

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**A Study on Why People Lack Dedication and Focus During Church Worship and Service
Time**

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

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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The researcher chose the topic of this thesis because members of Last Days Ministries (LDM) lacked dedication and focus during church worship and service. The project aimed to discover what caused LDM members to lack commitment and focus during worship and service time and to find a way to alleviate the problem among LDM members. This thesis project includes four themes from doing this project, of which three concern distractions. Those distractions came from cell phones, spontaneous distractions, and satanic distractions. Cell phone distraction was at the top of the list of distractions that disrupted the church and kept LDM members from being dedicated and focused during worship and service time. Satanic distractions mainly came from other members of the church, who allowed Satan to use them.

Spontaneous distractions, those noises that suddenly happen, interrupted the church because LDM members allowed the distractions to distract them. When LDM members chose to concentrate on God, spontaneous distraction lost its power over them. The final theme in this project discussed how the Holy Spirit of God gives strength to believers who submit themselves to Him. The researcher used the method of hosting a four-week workshop to find the four themes. First, the researcher solicited participants from LDM to participate in the workshop, which allowed them to input their feedback on the subject. Next, before the seminar took place, the researcher interviewed each participant. After the workshop, the researcher interviewed the participants again. The researcher used field notes during the interviews and the workshop. Finally, the researcher analyzed the data to identify the themes.

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Abbreviations

DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
IRB	<i>Institutional Review Board</i>
LDM	<i>Last Days Ministries</i>
NDM	<i>New Deliverance Ministries</i>
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
RDCOGIC	<i>Restoration and Deliverance Church of God in Christ</i>
TOPC	<i>Tabernacle of Praise Church</i>
TTCTLF	<i>The True Church of The Living Faith</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Dedication and focus are things that every company manager would love for their employees to possess. Everyone dedicates themselves to something or someone. This project will discuss dedication as having a love and a commitment to God and His will. According to Jesus, the first commandment given to His followers was to love God with their whole heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). God should be everything. In today's society, believers want God, but they want Him to stay on the back burner until they need Him. They casually walk into the church and bring the world with them. The world enters the church on a cell phone, in their mind, heart, and being. This research will help the members of Last Days Ministries learn why there is a lack of dedication and focus during church worship and service time.

The researcher of this thesis project is the pastor of Last Days Ministries (LDM) in Atlanta, Georgia. The researcher has noticed that the members at LDM significantly lack dedication and focus during church worship and service time. Therefore, in this research project, the researcher hopes to discover why LDM members lack commitment and focus while in church worship and service. Also, the researcher hopes to find enough information for a four-day workshop. The researcher will share the finding with the membership of LDM. Additionally, the researcher hopes to prove that the situation at LDM has been occurring in other places, such as schools, churches, and jobs.

Furthermore, the researcher wants to prove that no one can have any spiritual discipline without first having the Holy Spirit, which gives a person the help needed to be more dedicated and focused during church worship and service. Some LDM members have tried to discipline themselves. However, it has been complicated and burdensome for them. Pastor Richmond

Laney states, “Spiritual disciplines are not supposed to be a burden.”¹ This action research will show that when a person gets the disciplines of dedication and focus, that person gives their will over to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to lead and guide them on how to be disciplined on the things of God. Moreover, this research will show how everything starts with learning from Jesus, mimicking Him, and being His disciple.

The researcher of this project assumes that LDM members will add three components to their lives after this research. The first component is understanding God and the gifts He has given them. The second is the importance of being dedicated and focused. The third component is to show appreciation to God, which is due to Him for His goodness. Also, the researcher plans to gain knowledge from the participants in this research. The researcher hypothesizes that this research will cause LDM members to improve in being dedicated and focused. The researcher will share some information from scholars, which will give a few reasons why the members of LDM lack dedication and focus. Also, the researcher will show how members of LDM who allow the Holy Spirit to take charge in their lives and discipline their behavior will gain all the help they need to be dedicated and focused according to the Bible’s standpoint. In addition, being disciplined will help LDM members have a more powerful spiritual experience in the church so they can feel God's presence better and relate God's goodness to others. Scholar Scott Lowry Willis stated, “people who study any spiritual disciplines using the Scriptures will allow them a chance to enter into a conversation with God.”² This researcher will be studying several spiritual disciplines of being dedicated and focused, given in the scriptures and others provided by scholars who have paved the way.

¹ Richmond Laney, “Marriage as a Spiritual Discipline Principles and Benefits” (DMIN diss., Liberty University, 2014), 5, ProQuest Dissertation & Theses Global.

² Scott Lowry Willis, “Spiritual Disciplines for Men in a Medium-Sized Church” (DMIN diss., Liberty University, 2020), 10, ProQuest Dissertation & Theses Global.

Ministry Context

Getting Into Ministry

Being raised in a family that was comprised of Christian believers made it easy for the researcher to become a believer at the early age of sixteen. The researcher's maternal grandmother carried the researcher to church from birth to twelve years old. When the researcher was between twelve and sixteen years old, the researcher did not go to church because the family moved from the neighborhood where the grandmother lived. Although the researcher had spent the first twelve years going to church, the researcher did not understand everything that went on in the church. One day, some evangelists came into the neighborhood where the family was living, and they talked about the love of God and invited the researcher into the family of God through Jesus. The researcher said yes to having Jesus as Lord in her life and said the sinner's prayer. Although the researcher's grandmother taught the children in the neighborhood about God and was a great teacher, the researcher had not learned much about Jesus.

Many years went by, and the researcher searched from church to church to understand God, His Son, and God's purpose for her life. Although the researcher had said the sinner's prayer in 1971, the understanding of God was not apparent until He began to lead the researcher. In 1996, the researcher became a member of The True Church of The Living Faith (TTCTLF) in Atlanta and stayed there for five years. The researcher sang on the praise team at the church and was a prayer warrior. The leaders at TTCTLF were Bishop Samuel Christian and Pastor Ruby Christian. They were great teachers. Being under Bishop Samuel and Pastor Ruby Christian painted a more precise picture to the researcher of who Jesus is and why God sent Him to earth. The researcher enjoyed the teaching at TTCTLF so much that it led the researcher to enroll in a Bible college about three miles from her home. There the researcher obtained a Bachelor of

Theology. The researcher was happy to be learning so much about the Lord. The Holy Spirit led the researcher to move to another church after five years as a member of TTCTLF. The researcher joined the Restoration and Deliverance Church of God in Christ (RDCOGIC) because it was conveniently in the researcher's neighborhood.

According to what the researcher thought was a great church, NRCOGIC was it. While attending that church, Pastor James Summer sent the researcher to an evangelist class, which helped increase the researcher's knowledge about the Lord. Summer was so impressed by the little knowledge the researcher had gained that he made the researcher a Sunday school teacher and the person over all the Sunday school classes. The researcher was pleased to be working in the ministry. The ministry work was short-lived at RDCOGIC. The Holy Spirit led the researcher to move from there to another church after six months in that position. The researcher felt like a church hopper and did not want to move. However, it was a call from God, and the move was non-negotiable.

One day, while traveling home on a public transportation bus from work, the researcher met Minister Dorothy Jackson, who became her friend. Minister Dorothy Jackson was the wife of Pastor Freddie Jackson. Six months after they became friends, Minister Dorothy asked the researcher to come out on their friends and family day. Once the researcher went and visited New Deliverance Ministries (NDM), which was Jackson's church, the researcher settled down at that church. Was God leading the researcher to where He wanted her to be? The researcher had uncertainty about where she was supposed to be. Paul said, "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28, NIV). God had to work it out where He wanted the researcher to be. At NDM, the researcher started doing more work in the ministry and continued learning. There the researcher

learned how to take the church out of the four walls of the building. The researcher discovered how to jump in and give a helping hand wherever there was a need. This ministry was a beginning. It taught the researcher how to get more involved in doing the will of God and answer the call that God placed in the researcher's life to do ministry work.

Last Days Ministries

Last Days Ministries is in Atlanta, Georgia, and the congregation is small, consisting of fifteen regular members. When visitors are present, there could be an additional five to ten participants in a service. The researcher has been a member of the New Deliverance Ministry in Forest Park, Georgia, since 2004. However, in 2021, Pastor Freddie Jackson of NDM took a new job at Temple Grove Baptist Church, SW Atlanta, Georgia, because their pastor died. Jackson ordained the researcher in 2013 and gave his blessing for the researcher to go out and start a new ministry. LDM was incorporated in 2006, and the researcher stayed at LDM until after he gave his blessings in 2013 for her to move forward.

In August of 2006, when LDM was incorporated, the researcher felt a calling from God to start the ministry. However, because no one recognized the degree the researcher had obtained from a Bible college, the researcher had to wait on permission from God through Jackson. God still had a lot to teach the researcher about what it would take to lead a ministry and how it had to be according to His will. While waiting on God, LDM received willing vessels. LDM obtained a treasurer, a secretary, and others ready to join a new ministry. All members who joined the church were unchurched except two. The first person was Sister Paige, who would later be instrumental in helping the researcher with the start of LDM. Sister Paige has a bachelor's degree in Christian counseling and was an ordained minister. Sister Marlene was the second person who

was instrumental in helping the researcher with the ministry. Sister Marlene had years of training in children's ministry and driving a church van from her previous church.

Once the researcher got her pastor's blessing, she felt unready to answer the call and step into the ministerial calling. Therefore, the researcher registered at Liberty University in 2016 to ensure her teaching aligned with the Bible. Having watched Jerry Falwell on television in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, the researcher knew Liberty University was the place for her to learn. According to the researcher, Falwell exuberated integrity because he would not allow greed to be a part of his work for God.

Before entering Liberty University, the researcher got an invitation from Pastor Dr. Virginia Bradshaw to speak at Tabernacle of Praise Church (TOPC) in College Park, Georgia, in 2015. As the researcher sat there observing the needs of that ministry while watching Bradshaw work so hard in her church, the researcher decided to speak with the pastor at NDM about going over and assisting her in the ministry. Jackson encouraged the researcher to go and help Bradshaw two Sundays each month. On the other two Sundays in the month, the researcher was still a part of NDM.

Bradshaw was instrumental in the researcher's growth, just as much as Jackson. Bradshaw pushed the researcher to teach classes, write lesson plans, and help with record keeping during the absence of the church administrator. Since Bradshaw's administrator is a flight attendant, the researcher got a lot of record-keeping experience, which was beneficial for training the staff at LDM. King David wrote, "The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with His hand" (Ps. 37:23-24, New International Version). God ordered everything concerning the training the LDM pastor got, starting with the researcher going to a Bible college (whose credit

was not recognizable), being a member of NDM, and speaking at TOPC to entering Liberty University. According to the Apostle Paul, “called people are not wise. However, God will equip them to do the job He has called them to do” (1 Cor 1:26-29, translation). The researcher agrees with Paul because feeling like a wise person was not the experience of this researcher. The researcher just felt like a willing person.

LDM started in 2019, and although incorporated in 2006, it was 2019 when the researcher obtained a recognizable bachelor’s degree from Liberty University. In addition, in 2019, the researcher was encouraged by Jackson to complete what was started and to finish what was the will of God in the researcher’s life. Also, in 2019 it was not just Jackson's gentle push; God was also using Bradshaw to encourage the ministry. LDM Church is now officially operated by a pastor who has gained all the qualifications to conduct a church, and with God’s help, the church members will learn about God's will for their lives.

At the beginning of 2022, LDM entered its third year of being a church. It started with the researcher giving everyone in the church a one-year training class in ministry. Teaching the course was a great experience because everyone learned together from the church’s launching point. The researcher brought in Jackson and his wife to speak and share their knowledge. There was a licensing service for ministers, deacons, and evangelists. In addition, the treasurer/admin person and the secretary received certificates. The licensing board consisted of Pastor Freddie Jackson, Pastor Dr. Virginia Bradshaw, Minister Dorothy Jackson, and Pastor Changa Solwazi of The Great Church of God. Everyone was happy to help LDM get started. There were encouraging words given by each person on the licensing board.

Once everyone was licensed, it was another year of hands-on experience. The licensed individuals had a chance to minister, host a function at their homes, and invite others into the

ministry over the next year. Everything was starting to look up, but then the COVID-19 pandemic prevented LDM members from coming to church. The researcher used Bradshaw's building for church on some Saturdays to have service. Unfortunately, after the COVID-19 pandemic, TOPC members had difficulty paying tithes and offerings, and Bradshaw could no longer afford the building. LDM went online with church services; members were willing to participate, to the researcher's surprise. LDM lost only one member after going online because that member developed some ongoing medical problems.

At the time of this writing, the members at LDM have an existing problem that the researcher will address in this thesis. The researcher is praying and researching how to best address the issue at LDM. So far, the researcher has discovered that the LDM problem has existed in other churches. There is an ongoing conversation concerning believers lacking dedication and focus during worship and service time at church. The question is: What causes believers to lack commitment and focus during worship and service time? The researcher will research why this problem exists and discover ways to alleviate the distraction. The researchers acknowledge learning starts with Jesus by allowing His teaching and the Holy Spirit from God to teach each person. When believers submit to the will of God and use spiritual disciplines, it eliminates the problems. According to Laney, "Historically, Christians have used spiritual disciplines to enhance their relationship with God,"³ which the researcher wants the members at LDM to accomplish.

³ Laney, "Marriage as a Spiritual Discipline Principles and Benefits," 4.

Problem Presented

The problem at Last Days Ministries in Atlanta, Georgia, is that the members lack dedication, and focus, during church worship and service time. In March 2020, the pandemic of COVID-19 hit the world, which closed the church's doors. Church services everywhere went to online platforms. The pastor of LDM, the researcher, got with the members and decided to meet online on Google Duo. Everybody was happy to have a way to communicate and participate during the online church service. However, the praise and worship service did not get much participation. There were only three members of LDM that worshipped God during worship time. The rest of the members acted as if the church was not a church anymore. After a few months, and the pandemic was still in effect, LDM members started to treat the church as a conversation with their best buddy or girlfriend. Members would have their cameras on while driving, eating, braiding hair, or doing other things a person would do when they were on a simple phone call. There was no dedication when it came to worshipping and servicing God, nor was there any focus on the word of God.

The researcher believes that when believers gather together in the name of the Lord, it does not matter if the meeting is in a church building, online, or someone's home; God is due respect no matter where the church takes place. The Apostle Peter stated, "As you come to the living Stone rejected by men, chosen by God and precious to Him, He constructs you into a spiritual house like living stones to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:4-5, NIV). This research will teach LDM members how important it is to consecrate on the Word of God, be dedicated to Him, and stay focused during worship and service time.

Purpose Statement

The Purpose of this DMIN action research is to find out what causes LDM members to lack dedication and focus during worship and service time and find a way to alleviate that lack. The researcher hopes to discover detailed information from other scholars from this research to make LDM members aware of their lack of dedication and focus. Additionally, the researcher wants to teach LDM members the importance of giving their undivided attention to God during worship and service. After all, church time aims to show God's reverence through Jesus Christ. According to Jesus, "God is seeking believers to worship Him in Spirit and truth" (John 4:23, translation). The researcher believes that LDM members would not ignore church worship and service if they truly understood how important it is to dedicate themselves to God. The researcher read books, articles, and dissertations from numerous authors.

The researcher wants to have an opportunity to add additional information to the ongoing conversation by doing thorough research to find out what causes LDM members to be distracted during church worship and service time. This research will bring together notable scholars to discuss the importance of being dedicated to God for years. Also, the researcher wants to use the information gathered to prepare a four-week workshop for members of LDM so that they can learn the effects of distraction and hopefully have a better level of dedication and focus during worship and service time. In addition, the researcher hypothesizes that the members of Last Days Ministries will have improved behavior once this research is complete. They will be aware of who it is that they are not giving dedication and focus to. Also, the researcher hopes to gather enough information from this research so other teachers at LDM who come behind her will be able to use the information to help them in the same situation. This study will advance the researcher's hypothesis by providing several reasons that cause LDM members to be distracted.

The researcher will be talking to LDM members to get the results of their lack of dedication and focus during worship and service. The researcher believes that the best answer in this research will come from the focus group's participants.

The primary construct of this study is LDM members and scholars who dealt with the subject in the past concerning having discipline that comes from the Holy Spirit. Another primary construct of this study will be the Word of God. The researcher will incorporate instructions given through the Word of God.

Basic Assumptions

There are assumptions that the information gathered in this research will make a difference in the behavior of the members of LDM. The first assumption is that LDM members will become aware of their lack of dedication and focus and display appropriate behavior in church. The benefits would include LDM members enjoying church worship and service without distractions. Also, they will have increased knowledge about being dedicated and focused and what causes distraction. In addition, the researcher assumes this research will be educational information for future new believers' classes. This information will start with members of LDM understanding who God is and why He deserves their attention while in service. Additionally, the researcher assumes that LDM members will have an increased awareness after the workshop, which will end with members teaching others from this project.

The second assumption of this action research is that the information gathered will help bring glory to God's Kingdom. Visitors will leave glorifying God in the future because LDM members and new believers will display appropriate church behavior. Also, this information will guide other teachers at LDM who may face the same problem in the future. This project will give

them information on how to understand why they should give God their attention. For a teacher to understand the student better, that teacher needs to discover what or who is behind a person's distraction. There is such a thing as adult ADHD, which could be one thing that can cause a person not to be able to focus. Scholar Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D., stated, "ADHD is a real condition that affects children and adults."⁴

Definitions

Catechize: Teaching children the Word of God so they will grow up in fear of God. Scholar Scot McKnight says teaching includes "evangelizing them and challenging them to make a personal decision about Jesus early."⁵ This project uses this term to discuss how parents should train their children in the Word of God so that they know how to be disciplined during worship and service time at church when they are older.

Church Service: A gathering of Christians to worship and honor God. According to theologian Walter A. Elwell, "the service was established by the Apostles and was a simple service, with the climactic event of the weekly service on the Lord's Day being the sacrament of the Lord's Supper."⁶ This project uses the term to establish a purpose for the Christian meeting.

Dedication: Being zealous about something or someone. The act of loyalty by a person to a subject. According to scholar William Michael Beals, "dedication has some kind of value in

⁴ Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D., *Taking Charge of Adult ADHD: Proven Strategies to Succeed at Work at Home, and in Relationships*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2022), 2.

⁵ Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 28.

⁶ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1301.

virtue of its relationship to robust integrity, but that it also has intrinsic value.”⁷ The project uses the term to discuss the importance of putting one’s heart into the worship and service of God. Also, the word shows how being devoted to God will cause a person to dedicate themselves to God.

Disciple: A person that learns from Jesus, denies themselves, takes up their cross, and follows Him so that they can learn the things He taught about God. In addition, a disciple is someone who shows love to others, allows the Holy Spirit to discipline them, and is willing to make disciples (Matt. 16:24; 28:19-20; John 13:25; 16:13-15). Additionally, philosopher Dallas Willard said, “A disciple is a learner, a student, an apprentice, a practitioner, even if only a beginner.”⁸ The researcher uses this term to discuss those followers of Jesus who strive to mimic His action in every way possible.

Discipleship: Gary Bredfeldt writes, “A process of learning and growth. Living interactively with Jesus’ resurrected presence (through His word, His presence, and other believers) as we progressively learn to lead our lives as He would if He were here.”⁹ The researcher of this project uses this term to discuss followers of Jesus teaching others to do those things that Jesus taught.

Discipline: Having self-control over one’s life. Being able to be led by the Holy Spirit. According to theologian Gary Bredfeldt, discipline is “the ability to take action regardless of our emotional state or personal desires.”¹⁰ This project uses this term to describe having self-control

⁷ William Michael Beals, “The Importance of Dedication,” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2012), 4, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

⁸ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), xi.

⁹ Ibid, 160.

¹⁰ Gary Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2006), 110.

in worship in service at church. Also, it uses the word to describe the teaching obtained through the Holy Spirit of God.

Divine: Having the attributes of the godhead with all the power of the Almighty God. According to theologian John F. Walvoord, it is an “attribute related to Deity or ascribed to the Father or the Holy Spirit which attributes to Christ.”¹¹ This project uses the term to discuss the Heavenly Father's attributes and those of the Son.

Focus: Give all of one’s attention to a subject without outside interference. According to author Daniel Goleman et al., “focus means thinking about one thing while filtering out distraction.”¹² This project uses the term to describe a profound meditation on God alone during worship and service time and not allowing any other distraction to interfere with the mind.

General Revelation: Being able to recognize God through His creation. According to theologian Millard J. Erickson, it is “God revealing of Himself at all times to every human being.”¹³ This project uses the term to discuss how the robust creation of God speaks to everyone and can make known to them that God exists.

Grace: A gift God gives to all believers that is not earned (Eph. 2:8-9). The theologian Matthew W. Bates stated, “Grace can be two things. First, it can be a one hundred percent gift. Second, it can simultaneously summon the gifted person with an obligation, a heartfelt and intentional duty, to respond in gratitude and behavior per the new social bond created by the one

¹¹ John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 2008), 26, Logos.

¹² Daniel Goleman et al., *Focus: HBR Emotional Intelligence Series* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2018), 3.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e076mww&AN=1797876&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹³ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 122.

who gives the gift.”¹⁴ This project will use the term to describe how God provided a way out of sin and selfishness through grace.

Nomophobia: Being addicted to a cell phone. Seungyeon Lee et al., describe nomophobia “as fear and subset of anxiety that arises from not having access to one's mobile device.”¹⁵ This project uses the term to discuss how people are addicted to cell phones.

Paraclete: The Helper. Theologian Thomas R. Schreiner said He is “the Spirit of Truth, the advocate, the teacher, and the witness bearer.”¹⁶ In this project, the researcher will use this term to discuss the paraclete, the helper, who comes to bear witness of God so the believers can know how to act before a Holy God.

Repentance: To have a change of heart and change the course of action of one’s behavior. According to Erickson, “repentance is based on a feeling of godly sorrow for our sin.”¹⁷ This project will use the term to discuss how there is a need for believers to change their lives and turn to God.

Reverence: Having respect for the creator God and a healthy fear of God will cause a person to acknowledge His awesomeness. Author R. Kent Hughes says it means “to lift God as worthy and ascribe great worth to him.”¹⁸ The researcher uses this term to discuss how God deserves respect and should have attention during church worship and service.

¹⁴ Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2017), page number, Logos.

¹⁵ Seungyeon Lee et al., “Addicted to Cellphones: Exploring the Psychometric Properties Between the Nomophobia Questionnaire and Obsessiveness in College Students,” *National Library of Medicine* 4, no. 11 (2018): e00895, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6223106/>

¹⁶ Thomas R Schreiner, *The King in His beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 225.

¹⁷ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 866.

¹⁸ R. Kent Hughes, *Discipline of a Godly Man*, updated ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 114.

Spiritual Discipline: The ability to allow the Holy Spirit to discipline an individual's actions. Theologian Donald S. Whitney said, "The Lord Jesus not only expects these biblical Spiritual Disciplines of those who follow Him, but He is also the model of discipline for godliness."¹⁹ This project uses the term to discuss when a person shows discipline; they use the Holy Spirit's God-given strength to help them accomplish something they cannot do on their own.

Spiritual Formation: An action gotten by the transformation and the renewing of the mind, which comes through the help of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:2). According to theologian Paul Pettit, this "refers to the Holy Spirit in the context of forming, transforming, or conforming a person's life toward Christlikeness ('until Christ is formed in you,' Gal. 4:19b)."²⁰ This project uses the term to discuss how the Holy Spirit transforms the state of mind of a person.

Spirituality: The state of a person once the Spirit of God fills them. Scholar P. Adam McClendon stated, "those who live under the Spirit of God are spiritual."²¹ The researcher uses the term in this project to discuss how the Holy Spirit of God will change the state of mind of an undisciplined person.

Transform: Changing someone into a different state of mind. Pettit said this "allows the empowering presence of God to transform us into the image of Christ according to the will of the Father."²²

Worship: Giving adoration unto God. Whitney said, "worship is sincerity to God in our acts of worship. It is giving back to God by getting the heart involved and allowing the Holy

¹⁹ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Tyndale House Publishers, 2014), 14.

²⁰ Paul E. Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2016), 51.

²¹ P. Adam McClendon, *Paul's Spirituality in Galatians: A Critique of Contemporary Christian Spiritualities* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publisher, 2015), 1.

²² Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 60.

Spirit to motivate the responses given according to the truth that comes out of the scriptures about God.”²³ In this project, the researcher uses the term to discuss how worship gives adoration to God when time is dedicated to Him during church and responding to Him in spirit and truth.

Limitations

The researcher will use only the members of LDM in this project, and those affiliated with LDM will be a part of the four-day workshop. This workshop will be at the church in College Park, Georgia. Presently LDM only has access to the building one day a week on Saturday. Therefore, the researcher will schedule the workshop weekly on Saturdays. COVID-19 is another barrier that can cause limitations. At this time, the Omicron variant is causing some precautions for LDM members. Some members have ongoing health issues that prevent them from being among others, while this pandemic faces another variant.

Next, there is the issue of ethnicity. Most of the community that LDM surrounds consists of people from the black race. Although LDM is open to everyone from everywhere and every ethnicity of people, so far, there is only one person from another ethnic group that has chosen to be a member of LDM. The goal of LDM is to reach people from all ethnicities, races, and backgrounds because this is what Jesus did during His ministry on earth. Also, it is what He commissioned His disciples to do when He gave them their commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

Finally, since LDM is a tiny church, the research only covers a small percentage of the neighborhood's general population where LDM exists, which does not cover the entire city of Atlanta. The ministry is only three years old, and LDM is reaching out to everyone in the community so they can know they exist. Many people are unaware of the church, which is why

²³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*), 89.

each member of LDM must understand the importance of church worship and service time. Each one will be teaching someone after they have had the experience of learning from this workshop.

Delimitations

The researcher delimits the number of participants available to participate in this project because the researcher will use only the members at LDM. The delimitation came about because of the number of congregants at LDM and the fact that some members will naturally not be able to attend the workshop. Also, the researcher has put an age limit on the participants, ranging from eighteen to seventy-two-years-old. The research is open to many members of LDM willing to participate in this project. Additionally, there is a delimitation of the time set for the workshop. The researcher set a time delimitation because of the distance one couple at LDM travels to get to the church. The workshop will be on Saturday for two hours and will take place for four weeks. The researcher chose Saturdays to make it convenient for those who have to work during the week. Furthermore, the workshop choice of Saturday is because the researcher has access to the church building on this day.

Thesis Statement

If LDM members spend four weeks in a workshop on being dedicated and focused, they will be less distracted during church worship and service. During the workshop, the researcher and the participants will discuss why LDM members lack dedication and focus while church worship and service are in session. Also, it will discuss reasons why LDM members should learn from Jesus and reap the benefit from doing so, which will help them to know God better. According to scholar Raul Moreno, “when Believers know God’s Son Jesus Christ, it allows the

Christian a chance to know God.”²⁴ Additionally, the researcher and participants will discuss and learn from what Jesus demonstrated to his disciples about being dedicated and focused on God. Whitney said, “growing more like Jesus helps understand why the time God gives and the disciplined use of that time is important.”²⁵ The workshop teaching will include using God’s time wisely by focusing on fulfilling His will.

It is a discipline and learned behavior to have dedication and the ability to focus. However, LDM members struggle to understand how to be dedicated and focused because of so many distractions in today’s world. Journalist Johann Hari says, “you cannot achieve the things you want to achieve if you cannot pay sustained attention.”²⁶ LDM will discover, along with the researcher, how every decision starts in the heart. Hughes discussed how love should be the motivating factor behind a believer's decisions. According to him, “if you love God and want to please him, you will tell yourself, I will do this to please God.”²⁷ This research will use discussions from scholars like Hughes and will learn from LDM members what they know about this topic concerning what the scriptures say about being dedicated and focused. In a four-week workshop, LDM will have an opportunity to be a part of research that will bring awareness to them about their lack of dedication and focus during church worship and service time.

²⁴ Dr. Raul Moreno, *First Love: Restoring Your Relationship With God* (Orlando, FL: Moreno, 2021), 18.

²⁵ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 160.

²⁶ Johann Hari, *Stolen Focus: Why you can't Pay Attention and How to Think Deeply Again* (Broadway, NY: Crown Publishing Group, 2022), 13.

²⁷ Hughes, *Discipline of a Godly Man*, 23.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This Doctor of Ministry project aims to discover what causes LDM members to lack dedication and focus during church worship and service. The researcher will add to the discussion what other scholars have discussed as to why people lack commitment and focus. Also, the researcher will provide enough information to cover a four-day workshop for members of LDM in the hope of helping them display appropriate behavior during worship and service time. The researcher has designed this literature review to get qualifying information equal to the source of other scholars discussing the topic. While studying this topic, the researcher has discovered how scholars use the heart and mind together. According to scholars, the two must work together to help believers focus on what is essential in their lives. In this conceptual framework's theological and theoretical section, the information gathered will be compared to discuss what God says concerning this topic.

Literature Review

Being dedicated and focused first comes from learning from Jesus and becoming His disciple. Those who believe in Jesus, according to theologian Andrew Murray, “are called to learn of Him, who is the only path to God.”²⁸ People are not born dedicated to God. On the contrary, they were born to rebel against Him. This literature review will cover turning from rebelliousness to shrewdness when worshipping and serving God. Disobedience and insubordination originated in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3), which caused people’s inability to dedicate their time and be focused on God. Walvoord said, “God saw the disobedience of Israel to the law, and the worship of idols as their being spiritually unfaithful to her husband and a

²⁸ Andrew Murray, *Humility: The Beauty of Holiness* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publisher Group, 2017), 33.

violation of her marriage vows (Isa. 54:1–17; Jer. 3:1, 14, 20; Hosea 2:1–23).”²⁹ The act of disobedience seen in Genesis chapter three is one picture of who or what causes a person to lack dedication and focus. The ability to overcome the act of disobedience came through the blood Jesus shed on the cross. According to theologian J. Marcellus Kik, “Thus the blood, which is a vivid symbol of Christ’s violent death on the cross, restores harmony between sinful man and the holy God.”³⁰ The blood that Jesus shed is more than a symbol. The act of Him shedding His blood made it possible for the Holy Spirit to come down on the life of the believers. LDM members can get strength and the ability in their lives to become more dedicated and focused because of the blood Jesus shed. The power obtained in the lives of LDM members will teach them what is appropriate during worship and service. Also, it is that same strength that will not allow distractions to stop the flow of God during church service. This literature review will cover how the grace of God makes it possible for believers to have disciplined behavior through the Holy Spirit. Disciplined behavior comes when a person becomes a disciple of Jesus and receives the Holy Spirit that works in them to help change their behavior to succumb to the will of God.

Dedication and Focus

The researcher will start by focusing on why worship and service are essential since this research is about dedication and focuses on church worship and service time. Worship service is a spiritual interaction that affects both unbelievers and believers. Theologian Jared C. Wilson said, “the worship service conducted with the unbeliever in mind should keep the unbelievers in

²⁹ Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 250.

³⁰ J. Marcellus Kik, “Offense of the Blood,” *Christianity Today*, publication date, 1957, 15.

focus.”³¹ Therefore, leaders at church should remember to keep both audiences in mind when conducting service. Also, Wilson talked about how “in the biblical picture of the earliest church, there is no indication that the worship gathering to be an event-oriented around the unbeliever’s presence.”³² His use of 1 Corinthians 14:22-23, which spoke about tongues, gave a picture of how believers should not be doing anything that would be confusing to outsiders during church worship and service time. With this, church leaders and believers should concentrate on winning those lost at all times for the kingdom of God. Newcomers watch the way members of the church worship and participate in service. Newcomers also observe all church members' behaviors when distracted and not focused during church worship and service.

The purpose of church service is so that believers can fellowship with each other while showing dedication and focus to God. According to Elwell, “the service that the apostles established was a simple service, and the climactic event of the weekly service on the Lord’s Day was the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.”³³ Only the baptized believers were allowed to participate in the sacrament. As Elwell discussed the purpose of the worship service, he stated, “It biblically is a gathering of Christians to enjoy God in communion with him and each other with several elements to it, which are singing, praying, preaching, and eating.”³⁴ In Paul's writing, he was concerned about some eating and drinking in the church during communion because they humiliated those that could not afford to eat such elaborate meals. He said, “What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!” (1 Cor. 11:22, NIV). The

³¹ Jared C. Wilson, *The Prodigal Church: A Gentle Manifesto Against the Status Quo* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 63.

³² Ibid.

³³ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1301.

³⁴ Ibid, 62.

researcher agrees with Elwell and wants to add that the eating and drinking during communion are for commemorating the Lord.

Next, it is important to address why being dedicated and focused is essential. Dedication starts by being devoted to something or someone. Although there is no way to know a person's heart or to tell when they have not dedicated themselves, some actions made by individuals will signify that they lack dedication and focus. A person with no commitment to God will not devote themselves to anything. According to theologian Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "God wants the believers to devote themselves to the good of others passionately, and to humbly (or perhaps 'carefully') submit to the Lord's standards in all areas of one's life, before all else."³⁵ Once a person is dedicated, they will gain focus on the things of God. Therefore, the two go hand in hand together. Hughes stated, "devotion must culminate in a conscious yielding of every part of a person's personality, every ambition, every relationship, and hope to God."³⁶

When it comes to keeping focus, most people focus on what they have faith in and what interests them. Theologian John Stott said, "the Christian faith and life should be focused on Christ if they are authentic."³⁷ However, some believers cannot focus because they have issues preventing them from concentrating. Numerous distractions in today's world keep people from focusing, such as increasing social media pages and higher expectations because of rising technological developments. Also, humans are more complex today than ever before. Hari stated,

³⁵ Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 425.

³⁶ Hughes, *Discipline of a Godly Man*, 118.

³⁷ John Stott, *Focus on Christ* (Carlisle, CA: Langham Creative Projects, 2019), 3, ProQuest eBook Central.

“social scientists cannot agree about what affects people’s ability to pay attention because of the complexity of humans. It is hard to measure something as complicated.”³⁸

With the knowledge of the fact that it is impossible to measure the inability of people to pay attention, the researcher of this project takes on the challenge of finding some help in understanding if it is by choice or by life events that cause the problem. According to scholar Joseph McCormack, “Our brains are hard at work, making it harder to focus and easier than ever to get distracted.”³⁹ He listed a few things as a distraction: “overflowing e-mail, smartphone notifications, checking our device, social media streams, 24-hour connectivity, texting and messaging, news-fed frenzy, and time spent online.”⁴⁰

The researcher discovered that the problem which causes people to lack focus has everything to do with the issue of the increasing rise of technology and this world’s system. Hari claims, “this is a systemic problem that stems from living in a system pouring acid on people’s attention every day, and people are blaming themselves.”⁴¹ Acidic interruptions poured on people today are the pandemic, the forces of technology, and the confinement of children. According to Hari, “systemic problems require systemic solutions.”⁴² The researcher perceives family problems, long work hours, social activities, technological interests, and medical issues as interruptions that cause LDM members to lack dedication and focus. This researcher aims to find other reasons that distract LDM members, such as spiritual opposition to God.

³⁸ Hari, *Stolen Focus*, 15.

³⁹ Joseph McCormack, “Noise, Noise, So Much Noise,” in *Noise: Living and Leading When Nobody Can Focus* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2020), 3.
<https://www.oreilly.com/library/view/noise/9781119553373/c01.xhtml#usec0002>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Hari, *Stolen Focus*, 12.

⁴² Ibid, 13.

How Cell Phones Affect Church Worship and Service

In this section, the researcher will discuss the issue of cell phones and how improper usage affects environments such as schools and churches. The distractions of cell phones and other technological devices are known for interrupting church worship and service, which causes church members to lose focus. According to authors Michael J. Berry and Aubrey Westfall, “research has found substantial use of cell phones and the Internet during class time to be a detriment to students’ learning and academic performance.”⁴³ They are also detrimental to members of the church. Author Ed Cyzewski wrote, “disembodied technology can devastate incarnate spirituality.”⁴⁴ Additionally, Berry and Westfall stated, “Another study estimated that millennial students spent more time on social networking sites than they did working on homework or completing class assignments.”⁴⁵ The distraction from cell phones can stifle a person’s spiritual formation when they concentrate on their technological devices more than on what is happening during church worship and service.

When a person’s cell phone is ringing or they answer a call in an educational setting, they are disrupting the other people that are there to learn. In their research, scholars Jill T. Shelton et al. discovered how ringing cell phones in the classroom led to significant disruption. They wrote, “students’ memory of the information that presented was not obtained while the cell phone was ringing.”⁴⁶ Also, regardless of some acceptable attitudes to a ringing cell phone in any educational setting, it is distracting. According to Anastasia D. Elder, “Even though youth may

⁴³ Michael J. Berry and Aubrey Westfall, “Dial D for Distraction: The Making and Breaking of Cell Phone Policies in the College Classroom,” *College Teaching* 63 no. 2, (May 7, 2015): 63. DOI: 10.1080/87567555.2015.1005040

⁴⁴ Ed Cyzewski, *Reconnect Spiritual Restoration from Digital Distraction* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2020), 23. Kindle.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Jill T. Shelton et al., “The Distracting Effects of a Ringing Cell Phone: An Investigation of the Laboratory and the Classroom Setting” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 29, no. 4 (2009): 519.

be more accepting of cell phone use in class, studies regarding the distracting nature of simultaneous technology, such as that offered by cell phone use in courses, point to the harmful nature of the activity. “⁴⁷

Christians Escape Plan

In this section, the researcher will discuss how God has given man an escape plan from sin, which will assist man in the area of distractions. Christians who place their belief in God and His Son, Jesus Christ, regardless of their nationality or ethnicity, can learn through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was present when God created the first man. Theologian Jeremy M. Kimble, in his discussion, said, “when God created man during the time of creation, under grace and in love, He placed him at the top of creation by making him (man) in His image (Gen. 1:26-28).”⁴⁸ The disobedience of Adam and Eve caused man to sin. It changed man's heart, and He became corrupted by sin (Heb. 5:12). God's grace and love unselfishly gave the man who became separated from God by sin an escape plan (John 3:16, Rom. 5:19). The escape plan comes through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross. After Jesus shed His blood, rose again, and ascended to heaven, He sent humans the Holy Spirit to be a helper in their time of need. Whitney said, “The Holy Spirit’s office is to magnify Christ, and He gives the believer a desire to be like Christ.”⁴⁹

Additionally, God gave humans the Bible as an instructional guide to help them. Authors Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks said, “the Bible opens up the doors in your life

⁴⁷ Anastasia D. Elder, “College Students’ Cell Phone Use, Beliefs, and Effects on Their Learning,” *College Student Journal* 47, no 4 (2013): 585.

⁴⁸ Jeremy M. Kimble, *40 Questions about Church Membership and Discipline* (Chicago, IL: Kregel Publications, 2017), 14, ProQuest eBook Central.

⁴⁹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 137.

and provides a purifying dynamic to help you clean out sin and learn to conform to God's will."⁵⁰ Therefore, there is hope for the distracted sinner through the blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible.

Christians worldwide have talked about the saving grace of God, which comes through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross. However, not many speak about believers knowing God's saving grace and acting as if they are still under the curse of sin and death. With many professing Christians living as if Jesus did not die so they could have a relationship with God, this researcher discusses how LDM members' lack of dedication and focus displays what many people elsewhere are displaying. The researcher desires to help LDM realize that their lack of commitment and focus is the enemy's work. Once a person acknowledges Jesus as Lord and Savior, the next step is to ask the Holy Spirit into their life so they can have some help in submitting their will over to God. Scholar Jim Wilder stated, "the tough road to follow is the road where a person has their own will, which is a life alienated from God."⁵¹ Why would a professing Christian want to be alienated from God? A person might not believe alienation fits their description, but if they are not dedicated and focused on the things of God, they are going down the rugged road, as Wilder testified.

Members of LDM and other Christians in the world do not have to go down the tough road because they have a divine escape plan, which includes learning to become active in worshipping and serving God. However, they lack the knowledge to submit everything about their lives to God. Jesus taught His disciples how to discipline their lives. In addition, notable scholars have discussed how learning from Jesus and becoming His disciples can help develop

⁵⁰ Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading The Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 25.

⁵¹ Jim Wilder, *Renovated: God, Dallas Willard and the Church That Transforms* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2020), 59.

believers spiritually. Scholar Christopher M. Johnson wrote, “the process of discipline comes from the teaching and empowerment to others from the doctrine and lifestyle of Jesus.”⁵² The process is beneficial to the members of LDM. Just as Liberty University is training champions for Christ, the pastor at LDM wants to produce winners for the ministry.

Having a disciplined life begins at the point of salvation for most Christians. However, it takes longer for some Christians because they will not allow the Holy Spirit to take control of their lives. The pastor at LDM believes all LDM members have given their lives to Christ, but they lack spiritual formation. Pettit brought to the conversation what is meant by the term spiritual formation and gave a biblical understanding. According to him, “taken from passages in the Bible, it refers to the Holy Spirit in the context of forming, transforming, or conforming a person’s life toward Christlikeness (‘until Christ is formed in you,’ Gal. 4:19b).”⁵³

When some new converts give up control in their life, it makes them feel like they are no longer in charge of their destiny. Contrary to that thought, when new believers place their lives in the hand of the Almighty God, their lives are transformed through their faith in Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. Scholars William F. Cox and Robert A. Peck discussed Christian education of discipleship formation. They pointed out that “after Paul’s conversion, he set the example of aligning his zealotness with the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁴ Aligning a person's zealotness with the Holy Spirit starts with discerning when the Spirit is talking to them. Author Adele Ahlberg Calhoun stated, “Biblical discernment arises from a relationship with God in

⁵² Christopher M. Johnson, "4D's of Spiritual Growth: The Local Church's Role in Spiritual Growth and Discipleship" (DMIN diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2020), 36. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

⁵³ Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 51.

⁵⁴ William F. Cox Jr., and Robert A. Peck, "Christian Education as Discipleship Formation," *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 2 (08, 2018): 252.

prayer.”⁵⁵ Hopefully, the researcher and LDM members will practice aligning their zealousness so future members can learn something about how to be dedicated and focused on God.

Therefore, this project will help bring about the knowledge needed for the pastor, so the researcher can put more zeal into understanding the member, which will come after the four-day training class.

LDM is a small congregation of twenty congregants, primarily from the black race, whose education level ranges from high school education to a master’s degree. They are not slow to learn at all. Most LDM members know more than the average Christian about God’s plan of salvation. The problem of why they do not show dedication and focus during worship and service time seems to have stemmed from a lack of knowledge of the importance of committing to God. Christo Lombaard, a scholar in the field, discussed how “newcomers to a discipline tend to be more susceptible to misconstruing, from their backgrounds, what the denotations and connotations are implicit to the meaning of terms of the newly entered discipline.”⁵⁶

The ability of a person not able to focus could result from not having the power to control how their mind wanders. The power to keep their mind from wandering can come only through the Holy Spirit. According to Goleman et al., “people should notice when their mind wanders and bring it back to their desired point of focus.”⁵⁷ Their statement is not easy to accomplish since there are many distractions today. LDM members need to know how to meditate on the word of God so it will keep their minds from wandering. Whitney said, “meaningful meditation requires a concentration which is not developed often in our fast-paced society filled with media

⁵⁵ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 110.

⁵⁶ Christo Lombaard, “First Steps into the Discipline: On the ‘spirit’ in the Discipline of Christian Spirituality,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 75, no. 1 (2019): 2.

⁵⁷ Goleman et al., *Focus*, 8.

distraction.”⁵⁸ Yet, the omniscient God knew this distraction would come before this time came. Erickson stated, “God must know all things, and He cannot be ignorant of any matter if He is omniscient.”⁵⁹ God warned the believers about what was to come (2 Tim. 3:1-7). Being lovers of pleasure is what got the people here. LDM members have been enjoying the fun of increasing technology.

Discipleship

Discipline starts with discipleship. The leader of Christianity, Jesus, the son of God, demonstrated and taught his followers how to be His disciples. Jesus is the only person who lived on this earth that knows God. He is one with the Father and was here by the command of God (John 3:17; 10:30). Theologian Reinhard Feldmeier stated, “Jesus made known what He heard from God, which is not heavenly mysteries but love; as the gift and commandment of the Father.”⁶⁰ Every member of LDM is a disciple of Jesus, and they should know this. They should learn of Jesus because of God’s love and Jesus, His gift to the world, that makes discipline possible. Theologian Philip J. Noordmans talked about the body of Christ as being like an orchestra. He wrote, “orchestra should focus on the one conductor; follow the right score; play on key and play in time. In the typical church, some members ignore our conductor, Jesus Christ.”⁶¹

Only through Jesus can a human be one with God, the divine creator and maker of all things. Feldmeier stated, “since what is involved is not the divine, but the union with a divine

⁵⁸ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 208.

⁵⁹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 194.

⁶⁰ Reinhard Feldmeier, “As Your Heavenly Father Is Perfect: The God of the Bible and Commandments in the Gospel” *Interpretation* 70, no. 4 (October 2016): 43.

⁶¹ Philip J. Noordmans, “Becoming Focused, Flexible Servants of Jesus Christ at Faith Reformed Church” (DMIN diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1997), 9, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

that is made possible for those who follow Jesus, which makes the biblical inheritance remains determinative."⁶² If given a chance to study and learn everything from step one, becoming a disciple of Jesus, to the last step, being disciplined in worship and service for the glory of God, LDM would have improved discipline.

There is a role that each disciple of Jesus must play in the church. Scholar Michael Truman Allums said, "As recorded in God's inspired Word, all disciples of Jesus must submit to his plan for their sanctification by living it out in the church context."⁶³ Submission will improve LDM discipline because it will teach the members how learning from Jesus and submitting to His plan for sanctification will help improve how they live out those practices that only the submitted being can live in the church.

Spirituality

This researcher casually mentioned that the work of the Holy Spirit performs the work in believers to give them discipline behavior. This section will discuss just how the Holy Spirit works in a person to help them have improved discipline behavior. First, there are three steps that a believer has to take before the Holy Spirit can take over their life. Step one is repentance. A person should admit that they are a sinner and ask God to forgive them for sinning against Him, believe in the name of the only begotten son of God, ask Him to accept them into the body of God, and send the Holy Spirit into their life. Hughes talked about "how committing to the body of Christ and living under the discipline of the Church's leadership causes a corresponding

⁶² Feldmeier, "As Your Heavenly Father Is Perfect," 441.

⁶³ Michael Truman Allums, "Developing a Church Discipline Strategy for Verbena Baptist Church, Verbena, Alabama" (DMIN thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 16, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

deepening to take place in your soul, which is something the uncommitted person could never know.”⁶⁴

Step two is submitting to the will of God for one’s life. This step is crucial because God cannot transform a person's life without a willing heart. A new believer must give up control of their life. Afterward, the grace of God, which stems from the love of God, will begin to work through each believer. Wherefore, new believers, whom church leaders teach about submission to the will of God, will readily allow the Holy Spirit of God to teach them discipline. According to author Jerry Bridges, “if we fail to teach that discipline is by grace, people will assume that it is by performance.”⁶⁵ Doing this will allow the Holy Spirit to take over the new believer's life.

Step three is to become a disciple of Jesus. Since Jesus is a part of God just as the Holy Spirit is a part of God, becoming His disciple is an assurance that the person is doing the will of God. Scholar Joseph Mattera added, “when we think Christ’s thoughts after him, that is the only way to break the strongholds that put you in internal prisons and limit your growth capacity (2 Cor. 10:3-5).”⁶⁶ How can a person think thoughts after Jesus? A person can train their mind to be like Jesus by reading the gospel stories of Jesus and allowing the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to transform their minds. Theologian D. A. Carson argued that “the attitude of Jesus and the apostles is integral to Christianity, to the very nature of the gospel.”⁶⁷

Once a person completes all three steps, the Holy Spirit can work according to God’s will. The will of God through the Holy Spirit shows the new believer who they are and begins to humble that person to the same state of humility that was in Jesus Christ. Murray wrote, “When a

⁶⁴ Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 220.

⁶⁵ Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2018), 73.

⁶⁶ Joseph Mattera, *The Jesus Principles: Lead a Life That Even Death Can't Stop* (Chicago, IL: Charisma House, 2019), 18, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁶⁷ D. A. Carson, *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publisher, 2016), 481.

person is in Jesus and marked by Him with a divine humility, His secret life, His death, and His exaltation; the one infallible test of our holiness will be the humility before God."⁶⁸ Humility is the true spirituality of a Christian. The spirit of humility that Jesus had moved the believer in is how their lives become disciplined.

Discipline

The term discipline, according to theologian W. E. Vine, “derives from the Greek word (σωφρονισμός) *sōphronismos*, which means an admonishing or calling to soundness of mind, or self-control.”⁶⁹ The researcher discussed earlier that discipline comes through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, soundness of mind can only come from God. Kimble agreed with Blue and White when He said, “church discipline is when the body of Christ trains Christians in holiness and calls them to follow their Lord more closely.”⁷⁰ Therefore, the church's calling is about training believers on the importance of following Christ.

Believers have not trained accurately when the Lord is not put first in their hearts and minds. Hughes said, “maintaining a pure mind is impossible if you are a television-watching, internet-surfing, video-game-playing couch potato.”⁷¹ When you are busy doing the business of the Lord, you will become disciplined. Also, unbelief could contribute to not learning about God and a lack of discipline. Carson seems to agree with this because he said, “when people hardened

⁶⁸ Murray, *Humility*, 55.

⁶⁹ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 172.

⁷⁰ Kimble, *40 Questions about Church Membership and Discipline*, 141.

⁷¹ Hughes, *Discipline of a Godly Man*, 41.

their hearts to Jesus' word, it was because they did not want to hear it, which is what Jesus was talking about when he said because I speak the truth, you do not believe me! (John 8:45)."⁷²

God's Love and Grace

In this section of this Literature Review, the researcher reveals the person of God. It tells who is behind the act of being disciplined in its entirety. If it had not been for God's grace and love, man would not have any chance of being corrected. When Adam sinned in the garden of Eden, his sin made it impossible for there to be any spiritual formation. When Jesus died, he not only made it possible for humanity to form a union with God once again, but he promised the Holy Spirit to His follower to be a guide into all truth (John 16:13). Bridges discussed how a believer's union was with Christ, and it was spiritual. He advised believers to "keep in mind that the spiritual dimension is as real as the physical dimension."⁷³

God, the creator, and Father of all creation made it possible for humankind to share in His grace. Feldmeier discussed the multitude of God's grace. According to him,

The complementary divine names "Most High" and "Father" are employed deliberately: one who does not pay others back in their coin but does good deeds even to his or her enemies, is living in accord with the superior kindness of the Lord of the world, who behaves in keeping with his kindness even toward those who are ungrateful and evil.⁷⁴

That statement should make believers want to discipline their lives and thank God the Father.

All that God has done by His grace is because of His love. His love and grace work together. God's love is so deep that after He sent Jesus into the world, He made it possible for believers to connect as members of His family through the blood of His Son. In addition, He sealed every believer with His Holy Spirit so that they would connect to Him. In the words of

⁷² Carson, *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 1125.

⁷³ Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*, 66.

⁷⁴ Feldmeier, "As Your Heavenly Father Is Perfect," 439.

Whitney, “nothing can separate us from His love because we are his adopted children.”⁷⁵

Therefore, Christian believers should give God and others He created love in return for His goodness shown to them. As Whitney related, “our service should spring simply from our love for God and others most of the time.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, human beings' love for God should be filled with so much gratitude that they will automatically discipline their lives. As stated by Calhoun, “the decision to be disciplined enough to stitch our days together with the thread of gratitude is a decision that guarantees to stitch us closer to God.”⁷⁷

The Church’s Responsibilities

The church is responsible for teaching the members how to develop a solid spiritual formation that will help each believer in the church know who God is and what He has done for them through His grace and love. Every new believer should learn the three steps to spirituality, which should be in the form of a class. In the future, a discipleship training class will take place for every new believer of LDM. Presently, no members of the church know the steps of spirituality. The church’s responsibilities include discovering what stops a person from developing a healthy spiritual formation and teaching the member how to eliminate the cause. Such causes can come from distractions. The workshop classes will be the beginning for the pastor of LDM to uphold the church’s responsibilities to its members.

The researcher is learning during the process of this research. Everything gathered in this research and the three steps to spirituality will be used for the future training of new believers. As the activity begins, the researcher will remember the words of scholar Dov Singer, who

⁷⁵ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 158.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 144.

⁷⁷ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 32.

stated, “There are but few who devote thought and study to the perfection of Divine service, to love, fear, communion, and all aspects of saintliness.”⁷⁸ The researcher wants to be among the few who teach others about Divine service's perfection, including being dedicated and focused during worship and service. Church only lasts one to one and a half hours, which happens twice a week. According to Singer, “using spiritual intelligence that helps perceive what is hidden and awesome; makes the human intelligence sensitive to the notion of things with an inner essence.”⁷⁹

Conclusion

The literature used in this literature review will be beneficial for planning a four-day workshop for the members of LDM to possibly help them have the proper behavior at church doing worship and service time. The content of this project has provided information that led this researcher to conclude that there are one of two reasons undisciplined believers exist in service. First, they have unbelief in their heart. LDM must believe in Jesus before making Him Lord over their life. After all, discipline starts with following Jesus and mimicking what He taught his disciples. Second, the inability to be disciplined stems from a person not allowing the Holy Spirit to take over their lives and teach them.

Humans are sinners because Adam, the father of all human beings, sinned against God in the garden of Eden. God, who loves the world, reconciled the world to Him through Christ (2 Cor. 5:19). Therefore, humans who believe in Christ must learn from Christ through what He taught his disciples. The researcher stated earlier that discipline is about following Jesus and allowing the Holy Spirit to control one's life. The researcher's action plan in the four-day

⁷⁸ Dov Singer, "Service of God As A Unique Discipline," *Tradition* 52, no. 4 (Fall, 2020): 73.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

workshop will show the participants how any distractions that exalt themselves against the learning that comes from God are not part of God's will for the church.

This project was similar to other research work because scholars have been discussing for years how believers are to be disciples of Jesus. Also, there is nothing new about the importance of a believer mimicking Jesus by showing humility in everyday life. What is different in this research work is the essential need of each believer to submit everything in their life to the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8, NIV). As a believer who is a disciple of Jesus, the researcher believes church members (LDM in particular) have not taken this statement as seriously as they should. When believers understand Acts 1:8 and the importance of what Jesus said, they will allow the power of the Holy Spirit to be that power that will make a difference in their behavior during church worship and service time.

Theological Foundations

In this theological foundation, the researcher will show what the Scriptures say about being disciplined and how a person should approach the presence of God. They should approach God with reverence in their heart. In addition, the researcher will show how it is preceded throughout the Bible for the chosen individuals to have dedication (commitment) and focus on God. God has had a relationship with humans from the beginning of time. No action of a human substantiated God's relationship with His people. However, God's relationship carried some stipulations. God expects His creation to acknowledge His sovereign power by respecting Him and devoting the time set aside for Him to be "His time." In this theological foundation, the

researcher will incorporate Scriptures to show how discipline was essential throughout the Bible and still is before the presence of God. Today, commitment to God is still important and a way to express love to Him during worship and service.

The Holiness of God

God is holy, and believers should remember to approach Him as such. In Leviticus, Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were consumed by the fire from God because they offered unauthorized fire before Him (Lev. 10:1-7). According to theologian Richard S. Hess, “instructions given in preceding chapters of Leviticus and Exodus regarding the cult warned against doing such. Therefore, it seemed unlikely that ignorance played a significant role.”⁸⁰ Believers must pay attention to God's instructions through His servants. Hess said, “Moses's words in Leviticus 10:3 emphasize the holiness and dignity of God and his refusal to allow any infringement on his sacred presence.”⁸¹ Not focusing on God's instruction was the mistake of Nadab and Abihu. They were sons of Aaron, the priest, yet they acted as if they did not learn the correct way to approach God. Today's church members at LDM should know there is a right and wrong way to worship God. Scholar Timothy D. Price III stated, “Nadab and Abihu worshipped the right God but in the wrong way.”⁸²

When looking at a command given by Moses to the Israelites, it was evident that God wanted humans to put Him first in their lives. Moses wrote, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength” (Deut. 6:4-5,

⁸⁰ Richard S. Hess, *Genesis-Leviticus*, vol. 1, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 664.

⁸¹ Hess, *Genesis-Leviticus*, 664.

⁸² Timothy D. Price, III, "Assessing Cultural Influences in Worship." (DMIN diss., South University, 2020), 17, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

translation). This saying of Moses is known among scholars to be the Jewish Shema. The Shema was so important to the Israelites that Jesus repeated it in the New Testament as the first of the two great commandments He gave (Matt. 22:37-39). God wanted a people set aside for doting love upon Him. According to theologian Michael A. Grisanti, “Israel being set apart from the world is one of the realities that came about because of the exclusive relationship they had with a remarkable God.”⁸³ This remarkable God, the world's maker, requires man to love Him with all their being. Theologian Matthew Henry said, “Our love of God must be sincere, and not in word and tongue only, as theirs is who say they love Him, but their hearts are not with Him.”⁸⁴

God is still that same God today. Just as people were required to approach Him respectfully, it is equally important today. God does not immediately put offenders to death because now He sees the act of His Son on the cross. God is giving the world a chance to repent through His love, grace, and Son (John 3:16-17), and gratitude is due Him. Theologian Andreas J. Köstenberger wrote, “God’s love for the world is why He made eternal life available through His Son.”⁸⁵ A person wanting to be in God’s Kingdom should repent first and believe in Jesus. In John 3:16, Jesus told Nicodemus, “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” This eternal life comes from believing in God's one and only Son.

God knew everyone would not accept and believe in His Son. Nevertheless, He loved everyone and gave the world a chance to have salvation. Köstenberger said, “the blame is on the person when they do not believe in the God-sent Son, who causes them to be tantamount to self-

⁸³ Michael A. Grisanti, *Numbers–Ruth*, vol. 2, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 556.

⁸⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew to John*, vol. 5, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, 14th ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2020), 263.

⁸⁵ Andres J. Köstenberger, *John*, *Bakers Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 128.

condemnation.”⁸⁶ Believers should realize that if it were not for God's grace and love, they would not have inclusion as His people. Having God's blessing and being a part of His family should be enough to cause the new converts to want to give Him glory during church worship and service time.

Learning From Jesus

Jesus came down and humbled Himself so that He could taste death for everyone. He did it by the grace of God (Heb. 2:9 and Phil. 2:7). As On the morning after He walked on water, Jesus conversed with a crowd and said, “I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me, which is that I shall lose none of those He has given me but raise them at the last day. My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life. He promised to “raise them at the last day” (John 6:38-40, NIV). Jesus is speaking to them about how to obtain eternal life. Also, He told them He would raise them on the last day. Köstenberger stated, “the reason why Jesus certainly will receive those whom the Father brings to Him is that He is committed to His Father's will rather than His own.”⁸⁷ Jesus wanted His followers to know that they must be committed to God the Father through Him, ensuring they will have eternal life. He is still concerned about His followers' lack of commitment (dedication) and ability to focus when entering the church building. Christians must start by being Jesus's disciples, and then they can learn from Him how to be committed to God the Father.

Today, many who call themselves Christians do not show the type of commitment like those taught by Jesus. Learning from what Jesus taught and living by those sayings makes a

⁸⁶ Ibid, 130.

⁸⁷ Köstenberger, *John*, 212.

person His disciple. Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). In saying this, Jesus is declaring that it is what He taught that His disciples should learn. Also, according to His saying, only in His teaching is the truth that will set His disciples free. Köstenberger stated, “the measure of any disciple is the ability to hold to the master’s teaching.”⁸⁸ Holding to Jesus’ teaching would be to obey His command in Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8. It would cause the person who genuinely has His teaching to go out into the world and teach others what he commanded His disciples to do. According to Henry, “only the ones who continue in Christ’s word, adhere to it without partiality until the end shall be his disciples.”⁸⁹ The acts of being Jesus’ disciple give believers the commitment to focus on Him as they enter His church services.

Again, by committing to God and learning as a disciple of Jesus, a person can begin to have discipline. Therefore, obtaining correction comes from getting the heart and mind involved in deciding to do God’s will. Dedication starts in the heart and goes through to the mind. An excellent Scripture to look at to confirm how being dedicated begins in the heart can be seen in the book of Daniel when Daniel decided that he would not defile himself with the King’s choice of food (Dan. 1:8). According to Henry, “This was from a principle of conscience.”⁹⁰ When God’s law is in a person’s heart, their conscience will guide them into keeping a disciplined life. The mind controls the conscience. Paul told Timothy, “train yourself to be godly” (1 Tim. 4:7b, translation). Having a disciplined life came about in Daniel’s life because he trained himself. First, Daniel loved God in his heart. Next, he made up his mind and taught his mind not to defile his body. Third, Daniel practiced what he trained his mind to do, and it became a principle of his

⁸⁸ Ibid, 261.

⁸⁹ Henry, *Matthew to John*, 801.

⁹⁰ Matthew Henry, *Isaiah to Malachi*, vol. 4, Matthew Henry’s Commentary, 14th ed (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2020), 800.

conscience to continue doing the acts that would please God. When people teach themselves to be godly, it will program their conscience, guiding them toward doing the will of God, which would please Him.

Why People Are Not Committed

People cannot allow their flesh to control their minds. Paul said, “The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6, NIV).

According to theologian David Garland, “the desire of the flesh is opposed to the spirit's desires, and each mindset exercises exclusive control.”⁹¹ Therefore, a person who allows their flesh to control their mind is a person who has no control over how they act, which could be a reason why when that person enters the church during worship, and service, their behavior is distracting.

Additionally, some medically diagnosed problems could cause some believers to be unable to focus during an educational setting. Concentration can be hard to have when the pain of sickness is going through someone's body. Sickness is something that happens, and it does not discriminate regardless of the background of the person. Most will experience it before they leave this world. Being in church during this time could cause some distractions on the person's part. It takes a person who can tolerate pain to sit still while in pain. Paul, who had a thorn in his flesh given to him by Satan, said it was there so he would not be arrogant (2 Cor. 12:7).

According to theologian Murray J. Harris, “countless believers have been helped by Paul's reference; to his thorn.”⁹² Paul's thorn is why committed disciples of Jesus push themselves to

⁹¹ David E. Garland, *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 167, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁹² Murray J. Harris, *Romans-Galatians*, vol. 11, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 533.

come to church in pain. They read and heard about Paul continuing his work while dealing with his thorn in the flesh.

Furthermore, some believers cannot focus on the church service because of sleep deficiency. Hari wrote, “there has been a lot of scientific investigation into sleep deficiency, and a broad scientific consensus found that for people who sleep less, their attention will likely suffer.”⁹³ Solomon said, “In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat, for God grants sleep to those He loves” (Ps. 127:2, NIV). Theologian Willem A VanGemeran stated, “laboring under the sun becomes toil when God’s blessing is absent.”⁹⁴ Believers who work long hours to gain riches and do not love and trust God do not have God’s blessing. Solomon wrote, “Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your cleverness. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle” (Prov. 23:4-5n NIV). Theologian Allen P. Ross called this “fleeting wealth because of the symbol of the figure of the bird flying off.”⁹⁵

In addition, long hours at work can make a person so tired that when they get to bed, the muscles will not relax right away, which will cause sleep deficiency; thus, it causes a person to run late on church day and lack focus. The remedy would be to relax in God by holding to knowledge and comprehending Jesus’ teaching. According to Solomon, people should “keep wisdom and understanding in their sight and preserve sound judgment and discretion; they will be life for them, as an ornament to grace their neck. They will go on their way in safety, and their foot will not stumble which will cause the Lord to give them sweet sleep” (Prov. 3:21-24, NIV).

⁹³ Hari, *Stolen Focus*, 67.

⁹⁴ Willem A. VanGemeran, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 913.

⁹⁵ Allen P. Ross, *Proverbs*, vol. 6, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 197.

Ross said, “A diligent disciple that preserves sound judgment and discernment can be confident that the Lord will guide and protect him.”⁹⁶ Solomon's word of wisdom is a remedy for helping believers get sweet sleep from God, which will be beneficial for focusing.

The Benefits of Being Dedicated and Focused

When congregants worship God and learn His Word in a church service, it pleases Him, just like Daniel did as he took care of his body. In addition, Daniel pleased God by drawing near Him daily by praying and giving thanks to Him three times a day. James said, “Come near God, and he will come near you” (Jas. 4:8a, NIV). Therefore, the secret to God coming near is to go to Him and stay before Him. The theologian George H. Guthrie says, “God Himself will respond to a person who approaches Him in prayer.”⁹⁷ Therefore worship starts with prayer. After the prayer, a latecomer who enters the church has missed an essential part of the worship service. The same is true when a latecomer walks into church missing both the prayer and worship service, they will get the word of God, but they will have missed the soup and salad of the meal. It is like a person attending a party after a king gives them an invitation. The king will be insulted because the person did not think enough to get to the party on time. Think about how it makes God feel if an earthly king is unhappy with their delay; the King of kings is insulted by the lack of dedication and focus.

According to the Scriptures, believers miss great benefits from God when they do not discipline their time with Him. The Spirit of God is there to help a person discipline their time. David said, “You make known to me the life path; you will fill me with joy in your presence,

⁹⁶ Ross, *Proverbs*, 68.

⁹⁷ George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews-Revelation*, vol. 13, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 256.

with eternal pleasures at your right hand” (Ps. 16:11, NIV). Today, believers have something David did not have: His Holy Spirit. VanGemeran, in his discussion of Psalm 16:11, stated, “Hope of a lasting joy gotten in the presence of God goes beyond the present experience.”⁹⁸ Why would someone want to miss such an experience? Eternal pleasures make discipline in church worship and service worth the effort. Although a person could experience joy during an isolated time of worshipping by themselves, there is a more excellent experience gained by listening to a message God has given to His church. The most incredible experience comes from the Holy Spirit of God leading a person during worship and service.

Children who grow up in a home with Christian parents have an advantage over those who did not grow up in such an environment. Christians have a job of teaching discipline to their children at home. The parents are the first to influence the life of their children. Therefore, they should input a godly conscience into their minds and heart. Children's training should start at home, according to Solomon (Prov. 22:6). If parents teach their children how to be dedicated and focused during church worship and service time, they will learn how to respect the short time they have before God in church. Henry wrote, “parents are to catechize their children by initiating them and keeping them under discipline.”⁹⁹ That gives parents an excellent advantage. There is still hope for those not raised in the Lord, which comes through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

In the book of John, Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6, translation). When Jesus made this statement, He told His followers that there was no other way, truth, or life that could be gotten, leading them to the Father. Thus, to get disciplined, a person needs to change their heart by accepting Jesus the way

⁹⁸ VanGemeran, *Psalms*, 192.

⁹⁹ Henry, *Job to Song of Solomon*, vol. 3, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, 14th ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2020), 754.

and giving their will over to His Holy Spirit. According to Henry, “He is the guide of our way as the truth, and as the life, He is the true way to life.”¹⁰⁰ There is an excellent benefit for anyone placing Jesus first in their lives. Learning from Him is understanding the proper discipline, which leads to eternal life.

Commissioned By Jesus

When believers put Jesus in their lives, they are on their way as His disciples to obeying His commands. In John 20, Jesus gave His disciples two assignments. Their first assignment was to go into the world, and their second was to “receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:21, NIV). Afterward, He breathed on them (John 20:22). The statements came after He had spoken peace on them in verse 20. The Holy Spirit will not enter into a person’s life without them allowing Him to enter. Köstenberger said, “peace is what the disciples would need to fulfill their commission.”¹⁰¹ A person going out into the world to win souls for the kingdom without peace of mind would be like a soldier going to war without weapons. Notice that Jesus did not say I send you into the world, without speaking peace on them and telling them to receive the Holy Spirit. He knew they were going to need power before going into the world. Also, Köstenberger stated, “the present reference or receive the Holy Spirit was a symbolic promise of the soon to be given gift of the Spirit, not the actual giving of it fifty days later at Pentecost.”¹⁰² The researcher wants to add that His breathing on them was the breath of new life that can only come through Him and His Holy Spirit.

¹⁰⁰ Henry, *Matthew to John*, 896.

¹⁰¹ Köstenberger, “John,” 573.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 574.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He commanded His disciples to go out into the world to make disciples (Acts 1:8). Jesus' command in Acts included all Christian believers.

According to theologian Richard N. Longenecker, "this was a mandate that included the person of Jesus, whose authority the church is to act, and the Holy Spirit, who is the source of power."¹⁰³ The power disciples would receive in Acts 1:8 makes it possible for them to go out and proclaim the gospel. Unlike the commission in Matthew 28:18b-20 and John 20:22, Jesus talks to the church and the bystanders by telling them they will receive power after the Holy Spirit comes. In Matthew 28:18b-20, Jesus' Great Commission was critical, and John 20:20 was essential, but they could not obtain the Holy Spirit until He ascended into Heaven. In Acts 1, Jesus was ascending into Heaven. Theologians Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri said this about Matthew 28:18b-20, "this was a missionary mandate placed on the eleven, which included the entire world as His mission field. The missionary mandate meant their evangelization no longer was restricted to the house of Israel."¹⁰⁴ This missionary mandate is still in effect today. When a person is dedicated and focused, they will be about doing the will of God, which was demonstrated to the church by Jesus. Therefore, believers must be ready to listen and participate during worship and service so they can do God's work as a disciple of Jesus by making other disciples. Also, during worship, believers readily praise God because of the power the Holy Spirit provides, and He is the one that does the disciplining.

Although the Holy Spirit does the disciplining, numerous Scriptures in the Bible will help LDM members learn what it takes to become dedicated and focused during church worship and service. Paul wrote several scriptures that talk about being disciplined. One particular Scripture

¹⁰³ Richard N. Longenecker, *Luke-Acts*, vol 10, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 718.

¹⁰⁴ Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 590, ProQuest Ebook Central.

is 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, where he compared getting disciplined to a person running a race and going through strict training. Theologian Verlyn D. Verbrugge discussed how “the most important part of any athletic training is to exercise discipline and self-control.”¹⁰⁵ The researcher compares the time in church worship and service to strict training that teaches how to be disciplined and to have self-control. Another scripture Paul wrote that teaches behavior is in Colossians, where He said, “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation, if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel” (Col. 1:21-23a, translation). Paul told the believers that staying persistent in their faith was the thing that would establish them. Also, he said their hope is in the gospel. Jesus is the hope because He is the behavior-training hope. Such training starts by being Jesus’s disciple.

In the book of 1 Timothy, Paul wrote and informed Timothy, “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid but gives us power, love, and self-discipline” (2 Tim 1:7, NIV). Self-discipline is not in the King James Version of the Bible (KJV); instead, “a sound mind” is used. The Scripture Paul gave Timothy declares that the Holy Spirit will change the mind of Christians who allow the Spirit to lead them. The first way the Spirit is leading is with power. Second, the Spirit is leading with love. Third, the Spirit leads with self-discipline, which gives a sound mind. Theologian Charles R. Swindoll discussed this verse: “The competence for ministry never arises from the minister; it’s always the result of God’s Holy Spirit working in and through the man and woman He has chosen.”¹⁰⁶ The Holy Spirit of God is the one that does the discipline. He is

¹⁰⁵ Verlyn D. Verbrugge, *Romans-Galatians*, vol. 11, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 340.

¹⁰⁶ Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 11, *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2014), 168, ProQuest Ebook Central.

the same Holy Spirit that will alleviate LDM members' problem of lacking dedication and focus. Therefore, the spiritual discipline within a person who trusts the Word of God should work while they are in worship and service.

There is an excellent reward obtained by keeping one's mind stayed on God. Isaiah said, "Lord, you will give perfect peace to those who commit themselves to be faithful to you. That's because they trust in you." (Isa. 26:3, NIRV). A person whose mind is on God will not be swayed by worldly distractions because of the peace that comes from God. They can stay dedicated with their mind always focused on God because the Spirit trains their mind. Paul said, "Set your minds on things above, not earthly things" (Col. 3:2, NIV). As explained by theologian Todd D. Still, "the mind was no small thing to Paul. He embraced the notion of mind over matter."¹⁰⁷ Reading the Scripture is one way of setting one's mind on the above things. God has built every verse around His Son in the Bible, whose disciple every Christian should be.

A person's mind and heart work together in their decision-making process. They are motivated by what is treasured. Jesus said, "where your treasure is, your heart will also be there" (Matt. 6:21, NKJV). Henry states, "the treasures are the value and esteem, where the desires and pursuits control love and affection."¹⁰⁸ People cherish and have affection for their possessions and different human beings. Henry said, "the treasures that people lay up with God will lift their souls to Him."¹⁰⁹ On the authority of Matthew 6:21 and Henry's commentary, people do not dedicate and focus their attention during church worship and service because their heart is not with God. They do not value and esteem Him as being worthy of their love.

¹⁰⁷ Todd D. Still, *Ephesians - Philemon*, vol. 12, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 322.

¹⁰⁸ Henry, *Matthew to John*, 64.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

The Scriptures make it plain that God's love and His grace made it possible for believers to be able to be disciplined. Paul wrote the church in Ephesus and told them, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9, NIV). This gift that God gave to human beings is the same gift that the LDM members can draw from to help their behavior in church. However, it requires trust in God. According to theologian William W. Klein, "this thing that God did for the spiritually dead is something they cannot do for themselves. People cannot secure their salvation."¹¹⁰

Jesus taught how the Holy Spirit disciplines a person's life in the book of John. There Jesus informed His disciple about how the spirit of truth would be their guide and teacher. He would glorify the Father and make the knowledge of God known (John 16:13-15). Köstenberger used the Greek word ὁδηγέω when discussing how Jesus will guide them in all truth. He said, "Guidance in all truth entails providing entrance to the revelatory sphere of God's character and ways."¹¹¹ Vine explained the same Greek term ὁδηγέω as guidance into the truth by the Holy Spirit.¹¹² The Holy Spirit is the way sent by Jesus that leads His follower to the path of all truth, which will glorify the Father. Since the Spirit is leading, He is also teaching discipline.

When it comes to the worship service, everyone should know whom they worship and why. According to Jesus, "a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." (John 4:23, NIV). Köstenberger said, "true worship is paternal in focus (the Father), personal in origin (the Son) and pneumatic in character (the Spirit) and is a matter of the heart

¹¹⁰ William W. Klein, *Ephesians-Philemon*, vol. 12, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 70.

¹¹¹ Köstenberger, "John," 473.

¹¹² Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 285.

and Spirit.”¹¹³ Therefore a Christian’s focus on God should have God the Father in view. They should be Jesus’ disciples, and the Holy Spirit will transform them. Once the mind and heart of each believer understand and comprehend this precept, it will make a difference in their lives.

The Importance of Prayer

The researcher spoke earlier on how it was essential to be in prayer at the beginning of the worship service. Prayer is the channel between humans and God. David said, “Come, let us bow down in worship, kneel before the Lord, our Maker; for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care” (Ps. 95:6-7, NIV). When believers come before the Lord to worship Him, they should have only one thing in mind: dote love on Him.

VanGemeran said, “Worship is a concrete act of obeisance expressive of one’s devotion to the Lord.”¹¹⁴ One way to cement the act is to enter His presence with a ready heart, and there is no better way than to have an open dialogue with God before entering the church service. Also, praying in the Spirit will help prepare a person to worship God.

A good prayer for members of the church to request help from the Holy Spirit is like what David prayed. In his prayer, David said, “Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground. For your name’s sake, Lord, preserve my life; in your righteousness, bring me out of trouble” (Ps. 143:10-11, translation). Praying this prayer is another way of drawing near to God. God will be happy to teach believers through the Holy Spirit how to do His Will when their hearts and mind are dedicated and focused on Him.

According to VanGemeran, “David believed that he would get God's guidance through The Holy

¹¹³ Köstenberger, “John,” 157.

¹¹⁴ VanGemeran, *Psalms*, 791.

Spirit. Which would guarantee God's protection."¹¹⁵ Jesus declared the Holy Spirit would lead believers in all truth (John 16:13), making it easy to see how He will guide believers out of danger. God knows what will happen ahead of time, and the Spirit is a part of Him who does the leading.

Theoretical Foundations

Scholars have given theories concerning why people lack dedication and focus. This theoretical foundation will discuss a few of those practical theories. It will discuss how to put into practice what the scriptures stated about the importance of a person allowing the Holy Spirit to discipline them to become dedicated and focused on the presence of an unchanging God. Also, it will discuss how Christians learning from Jesus should do as Jesus did when they lack dedication and focus on God. According to Whitney, "One principle we learn from Jesus' example is this: Fasting is a way of overcoming temptation and of freshly dedicating ourselves to the Father."¹¹⁶ Distractions can sometimes come from something simple like work or school. Whitney stated, "At the start of school or a new job or ministry, there may be new temptations, or it may seem appropriate to dedicate oneself anew to the Lord."¹¹⁷ Therefore, it would be practical for believers to put God first when faced with a new life challenge. If believers are grateful to God for the new undertakings in their lives and praise Him for every detail, the Holy Spirit in them will keep them from new temptations.

Additionally, the researcher wants to discuss how daily devotions can aid in the possibility of a person improving on being dedicated and focused during church worship and service. According to the scriptures, believers can discipline themselves to pay attention in

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 981.

¹¹⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 213.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

church by running the race for Jesus in the way Paul discussed in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. They will have to subject their mind to being disciplined by the Holy Spirit. After all, believers receive the prize of eternal life by being dedicated and focused on doing God's will.

Bridges believe personal discipline and grace help a person pursue holiness. According to him, “grace and holiness go hand in hand.”¹¹⁸ He proved that the pursuit of holiness started with Christ and was a gift by the grace of God that ends with discipleship with the help of the Holy Spirit. Bridges wrote that when Paul urged Timothy to “be strong in the grace of Christ Jesus (2 Tim 2:1b), he was urging him to be strong in the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹⁹ This researcher wants to add to what Bridges said: what Jesus finished on the cross (John 19:30) was God’s love, wrapped in grace. Grace is the power of God’s love, through the blood of Jesus, that gives the Holy Spirit to all humankind. When they receive Him, they get the strength to be disciplined (Rom. 5:3-6; 8:37). Additionally, “the Holy Spirit is the hope God poured out in the believer’s heart through His love” (Rom. 5:5, NIV).

Hughes is an author who has done work on being committed. He believes having a disciplined heart is an exception that begins with the love people have for God. He said, “discipline is God-centered, and it starts in the heart.”¹²⁰ Also, according to him, “People must wholeheartedly agree that without a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, all have no hope.”¹²¹ Also, Hughes said, “a ministering heart passes from person to person.”¹²² The researcher agrees with his theory because what Hughes declared about the heart being the determining factor in learning how to be disciplined is biblical. Paul wrote about how salvation

¹¹⁸ Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*, 198.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 23.

¹²¹ Ibid, 209.

¹²² Ibid., 270.

starts with the mouth and the heart (Rom. 10:9-10). Therefore, there is no need to add or subtract anything from his words. All believers need to do is make sure they keep their hearts God-centered.

Next, McClendon believes the Holy Spirit is essential to helping believers become disciplined. He took a biblical stand and discussed how the Spirit is a part of Christ. McClendon stated, “there is evidence in the New Testament that shows that receiving Christ is to receive the Spirit.”¹²³ One place in the New Testament to confirm what McClendon said is in John 7:38, where Jesus stated, “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them” (NIV). Jesus talked about the Holy Spirit, which would flow in the individuals who believe in Him. The Holy Spirit's power descended on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), and today God still gives His believers that same power to help them become dedicated and focused on His presence.

Additionally, McClendon said, “First Cor 12:13–31 explicitly declares that not to have Spirit baptism is to not be in the body of Christ.”¹²⁴ All believers that accept Jesus as Lord and Savior become one in the Spirit. Being one in the Spirit will put every believer of Jesus on one accord. Paul said, “God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another” (1 Cor. 12:24b-25, NKJV). Church leaders do not emphasize the essence of the Holy Spirit received when someone believes in Christ. Leaders in the church are using Romans 10:9, which states, “If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (NIV), which is a good scripture for leading a person to Christ. However, someone who knows nothing about Jesus needs to learn more. They

¹²³ McClendon, *Paul's Spirituality in Galatians*, 52.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

need to know about John 1:12, which tells them that once they receive Jesus as the Son of God, they are members of the family of God. The researcher does not remember anyone saying anything about receiving the Holy Spirit after the prayer of confession. Therefore, McClendon's information about the Holy Spirit is crucial for salvation. Furthermore, sin and the quenching of the Spirit can keep the Holy Spirit from doing His job of disciplining individuals (Heb. 3:12-15; Ps. 95:8; 1 Thess. 5:19).

The best way to practice removing self so the Holy Spirit can work would be to do what Peter asked the people to do in Acts 2:38, "repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus, and receive the Holy Spirit" (translation). Notice after repentance comes getting baptized. According to Erickson, "baptism affects a transformation, bringing a person from spiritual death to life."¹²⁵ Getting baptized is a spiritual act and a natural symbol of a person's willingness to comply with an ordinance of the church. Erickson said, "baptism is the Holy Spirit's work of initiating people into the church."¹²⁶ He used 1 Corinthians, where Paul stated, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit to form one body whether Jews or Gentiles, enslaved person or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" (1 Cor. 12:13, NIV). Therefore, members of the church are forming one body drinking from one Spirit who transforms them into being dedicated and focused on church activities. LDM members should remember that they are drinking from one Spirit. Also, that Spirit comes from the immutable God.

In Acts 2:38, Peter said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (NIV). Once new believers repent and get baptized, they need to receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and a part of the unchangeable God. Because God is immutable,

¹²⁵ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1018.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

the researcher will add a couple of theories to this research. The first concept is that God does not change. The Israelites were given the decalogue as a guide while in the wilderness (Exod. 20:2-17; Deut. 5:6-21). However, they did not keep them (John 7:19). Their inability to obey the law did not change God because He does not change (Mal. 3:6; Num. 23:19; Isa. 40:8; Ps. 90:2). The New Testament writer of Hebrews wrote, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8, (NIV)). As a testimony to this, the singer Tye Tribbett sings in his song, “If He Did It Before (Same God),” these words, “if he did it before, he could do it again, same God right now, the same god back then.”¹²⁷ Tribbett understands the concept. However, scholars and preachers casually touch the surface concerning being disciplined during worship and service. Also, they do not discuss God's awesomeness, which requires believers to approach Him respectfully. It could be why some individuals are sitting in the church, not subjecting themselves to the will of God. Everything starts with a Holy God. There are discussions on how being disciplined starts in the heart and begins with the love of God, but there is still something missing. That something begins with a God who was holy from the beginning of time and will not change. Therefore, being disciplined requires believers to be holy and respect the excellent divine presence of God.

In Hebrews 13:8, Paul tells the readers that Jesus Christ is unchanging. According to theologian R.T. France, “Jesus Christ yesterday and today the same, and forever most likely are to emphasize that He has proved unchanged so far (yesterday and today), and it assures that He will remain the same.”¹²⁸ Since Jesus is unchanging and is part of the Triune God, believers

¹²⁷ Tye Tribbett, “If He Did It Before (Same God),” track 12 on *Greater Than*, Amazon Music, 2013, CD.

¹²⁸ R. T. France, *Hebrews-Revelation*, vol. 13, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 322.

should worship Him as Isaiah worshipped and praised Him (Isa. 25:1). Only those dedicated to God can focus on that type of worship and praise.

Furthermore, discipline during worship and service time is part of being holy, and the researcher cannot emphasize it enough. The writer of Hebrews wrote, “make every effort to live in peace with everyone and be holy; without holiness, no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14, (NIV)). The researcher’s theory is that being holy brings about serenity, which will cause those who truly worship and serve Him to be dedicated and focused during the one-and-a-half-hour of church worship and service. This discipline attitude will spill over into the life of the believers when they are not in church, and it will cause them to obey God's word by proclaiming God's Word to all people and every nation around the world (Matt. 28:18-20).

Additionally, being dedicated and focused during worship and service bring about an understanding of who God is because to worship Him in spirit and truth calls for a person to give themselves to the Holy Spirit. Giving oneself to the Holy Spirit requires letting go of all the life issues while in church or being along with God. It requires a spiritual formation from each individual to have the proper behavior in church and their lives. As a witness to this, Pettit said, “spiritual formation is an important part of the Christian life for males and females alike.”¹²⁹ Spiritual formation is formed by meditating on God's word and receiving instruction through the Holy Spirit. Willis stated, “The Holy Spirit reveals to those who meditate on God’s Word what He desires them to receive.”¹³⁰ Both men recognized the importance of allowing the Holy Spirit to control their lives and reveal the truth. Nothing is more important than this when it comes to worship, service, and life discipline.

¹²⁹ Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 100.

¹³⁰ Willis, *Spiritual Disciplines for Men in a Medium-Sized Church*, 48.

When the Holy Spirit is in control, there will be no constant interruptions of a phone ringing, gum chewing, looking around, whispering, and other distractions during church worship and service time. The researcher wants LDM members to trust God through the Holy Spirit, and He will help each person become disciplined and dedicated during worship and service time from one hour to one and a half hours of the church. Therefore, no one should be thinking about those not in service at the time. God will control any situation that may arrive while the church's worship and service transpire. What is vital in being dedicated and focused during church worship and service is assembling to bring glory to God. Scholar Charles Folami said, “Bringing people together to achieve or accomplish a goal in collaboration has rewarding results, which is a daunting task, but the results of collaboration surpass the lack thereof.”¹³¹

When looking at other scholarly theories concerning the works of the Holy Spirit and how He disciplines the lives of believers, this project brings a bonus to their views. That additional bonus is believers cannot expect the Holy Spirit to work on His own without them giving their total submission to Him. They must surrender every part of their life to the Holy Spirit. According to Paul, “this is your true and proper worship,” offering your body to God as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). Once a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior and surrenders all to the Holy Spirit obeying the great commission will be an easy task.

¹³¹ Charles Folami, “*The Worship Battle Reaching Generation Z and Alpha in American-Based Nigerian Pentecostal Churches*” (DWS diss., Liberty University, 2022), 24, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter expounds on the researcher's actions to determine why LDM members lack dedication and focus during worship and service time at church. It will give a step-by-step approach to the researcher's methods to complete this project. The researcher's primary focus is to discover detailed information provided by scholars and the participants, so participants lacking dedication and focus behavior would be better. While pondering on an action plan, the researcher decided to conduct a workshop that the researcher would facilitate to discuss the information gathered from scholars and the Bible on why the problem exists. The researcher gives a step-by-step method she will use in this project below. Once the project is complete, the researcher will analyze the data, observe the participants for any apparent changes and report the project's outcome.

Intervention Design

This intervention is to research why LDM members lack commitment and focus during worship and service time at church. The researcher started this intervention by gathering information and looking at what scholars have said about why people lack dedication and focus. This section will show how the participants are allowed to participate, which is crucial because they are the ones who can help with the discovery of why the problem exists. There will be several steps in completing this intervention, starting with the researcher following the direction of the DMIN handbook. The researcher will share what the researcher did to accomplish the requirements in the Implementation of the Intervention Design section.

The workshop will start on Saturday, May 7, 2022. Initially, the workshop was to begin on May 14, 2021. However, some participants had a vacation set to start in June. Therefore, the researcher changed the date so the workshop would accommodate everyone's schedule while still realizing that time and chance could happen to prevent someone from being in every workshop meeting. Figure 3.1 shows the estimated time the researcher will take to accomplish this project.

Table 3.1. Research Project Timeframe.

Research Project Step	Timeframe
Send a letter to the Chairman of the Board	1 Week
Pass out flyers	1 Week
Wait on response	1 Week
First interview of the participants	1 Week
Workshop	4 Weeks
The second interview of the participants	1 Week
Observation and Writing Time	4 Weeks
Total Time Needed	13 Weeks

This project will start immediately once the researcher has received a response from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher will not waste any time completing this project. A fair trial period to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention would be thirteen weeks. The thirteen weeks will allow the time needed to complete all the steps in this project.

The workshop will provide answers for alleviating the problem. It will help to alleviate the issue by bringing awareness to the participants of how their lack of dedication and focus causes a distraction to others during church time. The activities will occur at the church in College Park, Georgia.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

In this section, the researcher will discuss the steps that were required before the researcher could implement the intervention. The intervention could not occur before the researcher took IRB's required steps. The researcher will give details of how the implementation came to be in the following sections.

IRB Approval

The first step in this intervention started when the researcher completed the required training classes issued through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program. The training took about five and a half hours to complete. There were five modules that the researcher was required to take. At the end of each section was a required test. The researcher took each test and passed each section with a score that met the required standard to get the certificate before applying for approval from the IRB. Once the researcher had completed the training, a copy of the certificate was printed (see Appendix I). The researcher was ready to apply to IRB to get their approval.

The researcher went to the student portal, found the application to apply to IRB for approval, and completed the necessary steps. The researcher went to the web page to apply for IRB approval and found it was impossible to get on the web page because an IRB staff had to first create a student profile in Cayuse. All of this was a learning process for the researcher. Once the researcher followed all protocols for approval, the researcher got the IRB's permission. The IRB governs what is ethical in the process of doing research. Theologian Tim Sensing said,

“Ethics in research is an issue of accountability.”¹³² The researcher realized that all research work needed to be governed by the IRB.

LDM Approval

The second step for the researcher was to get the chairperson of the board's approval at Last Days Ministries (LDM). The researcher wrote a permission request letter to the board's chairman to get the church's approval to proceed with the research (see Appendix A). This step was necessary because the researcher wanted to include members of LDM as participants, and the researcher was required to get prior approval from the board's chairperson first. Sensing stated, “The researcher's role as a minister is a sacred trust.”¹³³ Therefore, getting permission from the board's chairperson was necessary for keeping a sacred trust with the members of LDM.

The board chairperson at LDM returned the permission letter (see Appendix B) to the researcher two days later via e-mail. Once the researcher received the permission letter, the researcher proceeded with the research. The researcher remembered what Sensing said about the role of a researcher: “the researcher's role is as a co-participant in the project and requires them to view the context and the people not as objects to be studied, but as people deserving of respect, dignity, and reciprocity.”¹³⁴ Therefore, the researcher respected all participants' privacy with the dignity they deserved.

¹³² Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Thesis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 31.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 41.

Recruit Participants

The recruitment phase was step three of the process of doing the research. It occurred after the board chairperson at LDM had given her approval. The researcher recruited participants by passing out flyers to the members of LDM (see Appendix C). The information passed out informed the participants why the research was taking place. The researcher e-mailed a letter to those not at church to invite them to participate (see Appendix H). After LDM members agreed to participate in the research, the researcher gave them a consent form to sign (see Appendix D). The consent form informed them once again of the study. Also, it told them that agreeing to participate in the research was their decision alone. According to Sensing, “Informed consent means the knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation.”¹³⁵ All participants signed consent forms and were ready to participate in the research at the end of week two.

Pre-Workshop Interviews

The researcher did a pre-workshop interview individually with each participant. Each participant met with the researcher as scheduled, and the researcher used the interview questions prepared ahead of time (see Appendix E). Each participant met the researcher at a different time because each person's answer was confidential.

During the interview, the researchers recorded what the participant said. According to author Ernest T. Stringer, “using a tape recorder gives the advantage that allows the researcher to

¹³⁵ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 34.

record detailed and accurate participants' words.”¹³⁶ Also, using a tape recorder was beneficial because it allowed the researcher a chance to go back later and complete the writing. During the interviews, the researcher was still writing chapter three, and starting a new chapter right away would have been a little hectic and out of order.

Workshop

The intervention was a four-week workshop held on Saturdays and lasted two hours each week. The workshop was the step of the intervention that allowed the researcher an opportunity to teach the participants. Additionally, it allowed the participants to discuss the importance of being committed to God. Participants learned from scholars and the Bible about the importance of being dedicated and focused during church worship and service. The information covered the scholar's hypothesis and the Bible instructions about being committed and focused while in the presence of God. According to Sensing, “in the methodology chapter, the researcher explains the design of the intervention and employs the individual methods.”¹³⁷ Therefore, the researcher employed individual methods during this stage of the intervention.

The researcher wrote an outline of what was taught on each workshop day (see Appendix F). Also, the researcher wrote handouts for each day of the workshop so the participants could follow along during the workshop (see Appendices J, K, L, and M). Each day, there were discussions covering the material on the handouts, and the researcher conversed with the participants to get their feedback on what they understood.

The researcher started workshop week one with prayer. Afterward, the researcher discussed the creation, the fall of man, general revelation, God's love for man, and repentance.

¹³⁶ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 110.

¹³⁷ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 26.

The researcher laid a foundation concerning who God is. The researcher believes that building a foundation will help make a convincing case for the importance of having dedication and focus while being before God. As illustrated in the Day One handout, the researcher discussed humanity's ability to perceive what was made by God through His creation. Also, the researcher discussed general revelation, as scholars know it. According to Pettit, "God's general revelation should affirm what He made before examining His special revelation in the Bible."¹³⁸ Under the topic of repentance, the researcher talked about what the Bible says about repentance and how believing in the Word of God plays a big part in accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior. The researcher elaborated on the word repentance and its meaning. Theologian Ronald F. Youngblood wrote that repentance is "feeling remorse and regret of past conduct. Also, it is turning from sin, disobedience, and rebelliousness and turning to God."¹³⁹

Workshop week two started with a prayer before the researcher began covering the day's topics. The topics covered on this day were "Jesus and Being His disciple," "The Holy Spirit," and "The Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit." The researcher used twenty-five minutes to discuss Jesus and being His disciple. During this time, the researcher elaborated on the importance of knowing Jesus and becoming His disciple. According to a declaration by Jesus, He is the way, and no one can come to the Father unless they come to Him first (John 14:6). Jesus' declaration reveals that He is a part of the unchangeable God (see Appendix K).

The topic on the Holy Spirit included how it was Jesus who asked the Father to send the Holy Spirit to His follower (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit is Him who makes it possible for believers to become disciples of Jesus. Since that is the case, participants learned about the Holy

¹³⁸ Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 32.

¹³⁹ Ronald F. Youngblood, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, new and enhanced ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 975.

Spirit's roles. Once the participants discussed the importance of being disciples of Jesus, the researcher discussed with them how when they give their will over to the Holy Spirit by allowing Him to take control, they will get the help needed to change. Paul told his followers, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:9, NIV). Paul was a teacher but was not the ultimate teacher. He clarified to his followers that they should imitate him while he imitated Christ (1 Cor. 11:1), which the researcher discussed with the participants.

As the researcher elaborated on the Holy Spirit, the discussion arose about individuals submitting and permitting Him to take control of their lives. Also, the information on the Holy Spirit showed how giving up control in one’s life allows believers to get the power they need to transform their life from an undisciplined one to someone whose life can be more disciplined. The scriptures of 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 were excellent for teaching how a person should be in Christ before a transformation occurs. According to Bates, “when we turn our eyes and minds to Jesus, he renews them as part of the transformative process in which he is working (Rom. 12:1–2).”¹⁴⁰ The researcher told the participant how that transformative process could change their lives.

The researcher designated one hour to discuss the transforming power of the Holy Spirit because the participants had to understand that the Holy Spirit is Him who does the changing. This section was an essential part of the day’s discussion. Also, the researcher painted a picture of how the Holy Spirit is the Helper that Jesus promised to send to His disciples to help them. According to Schreiner, “the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, the teacher, the witness bearer, and

¹⁴⁰ Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone*, 161.

the advocate.”¹⁴¹ The Holy Spirit comes into the disciple's life to be the helper needed to discipline their lives. Although God is a loving God, He cannot tolerate sin. The researcher drove home her crucial point: God is the same God who put Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden because of their sin. He has not changed. The researcher talked about how He is the same God who will not tolerate humans who sin in His presence. Malachi wrote, “For I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. 3:6a, KJV).

Additionally, the researcher discussed how Paul talked about how God gave those who rebelled against His will over to a reprobate mind. According to him, they ignored the invisible qualities of His divine power (Rom. 1:20-28) because they did not consider obtaining God's knowledge worthwhile. The researcher shared how the information about the Holy Spirit is the power that can help the participant learn how to be dedicated and focused during church worship and service time.

The researcher shared a comment written by Murray on how humility allows believers to have the power which works by the fullness of God's grace through the works of the Holy Spirit. Murray wrote, “The Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit of Power that works in believers, but it dwells in them in the fulness of God's grace and comes about through humility. Also, the Spirit communicates Himself to the converts for a life of power, holiness, and steadfastness.”¹⁴² These are some of the scriptures the researcher discussed to communicate how the Spirit gives Christian believers the power to live holy (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:26; 2 Pet. 1:3). Also, the researcher used what Moses said in Deuteronomy 6:4-6 concerning how God commanded the Israelites to love Him. The researcher told the participants how Jesus reiterated that commandment as the greatest of all commandments (Mark 12:29-30). The researcher talked

¹⁴¹ Schreiner, *The King in His beauty*, 225.

¹⁴² Murray, *Humility*, 70.

about how doing such would require believers to be committed to Him. When a person obeys the greatest commandment and submits to the work of the Holy Spirit, they can easily dedicate themselves to giving God the respect due Him.

The researcher started workshop week three off with prayer. During week three of the workshop, the researcher built on the foundation from day one and discussed the purpose of worship and church service. The researcher turned the discussion toward what could be the possible reasons why LDM members lack dedication and focus during church worship and service time. The participants were a large part of this discussion because only they could tell the researcher what they believed or had perceived to be the answer.

The researcher shared the importance of prayer and why God is worthy of being worshipped. The researcher discussed what Paul said about “offering your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God which would be the true and proper worship” (Rom. 12:1, translation). Also, there was a discussion of how as a believer, participants should offer their bodies as a sacrifice during worship. The researcher believes that if the participants gave their minds to God through the Holy Spirit, their minds would not drift during church service as the Word of God is going forth. They would be able to meditate on the Word of God as Joshua instructed the Israelites to do (Josh. 1:8). The handout given on this day references everything covered (see Appendix L).

On the workshop's final day, the researcher shared the information discovered in the research about possible reasons believers lack dedication and focus during worship and service time. The researcher started with a prayer, as usual. Afterward, the discussion began with scholars' views on why people lack dedication and focus. The researcher compared biblical information to scholarly information and gave her theory on the subject (see Appendix M).

Post Workshop Interview

Immediately after the workshop, the researcher did a post-interview with the participants (see Appendix G). According to Stringer, “interview processes make it possible for the people to reveal the issues and agendas and think deeply about the nature of events that concern them.”¹⁴³ The participant shared with the researcher what they learned in the workshop. Also, the participants shared with the researcher how they planned to apply their learning to their lives. Additionally, the post-workshop interview allowed the participants to discuss with the researcher any solutions they had for rectifying the problem of not being dedicated and focused during church worship and service.

Analyze Data and Identify Themes

Data analysis and identification of themes was the final step of the research. According to scholars John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, “this process is like a searchlight roaming back and forth across an inky black sea trying to understand some of what lies beneath.”¹⁴⁴ As the researcher took all the data gathered in this research, the researcher examined it to find the themes and interpret them so others could understand them. Stringer said, “Qualitative analysis requires some creativity, for the challenge is to place the raw data into logical, meaningful categories, holistically examine data, and find a way to communicate the interpretation to

¹⁴³ Stringer, *Action Research*, 127.

¹⁴⁴ Harriet Mowat and John Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* 2nd ed. (Norfolk, UK: SCM Press, 2016), 268.

others.”¹⁴⁵ Also, author Reginald O. York states, “The task of data analysis is to make sense of the words by applying a protocol of qualitative data analysis to the words.”¹⁴⁶

The themes came from how participants answered their questions during pre- and post-workshop interviews. Also, the researcher compared scholars' hypotheses to that of the participants. The researcher's goal was to discover not a remedy but information that could be applied as knowledge to alleviate some of the distractions at LDM because of the membership's lack of dedication and focus.

The evaluation process of this research told the researcher how this project would positively affect LDM members. Both the participants and the researcher were learning together. The evaluation provided the researcher with information that shows how LDM members understood why it was necessary to dedicate themselves to God during church worship and service. Members of LDM demonstrated by their answers and input on what they had learned from this research. God gave them, through His grace, the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome issues in their lives which is an excellent help to improve their ability to be dedicated and focused while in His presence.

The successful outcome of this intervention, as the researcher sees it, is members of LDM being aware of their previous actions during worship and service time at church. Also, the researcher perceives an increased ability of participants wanting to be disciples of Jesus and teach others the Word of God. The evaluation process shows the workshop outcome and the results. The researcher believes that charity begins at home. According to Paul, when a person does not take care of their home first, they are “worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8,

¹⁴⁵ Stringer, *Action Research*, 194.

¹⁴⁶ Reginald O. York, “Social Work Research Methods: Learning by Doing,” Sage Publication, Inc., (2020): 227.

translation). Not disciplining oneself in worship and service is like being an unbeliever because God requires a person to have control in their life. Also, He is worthy of LDM members' undivided attention.

Now that the workshop was over, the researcher evaluated to see if it was effective by looking at what was said, thinking about how it would make a difference, and observing the participants' actions to see if they would line up with their words. Stringer states, “evaluation is a cycle in the look, think, act process. It requires the researcher to formally examine or review the processes in which everyone involved has engaged.”¹⁴⁷

The researcher did this intervention because of the previous lack of dedication and focus shown by LDM members during church worship and service and to find ways to alleviate such a lack of commitment and focus among LDM members. The process of interviewing participants, holding a workshop, and doing the post-workshop interview was how the researcher determined the effectiveness of this research. Also, the researcher weighed scholars' hypotheses on why people lacked dedication and focused on measuring this project's effectiveness. However, the participants' words during the post-workshop interview showed the researcher what the workshop accomplished. Furthermore, what the participants will be doing in their lives helps to give the outcome of this intervention. The researcher observed the participants for changes in their behavior during the last phase of this intervention. So far, the researcher had noticed that participants who initially arrived late to worship and service came to church at least five minutes before church started. Also, the researcher saw that participants were not talking during church as before the intervention.

The researcher looked at every process stage while analyzing the data and identifying the themes. According to Sensing, it is crucial to “gather the data, look for what participants

¹⁴⁷ Stringer, *Action Research*, 205.

experienced: their reactions, behavior changes, and how it impacts the organization,”¹⁴⁸ which in this case applies to LDM. Therefore, in observing the participants, the researcher was watching the participants’ reactions, behavior changes, and how the differences impacted the church.

Reflection and Application

The researcher reflected on where participants were at the start of this project and compared it to improvements shown by their actions after participating in this research. The practical guide (see Appendix N) given to the participant by the researcher at the end of the workshop was a help because their behavior changed. The guide was not a mandate put on the participant by the researcher. It was a guideline to help participants as they practiced showing dedication and focus to God. Everything is about giving God the respect due Him and knowing how to approach Him. According to Hughes, “today's culture is a flip-the-channel culture, and reverence is especially needed to characterize our approach to God.”¹⁴⁹

The application state is the phase that produces the effectiveness of this project. Everything in this research would be null and void without the application stage because this is the stage that told the researcher what the participants in this study learned, and it is the stage where they said to the researcher how they would apply the learning to their lives. Sensing stated, “The purpose of action research is to apply a specific solution to a particular problem.”¹⁵⁰ The participant could accomplish some tasks during the application stage without effort, whereas others required concentration. However, the application stage was essential for measuring effectiveness.

¹⁴⁸ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 71.

¹⁴⁹ Hughes, *Discipline of a Godly Man*, 113.

¹⁵⁰ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 215.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, discipline starts with being disciples of Jesus. The researcher previously believed that once LDM members learned to be disciples of Jesus, everything would begin to change with the help of the Holy Spirit. The members of LDM were not the only participants in this research. This project was a learning process. The researcher was a participant with the members of LDM. The researcher learned a valuable lesson from this project and has been able to see from the participants' behavior that they, too, discovered information from this project that they are applying to their lives. Jesus said, “with God, all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26b, NIV).

What was true regarding the problem stated was that LDM members gather together to worship God and lack dedication and focus during church worship and service time. Also, what was true regarding the issue is some individuals were unaware of the power of the Holy Spirit and how it frees them and transforms them into the Lord's image (2 Cor. 3:17-18). The Holy Spirit is indeed a part of the Triune God with all the power of God needed to transform believers' lives. Jesus commanded His disciples to teach (Matt. 28:20). Therefore, this intervention happened so the researcher would introduce the participants to the transforming Spirit of God, which would help the members of LDM live a better-disciplined life when they are in worship and service at church.

The researcher discovered from this project how much the participants loved God and wanted to give Him the praises he deserved. Paul said, “Now to him who can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen” (Eph. 3:20-21, NIV). Finally, the researcher's belief that this project would cause a change in the participants' lives has shown that the information from this project can be used in the future for

new believers' training classes at LDM. It is because the researcher did everything so God could get the glory that allows the participants to understand and make changes in their lives. The researcher is glad that the workshop gathering represented the name of Jesus. Jesus said, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matt. 18:20, NIV).

Isaiah wrote, "my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Isa. 55:11, NIV). The Bible is the written Word, just like the prophets were God's spoken Word. There was a raffle held immediately after the workshop on the last day of the workshop. It was an incentive for those who participated in this project. When it was over every participant acted as if they had a million dollars because the researcher ensured there was no loser at the end of the day.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter will discuss the results gleaned from the workshop, field notes, and the data obtained from doing this project. According to Sensing, “field notes work because implications for theory only become visible as one observes and records, over time, particular practices of ministry.”¹⁵¹ The researcher will paint a picture of the discovery obtained from this research. The information includes the heart of twelve participants (it started with twelve and ended with eleven) and what they said about being dedicated and focused. For the sake of the participant's privacy, all names in this project are pseudo names. The researcher began this project to discover why members of LDM lack dedication and focus during church worship and service. This chapter will discuss what was found by the researcher while doing the research. The researcher started by finding some answers from scholars and the Bible on the subject. Next, the researcher's intervention in the workshop was with the members of LDM. It started with teaching them about being dedicated and focused before God. The researcher shared the discovery from both scholars and the Bible with them. Before beginning, the researcher did pre-workshop interviews with every participant to determine what members of LDM (see Appendix E) already knew about why they lacked dedication and focus during worship and service time at church.

During the interviews, the researcher observed each participant. The researcher used a tape recorder to record the interviews and wrote field notes during the interview. The process of taking field notes was necessary, according to Sensing. He said, “Taking notes before, during, and after the ministry intervention collects your observations and initial interpretations.”¹⁵² Table 4.1 includes background information about each participant.

¹⁵¹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 181.

¹⁵² Ibid.

Table 4.1. Gender, Age, Religious, and Educational Background of Participants.

Participants	Gender	Age	Religious Background	Educational Background
Sister Angel	Female	60	Full Gospel	High School Diploma
Sister Leah	Female	46	Non-Denominational	High School Diploma
Sister Maria	Female	20	Non-Denominational	High School Diploma
Sister Tina	Female	57	Full Gospel	High School Diploma/Some College
Sister Maggie	Female	53	Pentecostal	High School Diploma/Some College
Sister Paige	Female	68	Baptist	Bachelor's degree
Sister Bernice	Female	65	Full Gospel	High School Diploma
Sister Joyce	Female	52	Pentecostal	High School Diploma
Sister Marlene	Female	59	Baptist/Non-Denominational	High School Diploma
Sister Kathy	Female	58	Full Gospel	High School Diploma
Brother Drew	Male	47	Non-Denominational	High School Diploma
Sister Ashley	Female	20	Non-Denominational	High School Diploma

Analysis Based on Pre-Workshop Interview

The researcher did this analysis based on how the participants responded during the pre-workshop interview. The researcher discovered three facts after interviewing and observing the participants during this. The first fact was how much the participants knew about being dedicated and focused. Next, the researcher found out some members of LDM needed to recommit themselves to God. The third fact discovered by the researcher concerned how participants are distracted by cell phones and other members of LDM. After learning these facts from the participants, the researcher made every effort to proceed with the workshop by doing everything

possible so the planned lessons would include a discussion on the abovementioned facts. The researcher prayed each day that the words and teaching of her mouth and the meditation of her heart be pleasing in God's sight (Psalm 19:14).

The interviews of each participant took place at either the researcher's residence or the church. Everyone was on time for their appointment, which told the researcher that LDM members believed in being prompt. The researcher learned that most LDM members previously thought to be not dedicated and focused were committed to being on time. It was apparent they valued the researcher's time. It was an eye-opening experience for the researcher from the first pre-workshop interview.

Table 4.2 gives the top reasons given during the pre-workshop interviews by the participants for why LDM members lacked dedication and focus during church. There were ten out of twelve participants that stated participants are not committed to God and do not know Him. Seven out of twelve participants believe some members need to recommit themselves to God. Finally, according to the participants, five out of eleven said cell phones cause participants to be distracted. All of the pre-workshop interviews went well, which started the research work off great. The researcher went into the workshop enthusiastic about teaching the participants about God, the sacrifice made by His Son, the help provided by the Holy Spirit, and the salvation provided by God through Jesus.

Table 4.2. Participants' Reasons For Lacking Dedication and Focus During Church.

Participant's Top Reasons Why LDM Lack Dedication and Focus During Church	Reason # 1 Some Members Do Not Know God and Are Not Interested	Reason #2 Some Participants Need to Recommit Themselves to God	Reason #3 They Are Distracted by Their Cell Phones
Sister Angel	X	X	
Sister Leah	X		X
Sister Maria	X		
Sister Tina	X		X
Sister Maggie		X	
Sister Paige	X	X	
Sister Bernice	X	X	
Sister Joyce	X		
Sister Marlene	X	X	X
Sister Kathy			X
Brother Drew	X	X	
Sister Ashley	X	X	X

Analysis of the Workshop

The participants all participated during the workshop. The researcher covered everything that was prepared ahead of time for each week (see Appendix F). Because of the participants' eagerness, they enjoyed the learning process. During week one, the researcher did most of the talking. However, during weeks two, three, and four, everyone was willing to provide their input. As the researcher started the conversation about being disciples of Jesus, it was like someone suddenly lit a candle, and the participants wanted to participate in the discussion. The researcher was pleased with the participation.

Isaiah wrote, "My Word will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isa, 55:11b, NIV). The Bible is the written Word, just like the prophets were God's spoken Word. The Bible backed up most of the knowledge obtained during this workshop. The raffle was held immediately after the seminar on the last day

of the workshop. All the participants acted as if they had won a million dollars when it was over because the researcher ensured there was no loser at the end of the day.

Analysis Based on Post Workshop Interview

As the researcher finished the workshop and began doing the post-workshop interview immediately, the researcher became a student because the participant's answers were very enlightening to her. Each participant brought their knowledge to the post-workshop discussion and the knowledge they had learned in the workshop. After the workshop, when the participant discussed how they would apply their learning to their lives, they gave four top reasons why LDM members should dedicate themselves to God. This information came from post-workshop question number twelve. Sister Angel said, “it is God’s will for the believers to keep their mind on Him.” Also, Sister Angel provided Isaiah 26:3 as her supporting Scripture. Sister Maria stated, “God is a jealous God, and He does not want His follower focusing on cell phones and other distractions more than Him.”

Other answers came from other participants, such as Sister Maggie, who said, “God gave His Son through love so we could have life is reason enough why people should focus on God.” On a similar note, Brother Drew shared, “although God wants us to focus on doing His Will, he gave us free will.” The researcher noticed participants gave reasons why LDM members should dedicate themselves to God by answering questions never asked. In table 4.3 are the top four reasons participants gave for why they should commit themselves to God and the church service, according to the post-interview questions (see Appendix G).

Table 4.3. Reasons to Focus on God During Church Worship and Service.

Reasons why LDM members should Focus on God During Church Worship and Service	Reason 1 It is the Will of God for believers to Focus on Him and Put Him First	Reason 2 Distraction is A Trick of The Enemy	Reason 3 God sent the Holy Spirit to Help Believers Stay Focused	Reason 4 God is Loving, and He Gave His Son To Die For Our Sins
Number of participants who gave the reasons	Eleven	Eleven	Eleven	Ten

Theme One: Cell Phone Distractions

During the post-workshop interview, question number three asked; According to what participants said during the workshop's discussion, *what were the top two reasons believers cannot focus during church worship and service time* (see Appendix G)? Sister Angel said, "People are talking to others or paying more attention to their cell phones." In her opinion, "they are only coming to church to please either a family member or a friend." According to Sister Tina, "they do not want to be there, so they pay more attention to their cell phones." The problem of cell phones being a distraction was also one of the answers from Ashley, Leah, Maria, and Kathy.

In week four of the discussion, cell phone usage during church was addressed and compared to students using a cell phone at school while a teacher is teaching. The participants expressed their views on how they expected their children to pay attention in school and church. Brother Drew stated, "children are in school to learn and should not be using cell phones if there is no emergency, and since people are learning in church, they should not be using cell phones in church." Sister Bernice expressed the same sentiment: "cell phones should not be in school, and people should turn them off in the church's parking lot." Sister Bernice was the only one present during the fourth week's workshop who felt the cell phones should stay at home or in the car.

Sister Paige, who missed the fourth week's workshop during her post-interview question about cell phones in school, stated the same thing that Sister Bernice said. Sister Paige stated, "cell phones should not be allowed in the classrooms because they are a distraction." According to Sister Maggie, a "cell phone is instrumental in helping children learn in school, especially when solving math problems." Sister Angel said, "some people use cell phones in the church to read their Bible."

While looking to see what scholars had to say on the topic, the researcher found that some scholars wrote about cell phone distractions. Author Summer Dawn Dupont wrote, "Students in high school classes with cell phones and access to social media and other cellular or web-based outlets spend less time on their tasks. Spending less than an adequate amount of time can be detrimental to learning."¹⁵³ The researcher agrees that cell phones are a distraction; the same is true with cell phone usage during church. Social media and other web pages are distractions that cause participants to spend less time learning about the will of God. People are too dependent on cell phones. According to scholars Jessica S. Mendoza et al., "some people experience fear and discomfort when they do not have access to their mobile device. This cell phone dependency phenomenon has become more recognized in the literature on cell phones, known as *nomophobia*."¹⁵⁴

Just as earthly parents expect their children to pay attention during school, the heavenly Father desires His children to pay attention in church. LDM members focus not on God when they are busy looking at their cell phones. Sister Maria said, "when I look at my phone and see messages, it takes my focus away from the church." At least Sister Maria was honest. Sister

¹⁵³ Summer Dawn Dupont, "High School Teachers' Perceptions of Student Cell Phone Use in the Classroom a Case Study" (EdD diss., Liberty University, 2021), 29, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

¹⁵⁴ Jessica S. Mendoza et al., "The effect of cellphones on attention and learning: The influences of time, distraction, and nomophobia," *Computers in Human Behavior* 86 (2018): 53, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.04.027>.

Maria is only eighteen, and young adults are more prone to being distracted by cell phones. They become addicted to cell phones at a very young age. According to authors Deborah Kirby Forgays, Ira Hyman, and Jessie Schreiber, “The amount of texting is related to age, specifically young adult. The younger the adult, the more texts sent and received.”¹⁵⁵ Sister Maria said, “I will turn my phone off in the future because if it is on, I will look at it because I know my friends will be texting me.”

The church is a school for those that are learning about Jesus. Also, just as there will be a graduation ceremony from school one day, there will be a graduation ceremony for the disciples of Jesus in church. The children will one day complete their schooling, enter the work world, and be productive. So, will the dedicated and focused disciples go into the work field and win more disciples for the Kingdom of God? Paul said, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10, NIV). Therefore, cell phones, according to the participants of this research, are a distraction.

Sister Paige said, “cell phones interrupt when the Holy Spirit is moving. Some people are in church because they are hurting and need a word from the Lord.” Sister Paige was among the nine participants who said the phone should be silent before a person enters the church. The researcher agrees with Sister Paige because LDM members seem to be relying increasingly on their cell phones to the point that they cannot seem to give them up for an hour and a half, interrupting a person's spirit when the Holy Spirit is moving. Authors M. Sapacz, G. Rockman, and J. Clark said, “Their study hypothesized that an individual would experience an elevation of

¹⁵⁵ Deborah Kirby Forgays, Ira Hyman, and Jessie Schreiber, "Texting Everywhere for Everything: Gender and Age Differences in Cell Phone Etiquette and use," *Computers in Human Behavior* 31, (2014): 319.

temporary anxiety when they had some degree of restricted access to their cell phone.”¹⁵⁶

However, the participants in this study said they are just a distraction that prevents LDM members from getting what they need from the Lord.

The discussion about cell phones was very enlightening. Now that LDM members are aware of the distractions caused by cell phones, they have promised to change what is done with their cell phones when they are in church. Sister Maggie said, “I will not only turn my phone off, but I also plan to ask the person next to me if they could please turn their phone off.” Sister Marlene, Sister Maria, Sister Tina, Sister Bernice, and Sister Paige also said they would turn their phone on silent or off before entering the church. If the participants complied with what they said, that would eliminate the constant interruption of cell phones. The researcher understands that sometimes an emergency arises and believes LDM members in the church should have their phones on silent, allowing them to step out and either answer their phones or call the person back.

Theme Two: Spontaneous Distractions

Sometimes distractions can be unplanned and can be something that happens spontaneously. According to Sister Tina, there have been times when her phone caused distractions during church. Sister Tina said, “I was ashamed because I forgot to put my phone on silent, and it went off. Everyone turned around to see from where the noise came. I grabbed it and turned it off immediately.” Although Sister Tina’s incident could have been an example of someone causing distractions during church service, it caught her off guard. Therefore, it was

¹⁵⁶ M. Sapacz, G. Rockman, and J. Clark, "Are we Addicted to our Cell Phones?" *Computers in Human Behavior* 57, (2016): 155.

spontaneous. Sister Tina vowed, saying, “in the future, I will make sure my phone is on silent before entering the church.”

Another example of spontaneous distraction is when a baby starts yelling because they are hungry, need changing, or is sleepy. Nothing will prevent such interruptions from happening. Therefore, the distraction has nothing to do with a person's lack of dedication and focus during church worship and service. Sister Bernice, a grandmother, said, “spontaneous distractions caused by children are the type that causes me to go into my room and close the door when I am trying to dedicate time to God at home and my grandchildren are visiting.” Sister Bernice understood some noise made by children was unavoidable because she said, “children will be children.” The researcher agrees with sister Bernice. Also, older adults’ consecration is reduced by any distraction. Scholar Pamela A. Smith said, “normally aging adults will often demonstrate a reduced ability to complete cognitive tasks in distraction compared to younger individuals.”¹⁵⁷

Another example of a spontaneous distraction is when something suddenly drops by mistake. Brother Drew said, “I know that interruption comes sometimes. However, I can focus on God when the noise happens.” Similarly, Sister Tina said, “I know distractions come to get my focus off God and steal my attention. Therefore, I will stay focused on God.” Sister Maggie said, “such distractions can only steal your attention if you allow it.” The researcher agrees with Tammy and Melissa because the book of James states, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7, NIV).

Other spontaneous distractions happen during church worship and services, such as someone going to the restroom, coughing, a plane flying by, a train on the track, and LDM members entering the building late. Sister Marlene stated, “Noise does not bother me during

¹⁵⁷ Pamela A. Smith, “Ageing, Auditory Distraction, and Grammaticality Judgement,” *Aphasiology* 24, no. 11 (2010): 1343, DOI: 10.1080/02687030903490533.

worship and service time as long as I can hear the Word of God. However, I am bothered when the noise keeps me from concentrating on the Word.” Not everyone, like Sister Marlene, Sister Kathy, and Brother Drew, can easily tune the noise out. Sister Bernice stated, “people need to keep their mind on God and meditate on every word that comes out of the mouth of the person who is teaching or preaching His Word.” Calhoun said, “Christian meditation opens us to the mind of God and His world and presence in the world.”¹⁵⁸ The researcher could not have said it better.

This project concerns LDM members being more dedicated and focused during church worship and service. The lesson from this theme is to stay focused on God and not on distractions, whether spontaneous or carelessly made. Paul wrote, “Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1, NIV). Paul’s statement is essential to remember and goes along with Sister Bernice’s statement about being focused. Sister Bernice said, “if you are not focused, any distraction will throw you off.”

The researcher has discovered from this project that not every participant was disturbed by every little interruption during church worship and service. However, spontaneous distractions do affect some participants during church worship and service. When noise occurs in the church, it causes all participants to be distracted for a moment, but not everyone will pay attention to the disruption. Some LDM members will keep their minds stayed on the Word of God. Sister Kathy said, “I can focus on God no matter who I am around or the noise that can suddenly happen, and when people try to distract me, I tell myself I have to stay focused on God.” Sister Kathy’s statement goes along with the Scripture quoted by Sister Angel during the post-workshop interview: “You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast

¹⁵⁸ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 192.

because they trust in you” (Isa. 26:3, NIV). This project has proven that the participants who got distracted by disruptions do not necessarily lack dedication during church worship and service. They are like members everywhere. Some choose to give God their attention and are focused no matter what, while others are learning to stay focused. According to scholars Nicholas Gaspelin and Steven J. Luck, “attention may refer to several different cognitive phenomena. Attention can be selective.”¹⁵⁹ The participants have proved that it is their choice whether to pay attention or not.

The researcher's final question in the post-workshop interview asked: *How will you apply what you have learned from the workshop to your life?* Sister Tina said, “I will stay focused on God during church worship and service no matter what distractions come my way.” Sister Maria stated, “I will stop being distracted and give my time to God during church worship and service.” Sister Maggie said, “since it is my job to lead others to Christ, I will make sure I am on time for church, and once there, I will stay focused.” The other participants gave similar answers as the researcher continued doing the post-workshop interviews. Therefore, the researcher concludes that LDM members have committed to being dedicated and focused while in church worship and service.

Theme Three: Satanic Distractions

A distraction will take a person's focus from a subject via an interruption. Bredfeldt said, “distractions have a way of diverting our focus from the essential to the peripheral.”¹⁶⁰ According to the participants, it is the devil who causes distractions. In the post-workshop interview, question number fourteen asked: *Do distractions steal the time you have set aside to*

¹⁵⁹ Nicholas Gaspelin and Steven J. Luck, “The Role of Inhibition in Avoiding Distraction by Salient Stimuli,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 22. no. 1 (2018): 80, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2017.11.001>.

¹⁶⁰ Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 31.

worship and serve God? Why, and does the enemy have anything to do with the distraction?

Sister Maggie stated, “the enemy uses people to distract you and steal your time if you allow them. You cannot allow the enemy's tricks to sidetrack you through people and various methods.” Sister Kathy said, “in the past, distractions stole fifty percent of my time through people's cell phones, their talking during church, children playing, and my mind wandering due to my inability to understand the message. Now it is only taking five percent of my time because immediately after the tricks come, I dismiss them and refocus on God.”

According to Sister Bernice, “those who cause distraction do not know God and cannot commit to God because the concept of being devoted to Him is foreign.” The researcher agrees that without knowing who God is, there could be no dedication given to Him because a person should believe God exists and Jesus is the begotten Son who died for the world's sins. According to Sister Leah, “knowledge of the existence of God and His Son is only half of the equation. You must have faith in your heart.” Sister Leah said, “God knows everything, and nothing is unrevealed to Him. He rewards you because He knows if you truly have faith in your heart.” On the same topic, Sister Angel notes, “those who come to church to please someone else are the ones who play on their phone to pass the time and talk to members of the church. They do not know God.” Distractions can sometimes be deliberate because of a lack of knowledge and satanic influences. Knowledge comes from God (James 1:5). Sister Maggie said, “It is important to love God with your whole being, which would make it easy to put God first in your life.” Sister Maggie stated, “dedication to God is thinking of Him first when you wake up in the morning. Nothing or no one should infiltrate the mind of a believer before God.” The researcher agrees with Sister Maggie because Calhoun said, “God is the oxygen of our soul, and we need to

breathe Him all day long.”¹⁶¹ There could be no better way to do that than to wake up thinking of Him and praising Him for His goodness, leaving no room for demonic distractions.

LDM members that study the humility of Jesus can learn how to be dedicated and focused during worship and service. Murray wrote, “people need to study the humility of Jesus, the very essence of His redemption, and the very blessedness of the life of the Son of God, which is the only true relation to the Father. The reward is obtaining a part with Him.”¹⁶² Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6, translation). God is three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and they are equal in co-existence. The belief of Christian faith is a belief that God is a trinitarian being. Theologian E. Calvin Besnier stated, “For Peter to call Jesus the Son of the living God, therefore, almost certainly means Peter thought of Jesus as having the same nature as God.”¹⁶³ It was evident by how the participant spoke about God that someone taught them about the Trinity. Another one of the post-workshop interview questions the researcher asked the participants was *How did God show His love toward us?* Everyone except Sister Ashley responded by saying He gave His only begotten Son so we may have life. The researcher was astonished that the participants were using the words His only begotten Son. According to theologian E. Calvin Beisner, “the use of the term begotten spells out how Jesus possesses an eternal divine nature of God.”¹⁶⁴

Demonic influences sometimes disguise themselves as mental disorders. Sister Marlene said, “some demonic influence disguised as mental disorders give people a reason to do what they want without being blamed for their actions.” Also, Sister Marlene noted that some who have been diagnosed with certain mental disorders are tricks of the devil. Sister Marlene said,

¹⁶¹ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 233.

¹⁶² Murray, *Humility*, 29.

¹⁶³ E. Calvin Beisner, *God in Three Person* (Eugene, Oregon: WIPF & Stock Publisher, 1984), 14.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

“the church and family members can pray and ask God to help remove any demonic influence from the person's life, and it will make a difference.” Sister Marlene was right about believers' ability to pray and ask God for His help in removing any demonic influence. According to Jesus, sometimes there is a need to “fast and pray” to drive out demonic spirits (Mark 9:29). Sister Angel said, “servants of God need to push back the plate, fast, and pray, to come against the forces of the enemy that comes to steal kill and destroy.”

The enemy distractions come in different ways. Question fifteen of the post-workshop interview asked, *What are a couple of things you can do to stop the enemy from stealing your attention during worship and service time?* Sister Tonya stated, “I will focus more on God by ignoring everything around me during church time and the time I set aside to be with God.” Sister Maggie said, “I will pray and ask God to help me eliminate the distractions.” Finally, Sister Kathy stated, “the trick is to stay focused on God when people try to distract her during church worship and service.” Sister Angel was all about coming against the forces of the enemy. On this note, Sister Angel said, “the enemy causes people to be insensitive to the Word of God because they reject Him.” Erickson stated, “sins produce insensitivity. A person continuing in sin, who rejects God’s warnings and condemnations, becomes less responsive to conscience's promptings and the stirrings by the Word and the Spirit.”¹⁶⁵ Sister Maria stated, “when a person repents and receives the Holy Spirit, He will come and convict them of sin and let them know when they are doing something wrong by touching their heart.” The researcher agrees with Sister Maria because the Holy Spirit is sensitive to sin and cannot allow sin to go unnoticed. The next section below will elaborate on the influence of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶⁵ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 563.

Theme Four: The Influence of the Holy Spirit

The researcher talked about distractions that kept LDM members from being dedicated and focused during church worship and service in the first two themes. It appeared that some members were inconsiderate of others. Next, the researcher discussed how distractions could be spiritual distractions that come from Satan in what are called satanic distractions. In this section, the researcher will share a spiritual influence that, according to the participants, can change them from lacking dedication and focus to being dedicated in church during worship and service and in their everyday lives. Scholars Anna C. Brady, Yeo-eun, Kim, and Jessica Cutshall discussed distraction's positive and negative sides. They said, “Negative self-interruptions included obstructions, exhaustion, and frustration, while positive self-interruptions included reorganization, exploration, and stimulation.”¹⁶⁶ In discussing the influence of the Holy Spirit, the researcher will be sharing how the Holy Spirit enhances the positive self.

First, what does it mean to have dedication during church worship and service? According to the participants during the post-workshop interview, commitment to church had everything to do with God and how they allow the Holy Spirit to lead them. Question nineteen asked *What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers?* Sister Angel said, “the role of the Holy Spirit is to teach us to comfort us when we are down, to lead us, and to show us how we should act as well as to guide us to all truth.” Sister Angel paraphrased a statement of Jesus (John 14:26). On this subject, Sister Kathy said that a person with the Holy Spirit living in them will get help for every area of their life, which would teach them how to act; during church worship and service.”

¹⁶⁶ Anna C. Brady, Yeo-eun Kim, and Jessica Cutshall, “The What, Why, and How of Distractions from a Self-Regulated Learning Perspective,” *Journal of College Reading and Learning* 51, no. 2 (2021): 155, DOI: 10.1080/10790195.2020.1867671.

The Holy Spirit is part of the Triune God, who knows God's will (Rom. 8:27). According to Erickson, “The teaching ministry of illumination by the Holy Spirit was not merely for that first generation of disciples, but also includes helping believers today to understand Scripture.”¹⁶⁷ Also, the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit will help believers understand God's will for their lives. According to Paul, once believers are members of God’s family through Christ, “In Him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ” (Eph. 1:7-8, NIV). The wisdom from the Holy Spirit will keep believers from being distracted by the enemy. Jesus gave His disciples “power over all unclean spirits, to cast them out, and heal all kinds of sickness and disease” (Matt. 10:1, translation). Therefore, Satan cannot distract a person with that kind of power. Also, the Holy Spirit will turn the participants into teachers. Question eighteen of the post-workshop interview asked *What can you teach others about being dedicated and focused?* Sister Maria said, “I can teach them to be dedicated and focused by setting an example. I cannot live one way one day and another way the next day.” Also, Sister Angel said, “I can teach by example, just as Jesus taught His disciples.” According to them, Jesus, the master teacher, sets the example of teaching and living what one preaches. Sister Leah stated, “I would teach others to give themselves to God and do His work.” Also, Sister Paige said, “I will teach the people by examples of how to do the will of God because people are always watching to see what you are doing, which is the best way to teach.” None of this is possible without the indwelling of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit. According to Murray, “when the truth of an indwelling Christ

¹⁶⁷ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 796.

takes place in the experience of believers, then the Church can put on her beautiful garments, and church teachers and members show humility as the beauty of holiness.”¹⁶⁸

When it comes to following Christ, everyone will not be on board. According to the participants, the Holy Spirit will guide and lead them if someone who will not follow Christ is trying to teach them wrong, and they will reject that person. During the post-workshop interview, several participants said not everyone that comes to church had received salvation. Sister Angel insisted from the beginning that some church members do not know God, and her persistence did not change during the post-workshop interview. Sister Marlene said, “they cannot focus because they do not understand the message, and the service is too long because they are not interested.” The researcher will add that LDM members choose to learn when they are interested in a subject, and when they are not, they will not listen. Jesus said, “The one who rejects Me and does not accept My teachings has one who judges him: the word which I spoke. That will judge him on the last day.” (John 12:48, NIV). Accepting Jesus’ Word is to accept the love of God. According to Brother Drew, “to love God is to follow His commandments and obey His laws by doing what the Bible tells us to do, which is to love the people God created. That love would include praying for the people.” The researcher agrees and will add that the disciples of Jesus will start praying immediately on behalf of the person who rejects Christ. Maybe God will soften their hearts so they can receive salvation and not be among those who have to give an account to Jesus for not accepting Him. According to Whitney, “God still intends for each of His followers to find ways to share the gospel with unbelievers.”¹⁶⁹

The Holy Spirit will come over a person to lead and guide them. During the workshop, there was a discussion on the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. To the researcher's

¹⁶⁸ Murray, *Humility*, 43.

¹⁶⁹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 129.

surprise, the participants knew much about this topic. The researcher learned from the participants that when a person submits to the leading of the Holy Spirit, He will lead, guide, teach, and convict them when they are out of the will of God. The researcher understood that the Holy Spirit lived in a person from the time of salvation. He was deposited and dwelled inside a person, and that is where He stayed, according to 2 Timothy 1:14. However, participants discussed how the Holy Spirit comes over them. They could feel His presence when He came. Sister Leah noted, “the Holy Spirit comes over me, and I start praising God more.” Sister Ashley stated, “the Holy Spirit comes over me.” Sister Kathy said, “the Holy Spirit came over me to shut my mouth up when I talked too much.” The researcher wanted to say He does not come over you; God deposited Him in you from the time of salvation. The researcher took advice from what Sister Kathy said and kept her mouth closed because this was a learning experience for the researcher. After all, Jesus told His disciples, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8a, NASV).

The participant's clear statement that the Holy Spirit is a teacher agrees with what Jesus said. According to Jesus, “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26, NIV). According to Sister Marlene, “the Holy Spirit teaches the believer how to lead other people to church.” The researcher agrees with Sister Marlene. The Holy Spirit is a part of the Triune God, and He knows God's will for the participant's lives (Rom. 8:27). Also, Erickson said, “The teaching ministry of illumination by the Holy Spirit was not merely for that first generation of disciples, but also includes helping believers today to understand Scripture.”¹⁷⁰ Sister Maggie stated, “the Holy Spirit teaches us to worship Him, to praise Him, and to dedicate our study time to Him.” The researcher agrees with Sister Maggie's statement. Also, Sometimes

¹⁷⁰ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 796.

wisdom and understanding through the Holy Spirit can come through our intuition. According to scholar Deborah R. Chilcote, “intuition has been operationally defined as the affective element of critical thinking in which a nonanalytic process of knowing can be expressed through physical, emotional, and spiritual connections.”¹⁷¹ In addition, author Donald Dorr stated, “Our intuitions can, at best, be inspirations from God and a fruitful channel through which the Holy Spirit can get through to us.”¹⁷²

Some participants discussed the Holy Spirit as the voice from God that gives warning to them when God wants to provide them with protection. Sister Bernice said, “The Holy Spirit would warn believers of danger when it is near. The warning would undoubtedly be considered an act of help. Some may say it is a gift of prophecy because prophecy comes to reveal to God’s people things that are coming.” Amos said, “Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets (Amos 3:7, NIV). In addition to God revealing His plan, the Holy Spirit will warn believers of impending danger, according to Erickson. He said, “sins produce insensitivity, and a person continuing in sin and rejecting God’s warnings and condemnations, become less responsive to the promptings of conscience, and the stirrings by the Word and the Spirit.”¹⁷³ Therefore, focusing during church includes relying on the Holy Spirit to do as the participants said to convict one of sin and help do God's will. Focusing on the Word of God will help LDM members pay attention during church worship and service.

The participants are willing to make a change in their lives by allowing the Holy Spirit to help them as they transform into the person that God wants them to be. Bernice said, “I want to

¹⁷¹ Deborah R. Chilcote, “Intuition: A Concept Analysis,” *Nurse Forum* 52, no. 1 (2017): 63, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1111/nuf.12162>.

¹⁷² Donald Dorr, “The Holy Spirit as Source, Power and Inspiration for Spiritual Practice,” *Practical Theology* 10, no. 1 (2017): 12, DOI: 10.1080/1756073X.2016.1273642.

¹⁷³ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 563.

be with Jesus one day, so I will serve Him by giving the church worship and service the respect it deserves because I do not want to die and go to hell.” The researcher was discussing the love of God when sister Bernice said this. Sister Kathy stated, “when other people try to distract me, and the praise team is up worshipping God from now on, I will stay focused on God.” Also, Sister Marlene stated, “I will turn my phone off and dedicate myself to listening to the Word of God while in church worship and service. God is good. He will not allow ‘His Word to return to Him empty but will accomplish what He desires and achieve the purpose for which He sent it (Isa. 55:11).”

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This research aimed to determine why people lacked dedication and focus during church worship and service. There was a need in the ministry of LDM to do this research because it was clear the members of LDM did not understand why they came to church. This research contributed to the literature review on why people lack commitment and focus while in church worship and service. Also, the results found in chapter four are from the participants who agreed to participate in this study. Doing this research has been educational for the researcher because it gave the researcher some reasons why the problem existed. Also, it was educational for the participants and will be for any future members of LDM. The church learned about why distractions occurred and hindered them from being able to concentrate during church worship and service. The participants learned how to focus by submitting to the Holy Spirit. Scholars Patrick Sörqvist and John E. Marsh believe concentration can shield against distraction. They said, “We believe people notice their background environment less when they concentrate harder.”¹⁷⁴ This study has been administered to LDM’s lack of dedication and focuses during church worship and service. Now that the research is complete, the researcher is ready to implement the discovery obtained as a part of LDM’s future training.

Research Implications

First, the usage of cell phones during church time caused a technological interruption, according to the participants. They talked about how others used their cell phones in a way that was detrimental to church worship and service. Cell phone distractions were more offensive to participants than any other distraction discovered in this research. It is sad to say participants said

¹⁷⁴ Patrik Sörqvist, and John E. Marsh, “How Concentration Shields Against Distraction,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 24, no. 4 (August 2015): 268, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721415577356>.

using their cell phones was taking more of their attention than satanic distractions during worship and service time. According to scholars Jamie Pinchot, Karen Paullet, and Daniel Rota, “ten to twenty percent of students feel that it is all right to answer their cell phone in a movie theatre, church, or funeral.”¹⁷⁵ The usage and interruption of cell phones are not coming from students alone because scholars Veronica V. Galván, Rosa S. Vessal, and Matthew T. Golley stated, “People spent an estimated 2.30 trillion minutes using their wireless devices over the year of 2012.”¹⁷⁶ God is still a jealous God and does not want His children to worship other gods (Exod. 34:14). When LDM members cannot separate themselves from their phones, that phone becomes a god to them.

On a positive note, the mobile phone, causing so much distraction in the church today, is still one of the best inventions of all time. When church leaders use them to record live church services, cell phones are instrumental in allowing believers who cannot attend church service for whatever reason to experience it wherever they may be. Theologian Heidi Campbell said, “in the past ten years, numerous studies have considered how religious users responded to and used the internet for various religious rituals and to form spiritual communities.”¹⁷⁷ Also, when discussing mobile phones, specifically smartphones, author Geoffrey Miller said, “Smartphones are not just

¹⁷⁵ Jamie Pinchot, Karen Paullet, and Daniel Rota, “How Mobile Technology is Changing Our Culture,” *Journal of Information Systems Applied Research* 4, no. 1 (2011): 39.

¹⁷⁶ Veronica V. Galván, Rosa S. Vessal, and Matthew T. Golley, “The Effects of Cell Phone Conversations on the Attention and Memory of Bystanders,” *PloS one* 8, no. 3 (2013): e58579, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0058579>.

¹⁷⁷ Heidi Campbell, “Texting the Faith: Religious Users and Cell Phone Culture,” in *The Cell Phone Reader: Essays in Social Transformation*, ed. Anadam Kavoori and Noah Arceneaux (New York, NY: Peter Lang, Inc., 2006), 145, [Google Books](#).

cool cell phones with e-mail; they are powerful computers small enough to hold up to your head when you want to make phone calls.”¹⁷⁸

The facts remain that LDM members need to practice using cell phones less in worship and service. According to the participants, the users keep other members from having a great experience. After all, it is a matter of respect. Scholar John C. Webb talked about teaching children the virtue of holiness. In his dissertation, he stated, “Parents should instill holiness in their children to guide their use of cell phones and social media beginning with the virtue of wisdom.”¹⁷⁹ In addition to parents’ responsibilities of training their children, it was established earlier in this project that the church is responsible for teaching members the will of God for their lives. As Paul wrote, “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40, NIV). It would include cell phones to be used in that manner.

Secondly, spontaneous distractions, which happen suddenly without warning, caused participants to lose concentration during worship and service. Scholars Brian S. Rothman, Sandy Bledsoe, and Mark J. Rice said, “Distractions involve a thing that prevents someone from giving full attention to something else or something that makes it difficult to think or pay attention.”¹⁸⁰ According to the participants, sudden distractions cause a loss of concentration on what is happening in worship and service. Participants could not focus on what God was doing through the process of the church service when spontaneous distractions happened. However, the researcher learned from this project that believers choose if they will concentrate or not during

¹⁷⁸ Geoffrey Miller, “The Smartphone Psychology Manifesto,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 7, no. 3 (May 2012): 223, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691612441215>.

¹⁷⁹ John C. Webb, “Equipping Parents at Broadmoor Baptist Church to Lead their Children to a Safe and Biblically Guided Use of Cell Phones and Social Media” (DMin, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 66, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

¹⁸⁰ Brian S. Rothman, Sandy Bledsoe, and Mark J. Rice, “Turn Your Attention to Distractions,” *Anesthesia & Analgesia* 134, no. 2 (2022), 266, DOI: 10.1213/ANE.0000000000005836.

church worship and service, which is why focusing less on sudden noises in the church will be beneficial to members at LDM.

Third, distractions during worship and service can come from a spiritual being that the eyes cannot see. Those distractions come from Satan. Participants in this study discussed how Satan brings about distractions during worship and service to stop believers from accomplishing the Will of God (John 10:10). Satan knows why the church exists. Still, he does not want the believers to understand why they are there. Under ‘Satanic Distractions,’ participants talked about how focusing more on God kept Satan from distracting them, so they could be about why the church exists. The church got started by the apostles of Jesus (Acts 2:41). The apostle’s purpose for creating the church was so the people could come together to learn about Jesus, be baptized, lift one another, sing songs unto God, give Him the glory, and worship Him (Col. 3:16; Ps. 34:3; Acts 2:38; Matt. 18:20; Eph. 5:19). According to theologian Offiong O. Asuquo, “Church refers to a group or association of professing Christians and to the building in which they worship.”¹⁸¹ The researcher would not include the church to be the building because the church does not have to be in a building. When the apostles got the church started, they went outside the walls of the building (Jas. 5:20; Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 1:8). The church is the place wherever there are two or more people gathered in the name of the Lord (Matt. 18:20). Theologian Rick Warren said, “Until believers know why their church exists, they have no foundation, motivation, and direction for ministry.”¹⁸² A satanic distraction is an act of Satan that interrupts the flow of the ministry of God.

¹⁸¹ Offiong O. Asuquo, "The Role of Mass Media in Church Development in the Twenty-First Century," *PhilPapers* (2018): 2, ASUTRO-2.pdf (philpapers.org).

¹⁸² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 81, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit, a spiritual being that can be felt and not seen, is sent from God to enable believers to be committed to God through their humility and with all the keeping power needed. The Holy Spirit gives hope and helps believers to receive from God the ability to live according to His Will. According to theologian Fuchsia Pickett, “Only the convicting work of the Holy Spirit can bring us to a realization of our sinfulness, causing us to turn to Christ and cry for mercy.”¹⁸³ This project introduced a valuable lesson to the participants and the researcher. After completing this research, the researcher has some explanations for why LDM members lacked dedication and focus during church worship and service. The four-week workshop helped the participants learn how to pattern their lives according to the examples given by Jesus on how to present themselves before God.

Finally, it was implicated in this project that when a person acted attentively in church, they were spiritually mature. The researcher is aware that there is no way to measure their dedication or focus because some people could be sitting still, acting attentively in the church but still not focusing on the worship and service. Their mind could still be miles away. What is important is they are not disrupting church worship and service. However, they are open to the enemy's tricks if they are not alert. Peter wrote, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8, NIV).

The researcher believes a spiritually mature person should know how to behave in church and be respectful of the other members of the church as well as the presence of God through the Holy Spirit. According to Paul, “we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10, NIV). As the handiwork created in Christ, believers should be doing His good work which does not include making and receiving

¹⁸³ Fuchsia Pickett, *Walking In The Anointing of the Holy Spirit* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2015), 6, ProQuest Ebook Central.

phone calls during church. The distractions caused by devices such as cell phones affect teachers, according to authors Ali I. Azad, Michele R. Papakie, and Theresa McDevitt. They stated, “This is the ultimate effect of distractions because if the teacher gets distracted, all of the class will be affected because the teaching attention is often shifted to the distraction that the ringing cell phone caused.”¹⁸⁴ Such distraction can hinder the work God is doing in the worship and service, wherefore it becomes a satanic distraction.

Research Application

The researcher will apply the discovery from this research by keeping the findings from this project before the participants, so they will not forget what they have learned. The researcher has planned to follow up on the work done during this project. The participants have shown tremendous improvement in their behavior since the workshop. However, the researcher questions if participants will continue putting God first by being dedicated and focused on God during worship and service. With observation over time and additional training in the future, members of LDM can prove what they learned from this project through their behaviors. Otherwise, it is impossible to say what will happen in the future. Scholars Alan Strathman and Jeff Joireman said, “Time is the backdrop upon which life plays itself out.”¹⁸⁵

The researcher has observed the participants over the past two months and seen some behavior changes. Everyone who participated in this project demonstrates how it is possible to be in worship and service and not allow the distractions discussed in this project to distract them.

¹⁸⁴ Azad I. Ali, Michele R. Papakie, and Theresa McDevitt, "Dealing With the Distractions of Cell Phone Misuse/Use In the Classroom - A Case Example," *Competition Forum* 10, no. 2 (2012): 226, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/scholarly-journals/dealing-with-distractions-cell-phone-misuse-use/docview/1196772461/se-2>.

¹⁸⁵ Alan Strathman and Jeff Joireman, *Understanding Behavior in the Context of Time: Theory, Research, and Application* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate Publishers, 2005), 27, ProQuest Ebook Central.

However, the researcher will do a yearly one-day seminar to remind participants of what they learned during this project. May of 2023 will be the month of the first seminar. The one-day workshop will be a reminder so the participants will not forget the importance of being committed to God and focused on Him when in His presence in the church. Without the project's yearly reminders, everything would have been in vain because people learn by repetition.

During the refresher course, the researcher will ask additional questions. Once the researcher had completed the research, the researcher realized that other questions would enhance the participants' learning in the future. One question in particular that was absent was: How would you handle a problem of church members lacking dedication and focus during church worship and service? Another question missing was: What can be done in the future to help members concentrate better during church worship and service? Some other questions were not included, which would have enhanced the results. There is a saying that hindsight is always more precise than sight along the way. Missionary L. Nelson Bell said, “There are many things that we learn by experience or observation. Others we discover by experimentation, reason, and deduction.”¹⁸⁶ Also, corrected errors make a better future.

The following section outlines the yearly seminar that the researcher plans to conduct to keep the participants and LDM new members up to date on being committed and focused on God.

Table 5.1. Additions for Future Seminars.

1. Pray that God will be a part of all future seminars, and do not allow oneself to be the conductor.
2. The researcher will start new research in January to see what is unique about the subject that is unknown to the church.
3. The researcher will notify LDM members about the upcoming seminar by the middle of March.

¹⁸⁶ L. Nelson Bell, “A Layman and His Faith,” *Christianity Today International*, no 1 (1957): 19.

4. The researcher must give the date of the seminar (May 2023).
5. When the researcher sends out notifications for the event, it will include the address for the place of the seminar.
6. The invitation for the seminar will include LDM members and all new members.
7. There will be an outline of the discussion given out with the invitation.
8. The researcher will make copies of the outline to pass out during the seminar to those who may not have it.
9. The researcher will follow up in April with those who have agreed to participate in the seminar.
10. The researcher will make it happen and hold the seminar in May 2023.

In addition to the yearly seminars, the researcher will include in the messages at LDM once a month the importance of respecting others and God to keep before LDM members what they learned from this project. Peter said, “be like-minded, sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble” (1 Pet. 3:8, NIV). The believers who find themselves obeying what Peter wrote will begin to be like Christ (Phil. 2:8). Also, the researcher is willing to have seminars two to four times a year at another church to teach others who are eager to listen on the importance of reverencing God and having respect for others. Hopefully, the researcher will have the opportunity to hear from other ethnic groups in another demographic area about why they believe people lack dedication and focus.

Research Limitations

This research had limitations, just as any other analysis dealing with predicting human behaviors. According to author Hermann R. Muelder, “the business of predicting human behavior is no science. It is plain common sense which requires learning from experience or observation.”¹⁸⁷ Observation is one of the tools the researcher used to determine the results of the participant's behavior and time-limited the outcome. Scholar Anne Mulhall said, “Often, the

¹⁸⁷ Hermann R. Muelder, “Predicting Human Behavior,” *American Association of Industrial Nurses Journal* 5, no. 5 (May 1957): 20, <https://doi.org/10.1177/216507995700500505>.

primary reason for using observational methods is to check whether what people say they do is the same as what they do.”¹⁸⁸

Another limitation of this research is that LDM church members consist of one race of people. There was no way to determine how another ethnicity of people would have answered the questions during the interview or what they would have said during the participation time during the workshop. The results from this research come solely from LDM members, who were all from the black race, except for one person. Future research done with people from different ethnicities may bring different results.

The final limitation of this research is the inability to measure the dedication and focus of the church members. The researcher believes that although observation indicates whether LDM members are dedicated and focused during church worship and service, they can seem to be focused and will not be so. What is evident through observation is the behaviors of people when they so easily demonstrate that they are deliberately giving their attention to something other than what is going on during church worship and service.

Future Research

There are several themes that researchers can look into in the future to continue the research work on why people lack dedication and focus during worship and service. The researcher will give five suggestions of what future researchers can do in the future on this topic. The first suggestion for future researchers is to study how the word of God disciplines the life of believers. When people are genuinely committed to the word of God, they will be willing to allow the changes that would come about from His word. The second suggestion for future

¹⁸⁸ Anne Mulhall, “In the Field: Notes on Observation In Qualitative Research,” *Journal of Advance Nursing* 41, no. 3 (2003), 307.

researchers would be to find ways to show how to resist satanic distractions in church.

Suggestion three for future researchers would be to build on the effect of cell phone distractions during church worship and service. The fourth suggestion for future research would be to look into what causes people to lack dedication and focus during church worship and service according to a different ethnic group. Finally, the last future research work that the researcher will suggest is a study on how the influence of the Holy Spirit helps to keep people dedicated and focused during worship and service. The researcher hypothesizes that a future researcher that decides to study and build on this subject will gain additional knowledge that will benefit the church. The knowledge gained by any future research would help other churches, racial groups, and demographic locations.

First, future researchers could benefit from studying how the Word of God can discipline the life of believers to be dedicated and focused. This will be beneficial because it was discovered the participants were not reading the Word of God regularly. Reading the word of God gives believers power that they cannot get from any other source (Heb. 4:12). According to theologian Robert Kolb, “A definition of being Christian which was redefined by Luther characterize the believer’s life as a life initiated by God’s address to rebellious sinners and conducted under the power and direction of God’s speaking to the faithful through oral, written, and sacramental forms of the Word, which the Scripture outlines.”¹⁸⁹ Hearing the word builds faith in believers (Rom. 10:17). Also, the Word will give light to the believer as a lamp in darkness (Ps. 119:105). Being dedicated to God can only come from reading and hearing His Word (2 Tim. 3:17). The researcher can go on with the benefit of reading the Word of God daily. However, this topic is for future research work.

¹⁸⁹ Robert Kolb, "The Enduring Word of God, in Wittenberg," *Lutheran Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Summer, 2016): 194.

The second suggestion of a study for future researchers would be to discover how to resist satanic distractions in church. This research has stated how Satan distracts people during worship and service time. Satan's distractions come from people whom believers never thought he would be able to go through. Any human being can be used by Satan, whether they are a believer or non-believer. According to writer William Charlton,

There are human beings who tempt others into misbehaving. They cause distractions that keep others from behaving well. Also, there are theological difficulties in the idea that there are non-physical persons that are enemies of humankind and are allowed by God to wander throughout the world (as *Job* puts it) to tempt human beings while bringing accusations against them.¹⁹⁰

LDM needs to learn how to fight Satan and stop him in his track when he enters the church. According to James, believers should "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (Jas. 4:7, NIV). Future researchers can build on that subject.

Suggestion three for future researchers would be to build on the effects of cell phones during worship and service at church. The researcher touched the surface of this topic. A future researcher could dig into the impact of cell phones and learn more about how they affect worship and service time. According to scholars T. J. Lipscomb et al., "cell phones affect our lives in both positive and negative ways. Cell phones are looked at with scorn as an intrusion into society, yet, these devices offer us security, safety, accessibility, and other benefits."¹⁹¹ The researcher sees a good research topic for someone who wants to dig into how cell phones break the attention span of believers when they are in the presence of God. Paul said, "if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit, you put to death the misdeeds of the body, and you will live" (Rom. 8:13, NIV). When a person allows their cell phones to be a

¹⁹⁰ William Charlton, "Temptation: Reflections on Matthew 6:13," *New Blackfriars* 99, no 1081 (January 2018): 280.

¹⁹¹ T. J. Lipscomb et al., "Cellular Phone Etiquette Among College Students," *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 31, no. 1 (January 2007): 47, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2005.00483.x>.

distraction during worship and service, that person acts selfishly and does not respect other people's rights. Indeed, cell phones are convenient in an emergency, but on the other hand, those addicted to them disrespect worship and service because they cannot separate themselves from it. Therefore, future researchers can build on this topic by discussing how a cell phone can disrespect God and believers who want to enjoy Him through church worship and service.

The fourth suggestion for future research would be to look into what causes people to lack dedication and focus during church worship and service according to a different ethnic group. The participants in this study were all women except for one male. Everyone who participated was from the same ethnicity except one person. Also, most of the participants in this study were unchurched before becoming a member of LDM, except for two people. They were learning church etiquette along with being a part of this research. If some did this research among others who had been in church for many years or a different ethnicity of people, the results would be undoubtedly different.

The fifth suggestion of a study for future researchers would be to build on the influence of the Holy Spirit and how it can help believers to experience a more excellent church service beginning with worship. The discovery obtained from the participants of how they did not submit to the Holy Spirit was the root of why they were not dedicated and focused during worship and service time. Dedication unto God can only come from allowing the Holy Spirit to enable believers to yield to God's will. Theologian Joel R. Beeke wrote, "The Spirit supplies what we lack so that we press toward the mark. He enables us as believers to yield obedience to God by the life and death of Jesus Christ."¹⁹² Participants who submit to the Holy Spirit gain benefits. Jesus said, "when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth. He

¹⁹² Joel R. Beeke, "Spiritual Disciplines for Holiness in the Life of a Minister," *Unio Cum Christo* 7, no 2 (January 2021): 143.

will not speak on his own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come.” (John 16:13, NIV). Future researchers of LDM who decide to research the incredible power of the Holy Spirit and how it enables believers to be dedicated and focus on God during church worship and service could gain knowledge to use in the church by learning more about this subject.

The final suggestion for future research would be to work with a control group of participants devoid of cell phones, tablets, and iPad during church while doing a “media fast.” It would be interesting to see how participants would deal with doing research that omits the use of their modern-day technology. Also, it would be interesting to see how many participants in a control group would honestly give up cell phones, tablets, and iPad during church and go on a media fast while participating in research.

Conclusion

The researcher did this research because God led them to seek answers from the members at LDM on why they lacked dedication and focus during church worship and service. It was discovered from the participants that there were distractions that were blocking their minds while they were in church. Those distractions that entered the church have been stealing their time away from God and other members of LDM during church worship and service. When God created man and women, He made them in His image to worship Him, which would include their undivided attention. Also, Jesus gave the great commission in Matthew 28:16-20, which commanded His follower to go out and make disciples. Making disciples can be and has been, hindered in today’s society mainly by an obsession and addiction to technological devices. When

church members are not dedicated and focused, they lose sight of what is essential: being His witness so all can come to know God and His Son and feel the love shown through them.

Doing this research work was profitable for the work of the ministry at LDM, and the research work has taught the researcher and those that participated in it to go back and recommit their lives to God. The researcher's goal for LDM was to learn how to be humble and committed to God during worship and service time. The researcher accomplished part of the goal by discovering from the participants what distractions kept their attention during church worship and service. The researcher acknowledges that although measuring whether people are dedicated and focused during church is hard to measure, specific behavior patterns will prove they were not attentive in church. The researcher used observation to see how the members of LDM behavior changed. Observations are important. However, there are times when what we see does not reflect reality.

The researcher is thankful to God for the knowledge obtained in this research, which has been very enlightening. The researcher became a student and learned a lot from the participants during this research. Now that the researcher is over, the researcher discovered the distractions that have been taking the attention of LDM members were something that the member was unaware of. Now LDM members are aware of what they will need to do in the future to glorify God during church worship and service time. The researcher prays to God that the discoveries obtained during this project will stick to all who participated. Also, the researcher wants future members of LDM to reap the benefits received during this project. Additionally, the researcher hopes that some members of LDM will be future researchers who will look into doing future research using one of the suggested topics.

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APPENDIX A

PERMISSION REQUEST

March 21, 2022

Melissa Tolbert
Chairman of The Board
Last Days Ministries, Inc.
153 Skyland Drive, E.
Locust Grove, Georgia 30248

Dear Melissa,

As a graduate student in the Rawling School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my research project is “A Study of Why People Lack Dedication and Focus During Church Worship and Service Time” and the purpose of my research is to find out what causes people to lack dedication and focus during worship and service time and find a way to alleviate such a lack of dedication and focus among LDM members.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in Last Days Ministries name. I will be contacting members of Last Days Ministries to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview and to participate in a 4-week workshop, which will be once a week on Saturdays for two hours. The data will be used to help the researcher understand why people lack dedication and focus during church worship and service time. Participants will be presented with informed consent information before participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Maxine White
Pastor of Last Days Ministries

APPENDIX B
PERMISSION LETTER

March 22, 2022

Maxine White
Pastor
Last Days Ministries, Inc.
1374 Murphy Avenue, # 2021
Atlanta, Georgia 30310

Dear Pastor Maxine White:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled “A Study of Why People Lack Dedication and Focus During Church Worship and Service Time,” I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at Last Days Ministries. Also, you are permitted to invite members to participate in the study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- ☐ I will provide our membership list to Maxine White, and Maxine White may use the list to contact our members to invite them to participate in her research study.
- ☐ I grant permission for Maxine White to contact the members of Last Days Ministries to invite them to participate in her research study.
- ☐ I will not provide potential participant information to Maxine White, but I agree to send her study information to the members of Last Days Ministries on her behalf.
- ☐ I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Melissa Tolbert
Chairman of the Board
Last Days Ministries, Inc.

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Research Participants Needed

A Study of Why People Lack Dedication and Focus During Church Worship and Service Time

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Are you willing to participate in research on being dedicated and focused during worship and service time at church?

If you answered **yes** to each of the questions listed above, you may be eligible to participate in a research study.

The purpose of this research study is to discover why people lack dedication and focus during church worship and service time.

Participants will be asked to spend 2 hours on Saturday in a seminar for four weeks. The Seminar will begin at 11:00 am and will end at 1:00 pm on each day.

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study. A direct benefit that participants will gain from this research is knowledge to help advance the Kingdom of God. Also, Participants will be entered into a raffle for one of 4 visa gift cards, (the first gift card will be \$100.00, the second gift card will be \$50.00, and there will be 2 gift cards of \$25.00) which will take place on day three.

If you would like to participate, please contact the researcher at [REDACTED] or through one of the two email addresses [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

A consent document will be given to you within one week after you agree to participate in this research.

Maxine White, a doctoral candidate in the John W. Rawling School of Divinity at Liberty University is conducting this study.

Please contact Maxine White at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] for more information.

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

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: A Study of Why People lack Dedication and Focus During Church Worship and Service Time.

Principal Investigator: Maxine White, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years old or older and be affiliated with Last Days Ministries and be available on the dates of the seminar. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to find some answers to why people lack dedication and focus while in church worship and service. This research will not only look into what causes people to lack dedication and focus during church worship and service time, but it will also find a way to alleviate some of the problems from the distractions. The research will show that people who are dedicated and focused during the time set aside for worshipping and serving God are those who worship Him in Spirit and Truth and wants to demonstrate their love for Him.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Be available to meet once a week on Saturdays for four weeks during the hours of 11:00 am and 1:00 pm.
2. Participate in the application section on the last day of the workshop by giving your input on how this research work can be applied to your life.
3. Be okay with the use of a recorder during the interview.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from participating in the seminar. However, Participants will be entered into a raffle for one of 4 visa gift cards (the first gift card will be \$100.00, the second gift card will be \$50.00, and there will be 2 gift cards for \$25.00).

Benefits to society include the ability to use the information from this research for the betterment of ministry concerning being dedicated and focused during worship and service time at church.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are rare to none, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in your everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researchers will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participants' responses will be anonymous. Participants' responses will be kept confidential. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- The interviews/question and answering section will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Any published reports will not include confidential information that was shared by participants and will not disclose participant identities. Also, the only limit to confidentiality; while discouraged, is other participants in the seminar may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study. However, participants will be entered into a raffle for one of 4 visa gift cards (the first gift card will be \$100.00, the second gift card will be \$50.00, and there will be 2 gift cards for \$25.00). The raffle will take place at the end of the seminar.

What are the costs to you to be part of the study?

To participate in the research, you will need to pay for gas to and from the seminar.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher serves as a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. To limit potential conflicts the study will be anonymous, so the grading authority will not know who participated. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or with the Researcher. If you decide to

participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Maxine White. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED], or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Darren Hercyk, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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

☐ The researcher has my permission to video me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX E

PRE-WORKSHOP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your earliest church memories.
2. How relaxed was the atmosphere in the church?
3. What type of things did you witness in the church?
4. Was there full participation when it came to the worship service?
5. Was your previous pastor a teacher, and if so, could you understand his teaching?
6. How dedicated were you during the worship and service time?
7. Could you focus during worship and service time?
8. Can you tell me why you believe some LDM members lack dedication and focus during church worship and service time?
9. Who would you say is the recipient of your dedication and focus during worship and service time? Why do you say that?
10. When you think of the word focus, what comes to mind?
11. How does it make you feel when members get to the church late, walk, talk, chew gum, and keep their ringer on during church worship and service time?
12. Tell me in your words, what does it mean to experience good church worship and service time?
13. Since you have been a part of Last Days Ministries church, have you had a good worship and service experience? If not, how can you have a better worship and service experience?
14. What are some benefits gotten from participating in church worship and service?

15. Whose job is it to make new disciples and make sure they experience God through the worship and service at church?
16. Do you have a leadership role at LDM? If so, what is your job function?
17. What is a disciple of Jesus?
18. What is the Holy Spirit's role in a believer's life?
19. What does it mean to have a mighty move of the Holy Spirit?
20. Do you believe having dedication and focus during church has anything to do with your growth in doing the things required by God for you to do?

APPENDIX F

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Week One

- 11:00 am to 11:05 am – Make sure everyone has signed a consent form
- 11:05 am to 11:30 am – Creation, and The Fall of Man
- 11:30 am to 12:00 pm – General Revelation and Man's Ability to Perceive God's Existence
- 12:00 pm to 12:30 am – God's love for man
- 12:03 pm to 1:00 pm – Repentance

Week Two

- 11:00 am to 11:30 am – Jesus and Being His Disciple
- 11:30 am to 12:00 pm – The Holy Spirit
- 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm – The Transforming Power of The Holy Spirit

Week Three

- 11:00 am to 12:00 pm – Why There is Church Worship Time
- 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm – Why The Church Meet and Have Service Time

Week Four

- 11:00 am to 11:30 am – Lack of Dedication and Focus during Church Worship and Service
- 11:30 am to 12:00 pm – Cause and Effects From Lack of Dedication and Focus and How Others and The Word of God Address Such Things

- 12:00 pm to 12:45 pm – Applying the Knowledge of This Research to Your Daily Lives
(The last 15 minutes of this section are open for discussion and ideas from LDM members concerning what is applicable from this research that they can use in their lives)
- 12:45 pm to 1:00 pm – Draw names out of Raffle Jar and give out Visa Gift cards to winners whose names come out of the Jar.

APPENDIX G

POST WORKSHOP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was the most impactful lesson that you learned from the workshop?
2. Will you make any changes in your life based on the information that impacted you during this workshop?
3. According to the workshop's discussion, what were the top two reasons LDM members cannot focus during church worship and service time?
4. Should cell phones be put on silent while a person is in church? If not, will a cell phone distract you and keep you from enjoying church?
5. What did you learn about dedication during church worship and service time from this workshop?
6. What scripture/s taught in this workshop instructs participants on being dedicated to worshiping and serving God?
7. When you send your children to school, should they be dedicated and focused while the teacher is teaching, or should they be concerned about keeping their cell phones on so they can hear from their family and friends during that time?
8. What things would an earthly boss do if they discovered you were not dedicated and focused while doing that job?
9. What is the job of a believing Christian?
10. In what way is God different from an earthly boss regarding dedication and your focus on the job?
11. What does it mean to you to be devoted to God or someone?
12. Is God concerned with LDM members' ability to focus? Why or why not?

13. Who comes to steal, kill, and destroy?
14. Do distractions steal the time that you have set aside to worship and serve God? Why and does the enemy have anything to do with the distraction?
15. What are a couple of things you can do to stop the enemy from stealing your attention during worship and service time?
16. What does it mean to love God?
17. How did God show His love toward us?
18. What can you teach others about being dedicated and focused?
19. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers?
20. How will you apply what you have learned from this workshop to your life?

APPENDIX H

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Minister Dorothy Jackson:

As a graduate student in the School of John W. Rawling School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctoral of Ministry degree. The purpose of my research is to study why people lack dedication and focus during church worship and service time, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, be a member of Last Days Ministries, or be affiliated with Last Days Ministries. Participants, if willing, will be asked to be available once a week on Saturdays for four weeks for a workshop. The workshop will last 2 hours from 11 am to 1 pm. Also, I will need to schedule two interviews with you. The first interview with you will occur before the date of the workshop, and it will last 30 minutes. The second interview will occur two weeks after the workshop, and it too will last for 30 minutes. It should take approximately 7 weeks to complete the project from the interview date to the workshop dates, and the completion of the second interview. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please contact me at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED] for more information and to schedule an interview.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview. Contacting me to set up an interview time will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the research.

Participants will be entered in a raffle to receive one of 4 Visa gift cards. The first gift card will be for \$100.00, the second gift card will be for \$50.00, and there will be two gift cards for \$25.00.



Sincerely,

Maxine White
Pastor

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX I

CITI PROGRAM CERTIFICATE

		<p>Completion Date 10-Feb-2022 Expiration Date 09-Feb-2026 Record ID 47189180</p>
<p>This is to certify that:</p>		
<p>Maxine White</p>		
<p>Has completed the following CITI Program course:</p>		
<p>Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research (Curriculum Group)</p>		
<p>Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research (Course Learner Group)</p>		
<p>1 - RCR (Stage)</p>		
<p>Under requirements set by:</p>		
<p>Liberty University</p>		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> Not valid for renewal of certification through CME. </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px auto;">  Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative </div> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 20px;"> Verify at www.citi-program.org/verify/7w5cf3f663-2718-45b4-a48c-d8aed4b0bea0-47189180 </div>		

APPENDIX J

Workshop Day One Handout

Creation

Genesis 1:1-2:7, John 1:1-5

Facts About Creation

1. God is the creator (Gen. 1:1-2:7)
2. The Word of God (Jesus) was with Him from the beginning (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-3).
3. God created a dwelling place before He created man (Gen. 1:3-19).
4. God created vegetation before He created man Gen. 1:11-13).
5. God created animals before He created man (Gen. 1:20-25).
6. God Created Man in His image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:26-27).
7. God communicated with the first man. (Gen. 1:28-30; 2:16-17; 3:9, 11-19, 22).
8. God expected the first man to obey Him and worship Him as the supreme Being (Gen. 2:16-17, 28; 3:9-19, and Isa. 45:18).

Worship - Giving adoration unto God. Whitney said, “worship is sincerity to God in our acts of worship. It is giving back to God by getting the heart involved and allowing the Holy Spirit to motivate the responses given according to the truth that comes out of the scriptures about God.”¹⁹³

The Fall of Man

1. Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command (Gen. 3:1-19)
2. God separated Himself from humans because of their sin (Gen. 3:24; Rom. 5:12)

General Revelation

General Revelation- The ability God gave man to perceive His existence through His creation. According to Erickson, “the general revelation of God has been found in three areas: nature, history, and humanity.”¹⁹⁴

Scriptures References On General Revelation

1. Nature Revealing of God (Ps. 19:1-4; Rom. 1:18-20 and Acts 14:17).

¹⁹³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 89.

¹⁹⁴ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 121.

2. History Revealing of God (Heb. 1:1-3; Rom. 15:4; Amos 3:7).
3. Humanity Revealing of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 2:16).

God's Love For Man

1. God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 17:4-7)
2. God's promise to David (2 Sam. 7: 11b-16)
3. God's love for humanity (John 3:16-17).
4. Salvation through the grace of God (Eph. 2:8-9)
5. Justification through Jesus (Rom. 5:18-19)

Repentance

Repentance – To have a change of heart and change the course of action of one's behavior.

Erickson said, "It stresses the importance of a conscious moral separation, the necessity of forsaking sin and entering into fellowship with God."¹⁹⁵

Why Repent

1. Sin caused death to be a penalty for all human beings (Rom. 5:12; 6:23).
2. The Blood of Jesus (Heb. 9:22; 1 John 1:7).
3. Confession that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38).
4. The human's heart is wicked (Mark 7:21-23).
5. A change of heart (Rom. 10:10).
6. Jesus preached repentance (Matt. 4:17, Luke 5:32).

¹⁹⁵ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 866.

APPENDIX K

Workshop Day Two Handout

Jesus and Being His Disciple

1. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega (Isa. 44:6, 48:12; John 1:1-3; Rev. 1:8, 2:8, 21:6-7).
2. Jesus is the Son of God (Matt. 3:17, 17:5; John 1:14, 14:13; Mark 5:7).
3. Jesus the Redeemer (John 1:29; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:7)
4. Being a Disciple of Jesus (Matt. 16:24; Mark 9:31; Matt. 28: 16-20; Matt. 9:37).

Disciple: This is a person who learns from Jesus, denies themselves, takes up their cross, and follows Him, so they can learn the things that He taught about God. Dallas Willard states, “A disciple is a learner, a student, an apprentice, a practitioner, even if only a beginner.”¹⁹⁶

The Holy Spirit

1. The Spirit is the third person of the Trinity (1 John 5:7; 2 Cor. 3:17)
2. The Spirit is the teacher (John 14:25-26; 1 John 2:27).
3. The Spirit is the one who speaks through you (Matt. 10:20; Luke 12:12).
4. The Spirit is the power and help from above (Acts 1:8; John 14:16).

The Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit

Transform: The act that causes a person to change their mind from one state to another. Pettit stated that this is “allowing the empowering presence of God to transform us into the image of Christ according to the will of the Father.”¹⁹⁷

1. The Holy Spirit changes the mind (2 Cor. 3:18, 5:17; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22-24).
2. The heart is changed (Eph. 3:16-17; Gal. 4:6; Ps. 33:21; Matt. 22:37).
3. A behavior change comes through the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:18-20; Phil. 2:13).

¹⁹⁶ Willard, *The Great Omission*, xi.

¹⁹⁷ Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 60.

Appendix L

Workshop Day Three Handout

The Church Worship Time

Worship: Giving adoration unto God. Whitney said, “worship is sincerity to God in our acts of worship. It is giving back to God by getting the heart involved and allowing the Holy Spirit to motivate the responses given according to the truth that comes out of the scriptures about God.”¹⁹⁸

1. Give Adoration to God (Isa. 65:3; 1 Chron. 16:29; Ps. 29:2; Hab. 2:20).
2. Love the Lord with all your being (Deut. 6:5, 10:12, 11:1; Matt. 22:37; 2 John 1:6).
3. Meditate on the Word of God (Isa. 26:3; Col. 3:2; Matt. 6:33; Heb. 3:1-2; Josh. 1:8).
4. Worship God through music (Ps. 95:1, 150:1-6; Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15).

Church Service: A gathering of Christians to worship and honor God. According to Walter A. Elwell, “the service was established by the Apostles and was a simple service, with the climactic event of the weekly service on the Lord’s Day being the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.”¹⁹⁹

1. Why do people participate in church rituals (Heb. 10:25; Ps. 133:1-3; Matt. 16:18, 28:16-20; Heb. 2:12)?
2. The church is a hospital for the sick (Mark 2:17; James 5:14-16; Matt. 15:30).

¹⁹⁸ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 89.

¹⁹⁹ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1301.

APPENDIX M

Workshop Day Four Handout

Dedication

Dedication: Being zealous about something or someone. The act of loyalty by a person to a subject. According to Beals, “dedication has some kind of value in virtue of its relationship to robust integrity, but that it also has intrinsic value.”²⁰⁰

1. Dedicated disciples (1 John 5:3; Acts 2:42; Luke 10:39; Mark 4:1-9)
2. Dedicated to learning by asking questions (Luke 11:1; Matt. 18:1; Luke 2:46).
3. Dedication to the church (1 King 8:61; James 1:22; Prov. 16:3)
4. Dedicated to Serve (Col. 3:17, 23; Gal. 6:9)

Focus

Focus: Give all of one’s attention to a subject without outside interference. According to Daniel Goleman, Grant, Jen Su, Hougaard, and Thomas, “focus means thinking about one thing while filtering out distraction.”²⁰¹

1. Be focused on God alone (Matt. 6:24; Rom. 12:2; Matt. 6:33; 1 Chron. 16:11; Matt. 5:16).
2. Focus on the Word of God (Ezra 7:10; 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11; Ps. 25:15; Heb. 4:12; John 6:63; Matt. 4:4).

Why LDM Members lack Dedication and Focus

1. Satan steals the attention of believers (John 10:10; 1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 10:11-12)
2. Believers have temptation because of their desires (James 1:14; Rom. 8:5-7).

²⁰⁰ Beals, "The Importance of Dedication," 4.

²⁰¹ Goleman et al., *Focus*, 3.

3. Each person will be asked to fill in the blank. LDM members lack dedication and focus during church worship and service because _____.

Open Discussion

Please answer the two questions below regarding the information discussed over the last four weeks.

1. How would you apply the information from this worship to your life?
2. As a disciple of Jesus, can you genuinely say that you are ready to fulfill the great commission? If so, what would be your first steps in making disciples?

Raffle Drawing

APPENDIX N

Practical Guidance For Becoming Dedicated and Focus

1. Pray and read your Bible Daily.
2. Try to get into the church 5 to 10 minutes before the time for service so you can speak to other members before the start of the service. This way, you can give God the glory due to His Name (Ps. 29:2).
3. When someone comes into the service late, do not allow that to distract you from the worship and service time (1 Cor. 7:35). Keep your mind focused so you can praise God with your whole heart (Ps. 103:1-4)
4. Please place your cell phone on silent during worship and service time so it will not distract other church members (Eph. 4:32).
5. Please go to the restroom before the service start. If you are a person who has kidney problems and has to use the bathroom constantly, please sit as close to the aisle as possible so you can easily access the restroom.
6. Please consider others who want a good worship experience (Phil. 2:3). If you are late for church, tiptoe in as quietly as possible.
7. Please carry your children out of the service if you have to discipline them. Do not exasperate them during service (Eph. 6:4).
8. Remember to worship God in Spirit and Truth (John 4:24).
9. Remember, the Word of God tells us we should know how to conduct ourselves in the House of the Lord (1 Tim. 3:15).
10. Through His Holy Spirit, God can accomplish discipline in you so He can get the glory (Eph. 3:20-21). Therefore, allow the Holy Spirit to guide you.

APPENDIX O

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

TO: Maxine White, Maxine White, Darren Hercyk

FROM: Liberty University IRB

DATE: Apr 5, 2022

RE: Notice of Receipt of Initial Submission on Apr 5, 2022 4:02:01 PM EDT

STUDY #: IRB-FY21-22-923

STUDY TITLE: A Study on Why People Lack Dedication and Focus During Church Worship and Service Time

Your IRB submission for the above-referenced study has been received by the Liberty University IRB via Cayuse IRB. You will be notified if further information is needed.

Once an analyst is assigned to review your study, it will be listed as “in pre-review” in Cayuse until it is ready for approval. A pre-review status does not mean that our review has not begun.

Please note, both our preliminary and subsequent reviews may take 15-20 business days to process.

Please see our [website](#) for information on how to revise your study once it is returned to you.

Thank you,

Research Ethics Office
434-592-5530

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