are deemed as mentally unstable.

Participant 5

Participant 5 is a 40-year-old pastor who is not only a full-time worker but also manages the graphic arts, website, and social media of the church. He has to constantly keep in touch with all of the church staff in order to keep the congregation up to date on the current events within the church while resolving any technical issues that arise along the way. He is constantly overwhelmed, and, as a result, he does not take care of his diet or health. He has not visited the doctor in the past six years, because he does not have the time. During the study, the participant did not counsel his congregation regarding any health issues.

The participant stated his full-time job is extremely hectic, and he seldom gets time to eat. As a result, he usually skips meals and sometimes forgets to eat or drink the whole day. After work, he dedicates his time to help in the church, in the communications and technical department. As he enjoys working there, sometimes he works late, even through the middle of the night. Because of that, he usually sleeps 2 to 3 hours a day, returning to his full-time job in the morning. He is usually exhausted and lethargic and does not have enough energy to work out or prepare meals beforehand. As a result, he was not able to follow the six-week healthy diet and workout plan.

In addition to not following the six-week healthy lifestyle, the participant explained that he did not counsel his congregation regarding health issues. He believed that his body is supposed to glorify God, and he is doing so by working for His kingdom. The physical body is temporary, so there is no need to spend extra time, money, and energy to run after vain things like washboard abs.

Since healthy eating and working out was a waste of time for the participant, he explained that his church does not offer counseling for health issues. He explained that medical doctors earn their degrees to manage the health issues arising in the human body, and the church is not the place to find a cure for health matters. He stated that he does not go to the doctor regularly because he feels healthy and will only visit him when he is not feeling well. He also believes that obesity is the sign of a mature pastor, and only when a pastor has a big protruding tummy is he respected. He believes mental health is important, but he would not go to the doctor to see if he would need counseling for mental health because he might be deemed as unstable and a lunatic.

Participant 6

Participant 6 is a 40-year-old pastor whose ministry focuses on teaching the congregation and reaching the non-believers while traveling throughout the world. In addition, he is a full-time student and a full-time office worker. Due to pre-existing health conditions, he dedicated six weeks to participate in the study. He already manages his health and works out. However, during that time, the participant did not counsel his congregation regarding any health issues.

The participant stated that as he is a full-time student and has a full-time job. Since he already has pre-existing health conditions where he must consistently monitor his health, he eats a reasonably healthy diet. He does prepare meals beforehand and usually informs the people he visits about his pre-existing conditions so that they can accommodate him accordingly.

In addition to following a healthy diet routine, the pastor was able to exercise consistently. He makes sure that he goes to bed on time and gets eight hours of sleep to have enough energy for the next day. He stated during the study that his energy levels were high, and because he was able to work out, he was able to focus on his studies too.

Additionally, he explained that while realizing that healthy eating and working out is essential to further God's kingdom, he does not counsel his congregation regarding health issues. He stated that he was not taught either by his parents or in school that the topic of healthy living should be a part of a sermon. While the congregation is aware of how following a strict diet and workout routine has helped him manage his health conditions, he does not actively preach about it.

Moreover, he does not offer his congregation the option of counseling for health issues because he believes they should contact a doctor or health issues, as he is not qualified to diagnose or cure them. Even though he understands that mental health is highly ignored in

Pakistani culture, he believes that if there is a problem, a person should seek appropriate help. In addition, he believes obesity is not a serious issue if the person is not experiencing the negative side effects associated with obesity.

Participant 7

Participant 7 is a 34-year-old pastor whose ministry focuses on reaching the non-believers. Although he was hesitant to participate in the study because he did not have much time and worked full-time, he reluctantly agreed. He stated that he believes in working toward getting glorious bodies in heaven rather than focusing on the temporary physical bodies on earth. During the duration of the study, the pastor did not counsel his congregation regarding any health issues.

The participant stated that he works full-time, and after work, he evangelizes along with other church staff. Because of his hectic schedule, he often skips a meal, and when he does eat, he overindulges, as he had not had any caloric intake since morning. He is completely dependent on his family to cook for him, as he does not know how to cook. He forgets to eat his packed lunch because of his busy schedule and relies on eating outside calorie-laden food at the end of the day to compensate. He rests or sleeps right after due to a hectic day. Therefore, the participant was unable to strictly follow a healthy diet routine.

Moreover, not only was he unable to complete the six-week healthy living program, he did not counsel his congregation regarding health issues. He explained that obsessing over one's body is not biblical and, therefore, is idolatry. In addition, he did not have much knowledge of the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle and working out. He also explained that any health issues he may have, are the result of his sin and are not directly linked to his unhealthy lifestyle. And living in the sin-cursed world, he has to endure such afflictions if it is God's will for him to suffer.

Furthermore, not only does his church does not offer counseling for health issues, he explained that mental health issues are not addressed in his congregation because the media has exaggerated the issue. While many suffer from serious mental illnesses, there are others who use mental illnesses as an excuse to get away with anything. He believes this generation is being raised into weak men and women who cannot think for themselves and rely on media to tell them that they have an illness. As a result, the majority of the self-proclaimed mental issues are fictitious. Obesity is not a mental health issue, as he believes that as a person ages, his body goes through certain processes that make him overweight and slow. Some people are blessed with good genes, while others endure the complexities associated with old age, such as obesity. Therefore, obesity is part of the natural aging process.

Participant 8

Participant 8 is a 27-year-old pastor whose ministry focuses on digital media management. He was ecstatic about joining the study initially, but as the weeks progressed, his enthusiasm vanished because of exhaustion. Throughout the study, the pastor did not counsel his congregation regarding any health issues.

The participant indicated that throughout the day, he is in the church helping out other church staff and assists in maintaining the church property too. He helps the senior pastor manage the sermon slides during the church sermons, develop graphics, assists in editing and video making, collaborate with other church leaders to compile, edit, and release special communications to the rest of the congregation or other staff members. In the first few weeks of the study, he regularly ate healthily and worked out. However, because of a heavy workload, he was not able to keep up with his healthy eating schedule, and in order to relax, he would often indulge in unhealthy food choices.

In addition to not following a proper diet, the pastor was unable to follow the regular exercise routine because of low energy levels. He would sometimes have to stay up late at night in order to finish projects, in turn disrupting his sleep patterns. In order to keep himself awake during late nights, he would often resort to late-night snacks and fast food to keep his brain functioning properly. And many times, he would sleep right after a heavy last night meal. As he did not sleep properly, the participant was not able to keep up with the study. He could not work out as he did not have enough energy to do so.

In addition to not following the proper diet and exercise during the study, he explained that he did not counsel his congregation regarding health issues. He stated that the lead pastor did not teach about the connection between healthy living and spiritual health. In addition, the church does not offer counseling for health issues. Any physical or mental element should be handled by a medical doctor, and the church is not designed to address those needs. While he believes mental health is a serious issue, he believes anybody would be ashamed to seek help because of the stigma associated with mental illness. He believes that mental health issues are easily resolved by talking to peers and elders in the community, and seeking the doctor's help should be a last resort and reserved for people who really need it. He did not have any knowledge about the psychological aspects leading to obesity, and therefore, did not consider obesity a psychological issue. Instead, many obese men and women are highly respected in society; therefore, obesity is part of a human life cycle.

Participant 9

Participant 9 is a 40-year-old pastor whose ministry focuses on managing accounts. He works full-time as an accountant and then full-time in the church. He was initially ecstatic to

participate in the study because he realized he had to lose weight. Throughout the duration of the study, the pastor did not counsel the congregation regarding any health issues.

The participant stated that most of the time, he is at his desk working on the computer, and even in the church, he is constantly on the computer managing the accounts. Therefore, he does not walk much throughout the day. Initially, he started eating healthy, and soon got bored of the bland health food and went back to eating high fat and high-calorie meals. If he skipped one of the meals during the day, he would compensate by overindulging at dinner. He would sleep right after dinner because of exhaustion. Therefore, the participant was not able to strictly follow a healthy diet routine as he would eat fat-laden oily foods.

In addition to not maintaining a proper diet, he was not able to exercise regularly either. He stated that by the end of the day, he would be so exhausted that he would not have the stamina to work out. He worked seven days a week without taking even a day for vacation with the family. With the busy schedule, he would not have enough time to maintain his diet and exercise.

While explaining the reasons for not working out and following the proper diet, the pastor also explained that he does not counsel members in the congregation regarding any health issues. He stated that there are no such thing as mental issues, and the brain is strong enough to handle negative emotions. It is only a matter of self-control and a proper mindset. A person should handle his own emotions and not get involved with the emotional battles of others, as it is a private matter. He does not have any knowledge about healthy living or the relationship between a sound body and a sound mind. He does not believe obesity is a psychological issue but rather a physical issue due to some hormonal or chemical imbalance.

Participant 10

Participant 10 is a 40-year-old pastor whose ministry focuses on families and youth. He is also a part-time health care worker. Due to pre-existing health issues, the pastor wanted to participate in the study in order to start his journey of healthy living. He was enthusiastic about the study and was ecstatic to join. Throughout the study, he did not counsel his congregation regarding any health issues.

The participant stated that being in the healthcare industry, he understands the importance of healthy living and its effect on mental health too. He strictly followed the six-week diet and workout program. He ate healthily and worked out regularly. With pre-existing medical conditions and the doctor asking him to drastically change his lifestyle in order to live, He explained that his study was his way to examine a healthy lifestyle. After only a month of following a healthy lifestyle, he stated that he felt energized, lost weight, and reversed his medical conditions. He stated that while at someone's house, he would respectfully indicate that he has a health condition and he is watching his diet; and if they insist on eating together, he would choose the healthier options like salads or fruits and would control the portions consumed too.

In addition to maintaining a healthy diet, he was able to exercise regularly. He would either engage in cardio exercises or strength training. He made sure to keep himself hydrated and get enough sleep in order to tackle the next day.

While he was able to follow the healthy diet and exercise program, he stated that he could not counsel the members of the congregation regarding health issues. He stated he was able to successfully reverse medical conditions and begin a healthy lifestyle because he had the constant support of his doctors. Anyone who desires to lose weight and start a healthy lifestyle should do

so under the supervision of his doctors, and the church should not be involved. He was educated by his doctors about mental health affecting the physical health and was, therefore, able to change his mindset in order to achieve the desired results. However, in his opinion, the church is not qualified in that department and, therefore, should not get involved. A person's emotional, psychological, mental, and physical needs should be addressed by a doctor alone. Therefore, having mental health counseling in a church is absurd.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The purpose of this DMIN research was to educate Pakistani evangelical pastors on the importance of health and healthy living as mentioned in the Bible. This healthy living was to cause them to be good representatives of God's standards and good stewards of their bodies, further motivating others to live a holy life. The participants will consider health concerns that arise from lack of education and the implementation of biblical truth regarding healthy living. In the six weeks of the program, the Pakistani pastors were advised to consult with their primary care doctor or nutritionist regarding making healthy choices. Furthermore, these pastors were to do physical exercises for 30 minutes daily. After learning about the biblical teachings on physical health, they were to apply these truths in their lives. Through this study, the pastors were reminded of the source of their power and were counseled on the importance of nutrition, exercise and fitness, and the significance of health according to the Bible. However, before discussing the conclusion, the researcher wants to discuss the limitations faced during her study.

As discussed in chapter 1, the researcher faced few limitations. Due to the pandemic (Covid-19), the study was done virtually. However, due to the short supply of electricity in Pakistan, participants did not have a proper internet connection, which caused communication issues with the researcher. Participants preferred using their mobile devices over desktop computers or laptops due to a lack of electricity. When they did have electricity, they would prefer to charge their mobile devices as fast as possible to prepare themselves for the next power

outage. The time difference was another limitation. Also, two of the participants contracted Covid-19, hindering them from completing their six-week study.

Chapter 1 provided background information about Pakistani pastors (the participants), the culture they live in, and how that culture influences their healthy living. For example, as one of their activities, the congregational members, mainly the youth, are expected to emulate their pastors as the youth's expected duty for a proper Christian living. Furthermore, many cultural rituals and belief systems have infiltrated Pakistani churches, and thus, influencing congregational members and their private lives. For example, in Islam and Hinduism, self-indulgence is a common practice. Christians who constantly live within a culture that praises self-indulgence can easily be influenced by these practices. God's Word, on the other hand, does not teach self-indulgence but teaches Christians to practice self-control. Furthermore, Pakistani culture greatly values hospitality. Guests are expected not to offend their host's hospitality. Hosts are expected to shower their guests with lavish food, and guests are expected to eat in plenty. Eating in plenty brings honor to the host. As aforementioned, because the rituals and culture of Pakistan have entered many churches, pastors are expected to follow the same rituals and belief systems of honoring their hosts and eating in plenty. Pakistani pastors are not taught that self-indulgence or gluttony is a sin because, to these pastors, self-indulgence is the norm of their society. Furthermore, health concerns relating to unhealthy eating are not considered a priority for these Pakistani pastors and their congregational members. The predominant cultural rituals and belief system has permeated Pakistani churches to the extent that pastors and their congregational members rather rely on medicine to achieve health than practice biblical views of holy habits and healthy living. As aforementioned, hosts are expected to present their guests with

extravagant food. These foods are usually laden with fats and sugars, which cause health issues such as heart disease, obesity, and high blood pressure.

Chapter 2 discussed God's design for human bodies. Christians are to use their God-given bodies to worship and glorify Him. According to the Bible, Christians are pilgrims and must be ready to go about their master's business. In order to be ready, one must train one's mind, body, and soul. One cannot truly function properly, as God has intended in His image, if one is neglecting any aspect of the being that God has graciously given. Even though one is a fallen being, God still desires one to pursue heavenly things. Self-control is one of the virtues that God wants for a Christian to seek after. Because one is still imperfect, there is a lack of self-control over many aspects of one's life, including eating. Overindulgence in anything can cause a Christian to fall into sin, become a bad testimony to the world, and become a stumbling block for other believers. The Bible states that a Christian is recognized by his or her fruits. If one is to be a good testimony of Christ, one must bear good fruits, including the practice of self-control. Pastors who neglect this fruit of self-control in eating can be in danger of being counted as false teachers. Therefore, one must do one's best to seek after the fruit of self-control in living a healthy life. Chapter 2 also discussed literature from Christian writers who spoke on healthy living. For example, Lynn Gerber stated that the body is a gift from God, and thus, one should treat it with respect. One should always be aware of one's healthy and unhealthy habits. Jude Cole states that Christians must stay alert, avidly protecting their body and mind with the help and for the glory of God. Overall, all authors stated the value of healthy living and its benefits. The main benefit of healthy living is to glorify God with one's being. According to Tracey Greenwood and Teresa Delgado, healthy living improves overall body function and gives individuals energy to vigorously perform daily tasks. For a believer of Jesus Christ, it reiterates

God's truth that one is made in His image; thus, enjoying His many blessings for one's life through the good health He provides. The authors state further that daily exercise improves the mind, body, and soul connection, making our spiritual health more sensitive towards the presence of God.

Chapter 3 focused on the methodology of the study. In this six-week study, participants were supposed to live a healthy lifestyle, managing a weekly journal of their six-week study. In the journal, the participants were supposed to record their emotions while participating in the six-week study. They were also to record their energy levels or lack thereof, behavior towards others (mainly their congregation), and any hindrances that stopped the participants from completing their six-week study. Furthermore, the study was done virtually, as mentioned in the expected limitations of the project, even though the researcher desired to complete this study with the participants in person. In order to communicate with the researcher, the participants were to have access to the communication application, WhatsApp. Participants were also supposed to have access to the video chatting application Zoom for a group discussion; however, due to scheduling conflict, this method was not established. Each participant packet was given an information packet regarding the purpose of the study and the researcher's contact information.

Chapter 4 recorded the findings of the study. Many of the findings supported the researcher's assumption regarding the Pakistani pastor's lack of health concerns. As mentioned in chapter 1, Pakistani pastors do not understand the biblical view of healthy living, primarily because they have never been taught such teachings in their seminaries as health-related topics are considered a private matter. Permeation of the predominant culture is also the reason seminaries do not teach about health concerns. Some of the participants believed that health topics are a distraction from preaching other biblical topics that are more important. In their

view, Pakistani pastors believe that spiritual aspects are more important than physical ones, as any physical aspects are considered personal and should not be discussed publicly. Part of the reason is the permeation and expectation of the predominant local culture, as mentioned in chapter 1.

The findings also established that the participants were overwhelmed with pastoral responsibilities, which they could not share with other congregational members due to fear of church division. Because all participants were overwhelmed with their responsibilities, they could not properly participate in the six-week study, as there was no room in their schedule for an exercise routine or any dietary plans. Some of the participants had full-time jobs along with their full-time ministry leadership positions. They were also enrolled as full-time students to further their biblical education, further aggravating the scheduling conflict.

Some participants were content with the predominant culture of self-indulgence. The first reason for their contentment with self-indulgence was that it is considered the norm of their society. The second reason being the misinterpretation of scriptures. As mentioned in chapter 1, many pastors misquote Luke 10:7 in saying that "...the laborer is worthy of his hire." The reason most participants misquoted the scriptures is that Pakistani pastors are not taught the biblical view of healthy living in their seminaries, as this topic is considered unimportant.

Further findings stated that the participants did not know how to cook, which caused them to rely upon family members. When these participants traveled, they would be reliant upon the hospitality of the hosting family members, who do not know about their dietary plans. This lack of information causes the hosting family members to present the participants with lavish foods that may be unhealthy and must be eaten in plenty.

In another finding, it was discovered that Pakistani pastors are not taught the significance of counseling, i.e., psychological, or physical. Any communication regarding psychological issues was considered taboo; anyone with psychological issues is automatically considered an outcast; thus, that individual is looked down upon. As aforementioned, because of the presence of the predominant Islamic culture and of Hindu culture, seminaries in Pakistan do not teach counseling methods.

Furthermore, some of the participants do not schedule annual doctor visits; they only visit their doctors when necessary. For example, one participant informed the researcher that since human bodies are temporary, exercising them is unnecessary as believers would receive a brand-new glorified body.

These pastors failed to realize that physical healthy living is connected to spiritual health. God has placed Christians in the physical realm to be spiritual beings; nonetheless, they still occupy the physical realm until Christ's return. While they are living in the physical realm, Christians must treat the body according to the Word of God, as the temple of God, and to treat it like such, one must show restraint while eating. Discussing eating habits among congregation members should not be considered taboo, instead it should be encouraged. God has given Christians the ability to overcome any hurdles in their lives, including poor healthy eating habits. Even though God has given Christians all liberty in Christ, they must use it to glorify Him in all that is done. Satan has blinded many into believing that unhealthy living is the normal way of life. However, God has designed Christians to live victoriously even in the physical through spiritual means. Therefore, one must ask God for his power to overcome distractions, hurdles, and temptations when dealing with eating healthy. Furthermore, seminaries in Pakistan must start focusing on counseling methods which is vital for Christian living.

Some participants have realized that healthy living is part of spiritual living and should be pursued diligently; however, because of hindrances like poor time management, cultural expectations, unexpected interruptions, and other priorities, they were unable to properly complete the six-week study. If the study was conducted in person, the researcher could have provided proper resources to the participants. The researcher could have provided personal trainers for the participants for their physical needs, teaching them daily exercise routines. Other resources that could have been provided include training in biblical counseling, education on counseling people with psychological issues, medical assistance for their health concerns, and teaching on nutritional methods for traveling.

Passion is evident in their dealings with the work of God; however, these leaders are not as fervent in dedicating their time to their families. While becoming expert communicators in their public lives, they often neglect their non-public lives, to the point that they no longer reveal their private lives. Working long hours without dedicating any time to self-relaxation can lead to burnout. According to the article published in mental health, religion, and culture, “Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy.”⁸²

In the article, studies cited indicate that 65% of the leaders are either tremendously affected by burnout or at the brink of burning out. The terrible outcomes of burnout are detrimental not only for the leader but also for the congregation. It is important to understand that such mentally exhausted and overwhelmed pastors will not be able to counsel others if their exhaustion is not handled correctly.⁸³ Not only will their counseling abilities be compromised,

⁸² Dunbar Scott, Thomas Frederick, Yvonne Thai, and John Gill, "Calling, Caring, and Connecting: Burnout in Christian Ministry." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 23, no. 2 (2020): 173-186.

⁸³ Ibid.

but burnt-out leaders are in danger of suffering “stress, frustration, loneliness, isolation, and spiritual dryness.”⁸⁴ In order to combat these issues before they become problematic, regular exercise, spending time with family and close friends, focusing on a wholesome marriage, maintaining one’s private life separate from his public life, setting up monthly goals, and striving for godly character development, would prove to be beneficial for their overall health.⁸⁵

Furthermore, their zeal to do more for God inadvertently affects their relationship with God. These burnt-out leaders are constantly throwing themselves in situations and activities which are too much for them to handle alone. As a result, they do not have much time but a lot to do. However, this attitude of taking on a project without prayerfully seeking His will, and thinking that if it is for God, it should be done without hesitation, is reckless. Such leaders assume that taking time out for oneself is a luxury and relaxation is only enjoyed in heaven in glorified bodies. While striving to spread His gospel, these leaders forget the joy of the Lord, which only comes when they have a relationship with Him; as Luke 10:20 says, “Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”⁸⁶ However, in their defense, many leaders are not aware that they are exhibiting the symptoms of an unhealthy leader. The first step to cure an illness is to become aware of it; thus, it is important to train leaders to observe themselves.

In order to build a healthy leader, certain steps are necessary, and the first of these steps is the realization that there is such a thing as burnout, and leaders are susceptible to it too. While it is unfortunate that these leaders are not mindful of their hazardous administrative patterns,

⁸⁴ Diane J. Chandler, “The Impact of Pastors’ Spiritual Practices on Burnout.” *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 64, no. 2 (2010): 6,1–9, <https://doi.org/1177/154230501006400206>.

⁸⁵ Chandler, “The Impact of Pastors’ Spiritual Practices on Burnout.”

⁸⁶ Luke 10:20 (NIV).

seminars could be held where leaders are not only made aware of the characteristics of an unhealthy leader but taught techniques to identify and ultimately prevent the problem of burnout in order to attain better mental, physical, and spiritual life. In an article by the *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*, a five-week seminar was arranged in a university setting among graduate healthcare students experiencing stress that was affecting them scholastically and clinically. With the help of that five-week seminar, there was improved “self-compassion and mindfulness and diminished anxiety, depression, and stress” observed among the students.⁸⁷ Hence, by actualizing programs that not only provide the participants the opportunity to delve into self-awareness but also focus on self-care, a counselor could provide critical benefits for these leaders.

In addition to seminars, workout programs can be presented to these leaders active in the ministry. Numerous studies demonstrate that increased physical activity among people with depression and even epilepsy has positive results.⁸⁸ Physical exercise is always associated with a positive temperament. Many people give a detailed account of the sentiments experienced after physical activity, and the majority of the time, it has a positive sense of fulfillment.⁸⁹

Moreover, while introducing the concept of exercise to leaders, it is important to understand that all the help should be encompassed in a holistic guided journal approach. CBT has been demonstrated to be very effective in this regard. “Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

⁸⁷ Amisha Klawonn, Dana Kernan, and James Lynskey. "A 5-Week Seminar on the Biopsychosocial-Spiritual Model of Self-Care Improves Anxiety, Self-Compassion, Mindfulness, Depression, and Stress in Graduate Healthcare Students." *International Journal of Yoga Therapy* 29, no. 1 (2019): 81-89.

⁸⁸ R. L Vancini, C. A. de Lira, & R. M. Arida, “Physical Exercise as a Coping Strategy for People with Epilepsy and Depression,” *Epilepsy & Behavior* 29, 2 (2013), 431. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yebeh.2013.08.023>.

⁸⁹ Rimer, Jane, Kerry Dwan, Debbie A. Lawlor, Carolyn A. Greig, Marion McMurdo, Wendy Morley, and Gillian E. Mead. "Exercise for Depression." *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* no. 7 (2012): CD004366-CD004366.

is a collaborative approach with the underlying therapeutic assumptions that psychological distress as a result of disturbances in cognitive processes and that changing the way one thinks results in a positive, healthy change in behavior and affect.”⁹⁰ The proof of this claim is evident by the journal article by Dr. Albert Sarno, which states that CBT is proven to help people tormented by childhood traumas and even current traumas.⁹¹ Backed by strong research and evidence-based techniques,

CBT has shown to be beneficial for educators, counselors and any individual employed in the field of human services. (Panzano & Herman, 2005; Rapp & Goscha, 2005). Every client has their own personal beliefs and convictions that shape his or her activities and mannerisms. Even the negative behaviors operate under a prior belief system. In order to make a difference in the life of a client, who has seen life with the eye of a soldier, prior beliefs must be addressed, and new beliefs explored in order to alter the unwanted behavior to more desirable ones. (Dees, 2011; Jones, 1986). Anything related to a human psyche is usually complex, and the hypothesis of cognition is not isolated for every client; therefore, to attain full potency of the treatments used, any childhood trauma must be settled prior to utilizing any other approach.⁹²

With the rise of new cases of abuse in Pakistan, which include gang rape and forced conversion of teen or younger Christian girls to Islam, being physically fit could prove beneficial. Even though it cannot stop the rising mistreatment of Christians, but it can help with the mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of their Christian life. Living in a nation with only 2% of the Christian populace and the larger majority of Muslims, about 97%, a constant fear of armed assailants breaking into the house and abducting daughters and sons for forced conversion to Islam can negatively influence the mind of Christians. Taking care of their physical and

⁹⁰ Dr. Tim Clinton and Dr. Ron Hawkins, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling* (Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2011), 456.

⁹¹ Sarno, Albert. “Treating Veterans with Complex Traumagenic Disorders: When Childhood Traumas and Current Traumas Collide.” *Liberty University Scholars Crossing* (2014): https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/ccfs_fac_pubs/81/.

⁹² Ibid.

mental health would help them be agile while in such situations, but a clear and sound mind will be helpful to make quick decisions. While one's ultimate hope should be in the LORD, the ultimate refuge in times of suffering, one should be careful of their surroundings too.

Bibliography

- Allred, Brian. "Working out Your Salvation and Just Working Out: Toward a Biblical Perspective on Physical Fitness." *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 29, (2018): 173-81. <https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAI14190520000293&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Anderson, Diana. *Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness*. Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2011.
- Bergmann, Alyssa. "Healthy Temples and a Christian Ethic of Fitness." *Lutheran Forum* 53, no. 3 (2019): 52-56, <https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAI60V200131000743&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Bloomer, Richard J., Mohammad M. Kabir, John F. Trepanowski, Robert E. Canale, and Tyler M. Farney. "A 21 Day Daniel Fast Improves Selected Biomarkers of Antioxidant Status and Oxidative Stress in Men and Women." *Nutrition & Metabolism* 8, no. 1 (2011).
- Bottke, Allison. *Setting Boundaries with Food: Six steps to Lose Weight, Gain Freedom, and Take Back Your Life*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2012.
- Campbell, Constantine R. 1, 2, and 3 John. Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2017. Accessed October 4, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Clinton, Tim and Ron Hawkins. *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling: An Indispensable Tool for Helping People with their problems*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2011.
- Cole, Judy. "Take care of yourself." *Christian Science Monitor*, (August 2015): accessed June 1, 2020, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A424613217/ITOF?u=vic_liberty&sid=ITOF&xid=996fbfc4.
- Dailey, Erik W. *The Fit Shall Inherit the Earth: A Theology of Sport and Fitness*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018.
- Diddams, Margaret, Lisa Surdyk, Denise Daniels, and Jeff Van Duzer. "Implications of Biblical Principles of Rhythm and Rest for Individual and Organizational Practices." *Christian Scholar's Review* 33, no. 3, 2004.
- Gerber, Lynne. "Fat Christians and Fit Elites: Negotiating Class and Status in Evangelical Christian Weight-Loss Culture." *American Quarterly* 64, no.1 (March 2012): 61, 84, 181, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1013809069?accountid=12085>.

- Greenwood, Tracey C., and Teresa Delgado. "A Journey Toward Wholeness, a Journey to God: Physical Fitness as Embodied Spirituality." *Journal of Religion and Health* 52, no. 3 (09, 2013): 941-54.
<http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F1372178672%3Faccountid%3D12085>.
- Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*. Second edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Jamal, Siti Noraida, Foong Ming Moy, Azmi Mohamed Mohd Nahar, and Firdaus Mukhtar. "Effectiveness of a Group Support Lifestyle Modification (GSLiM) Programme among Obese Adults in Workplace: A Randomised Controlled Trial." *PLoS One* 11, no. 8 (08, 2016). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0160343>.
- Johanna Hinman, Iris Alcantara, Karen Glanz, Ann Addison, Cam Escoffery, and Michelle Kegler, "Perceptions of Social and Environmental Support for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in Rural Southern Churches." *Journal of Religion and Health* 51, no.3 (2012): 799-811. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-010-9394-z>.
- Lewis, Caroline, Caroline Oates, Rachel Ainsworth, Sherif Wilson, and Philippa Jackson. "P033. the Impact of Community Outreach Black and Ethnic Minority Breast Health Awareness Seminar: Addressing Healthcare Inequalities." *European Journal of Surgical Oncology* 45, no. 5 (2019): 894-895, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/science/article/pii/S0748798319300800?via%3Dihub>.
- Lieven, Anatol. *Pakistan: A Hard Country*. New York: Public Affairs, 2012. Accessed September 2, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Murphy R, Straebler S, Cooper Z, Fairburn CG. "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Eating Disorders." *The Psychiatric Clinics of North America*. 33, 3 (September 2010): 611–27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psc.2010.04.004>. PMC 2928448. PMID 20599136.
- Murphy, Cara. *The Inquisitive Christ*. New York, NY: Faith Words, 2020.
- Open Doors. "What does persecution look like in Pakistan?" Accessed Nov 2020, <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/pakistan/>.
- Ortberg, John. *The Me I want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Persecution.org. "Family of Abducted Christian Girl in Pakistan Claims Missing Daughter Now Pregnant," 07/26/2020, <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/26/family-abducted-christian-girl-pakistan-claims-missing-daughter-now-pregnant/>.
- Presler, Titus. "A Toll on the Soul: Costs of Persecution among Pakistan's Christians." *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 39, no. 2 (April 2015): 72–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/239693931503900204>.

- Roberson, Troy. *Understanding Spiritual and Physical Health: A Biblical Perspective*. Bloomington, IN: West Bow Press, 2017.
- Rubin, Jordan. *Patient Heal Thyself*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc, 2018.
- Sarno, Albert. *Treating Veterans with Complex Traumagenic Disorders: When Childhood Traumas and Current Traumas Collide*. Liberty University Scholars Crossing, 2014. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/ccfs_fac_pubs/81/.
- Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015.
- Schacht, Darlene, and Bure, Candace Cameron. *Reshaping It All*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011.
- Swan, Elizabeth. "From Gluttony to Enlightenment: The World of Taste in Early Modern Europe." *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 72, no. 1 (January 2018): 113-114. <https://web-a-ebshost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=1d8551c1-815d-4db5-9200-72330bc3b131%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=EIS127080732&db=mlf>.
- Terkeurst, Lysa. *Made to Crave: Satisfying Your Deepest Desire with God, Not Food*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Thomas, Gary. *Every Body Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Tracey Greenwood and Teresa Delgado, "A Journey Toward Wholeness, a Journey to God: Physical Fitness as Embodied Spirituality." *Journal of Religion and Health* 52, no. 3 (September 2013): 941-54. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1372178672?accountid=12085>.
- Vancini, R. L., C. A. de Lira, & R. M. Arida. "Physical Exercise as a Coping Strategy for People with Epilepsy and Depression," *Epilepsy & Behavior* 29, 2 (2013): 431. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yebeh.2013.08.023>.
- Wolter, Michael. *The Gospel According to Luke: Volume I (Luke 1-9:50)*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016. Accessed October 4, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Appendix A

Questions in the Survey

1. What age range applies to you?
 - 18-25
 - 25-35
 - 35-45
 - 45-55
 - 55-65
 - 65 and above
2. What is your marital status?
 - Single/engaged
 - Married/separated
 - Divorced /widowed
3. How long have you been practicing the Christian faith?
 - 0-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11-20 years
 - 20-30 years
 - 30 or more years
4. How many years have you been fully dedicated to the ministry?
 - 0-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11-20 years
 - 20-30 years
 - 30 or more years
5. What is your role in the ministry?
 - Member
 - Youth leader
 - Pastoral staff
 - Pastor
6. How many times have members consulted you for advice?
 - Never
 - Sometimes
 - Often
7. Have you ever provided counseling for food addiction or healthy living?
 - Yes

- No
8. If the situation arises where someone needs counseling regarding their unhealthy lifestyle, how would you rate your knowledge and experience to handle such a situation?
- Limited
 - Somewhat knowledgeable
 - Knowledgeable but needs more education
 - Fully capable of handling questions or concerns
9. Have you been trained or received education to handle crises regarding health?
- Yes
 - No
10. Would you be willing to consult and refer members to a dietitian or or a doctor concerning health issues?
- Yes
 - No
11. How often are you invited to events that include food and beverages?
- Everyday
 - Once a week
 - Twice a week
 - Three times a week
 - More than three times a week
12. Have you ever discussed the importance of healthy living with the members or staff?
- Yes
 - No
13. If yes, what was the focus of the topics?
14. How often have you counseled people dealing with mental health issues?
- Never
 - Sometimes
 - Often
15. Are you comfortable consoling members who are battling health issues?
- Yes
 - No
16. What training do you have to understand and educate the members seeking counsel?

17. How often do you skip meals?

- Never
- Everyday
- Once a week
- Twice a week
- Three times a week
- More than three times a week

18. Do you manage your caloric intake?

- Yes
- No

19. Do you monitor your fat intake?

- Yes
- No

20. How often do you snack on the following food each week? Cookies, chocolates, cakes, ice cream, street food, fried food, cheese, butter, nuts, etc.

- Never
- Everyday
- Once a week
- Twice a week
- Three times a week
- More than three times a week

21. Do you regularly get enough sleep?

- Yes
- No

22. Do you sleep for about eight hours per night?

- Yes
- No

23. Do you go to sleep effortlessly and sleep through the night?

- Yes
- No

24. At least five fruits and vegetables are a daily part of your meal?

- Yes
- No

25. Is your sugar and salt intake limited?

- Yes
- No

26. Do you smoke cigarettes or other tobacco products?
- Yes
 - No
27. Do you consume alcohol or engage in recreational drugs?
- Yes
 - No
28. Do you practice regular brushing and flossing at least twice a day?
- Yes
 - No
29. Do you see your dentist regularly, at least twice a year, Or only when you feel there is something wrong?
- Yes
 - No
 - Only when I feel there is something wrong
30. Do you see your primary doctor regularly, at least twice a year, or only when you feel there is something wrong?
- Yes
 - No
 - Only when I feel there is something wrong
31. Are you easily able to manage the tasks required of you, or do you feel overwhelmed?
- I feel overwhelmed
 - I can easily manage the tasks throughout the day
32. Are your family and friends available and ready to support you if the need arises?
- Yes
 - No
33. Are you comfortable discussing issues with your family or friends
- Yes
 - No
34. How many days a week do your exercise for over 45 minutes?
- Never
 - Everyday
 - Once a week
 - Twice a week
 - Three times a week
 - More than three times a week
35. How much walking do you do each week (continuous)?

- 0-30 minute
- 30-60 minutes
- 60-90 minutes
- 90 minutes or more

36. How long are you on your feet and moving around during the day?

- 0-30 minute
- 30-60 minutes
- 60-90 minutes
- 90 minutes or more

37. How much time do you spend watching television or on the internet every day?

- 0-30 minute
- 30-60 minutes
- 60-90 minutes
- 90 minutes or more

38. How much time do you spend relaxing each day?

- 0-30 minute
- 30-60 minutes
- 60-90 minutes
- 90 minutes or more

39. How much would you rate the current physical fitness of the congregation?

- Sedentary
- Mildly Active
- Active

40. What is the physical health of the congregation?

- Malnourished
- Healthy
- Obese

41. Is mental health address in the congregation?

- Yes
- No

42. Is there a concept of mental health?

- Yes
- No

43. Is the congregation educated to take care of their emotional health?

- Yes
- No

44. Is psychological health a priority in the congregation?

- Yes
- No

45. Is there any education involving maintain good psychological health?

- Yes
- No

46. Is the church doing anything to remain healthy?

- Yes
- No

47. If yes, then what are they doing, and what are the results?

48. If no, then how was the church doing in mission and their emotional health?

Appendix B

Thank You Letter

Thank you for participating in this study.

This study is being conducted to counsel Pakistani Evangelical pastors on the importance of healthy living for the benefit of the ministry. You are called to participate in this research study on the importance of health because of your role as a pastor. This information packet is provided to guide you throughout these six weeks of study.

Please note that the identity of the participants will be kept anonymous.

Appendix C

Researcher's Contact Information

Benish Masih can be contacted at [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED].

If the participants would like to talk with someone other than the researcher, then they are encouraged to contact The Institutional Review Board, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED]

Appendix D

Sample Recipe

(This can be found on <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/2-step-chicken/>)

Recipe: 2-Step Chicken

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 Boneless chicken breasts
- 1 can cream of chicken soup (10 ounces)
- 1/2 cup water

Directions:

1. Heat oil in a skillet at a medium-high setting.
2. Add chicken and cook for ten minutes.
3. Remove chicken from pan and set aside.
4. Stir the soup and water together in the skillet and heat it to a boil.
5. Return the chicken to the skillet. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for an additional 10 minutes, or until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165 °F.

Notes:

To lower sodium content, use reduced-sodium cream of chicken soup.

Source:

ONIE Project - Oklahoma Nutrition Information and Education.

Appendix E

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to educate the pastors and leaders of the churches on the importance of good health in the ministry by identifying its importance in the light of the Bible, counseling, and education. Participation in the survey should take about 20 to 30 minutes. The link will be provided where the survey can be printed out, completed, and faxed or emailed at



How can I access the survey?

The survey can be accessed on the link provided in the email from researcher, and all feedback will be anonymous. The survey will not collect any information about your identity, location, or any other confidential information.

Will completing the survey jeopardize my safety?

As a survey will not collect any information about your location, your safety will not be jeopardized. There are minimal risks involved in the study.

How will I benefit from the survey?

There will not be any monetary or financial reward for participating in the study. Participants should not expect to receive any benefits for participating in the study, as participation is voluntary.

Will I be compensated for my time?

Because this is a voluntary survey, participants will not be compensated.

How safe will my information be?

Everything conducted during the survey will be confidential. The report that will be published would not include any names or information that could make it possible to identify the participant. Only the researcher will have access to the records and will be stored on a password-protected computer.

Will my relationship with Liberty University be affected if I choose not to participate in the study?

If the participant chooses not to participate in the voluntary study, his relationship with Liberty University will not be affected.

What will happen if I decide to participate in the study and decide to withdraw later?

If the participant chooses to withdraw from the study, all he needs to do is to exit the survey and close the Internet browser. His information will not be saved, recorded, or included in the study.

What would I do if I have questions or concerns that are not answered above?

The participant can address the questions when prompted for the survey. If the questions arise later, Benish Masih can be contacted at [REDACTED] or via email [REDACTED]. If the participants would like to talk with someone other than the researcher, then they are encouraged to contact The Institutional Review Board, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED]

Would I be provided with a copy of the survey for my records?

If you would need a copy of the survey for your records, you can contact the researcher.

I hereby acknowledge that I have read, understood, and agree to participate in the study focusing on the importance of having a healthy body considering the Bible. I have clarified any

questions or concerns regarding the study, and by signing my initials below I consent to participate in the study.

Appendix F

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 3, 2021

Benish Masih
Albert Sarno

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-391 The biblical teaching of health among Pakistani Evangelical pastors

Dear Benish Masih and Albert Sarno,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at



Sincerely,

