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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

The Effectiveness of Praying and Fasting

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

by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The problem is that members of a small church were not praying and fasting often. When asked to pray in a congregational setting, they were hesitant. Therefore, the researcher invited fourteen God's Chosen Generation Church members to volunteer for a six-week prayer and fasting research study. The study sought to demonstrate that when praying and fasting are applied together, Christians can hear from God and better understand His will for their life. However, three participants decided to leave the research for personal obligations. Those who continued received a prayer and fasting schedule to pray three times a day and information on fasting with the Daniel Fast for three days per week. The research intended to help them restore and strengthen their relationship with God. To discuss their progress, the researcher scheduled a weekly Zoom meeting. During the study, the participants kept a daily journal of their progress and turned these in weekly. The researcher obtained data from interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and surveys. At the end of six weeks, the results from the post-praying and fasting survey were astounding. The intricacies of being a small church made it easy for each participant to build relationships that evolved during the meetings. Moreover, the participants gave testimonies of how God changed their life through healing, finances, and becoming closer to Him. Praying and fasting became powerful tools when applied together.

Keywords: fasting, praying, Daniel Fast, research in a small church.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Ministry Context	2
Background of God’s Chosen Generation Church	2
Value and Beliefs of GCGC	6
History and Context	8
Demographics of Matteson, IL	9
Economy	9
Education	10
History of Fasting	10
Prayer and Fasting.....	15
Problem Presented	16
Purpose Statement	17
Basic Assumptions	19
Definitions	20
Limitations	21
Delimitations	22
Thesis Statement	23
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework:	24
Literature Review	24
The Purpose of Praying and Fasting	27
Repentance	28
Boldness and Faith.....	30
Humility in Praying and Fasting.....	32
Unity.....	34
Strength and Healing.....	36
Attitude.....	37
Praise	39
Obedience	40
The Effectiveness of Praying and Fasting.....	42
Conclusion	44
Theological Foundations	45
Praying and Fasting for Personal Requests	47
Praying for the Right Decision	48
Praying for Wisdom.....	48
Praying for Understanding and Revelation	49
Praying for Healing.....	50
Praying for a Breakthrough	52
Fasting for the Holy Spirit.....	53
Fasting for Protection.....	53
Praying and Fasting with Purpose	53
Fasting for Instructions	54
Conclusion	54
Theoretical Foundations	55

Churches Specializing in Prayer and Fasting	61
Tapestry Church	61
New Life Christian Church	62
Christ’s Church	62
Redeemer Churches and Ministries	63
Church of the Highlands	63
Generations Church	64
Cross Points Church	64
Life Church	65
Four Square Church	65
The Agape Christian Church	65
Chapter 3: Methodology:	67
Intervention Design	67
Recruit Participants	68
Pre-Praying and Fasting Questionnaire	71
Interview Questions	73
Praying and Fasting Schedule	75
Data Analysis Procedure	78
Conclusion	79
Implementation of the Intervention Design	80
Chapter 4: Results	85
Theme 1: Closer to God	86
Belief in God	87
Relationship with God	88
Theme 2: Research in a Small Church	95
Theme 3: How the Research Affected the Participants	99
Theme 4: Relationship that Evolved During the Research	105
Summary of Results	108
Chapter 5: Conclusion	110
Research Implication	112
Research Applications	115
Research Limitations	116
Further Research	116
Create Bible Study Material	116
Bible Study Curriculum	120
Six-Week Bible Plan	121
The Daniel Fast Guide	124
Partner with Food Banks	125

Appendix A.....	129
Appendix B.....	130
Appendix C.....	131
Appendix D.....	132
Appendix E.....	136
Appendix F.....	137
Appendix G.....	138
Appendix H.....	139
Appendix I.....	140
Appendix J.....	141
Bibliography.....	142
IRB Approval Letter.....	149

Tables

1.	Prayer Times: Six Weeks	76
2.	Fasting Schedule: Six Weeks	77

Illustrations

Figures

1.	Data Triangulation	80
2.	Prayer and Fasting Resolution	105
3.	Daniel Fast	124
4.	Food Pantry Document	128

Abbreviations

AFM	<i>Adventist Frontier Missions</i>
BABIAU	<i>Bandar Abbas Branch of Islamic Azad University</i>
COVID	<i>Coronavirus Disease</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
GCGC	<i>God's Chosen Generation Church</i>
IRB	<i>Institutional Review Board</i>
LP	<i>Lord's Prayer</i>
NT	<i>New Testament</i>
OT	<i>Old Testament</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This thesis discusses the effectiveness of praying and fasting. Individual Christians may not know how to pray or fast effectively and become fearful or intimidated when asked. Certain Christians may not desire to pray due to past prayers not being answered and do not fast for lack of understanding of the meaning and purpose of fasting. Moreover, other Christians pray out of fear. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people prayed out of human instinct during a crisis. The suggested therapeutic elements of praying in a difficult time in life are triggered by the transcendental relation of intentionality (addressing God to ask for help, the so-called prayer of petition). They may be considered a potential psycho-resource promoted by research on this matter.¹ In contrast, it seems many do not understand that praying and fasting are in the will of God. Therefore, this research will explain the purpose and importance of prayer and fasting and what the Scriptures say about these important spiritual disciplines.

As spiritual leaders, it is necessary to live a lifestyle pleasing to God so that others will want to follow and give honor to Him. This thesis and the study results are crucial to fostering a personal relationship with God. Specifically, fostering a relationship with God requires effective prayer and fasting. The enduring question is, how well do leaders bring believers together to understand the importance of the topic of this thesis? Those at God's Chosen Generation Church (GCGC) who will participate in this research will show what may happen to people when they pray and fast effectively.

¹ Roman Ryszard Szałachowski, and Wioletta Tuszyńska-Bogucka. ““Yes, in Crisis We Pray”. The Role of Prayer in Coping with Pandemic Fears” *Religions* 12, no. 10 (2021): 824. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100824.c>

Ministry Context

Background of God's Chosen Generation Church

God's Chosen Generation Church first began operating in August 2018. The ministers are young and have been attending church since their youth, and have been active in ministerial duties for the past two years. When they were asked to lead intercessory prayer, they were not comfortable praying aloud and appeared intimidated in front of others. Therefore, they were hesitant and did not know how to pray effectively or what to say. It was noticeable that GCGC members needed guidance on how to be more productive when praying.

Observing how to pray effectively and the lack of knowledge on how to fast was concerning. Many churches may encourage their congregation to pray and fast, but not everyone may understand why it is essential. Some may consider it unnecessary or not a priority without clarifying reasons to participate in prayer and fasting. However, one activity that may be crucial in shaping Christians and influencing the congregation to practice these disciplines is developing a Bible study program.

GCGC started in August 2018 in Illinois and moved to Detroit, Michigan. Church services were held monthly due to long-distance traveling from Illinois to Detroit. As the months passed, those who attended desired to have more services. Therefore, church services increased every other week. The members longed to have services every Sunday. Due to the excessive traveling, the pastor took temporary residency in Detroit, and services began to meet every Sunday. The church was going well despite little to no finances due to the small congregation.

As the church started to grow, so did the finances. Within a year, those who attended GCGC began complaining about the donation of tithes and offerings. They felt they were not obligated to give to the local church. Though more people started attending services, the gift of

giving was not with them. The church leadership explained what the Bible taught about tithes and offerings. Incidentally, the members of GCGC in Detroit did not have a clear understanding. Many members did not own a Bible, and it became evident that the church body needed a teacher and a preacher. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, GCGC moved back to Illinois and began services via radio. Moving back to Illinois was the best decision for GCGC. The church now has a youth pastor and other faithful members to do the work of God. Though it is a small church, membership is growing gradually. The leadership is hopeful that the church will expand over time.

According to the current church data of the regular attendees of GCGC, the church has a membership of twenty-three people. Church members are primarily young adults, with a few youths. Below are the demographics of GCGC:

- **Age segmentation:** The various ages span youth, young adults (twenties to mid-forties), with a few older adults (early fifty's to eighty's). Most of the congregation are members younger than forty-five.
- **Family segmentation:** Most young adults have children who attend school or stay home. Taking care of a family can be time-consuming and may cause problems with the spiritual time spent together.
- **Gender segmentation:** For most of the GCGC membership, the gender is balanced. There are a few more women than men.
- **Race and ethnicity segmentation:** Currently, GCGC is primarily African American. The church is in an area with many Black and Hispanics and a lower percentage of Caucasians. GCGC disciples all races and ethnicities by welcoming all people.

- **Family income segmentation:** The young adults that attend GCGC operate their businesses and are self-employed. They are new entrepreneurs and have busy schedules. The older adults are retired with a limited income.
- **Living status:** A few members are homeowners, while most rent.
- **Religiosity of Location:** The location of GCGC surrounds other churches in the community, which are of the Apostolic Faith, Baptist, Protestant, Lutheran, Catholic, Christian Science, Unitarian, and Non-denominational.
- **Education level:** GCGC members have a high school, trade school, undergraduate, or graduate education.

The demographics of GCGC are the beginning of understanding who they are and describing how to address the problem. These analyses give the community profile, making it easier to know how to approach the problem from their perspective. It takes time to evaluate what the congregation values most. Building a relationship with them will help explore what they need to develop a routine that will lead them to pray and fast.

The membership of GCGC should have practicing members who know God's Word and a leader who is knowledgeable of the Bible. How can a leader teach a congregation about God's will if the leader him or herself does not know and understand God's will? Teaching others spiritually must line up with the Word of God to gain trust and build faith.

As a pastor and leader of GCGC, the researcher seeks and maintains a relationship of compassion, faithfulness, biblical servanthood of God, and showing respect for all persons. The connection between GCGC membership and the church leadership should be that when spiritual counseling is needed, the membership can trust it to line up with the Word of God. The book of

Proverbs states, “Where there no counsel is, the people will fall” (Prov 11:14a).² A pastor is a shepherd who will feed and lead the flock. She will be available, approachable, and accessible. With these characteristics, the congregation will be ready to express their needs, and the pastor willing to help and encourage them.

Learning about the congregation’s spiritual life as a leader is instrumental to communication and knowing the people's hearts. This learning will help with the problem at GCGC regarding prayer and fasting. During conversations with the congregation, it became evident that a small number have not attended church in over two years, while others have been attending for just the past year. Therefore, being away from biblical teaching for some time has led to a lack of spiritual maturity. Overall, the most concerning characteristic of this congregation is the lack of understanding of how to pray and fast effectively.

Not attending church has also led to a lack of wisdom in knowing what God desires them to do. GCGC needs a firm foundation on which they can stand and be encouraged. Sometimes one may feel lonely and lack purpose when communication with God is inconsistent. It is then necessary to focus on prayer and fasting to foster their relationship with Him. Knowing the background of GCGC helps the researcher understand how to educate the membership by ensuring they receive the accurate teachings of the Bible. The church members will then develop a sense of hope knowing they have a leader concerned about their spiritual nourishment.

Realizing that some members of GCGC have not been active in attending church establishes the reason to help them research the Bible and learn more about prayer and fasting. It is valuable for a leader to provide adequate scriptural material from the Word of God. Teaching GCGC about this topic is as important as knowing its purpose as a shepherd. Knowing how to

² Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references will be from the King James Version of the Bible. Biblegateway.com <https://www.biblegateway.com>, (accessed August 2020).

interpret the Bible is also important so that the participants will have a concise meaning of the Scriptures for the glory of God—in other words, teaching the church members in such a way so they comprehend. However, understanding the Bible will give them direction in knowing their purpose, which they can obtain when praying and fasting are applied.

Value and Beliefs of GCGC

The core values of GCGC are truth, integrity, and compassion. The church truth is that one God exists in three equally divine Persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. GCGC is to do what is right and obedient according to God’s Word regardless of what others are doing. The church understands that wrong thinking has negative consequences. Finally, the church strives to have the compassion to love one another as Christ loves the church.

GCGC is a non-denominational stand-alone church under the Pentecostal and Apostolic faith. What is meant by non-denominational? Grace Plano Church states, “A non-denominational church is a Christian church with no connection with the recognized denominations and mainline churches such as the Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran, or Methodist churches.”³ GCGC, even though it is non-denominational, is based on Pentecostal and Apostolic faith teachings.

The history of the Pentecostal and Apostolic church goes back to 1905. In 1905, a man named Charles F Parham theorized that glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, provided the Bible evidence that a Christian was infused with the Holy Spirit, a doctrine that became the central tenet of Pentecostal thought.”⁴ This reveals what happened in Acts 2, on the Day of Pentecost, and the foundation of the Pentecostal and Apostolic church.

³ Grace Plano Church, “*Non-denominational Churches Explained*,” <https://graceplano.church/about/non-denominational-churches-explained>, (accessed September 15, 2022).

⁴ Kevin Sack, “The Pentecostal Church in America,” *The New York Times*, June 2000.

GCGC believes strongly in the Apostolic faith. The Washington Post says, “Apostolic refers to the apostles, the earliest followers of Jesus who were sent out to spread the Christian faith. In this case, it comes from Apostolic Pentecostals’ beliefs about baptism. Apostolic Pentecostals baptize believers in the name of Jesus.”⁵ GCGC also believes in and embraces this form of baptism.

The Apostolic Christian Church was a movement started by Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich, who became radical in his evangelical Anabaptist convictions. Frohlich had doubts about baptizing infants in the Baptist church, though he was affiliated with the Baptist Continental Society. Joseph Pfeiffer stated, “Fröhlich could then write to the Baptist Continental Society with full conviction in his doctrinal statement that the qualifications for baptism were sincere repentance, faith, and a renewed heart—by which definition, infant baptism did not qualify as true baptism.”⁶ Frohlich started the Apostolic Christian movement for this reason. Pfeiffer also mentioned, “The Apostolic Christian Church was thus idealized as the church of harmony, peace, and true holiness—of one accord, resting on the true foundations of Christ and the Apostles, absolutely unified in doctrine and spirit.”⁷

The Apostolic beliefs are the same as the Pentecostal, the unity of the Godhead of three Persons, the virgin birth, the sinless life of Jesus, the death and resurrection, ascension, the second coming of Jesus Christ, and repentance of sins for salvation.

⁵ “What is Apostolic Faith?” *Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/09/30/whats-an-apostolic-christian-and-why-is-kim-daviss-hair-so-long> (accessed September 15, 2022).

⁶ Joseph Pfeiffer, “The Nineteenth Century Apostolic Christian Church: The Dynamics of the Emergence, Establishment, and Fragmentation of a Neo-Anabaptist Sect,” *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies*, Volume 6, Issue 1 (2018): 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

GCGC is also a five-fold ministry, as Apostle Paul stated in the book of Ephesians. There are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Some roles are assigned to each of these gifts as instructed by God's visionaries who proclaim the message and start new churches. David Kovalevich stated, "Prophets receive messages from God's Word and truth to share with others. Evangelists gather in people by sharing the gospel with those who have not heard and helping new members grow in faith. Pastors shepherd the flock spiritually. And teachers break down the Bible for instruction."⁸ Though the church is non-denominational, it believes the Bible is inerrant and that every word is true. However, GCGC does not choose to hold a particular identity or follow traditions other than Christ's.

History and Context

GCGC originated in the Village of Matteson, Illinois, a Chicago South Suburb. As of 2020, approximately 19,073 people reside in Matteson, according to the United States Census Bureau.⁹ The village is named after the tenth Governor of Illinois, Joel A. Matteson. Matteson was in office at the time of the settlement of 13,000 residents in the mid-1800s. The first settlers to arrive were German.

In 1848, one of the pioneers, Fredrick Illgen, purchased 40 acres of land from the government. Thanks to two railroads, Illinois Central and New York Central, thousands of people came to the Midwest and Chicago southland communities a year. Ultimately, people

⁸ David Kovalevich, "What is the Five-fold Ministry," Ffministry.com. July 17, 2022, <https://www.ffministry.com/blog/what-is-the-five-fold-ministry> (accessed September 15, 2022).

⁹ United States Census Bureau. "Population of Matteson," census.gov, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/mattesonvillageillinois> (accessed September 16, 2022).

decided to reside in the Matteson area.¹⁰ The railroads caused the population to grow and bring income to the village.

Demographics of Matteson, IL

There are five large ethnic groups located in the village. Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) is 82.3%, White (Non-Hispanic) is 12.3%, Two+ (Non-Hispanic) is 2.76, White (Hispanic) is 35%, and Asian (Non-Hispanic) is 1.31%. All households reported as English-speaking with the potential of a multi-lingual nature, with a 97.4% US residency.¹¹ This diversity brings unity among individuals with different cultures, languages, and religious beliefs so that people can live together and learn from one another.

Economy

The median household income is \$86,611. In 2020 Matteson was placed with the highest median family income, according to the US Census. Using the Gini index, which measures the population through the Census Bureau, men in Illinois have a 1.34% higher income than women, which is higher than the national average. However, the economy in this village employs 9,370 people. According to Data USA, “The most prominent industries in Matteson, IL are Health Care, and Social Assistance (1478 people), Retail Trade (1189), Educational Services (1164), Finance and Insurance (\$81,462) are the highest paying, Real Estate and Rental Leasing (\$74,888), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (\$74,512).”¹²

¹⁰ Village of Matteson, “*Community of Matteson*,” Villageofmatteson.org, <https://www.villageofmatteson.org> (accessed September 16, 2022).

¹¹ Matteson, IL - Data USA. “*Matteson, IL Census*,” *Data USA*, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/matteson-il#about>, (accessed September 16, 2022).

¹² Ibid.

Education

In 2020, universities in Matteson awarded sixteen degrees. The student population is more toward women, with five male and fifty-six female students. Most students who graduate from universities are Black or African American (81.3%), followed by Asian (6.25%), Hispanic or Latino (6.25%), and two or more races (6.25%). The largest university in Matteson, Illinois, with the most significant number of degrees, is the CAAN Academy of Nursing, rated at 100%. The CAAN Academy of Nursing states, “CAAN Academy of Nursing has been helping students become the best nurses in their fields since 2007. We have Christian morals and teach compassion and understanding for all future nurses to provide the best care.”¹³ The most popular majors are other practical nursing, vocational nursing, and nursing assistants, with an 80% graduation rate.

History of Prayer and Fasting

To understand prayer and fasting is to know its history. Where did these originate? These are questions that some people may want to know but never ask. For years people have prayed and fasted without asking how it all started. The Old and New Testaments both speak about prayer and fasting. In the New Testament (NT), the question of prayer came up during conversation with Jesus. After praying for so many years in the Old Testament (OT), praying should have been a simple task for the religious in the NT. The disciples did not find it that simple. What is challenging, however, is why no one asked, how do we fast?

Although the religious often prayed in the OT, there was no discussion on how to pray; they just prayed. The people prayed to God but did not ask Him how to pray. Because when they needed answers, it was out of direct communication. They opened their mouth and started

¹³ CAAN Academy of Nursing. “*Academy of Nursing*” Caanacademy.org, <https://www.caanacademy.org/experienced-nursing-instructors> (accessed September 16, 2022).

speaking to God. However, in the NT, it is quite different. The first mention of being taught how to pray was in Luke 11 when one of the disciples wanted Jesus to teach them about prayer. The first prayer Jesus taught them is affectionately known as the Lord's Prayer (LP). This prayer is a confirmation to those who do not know how to pray. The history of the LP is crucial because it has been a blueprint for prayer throughout the centuries. Why? Because it is the prayer that Jesus taught in the NT. The prayer is directed toward God.

David Clark defines the theory of the Bible's reception history of the LP. Reception history examines how people have interpreted and used biblical texts throughout history. Therefore, this prayer's history has existed since Jesus first spoke it. Clark states, "The reason that the Lord's Prayer has existed in our society since Luke 11 is not because people can interpret this prayer, but because Jesus said it. And since they understand it to be His prayer, there were accepted parameters that shaped what it could or could not mean."¹⁴

The book of Matthew has a version of the LP with different variations than in Luke 11. In Matthew 6:12, Jesus says, He will forgive their debts. However, in Luke 11:4, Jesus says, He will forgive their sins. Clark mentions, "The first-century versions of the Lord's Prayer represent irreducible pluriformity."¹⁵ These two versions are rare but the same. Matthew 6 and Luke 11 are about forgiveness of sin. These are two variations in the Bible that are interpreted differently. However, the church is one body of Christ and should all agree that both Scriptures described the forgiveness on the cross when Jesus took on the debt of all sin. Clark also states, "If we define the original context of the Lord's Prayer in the narrowest sense, as the original historical setting

¹⁴ David Clark. "Exploring Metaphors for the Reception History of the Lord's Prayer," *Journal of the Bible and It's Reception*; Vol. 6, Iss.1, (2019): 41-42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

in which Jesus taught his followers this prayer, our hopes of discovery lie with the Gospel accounts of Matthew and Luke.”¹⁶

The context of prayer was first conceived with the Christian Church, dating back over a century. One man, named Auguste Sabatier (1839-1901), a French Protestant theologian and biblical scholar, noted that prayer was only a religious act. Sabatier argues that prayer is what the mind knows, senses, and holds onto to live. Sabatier stated that no words or formula is involved with prayer except the moving of the soul, which connects with a powerful presence.¹⁷

Roy Hammerling’s reasons for defining prayer are “Most people would be able to define prayer simply in the same way that John Chrysostom (d. 407) does. Prayer is a conversation with God.”¹⁸ One historical period concerning prayer by the Christian Church is that of the LP. The LP originated with Jesus as before, in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. The argument is not about who taught the prayer but who the people were. The Book of Matthew suggests that Jesus taught the LP to the people during His Sermon on the Mount. Moreover, Luke stated that it was taught only to the disciples who asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

While scholars still may argue about who was present that heard the LP, the main issue is that because of the LP, people pray. Hammerling stated, “Over time, the Lord’s Prayer continued to be prayed throughout the history of Christianity, and the Lord’s Prayer can be found in many later contexts, everywhere from worship to private devotional prayers in the home and out in the public world.”¹⁹ The LP was an influential part of the history for Christians in the early first

¹⁶ Clark. “Exploring Metaphors...” 51.

¹⁷ Roy Hammerling, *A History of Prayer: The First to the Fifteenth Century*, vol 13, ed. Roy Hammerling. (Boston, MA: Brill, 2008), 4.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Hammerling, *A History of Prayer: ...*, 5.

century of the church to have a foundation for learning how to pray. Furthermore, the LP is still used today as a blueprint for teaching people how to pray.

Leading up to the present day, how has prayer developed over time? *The Sociology of Prayer* defines prayer as communication to God or gods depending on religious background. Froese and Jones wrote, “A prayer experience can be individually generated but requires a sustained level of uninterrupted inner concentration. In prayer, it describes changing the subject in one’s mind.”²⁰ Defining prayer is shifting one’s concerns and consciousness to be able to communicate with the divine by seeing through the eyes of God. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Through prayer and fasting, one is transformed into the same creator’s image, which reflects His glory. Therefore, they become more like Christ when they pray, fast, and read the Word of God through the Holy Spirit.

Different mechanisms today influence the social structure, such as family, religious institutions, and politics. In the past, people prayed to many types of gods. Froese and Jones also mentioned, “It is the social context of both beliefs in gods and prayer which determines their meaning and significance.”²¹ People prayed due to their religious lifestyle and created a sense of quantity in daily life, including the length of time spent in prayer, how often they prayed, and the consistency of prayer. Prayer could lead to a healthier lifestyle and a physiological and psychological therapeutic effect.²² Froese and Jones suggested, “For instance, Newberg and Waldman (2009) found that contemplative prayer (inner prayer purpose) consistently practiced

²⁰ Paul Froese and Rory Jones. *The Sociology of Prayer: Dimensions and Mechanisms* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2021), 3.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 5.

has a beneficial effect on memory and slows down the neurological damage of aging. Some prayer purposes can damage the brain if focused on thoughts that make people frightened or angry.”²³ Researching the past to the present, the purpose of praying is not just about how often one prays or the length of one's prayer. Knowing why prayer is essential helps to understand the meaning.

Fasting has been around for thousands of years, according to Matthew 4 and Luke 4. It has been considered a practice of discipline in Christianity, historically rooted in Judaism. The practice of fasting began with Lent during the celebration of Easter. In Islam, they practice fasting during Ramadan for a month. Fasting also is found in Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Taoism, and other religions.

Fasting is mentioned in the book of Exodus when Moses went on a 40-day fast. Furthermore, Jesus fasted in the wilderness for 40 days in the NT. Carla Venegas-Borsellino mentioned, “Most religions employ fasting as a means of purification, as an aid to contemplation, and as a method to attain an ultimate freedom.”²⁴

The history of fasting in the OT, in the Israelite religion, was part of their worship culture. One of their primary days of fasting was the Day of Atonement (Lev 16; Isa 58:3-5), which was fasting for the repentance of sins. Brandon Walker stated, “Days of fasting and prayer were called throughout Israel’s history, especially when the nation was up against calamity. It is important to understand that these fasts were done in a congregational setting, and everyone within the society was expected not to eat or drink.”²⁵ The OT also had individual fasting, like

²³ Froese and Jones. *The Sociology of Prayer...*, 5.

²⁴ Carla Venegas-Borsellino, and Sonipreet, and Robert G. Martindale. “From Religion to Secularism: The Benefits of Fasting,” *Curr Nutr Rep* 7, (2018): 132.

²⁵ Brandon Walker, “This Kind Only Comes Out by Prayer and Fasting: Fasting, Ritual Efficacy and Magical Thinking in Early Christianity,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* Vol. 31, (2017): 44.

that of King David. When King David's son was ill, he fasted for seven days to see if God would change His mind about taking his son's life. It was rare for the Israelites to fast individually.

In Judaism, when practicing fasting, it was due to different motives: such as fasting for atonement, fasting for mourning, and fasting for ritual purification. Moreover, they also fasted for magical purposes, especially for divine revelation, because of their magical thinking. Walker also mentioned, "One of these motives overlaps as in the book of Daniel 1. Daniel and his three compatriots refrain from the king's food, requesting only vegetables and water. The motive for this fast or willful abstention is related to dietary taboos and pollution as the food was often dedicated to certain gods within antiquity."²⁶ When it came to the NT, Jesus, Peter, Paul, and the disciples fasted because they were motivated by Jesus (Mark 2 & 9, Matt 6, Acts 10). Walker stated, "Concerning fasting and prayer, the correlation between the two practices seems to be a common script that early Christian scribes and their communities understood."²⁷

Prayer and Fasting

Elmer Towns suggests that people believe they do not have the time to pray, do not pray, or have no understanding of the nature of prayer. Towns also suggests that Jesus did not invent prayer; He just did it. Learning how to pray is an opportunity to communicate with God. Towns also stated, "Let's examine the nature of prayer. 1. Prayer Is Relationship 2. Prayer Is Conversion 3. Prayer Is Entrance into God's Presence 4. Prayer Focuses on God. 5. Prayer Demands Your Total Personal Response 6. Prayer Is Life-Changing 7. Prayer Is a Necessary

²⁶ Brandon Walker, "This Kind Only Comes Out by Prayer and Fasting", 132.

²⁷ Ibid., 49.

Mandate.”²⁸ However, if a Christian does not communicate with God, the Christian will not understand the nature of prayer.

Prayer should not be complicated. It should come from the heart. The LP is what Jesus prayed for so people could have a template for learning how to pray. Wesley Hill stated, “It’s a model for approaching God with childlike confidence that He will hear. Depending on whom you ask, it comprises six or seven petitions; the first three focused on God’s holy character and rule, and the latter three or four concerned with invoking God’s help in some way.”²⁹ As a Christian, praying is essential and necessary; when combined with fasting, it is powerful.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, the Bible says that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost and belongs to God. Amy and William E. Malphrus wanted people to understand that “Ritualistic fasting is practiced as part of a religious exercise. However, there are also physiological principles that come with fasting. Intermittent fasting has been shown to increase a person’s lifespan, promising results for those with type 2 diabetes, healing with cancer patients, and aiding in the prevention of certain tumors.”³⁰ Fasting with prayer is powerful when used together. Not just for spiritual purposes but also for healing in the body, which is the temple where God dwells.

Problem Presented

This project will address the problem that members of GCGC are not praying and fasting often. During services, when ministerial leaders are to lead in intercessory prayer, it is noticeable

²⁸ Elmer L. Towns. *Praying with Jesus: 50 Daily Devotions* (Shippensburg, VA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2019), Ch. 1.

²⁹ Wesley Hill. *The Lord’s Prayer: “A Guide to Praying to Our Father”* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 10-11.

³⁰ Amy Malphrus, and William E. Malphrus. *As You Fast: The Physiological and Spiritual Principles of Fasting* (Meadville, PA: Christian Faith Publishing, 2021), Ch. 1 & 2.

that they are not well engaged or decline to pray because they feel inadequate. The more they can communicate the Scriptures in prayer, which is God's divine truth, the closer they are to God. This truth can come from trusting and believing that God, through prayer, will give spiritual wisdom and knowledge on how and what to pray.

Corey Russell stated, "Faith in prayer flows out of revelation - the revelation of who God is and where He lives. And since revelation never stops, as seen in the worshipful response of the four creatures, faith continually flows out with fresh proclamations."³¹ The purpose of researching the effectiveness of praying is due to the will of God, which is most important. Scot McKnight stated, "The emphasis of passages in the Bible is not that fasting clears the mind and opens the windows for God's light to enter. Instead, the importance is on the yearning of God's people to know the will of God."³² The goal is to seek out the reasons behind the problem and produce an approach to understand how the church can come together to be more effective in their praying and fasting.

The problem was that members of a small church were not praying and fasting often. They had a life without prayer and fasting, separating them from God. Once they increased their prayer life and began to fast, they saw a change in their relationship with God. Moreover, they wanted to pray and fast consistently and effectively.

Purpose Statement

This Doctor of Ministry Research aimed to teach the importance of prayer and fasting and show how Christians can build a closer relationship with God and each other. Each member

³¹ Corey Russell. *Teach Us to Pray: Prayer that Accesses Heaven and Changes Earth* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2020), 65.

³² Scot McKnight. *Fasting* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 49.

at GCGC can identify with their prayer life regarding how often they pray or fast. On the other hand, the members may not understand the purpose and reasoning behind praying and fasting.

The objective was to use surveys to collect data measuring the effect of prayer three times a day and fasting three days per week on GCGC members within six weeks. This analysis identified if prayer and fasting affected their attitude, faith, and spiritual conviction. All participants in this research were adult men and women of GCGC located in their homes. Ben Gutierrez stated, “Selfish ambition implies that one is doing something for the sole purpose of promoting himself and not the glory of God.”³³ Educating about how to pray and fast is giving glory to God, not for personal gain.

Fasting is the voluntary abstinence from eating foods for a brief time. Although Muslims trust in the Holy Qur’an during the Ramadan Fast, they believe one is drawn closer to God and think it can improve health. Naufiqurrachman Nasihu mentioned, “In summary, in fast periods during Ramadan fasting, starvation occurs, and autophagy is activated to remove protein aggregate and other cellular debris to recycle, resulting in health benefits.”³⁴ In other words, autophagy cleanses the body of impurities.

Preparing the mind is one concern that people may not consider when it comes to a spiritual fast. Fasting is mainly acquired by voluntarily removing specific foods or all food from their diet, depending on the fast. Romans 12:2 says not to be conformed to this world but to renew the mind. Jason Gregory discusses that the mind needs a spiritual fast like the body. Gregory stated, “Mind fasting directly impacts the root cause of all our suffering. Fasting the

³³ Ben Gutierrez. *Living Out the Mind of Christ* (Virginia Beach, VA: Academy Publishing, 2011), 35.

³⁴ Taufiqurrachman Nasihun. “Ramadan Fasting, Health, and Autophagy: Is There any Relationship?,” *Sains Medika* 8, no. 2, (2018): 46-47.

mind eliminates all the content that stimulates our mind and from reframing or trying to stimulate it out of fear of boredom.”³⁵

Therefore, this thesis research addressed the importance of prayer and fasting. Self-discipline was a central concern for the research study. Thomas Ryan noted, “Self-discipline is training in freedom. True Christian freedom is the freedom of those who live no longer for themselves, the freedom of being a new creation in Christ.”³⁶ After the research, each participant received benefits from praying and fasting, developing a closer relationship with God, refreshing their soul, having a purpose in life, having a healthier body, and having peace of mind.

Basic Assumptions

The expectations of this research were not just to see what would happen but expecting that GCGC would notice that prayer and fasting would help them obtain a closer relationship with God. Hopefully, those who participated in the research were honest and truthful in responding to the survey and did it out of obedience to God. Most of all, the hope is that GCGC will desire to continue to pray and fast due to the spiritual power they received.

This research assumed that the participants would realize prayer and fasting may not solve all their problems but will help them in their spiritual growth to understand that it is always the will of God. As the members continue learning how to pray and fast effectively, they can better understand the plans and purpose of their life.

The second assumption was the validity of the research questions that GCGC will answer, understanding that the research will be kept anonymous. Were they honest in answering the questions based on the assumption of anonymity? Did they trust the researcher to respect

³⁵ Jason Gregory, *Fasting the Mind: Spiritual Exercises for Psychic Detox* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 7.

³⁶ Thomas Ryan, *The Sacred Art of Fasting; Preparing to Practice* (Nashville, TN: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2005), 43.

their personal information with confidence? Or did they stretch the truth because they did not want to look like they were not spiritual? So many variables must be considered when doing research.

One last assumption of this research was that the participants potentially realized that they could not live without praying and fasting. When they do not pray, they may sense their life is incomplete. If they pray, they will spiritually connect with God in a way that leaves them wanting more of Him daily. Even if praying and fasting do not solve all their problems, they will build their faith in God, understanding that He is there with them. Winchestera and Guhinb stated, “For Evangelicals, prayer should look and feel a particular way (i.e., sincere), and this expectation simultaneously shapes how they use prayer to solve problems and how prayer becomes a site of its unique dilemmas of action.”³⁷

Definitions

This research provides the following definition of terms to understand better.

Ephod. Dr. Theodore C. Foote’s definition of the word is, “A long flowing garment is drawn partly, representing a high priest in a long robe.”³⁸ The Ephod was used during holy ceremonies. The high priests were the only ones who wore the Ephod for prophetic rites. The high priest used it to perform ritual duties and wore it at the command of God.

Fasting. Jentezen Franklin stated, “Fasting brings one into a deeper, more intimate, and powerful relationship with the Lord.”³⁹ Jentezen shows that fasting is more than just abstaining

³⁷ Daniel Winchestera and Jeffrey Guhinb, “Praying “Straight from the Heart”: Evangelical Sincerity and the Normative Frames of Culture in Action,” *A Purdue University Department of Sociology, UCLA Department of Sociology* 72, (2019): 34.

³⁸ Dr. Theodore C. Foote, “The Ephod,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 21, no. 1 (1902), 1.

³⁹ Jentezen Franklin, *Fasting: Opening the door to a deeper, more intimate, more powerful relationship with God* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2007), 10.

from food. It is an act of self-denial for higher purposes. Fasting strengthens and works as a prayer tool by bringing humility and repentance.

Intercessory Prayer. Andrew Murray states that intercessory prayer is “Praying for the needs of others.”⁴⁰ Intercessory prayer is a prayer that when God speaks, He gives a sense of urgency about a friend or person that may need help. It shows humility towards God by allowing the lives of others to take precedence.

Prayer. Ronnie Floyd stated, “Effective prayer occurs when you talk to God and listen to what God is saying to you.”⁴¹ Prayer is direct communication between those who love Him to get instructions.

Limitations

The purpose of researching praying and fasting was to help the congregation at GCGC have an improved spiritual insight. Moreover, to have a more personal relationship with God. Potential recognizable issues included what if people do not wish to participate? Everyone has a choice to make when it comes to choosing to worship God. One limitation was that if the congregation decides to participate, they might not be honest about how often they pray and fast. Using surveys for research depends on those completing the surveys to be honest.

Another limitation was determining the right size groups to explore; the right amount of gender and age per group. Was the research accurate if it targeted only specific ethnic groups or religious affiliations? Most statistics are more than just a handful of people in a small church setting. Would the decision to go outside of GCGC to other local churches affect the research? Or should it just be for GCGC only? Because these were the only available people, the research

⁴⁰ Andrew Murray, *The Ministry of Intercession: A Plea for More Prayer* (Abbotsford, WI: Anneke Press, 2016), 19.

⁴¹ Ronnie Floyd, *How to Pray: Developing an Intimate Relationship with God* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 2019), 6.

was limited. Were there previous research studies on the topic to develop an analysis? There seem to be more scholarly books on praying than fasting, which may make it more challenging to analyze. Because people are personal with their religious beliefs, was there enough data and resources to compare this research project? It was hard to find data studied based on the subject matter. Therefore, relying on the research by GCGC will have to be sufficient.

Delimitations

The researcher interviewed several GCGC congregation members by asking them to pray three times daily and fast three days per week for six weeks. Because the problem was within GCGC, the congregation was the best place to start. There were no certain groups delimited during this research. Since the GCGC is small, all were requested to volunteer, although not required to participate. If medical reasons cause a problem, those who cannot abstain from food or water for long periods use sound judgment. For medical reasons, they may have decided to start fasting for an hour or even half a day, whichever was healthier. Some kept handy small snacks and drank sips of water for taking medication. Since the fast was a spiritual exercise to allow the mind and spirit to align with God, all were encouraged to use wisdom, judgment, and faith.

Because the church had not been effective in praying and fasting, it was limited to shorter periods to avoid the desire to leave. Limiting the time to three days per week during the six weeks was more appropriate when teaching the importance of fasting. Different types of fasting were applied during the research, such as denying oneself from electronic devices, television, and the internet. There was also a complete fast (no food or liquids for a certain number of days), a partial fast (a specified number of hours per day), and the Daniel Fast (no meats, sweets, or bread, but only fruits and vegetables). By providing all these different scenarios to GCGC

members, the researcher created options for them to decide how they would fast during the research.

The goal was for those participating in the research to think about the fasting aspect of replacing unhealthy food with healthier food, such as fruits and plenty of vegetables. Moreover, participants were encouraged to drink only 100% juice instead of liquids with a high volume of sugar and water. These restrictions were complex in the beginning for those whose bodies were not accustomed to going without certain types of food. The participants likely became hungry or cranky, which is a normal reaction when changing their eating habits.

Thesis Statement

This research demonstrated that if GCGC is more effective in praying and fasting, they could improve their mental, physical and spiritual well-being. To benefit from these improvements, they needed to spend more time communicating with God by reading their Bibles consistently and adjusting their eating habits. When combining fasting and praying, GCGC saw a great move of God's healing in their body, mind, and soul. It resulted in a positive effect on them psychologically, physically, and spiritually. These were some of the anticipated changes that GCGC experienced from prayer and fasting.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Prayer and fasting have been around since the OT. Many people participate in it as direct communication with God. The problem was that GCGC had not consistently prayed and fasted. To be effective is to ask about the purpose of prayer and fasting and how it affects the church spiritually. This literature review will provide research on how it affects a person's behavior that can lead to repentance by building up their boldness with faith. The literature review will also explain how consistency in prayer and fasting can bring together humility, unity, strength, healing, and changes in attitude, praise, and obedience, which leads to effectiveness.

Literature Review

This literature review is about the effectiveness of prayer and fasting. This literature review aims to provide the church with informative research to become more aware of the importance of prayer and fasting and some current practices. In Shiraz, Iran, the current fasting practice has positive health effects. Sadati A. Kalateh stated, "Several articles have shown that fasting leads to physical health. Moreover, the results of some other studies indicated positive functions of fasting, such as enhancing spiritual wellbeing, mental health, elimination of depression, and decreased level of social dysfunction."⁴² However, most people do not care about how fasting affects Muslims. It is more about their values or well-being. According to Koenig H. King, fasting was necessary; however, praying and devotion affected their physical health and longevity.⁴³ Kalateh quotes a passage from the Holy Quran, a Muslim book. Chapter 2, Verse 183 states, "Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you."⁴⁴ The

⁴² Sadati A. Kalateh, "Islamic Worldview, Fasting and Health," *Journal of Fasting & Health*, 6(2), (2018): 104.

⁴³ Kalateh, "Islamic Worldview..." 104.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

emphasis here is piety and caution. The Muslim's behavior with fasting changes their virtue to wanting to read the Quran, praying daily, fasting, self-discipline, humility, and forgiveness. Because of the changes in their character, fasting indirectly affects their health.

In Buddhism, fasting starts with its first stage of divine awakening. Buddha was a young prince named Siddhartha who left home to find enlightenment. While under intense stress, which affected his mental capacity, he practiced fasting. Buddha continued fasting for six years which caused his body to become more bones than flesh.⁴⁵ When mentioning Buddha, Sandip T. Gaikwad states, “When he realized that the basic cause of samsara is desire, he thought that fasting is among the methods to overcome this desire. He was surviving only on a single grain of rice per day.”⁴⁶ In expectation of death, a native girl named Sujata offered him rice with milk. After he regained his strength, he preached a message today they call *The Middle Way*. Gaikwad mentions, “*THE MIDDLE WAY* According to Tripitaka (collection of Buddhist scriptures), Buddha received wrong guidance that through practicing extreme fasting, he can achieve wisdom.”⁴⁷ Instead of gaining wisdom, however, he suffered. After six years, Buddha comprehended that his punishment did not lead to enlightenment. Gaikwad stated, “Then he stopped his fast and tried other means for his quest. He guided the middle way between deprivation and gluttony when he achieved enlightenment. Buddha guided his followers to avoid extremes.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Sandip T. Gaikwad, “Apprehending Concept, Canons and Types of Fasting in Buddhism,” *National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management* 2, no. 4 (2017): 165.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 166.

⁴⁸ Gaikwad, “Apprehending Concept...,” 166.

Different practices today, like that of Muslims and Buddhists, may not have the balance needed to be effective. In this research, GCGC saw how consistent prayer and fasting could foster their faith and strengthen their relationship with God. However, it will also provide an overview of the literature that will present the knowledge of the topic and the benefits they can receive. It may not necessarily solve the problem. Nevertheless, it will be a guide to enhancing the quality of life through effective praying and fasting.

The OT provides a good understanding of fasting. In Judaism, fasting means absolute abstinence from all food, drinks, and sexual relations. There are three kinds of fasts in Judaism: Private fasts, statutory public fasts, and non-statutory public fast, which are held for special events. The Mosaic Law included only one mandatory fast, which is Yom Kippur. This fast is known as the Day of Atonement, the most significant religious moment for Jews in the year. Leviticus 23:26-27 emphasizes what the Lord spoke to Moses, commanding the Jewish religious authorities to deny themselves from sundown to sundown.⁴⁹

When it comes to Christianity, Jesus was raised among the Jews, but He did not give any specific rules about fasting. However, among the gentile or non-Jewish Christians, fasting was not common. “The most important fast for the Christians had been the fast on the day before Easter celebrations which commemorate the believed resurrection of Jesus after the crucifixion; this fasting period is known as Lent.”⁵⁰

Christianity has three types of fasts: normal, absolute, and partial. The normal fast means abstinence from food and only drinking water (Matthew, 4:1-2). An absolute fast means neither eating nor drinking (Acts, 9:9). The third type is the partial fast or the Daniel Fast, which is

⁴⁹ Muhammad Akram. “Meaning and significance of fasting in comparative perspective: A study with special reference to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.” *Hamdard Islamicus* 39, no. 2, (2016), 39.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 43.

recorded in the OT. “I had eaten no rich food, no meat or wine had entered my mouth, and I had not anointed myself at all, for the full three weeks”⁵¹ (Daniel, 10:3).

The Purpose of Praying and Fasting

People may not pray or spend enough time in prayer for various reasons. One is the ability to stay focused on God’s plans and purpose for their lives. God being who He is should be the motivation to pray. However, that is not always the case if there is no commitment. Ben Gutierrez mentioned, “Focusing on the purpose or reason for why God has called those to minister will encourage them to want to fulfill His purpose because of their love for Him so all who see will give God all the glory.”⁵² That is why fellowship with God is the purpose of praying. Charles Spurgeon suggests, “To grow in experience, there must be much prayer.”⁵³

Whenever Jesus wanted to be close to God, He went to pray. He always allowed His disciples to see Him praying to the Father, not to get the glory but to glorify God. However, Ronnie Floyd stated, “Jesus wanted fellowship with His Father in heaven, and He knew prayer was the only way to experience it.”⁵⁴ In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul says to rejoice, pray without ceasing and give thanks in everything because this is God’s will and purpose. If the word “think” is etymologically and phonetically related to the word “thank,” then thinking about what to say to God is praying. Boyd Jay Peterson mentioned, “In sum, I believe thinking itself can be a prayer. I also believe God desires to expand our minds and souls.”⁵⁵ In Philippians 4:8, the word

⁵¹ Muhammad Akram. “Meaning and significance of fasting in comparative perspective”, 44.

⁵² Gutierrez, *Living Out the Mind of Christ*, 29.

⁵³ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon on Prayer & Spiritual Warfare* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997), 281.

⁵⁴ Floyd, *How to Pray...*, 5.

⁵⁵ Boyd Jay Peterson, “Pray Without Ceasing,” *Dialogue: A journal of Mormon Thought*, 53, no. 3 (2020): 183, 185.

think is about what comes from the heart. The purpose of praying and fasting is to seek God. And as the participants engage their minds in thought, they will be offering a prayer to God.⁵⁶

Praying also strengthens the church and gives them more confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit, which can create a new heart. While the church will still suffer conflict, it will also have the strength and confidence to overcome conflict. McClendon and Kimbrough stated, “The presence of God’s Spirit brings us the power to submit our wills to God and to deny sinful fleshly desires.”⁵⁷ Jentezen Franklin says, “If the church desire to experience God and know who He is, or to have a more intimate and powerful relationship with Him, what better way is there than to pray and fast? As expressed by the impassioned plea of King David in Psalms 42, “fasting brings one into deeper intimacy and a strong relationship with the Lord.”⁵⁸

Fasting differs from praying, although they should go hand in hand. While teaching people the purpose behind fasting may not seem complicated. So many get the wrong understanding as to why a fast is needed. Franklin also stated, “It is not a diet to be absent from food for a certain period or restricted to just ministers or a special occasion. It is abstaining from food or certain foods for a spiritual cause. Fasting is developing a more intimate and powerful relationship with God.”⁵⁹

Repentance

People should confess their sins to God daily to make a complete life change through repentance. Eugene H. Peterson stated, “Repentance is a realization that what God wants from

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Adam McClendon and Matt Kimbrough, *Square One: Back to The Basics* (Little Elm, TX: Electio Publishing, 2018), 87.

⁵⁸ Franklin, *Fasting*, 9-10.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

you and what you want from God are not going to be achieved by doing the same old ideas.”⁶⁰ In Philippians 4:8, the word think is about what comes from the heart. The purpose of praying and fasting is to seek God. And as the participants engage their minds in thought, they will be offering a prayer to God, thinking of the same old ideas. Peterson says, “Repentance is a decision to follow Jesus Christ and become his pilgrim in the path of peace.”⁶¹ That means spending time with Him in prayer.

Once they develop a more intimate and powerful relationship with God, it will make it easier for them to confess their sins. Furthermore, building a more personal relationship with God should be done with boldness and humility. That is why it is important to pray daily. Ronnie Floyd stated, “People have a dire need to confess their weaknesses to God daily. That is why they like to begin with a time of confession in their prayer time.”⁶² People are so busy throughout the day that they may not recognize some of their behavior as sinful. The Greek word for confessing is *homologeō*, which means "the same as God says." When people confess their sins and repent, they identify with God that they understand the offensiveness of their sin by seeing it through His eyes.

Once they understand their purpose for prayer and fasting by living in submission to the will of God, the power of praying and fasting through the Spirit will guide them to wanting to say no to sin. McClendon and Kimbrough mentioned, “Then they will have the confidence and power of the Holy Spirit that will continue to grow in them the confidence of knowing that they can walk in godliness, which will transform them through the effectiveness of praying.”⁶³

⁶⁰ Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 23-24.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Floyd, *How to Pray*, 8.

⁶³ McClendon and Kimbrough, *Square One*, 87.

Sometimes, people do not want to accept responsibility for their life's outcomes. However, some actions are due to bad choices. After being consistent with a prayer and fasting life, they will begin to understand they are to blame for the choices they make in their life. That is when they will know that the Spirit is at work within them. McClendon and Kimbrough stated, "By God's grace, through His Spirit, I can acknowledge, repent, and overcome my sin."⁶⁴

Boldness and Faith

When people build a more intimate and personal relationship with God, they can confess their sins and repent with boldness. Stelyios S. Muksuri adds, "The faithful should become accustomed to fasting as an expression of repentance, as the fulfillment of a spiritual pledge, to achieve a particular spiritual end in times of temptation."⁶⁵ It takes faith to have the boldness they desire. Faith knows that the person they pray to is their friend when they confess and repent through prayer and fasting. Furthermore, Christ is a true friend.

People who desire to draw nearer to Him will come to understand and know without a doubt that He is a friend they can trust. Furthermore, that is when their boldness to speak to Him will become more fluent. Charles Spurgeon stated, "They want to draw very near to You now through Jesus Christ the Mediator, and they want to be bold to speak to You as a man speaks with his friend."⁶⁶ After realizing this truth, they will find it easier to come back to God for prayer. Earley and Gutierrez stated, "It took faith to keep coming back to God and asking for

⁶⁴ Ibid., 89.

⁶⁵ Stelyios S. Muksuri, "The Importance of Fasting and its Observance Today," *Orthodox Theological Review* 62, 3 (2017): 76.

⁶⁶ Spurgeon, *Spurgeon on Prayer & Spiritual Warfare*, 247.

more.”⁶⁷ Persistence in prayer makes a difference because God knows the motives and intentions of those seeking to understand Him.

People must have faith, trust, and belief in knowing that their purpose for prayer brings them to repentance as they come boldly before God. Moreover, in knowing He is a friend who will give them the power they need through the Holy Spirit, they can humble themselves before Him to grow and live a lifestyle that brings them joy. McClendon and Kimbrough mention, “As they grow in confidence in the power of God, in and through their lives, they will begin to see more clearly and experience more definitely that the way of God brings greater satisfaction, greater pleasure, and greater fulfillment.”⁶⁸

By having confidence, they learn to be obedient in a world with distractions. These distractions keep them from doing the right action: staying submissive. Franklin states, “Do not let the enemy drag them down with discouragement. Remember, God gives them the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Sometimes they will not desire to pray when fasting; however, they continue to pray. It will be amazing how God will show up, and it will be like all of heaven has come down, and glory has filled their soul.”⁶⁹ Yielding to God in prayer and fasting will lead people to humility.

Some test their faith, believing what they prayed for might have happened without prayer. C. S. Lewis replies, “There is no question whether an event has happened because of your prayer. When the event you prayed for occurs, your prayers have always contributed to it. When the opposite event occurs, your prayer has never been ignored; it has been considered and

⁶⁷ Dave Earley and Ben Gutierrez, *Ministry Is: How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 264.

⁶⁸ McClendon and Kimbrough, *Square One*, 87.

⁶⁹ Franklin, *Fasting*, 154.

refused for your ultimate good and the good of the whole universe. But this is, and must remain, a matter of faith.”⁷⁰

The miracles that Jesus performed were out of the faith of those who trusted and believed in Him. The church could argue about the lame man that Peter healed in the book of Acts. Dutch Sheets states, “[The cripple was] a man who had been living with a medical condition for forty years. Because of Peter’s faith and the man’s belief in the name of Jesus, the man regained his strength.”⁷¹ Just like Daniel’s humility when he fasted and prayed no matter what, he feared the outcome. Daniel was bold in his faith. Cindy Anschutz stated, “Daniel and his friends had already experienced the power of the Lord before the king. And knowing when God’s people trust Him, that fasting will bring them to a place where they will never forget the faithfulness of God.”⁷²

Humility in Praying and Fasting

People find it difficult to conform to being submissive in a relationship or even in authority. Their pride may get in the way of who they are or are trying to be. Dave Early stated, “Paul summarized his ministry in Ephesus by reminding the elders that he served the Lord with all humility and with tears, and for three years, he did not stop warning each one of [them] with tears.”⁷³ Humbling before God means they must obey His will, not their will. That is why when they pray, it is an act of humility to God and shows Him that they are extinct without His help and guidance. Anschutz stated, “Prayer creates a posture of humility and reverence toward the

⁷⁰ C. S. Lewis, *How to Pray: Reflections and Essays* (New York, NY: Harper One Publishers, 2018), 17.

⁷¹ Dutch Sheets, *The Essential Guide to Prayer: How to Pray with Power and Effectiveness* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2001), 41.

⁷² Cindy Anschutz, *The Daniel Fast Cookbook: Meal Plans & Recipes to Bring You Closer to God* (Emeryville, CA: Rockridge Press, 2020), 41.

⁷³ Earley and Gutierrez, *Ministry Is: ...*, 267.

one true God.”⁷⁴ In the book of Daniel, Daniel never stopped praying, no matter his position as a high official. Through his humbleness, God closed the mouths of the lions, and no harm came to Daniel because of the grace and mercy of God. When people humble themselves in obedience to serve only Him, He will protect and keep them safe from harm. Charles M. Murphy indicates, “By directly countering our cravings, fasting helps to restore the original freedom of the children of God and helps them adopt the proper posture before God of humility and vulnerability.”⁷⁵

Humility also shows kindness towards another person. When the church is fasting or praying, it should always consider others. Floyd states, “When God places an urgent need in someone else’s life upon your heart, commit yourself to pray for that person daily.”⁷⁶ Sometimes, there will be a need to take time out during prayer for urgent prayer requests. Ian M. Church expresses, “We define humility using the intrapersonal dimension. Humility involves an accurate view of self, including an awareness of one’s strengths and limitations, not thinking of oneself too highly or lowly.”⁷⁷ It is essential as a church to pray for others who need prayer and not just think of oneself. It is also important not to criticize others who do not know how to fast or pray and those who do not want to participate. Encouraging others with kindness as to why they need to participate may win them over. Muksuri stated, “It is good to fast, but may the one who fasts not blame the one who does not fast. In such matters, you must neither legislate, force, nor

⁷⁴ Anschutz, *The Daniel Fast Cookbook*, 57.

⁷⁵ Charles M. Murphy, *The Spirituality of Fasting: Rediscovering a Christian Practice* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2010), 30.

⁷⁶ Floyd, *How to Pray*, 278.

⁷⁷ Ian M. Church, “Intellectual Humility and Religious Belief,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology; La Mirada* 46, 4 (Winter 2018): 220.

compel the flock entrusted to you; instead, you must use persuasion, gentleness, and a word seasoned with salt.”⁷⁸

People must learn to humble themselves before God, not only in prayer but in fasting. Ryan stated, “To fast is an act of humility, remembering who you are in relation to God.”⁷⁹ While Jesus was on earth, He consistently glorified His Father by obedience and doing God’s will, no matter the cost. Russell stated, “When they ask Jesus to teach them to pray, they ask Him to make them humble as He is humble, and that strikes at the heart of their independence and self-determination.”⁸⁰

Unity

When people humble themselves before God and others, it will be easier to pray for one another and pray together. Earley and Gutierrez mentioned, “A large part of effective ministry is intercessory prayer.”⁸¹ Sometimes, they must stand in the gap for others regardless of who they are or if they do not desire to pray. In the book of Acts, they prayed together in unity while waiting for the Spirit of God to come. Murray expressed, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. With the prayer, the shaking of the house, the filling with the Spirit, the speaking of God’s Word with boldness and power, the great grace upon all, and the manifestation of unity and love.”⁸² That is why people pray and fast; to build up boldness and faith so they can come before God on behalf of others who need God’s grace and

⁷⁸ Muksuri, *The Importance of Fasting and its Observance Today*, 75-76.

⁷⁹ Ryan, *The Sacred Art of Fasting*, 17.

⁸⁰ Russell, *Teach Us to Pray: ...*, 30.

⁸¹ Earley and Gutierrez, *Ministry Is*, 259.

⁸² Murray, *The Ministry of Intercession*, 10-11.

mercy. Gutierrez said, “Loving people for who they are, and loving them on the days that difficult to do so.”⁸³

Jesus was an intercessor while on earth. He stood in the gap for the people of God. He also went to the Father to intercede on their behalf. Just as Moses, Samuel, Paul, and Nehemiah have done for the people of God. These men conformed their minds and soul to line up with Christ through their humility. Matthew W. Knotts stated, “According to Timothy Maschke, the nexus of Augustine’s theology of prayer lies in a gracious conformation, the humble, restructuring or reforming of the Christian’s life to the divine will as empowered by the assurance of God’s grace.”⁸⁴ Each one of these men of God had one thought in common. They spent time in prayer for others. They were always thinking about the people of God and how much they needed God. Intercessory prayer is the turning point where God hears the respect for authority on behalf of others. Early and Gutierrez stated, “True prayer never stops in the petition for oneself. It reaches out to others. Intercession is the climax of prayer.”⁸⁵

Another way people come together in unity is by fasting. Ryan mentioned, “Through the centuries, fasting has been used to draw communities of people together, providing them with a common experience and the opportunity to share them with a common experience and the opportunity to share that experience: Lent, the Day of Atonement, Ramadan, the fast Sunday.”⁸⁶ Christians can also build strength by fasting in unity with a friend, spouse, a small group, or a

⁸³ Gutierrez, *Living Out the Mind of Christ*, 25.

⁸⁴ Matthew W. Knotts. “Why Pray? Augustine of Hippo’s Multifaceted Doctrine of Prayer,” *Journal of Early Christian History* 5, no. 2 (2015), 55.

⁸⁵ Earley and Gutierrez, *Ministry Is*, 263.

⁸⁶ Ryan, *The Sacred Art of Fasting; Preparing to Practice*, 134.

congregation as long as it is to draw close to God. Lynne M. Baab states, “In other stories, they see strong models for community fasting to pray together with power.”⁸⁷

Samuel T. Scott wrote lyrics that said prayer is the key to heaven, and faith unlocks the doors. There is a secret key that unlocks heaven’s door. However, it forcefully closes the gates of hell.⁸⁸ Moreover, the key is fasting. Jentezen Franklin states, “For Scott, fasting has been the secret to obtaining open doors, miraculous provision, favor, and the tender touch of God upon his life.”⁸⁹

Strength and Healing

Fasting is not only a secret key that unlocks the doors of heaven. It is also essential to healing the body before people pray. As stated earlier, fasting is to draw close to God in prayer. Moreover, their willingness to become disciplined will show the love of God when they are fasting. To gain the strength of God is through fasting and praying. Baab stated, “Fasting from all food enables men and some women to let go of their strength and experience God’s strength in their weakness.”⁹⁰ Fasting not only cleanses their heart, mind, and soul from sin but cleanses their body of impurities. Towns stated, “Fasting helps unclog the system and eliminates poisons. It is encouraging to know that the same God who designed the discipline of fasting designed the body to benefit from periods of abstinence from food.”⁹¹ Franklin stated, “This type of spiritual cleansing will release the power of God. Fasting is truly a secret source of power.”⁹²

⁸⁷ Lynne M. Baab, *Fasting: Spiritual Freedom Beyond Our Appetites* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 23.

⁸⁸ Franklin, *Fasting*, 3.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Baab, *Fasting: Spiritual Freedom Beyond Our Appetites*, 23.

⁹¹ Elmer L. Towns, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough: A Practical Guide to Nine Biblical Fasts* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2017), 24.

⁹² Franklin, *Fasting*, 17.

When people pray and fast, they might not always get the results they are looking for, or their situations may not change. However, drawing nearer to God can change their attitude and handle obstacles that come their way. McClendon and Kimbrough stated, “People must strengthen their resolve to live for God and be content with the results.”⁹³ Christians must remember that they are still in a world full of evil. Sometimes, people have negative emotions. Therefore, praying in unity can also build strength and help increase positive actions. Tyler S. Greenways mentioned, “Intercessory prayer may generally evoke feelings of reverence, respect, awe, or humility because one is approaching and communicating with a powerful supernatural being.”⁹⁴ When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, He also explained that their prayer should always be Thy will be done on earth. Then people will be content knowing that the outcome of their praying and fasting is the will of God. Moreover, they fight when they understand that it is a spiritual war and God knows best. Then they will have an attitude of knowing the outcome of all their praying and fasting is the decision of God.

Attitude

In the book of Luke 22, Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane. While still being man and God simultaneously, He cried out to the Lord with the anxiety of His Father removing the cup from Him. However, at the end of His prayer, Jesus prays that it is not His will but God’s will to be done. He prayed until His Spirit was in alignment with His Father. Sometimes when in prayer, the attitude may be to desires that are not God’s at this time. Circumstances may not change like that of Christ. However, prayer can change attitudes toward the way a problem is solved. Tim Keller stated, “Prayer is artillery that changes the world’s circumstances. It is as

⁹³ McClendon and Kimbrough, *Square One*, 89.

⁹⁴ Tyler S. Greenway, “A Review of Theories Accounting for the Relationship Between Intercessory Prayer and Prosocial Behavior: Current Research and Future Directions.” *Educational Publishing Foundation Psychology of religion and spirituality* 12 (1), (2020): 72.

much or even more about changing their understanding and attitude toward those circumstances.”⁹⁵

People must change their thoughts and not expect more from God than He gives them. To change this mindset, one must have the desire to want to know and understand the Word of God. Vincent Brummer stated, “We do not pray to sway God. We pray to change and dispose of ourselves to receive properly what God has willed to give us. Through this change in attitude, the person who prays becomes better able to cope with how things go in the world.”⁹⁶

Their boldness must bring the faith they need to desire to learn the facts of the Scriptures. Through the Scriptures, people develop character and expectations of believing that through praying and fasting, their attitude will change. Towns stated, “Changed thinking leads to changed beliefs; changed beliefs lead to changed expectations; changed expectations lead to changed attitudes. *Life* is a process through which people develop character. They begin to focus on it, act on it, and become it.”⁹⁷ Leaders and pastors must be that example for their congregation if they want them to follow Christ. Early and Gutierrez said, “Great leaders are willing to sacrifice for their followers.”⁹⁸

Christians must also be willing to discipline themselves in prayer so they open their eyes spiritually. Only then will they begin to comprehend their physical circumstances. Elizabeth Alves mentioned, “Keeness in the Spirit realm comes as you discipline yourself in prayer,

⁹⁵ Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York, NY: Penguin Books Publishing, 2016), 31.

⁹⁶ Vincent Brummer, *What Are We Doing When We Pray?: On Prayer and the Nature of Faith* (London: Routledge, 2008), 12.

⁹⁷ Towns, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*, 109-113.

⁹⁸ Early and Gutierrez, *Ministry Is*, 266.

praise, fasting, and renewing your mind through God’s Word.”⁹⁹ As their faith grows in their prayer and fasting life, they will recognize God for who He is and begin to praise Him.

Tyler Greenway conducted research involving intercessory prayer (praying for the needs of others), showing how it compares to prosocial behavior by manipulating the effect. Greenway wanted to see the change in a person who cared for others more than they cared about their needs, moreover, to see if the participants were on behalf of someone else. They showed less anger and aggression than those angered by someone they did not know. Another research study found that intercessory prayer reduced negativity and increased positive stimuli. This study reported that participants prayed on behalf of someone else, with no specific directions.¹⁰⁰

Praise

Once people become prayer warriors, redefine their purpose, confess their sins through repentance, having the boldness and faith to pray for others through the strength that the Holy Spirit has given them through fasting, they will develop an attitude of praise. What causes their faith to grow is praise. Praise is the root of knowing that nothing is too hard for God (Jer 32:27). Greenway also stated, “The source of praise is the Holy Spirit activating their spirit to express approval and adoration for God’s greatness; praising Him for His character. People should develop the habit of praise during their prayer time.”¹⁰¹ Just as they learned the habit of praying and fasting, praising God will also advance their spiritual growth.

The book of Psalms is how one can identify themselves with God. According to Howard Neil Wallace, there are two dual roles of Psalms. One has to do with using Psalms in prayer and song to God; the other concerns the use of Psalms for the instruction and guidance of the faithful.

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Alves, *Becoming a Prayer Warrior* (Minneapolis, MN: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 30.

¹⁰⁰ Greenway, “A review of theories...,” 72.

¹⁰¹ Greenway, “A review of...,” 52.

In other words, the Psalms are a key to developing statements of faith. Later he speaks of an infallible rule prescribed in the Psalms for directing the faithful in giving praise to God.¹⁰² As they begin to give God glory and thanksgiving for all He has done and who He is, it will open their ears to peace and joy within their spirit. Praise also opens the door to God directing their paths each day.

The book of Proverbs says, “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Prov 3:5,6). Praising God washes away negativity and cleanses the soul. That is the purpose of praying and fasting as in the beginning; to bring people closer to God and keep them encouraged. Keller stated, “Praise and adoration are the necessary preconditions for the proper formulation and motivation of all the other kinds of prayer.”¹⁰³

Praise should be to God daily. If a man can give gifts, awards, and recognition to other men, praising God should be easy when they fast and pray. There must be steadiness when it comes to man and God. Gutierrez stated, “The Biblical balance between praising man and God teaches humanity that their praise to God should outweigh their praise to man.”¹⁰⁴ Out of obedience to God, His praise should supersede man.

Obedience

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul’s letter uses a metaphor about a race in that only one athlete can win. To win the race requires discipline and obedience to the body. That is the same with fasting and prayer. The more people learn how to discipline their bodies it becomes obedient. Baab says,

¹⁰² Howard Neil Wallace, *Words to God, Word from God: The Psalms in the Prayer and Preaching of the Church* (London: Routledge, 2017), 3, 11.

¹⁰³ Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, 190.

¹⁰⁴ Gutierrez, *Living Out the Mind of Christ*, 79.

“Christians know that fasting teaches the body obedience, which helps them draw near to God more fully.”¹⁰⁵

Praying and fasting are obligations for spiritual reasons and to keep their bodies purified and healthy. Christians cannot do the will of God effectively if they do not give their bodies love. Franklin stated, "When giving, praying, and fasting are practiced together in the life of a believer, it creates a type of threefold cord that is not easily broken."¹⁰⁶ Jesus says praying and fasting should be a part of believers' lives. When the church is obedient and disciplines itself to prayer and fasting, nothing will be impossible when they get nearer to God.¹⁰⁷

Franklin also mentioned, “God assures us that if believers are obedient to Him in worship, what they thought impossible to do on their own will be through praying. Murray stated, “With their life abiding in Him, and His words abiding, kept, and obeyed in their heart and life, transposed into their very being, there will be the grace to pray aright, and the faith to receive the whatsoever-they-will.”¹⁰⁸

Prayer is not just for their inner being but to be obedient to the will of God. Keller mentioned, “The ultimate aim of praying is obedience to God’s will, not the contemplation of His being.”¹⁰⁹ Just as Daniel was obedient to fasting and praying because of who God was. Daniel knew that his strength came from being obedient to God by fasting and praying. Anschutz stated, “Fasting allowed Daniel to experience the Lord like he never had before. Believers want

¹⁰⁵ Baab, *Fasting*, 50.

¹⁰⁶ Franklin, *Fasting*, 11.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Murray, *The Ministry of Intercession: A Plea for More Prayer*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ Keller, *Prayer*, 2.

their spiritual eyes opened to what they have been given for their greatest need, in addition to taking a new step in obedience to Christ.”¹¹⁰

Praying and fasting also bring the body under subjection, which is obedience to the Holy Spirit. When subjecting to the Holy Spirit, Christians are in obedience to the will of God. He gives us the power to be obedient to Him through prayer. Wesley L. Duewel stated, “God has appointed us to a sacred partnership for gospel advancement. Every form of obedience to God is urgent. Through prayer, we can cooperate with Him anywhere, anytime, and for any need because we were created to pray. We were saved by God’s grace to enter into a ministry of prayer.”¹¹¹ Therefore, when one prays and fasts, one gives God the authority to have complete control of one's life.

The Effectiveness of Praying and Fasting

For Christians to learn how to be effective in praying and fasting, they must start and be consistent. Spurgeon stated, “In ordinary times, we should not come with an unprepared spirit, even as a child does not come to his father in the morning until he has washed his face. We should plow carefully and pray carefully. The better the work, the more attention it deserves.”¹¹² If they do not have a prayer plan, they have already failed. Believers cannot be effective in their prayer life if they do not stay focused and consistent. Their prayer and fasting life are part of their spiritual journey to obtaining closeness with God. Floyd suggested, “A prayer plan is critical to praying effectively and consistently. And an effective prayer plan helps them to pray more specifically.”¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Anschutz, *The Daniel Fast Cookbook: Meal Plans & Recipes to Bring You Closer to God*, 9.

¹¹¹ Wesley L. Duewel, *Touch the World Through Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2018), 22.

¹¹² Spurgeon, *Spurgeon on Prayer & Spiritual Warfare*, 43-44.

¹¹³ Floyd, *How to Pray*, 271, 273.

When fasting, Christians must understand what it means to commit themselves. Towns suggested, “For a meaningful fast, people must not only abstain from food, but they must also agonize in prayer. Fasting is more than diet adjustment; it involves spiritual agony and intercession.”¹¹⁴ Charles Spurgeon identifies prayer as an institution of God. Moreover, this reason is why believers should pray. Spurgeon mentioned, “Believers find a powerful reason for expecting prayer to be effective in the fact that it is an institution of God.”¹¹⁵ While praying and fasting are institutions of God, they will bring the effectiveness of building a closer relationship with Him.

Conrad Vine authored an article in 2013 on praying and fasting, which took place in West Africa. He was a part of a fasting and prayer mission called Adventist Frontier Missions (AFM). That year the project leader received a threat from an unknown group demanding that they close the school of three hundred students because of their Bible teachings. Upon visiting the local officials, they could only have classes on the Sabbath with no morning prayers. The AFM decided to close the school down for ten days. Each day the school was closed, the colleagues prayed and fasted to humble themselves before God, claiming the promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14. Vine quoted, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”¹¹⁶

Not only were the colleagues praying, but families of AFM with supporters from around the world had also joined. The local officials instructed the students to leave the school on the

¹¹⁴ Towns, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*, 54.

¹¹⁵ Spurgeon, *Spurgeon on Prayer & Spiritual Warfare*, 12.

¹¹⁶ Conrad Vine, “Prayer and Fasting: A Response to Crisis in Mission,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*, 11, no.1, Art. 2 (2015), 1.

first day of praying and fasting. The students refused, became angry, and threatened to riot. On the third day of praying and fasting, the parents of the students went to visit the officials, and by the fifth day, an official apologized but still demanded they cease the fast. On the seventh day, two national ministries in the capital openly stated that AFM was doing nothing wrong and that they could reopen the school. On the tenth day, the school reopened.¹¹⁷

Many obstacles will arise when living for God. Vine stated, “Prayer and fasting in the Old Testament and New Testament are identified as the primary response of God’s people when engaged in spiritual conflict. Spiritual conflict occurs whenever God’s people are engaged in mission—it is inevitable.”¹¹⁸ When the students and families of AFM prayed and fasted, the effectiveness of praying and fasting was recognized.

Conclusion

In conclusion, GCGC may not be consistent in their prayer and fasting life. However, with adequate research and instruction on teaching the importance of prayer and fasting, they will become more motivated to do what is pleasing to God and not feel they are doing so out of obligation but out of obedience. Once they identify that praying and fasting are to glorify God and experience a more personal relationship with Him, they can begin to move forward and be effective in their spiritual life. That is why this literature is so essential in supporting prayer and fasting for the necessity of GCGC to receive that it may enhance their prayer and fasting life and bring them closer to God.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 7.

Theological Foundations

Understanding the importance of praying and fasting on a theological platform is crucial. The theological reflection will help GCGC understand the purpose of praying and fasting through the Scripture. How praying and fasting should take precedence in the life of those who are seeking a closer relationship with God. There may be reasons people do not pray or fast often. One hypothesis is that they do not know how to pray or fast effectively. Russell stated, “In Luke 11:2-4, Jesus highlighted two truths about prayer. The first is what we call the Lord’s Prayer, and the second is in the parable that immediately follows the Lord’s Prayer.”¹¹⁹ Jesus said, “when you pray,” moments before He began praying. Jesus is teaching them that learning how to pray is simply just praying.¹²⁰ For GCGC to pray effectively, they must be consistent in their prayer life.

Why is praying so important? The purpose of prayer is to have a relationship with God when deciding to do His will. Alves shared a quote from the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 that states, “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgiving be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life and all godliness and dignity.”¹²¹ God desires His people to pray for others, known as intercessory prayer. Prayer was precedence in the life of Jesus. Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16, and 6:12 are Scriptures relating to the prayer life of Jesus. These verses also tell how He prayed in the morning or all night. However, His foundation was on praying alone, in private, where only He and God built a spiritual relationship.

¹¹⁹ Russell, *Teach Us to Pray*, 51.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Alves, *Becoming a Prayer Warrior*, 27.

Why should the topic of prayer be researched? When looking at the Scripture in Luke 11, Jesus is making a mandatory statement saying that prayer is not an option but justified by Jesus to glorify God. Moreover, in the LP, Jesus starts by saying, “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name.”¹²² To pray effectively, Christians first must give honor to God. When to pray is up to each individual. In Exodus 16:21, God poured down manna from heaven every morning. However, in Isaiah 50:4, the Lord said, “He awakens me morning by morning. He awakens my ear to hear as the learned.”¹²³ God chooses daily to ensure that those who love Him have the necessities of life as they did in the wilderness, as well as waking up with the breath of life. Early morning prayer is a legitimate time to start by saying "thank you" to the Lord to connect with God in the quiet of the day.

James 5:16 says, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may have healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” For GCGC to be effective in praying, they must confess their sins one to another and pray for healing and restoration because they are entering God’s presence. Therefore, they must be honest by asking God for forgiveness with humility, showing God that their motives are pure and their heart belongs to Him. Douglas J. Moo stated, “God does not mete out his love for us in small measures; he has poured it into our hearts. This verb describes the *pouring out* of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Paul, therefore, cleverly alludes to the Spirit here. It is the Spirit, dwelling in the heart of the believers, who communicates God’s love to us.”¹²⁴ The Apostle Paul suggests theologically, in Romans 5, that the Holy Spirit will pour out to those who believe in God.

¹²² Alves, *Becoming a Prayer Warrior*, 51.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹²⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *Romans: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 171-172.

The topic of praying and fasting is worthy of researching from a biblical perspective to show the power of God through those who are faithful. The Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. Furthermore, because the Bible is incapable of error, it shows how the people of God were strong in their faith when praying and fasting. Whenever they prayed and fasted effectively, they sought results. Effective praying and fasting require dedication and work. It is significant to put time into praying and fasting to get results. The book of James says, “For as the body is without the spirit is dead: so faith without works is dead also” (Jas 2:26). These are the reasons to pray and fast.

Praying and Fasting for Personal Requests

To request something from God, praying and fasting are necessary. In the first book of Samuel, Hannah was one of the wives of Elkanah and the mother of Samuel, her firstborn child. Due to her infertility, Elkanah took a second wife named Peninnah. Peninnah provoked Hannah and intentionally irritated her, which caused her great sorrow and grief. It caused her to cry, pray and go without food. Hannah prayed to the Lord to remember her as His humble servant and understood that children are a gift from God. A few days after Hannah prayed, she had sexual intimacy with her husband, Elkanah. Ronald F. Youngblood stated, “The Lord, as she had earnestly prayed, *remembered her* just as he had remembered her ancestor Rachel by enabling her to bear a son. Hannah called him Samuel and then punned on the name by saying that she has asked the Lord for him.”¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Ronald F. Youngblood, “1 Samuel” in *1 Samuel – 2 Kings*, Vol. 3, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, ed. Tremper Longman, III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 47-49.

Praying for the Right Decision

In the book of Samuel, Saul commanded his officer, David, to take the army back to Ziklag. When David reached Ziklag, “The Amalekites had destroyed it and captured their wives and everyone in it, including young and old” (1 Sam 30:1). David and his men cried until they had no strength left. Because his men lost their families, they wanted to stone him. Then David acted quickly to save his family along with his men. So he turned to God for an answer. Robert D. Bergen mentioned, “David found strength in the LORD his God. Then David said to Abiathar, the priest, the son of Ahimelech, Bring me the ephod. Abiathar brought it to him, and David inquired of the LORD. Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them? Pursue them, He answered. You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue.”¹²⁶ After hearing from God, David and his men defeated the Amalekites. He brought back everything taken, including their wives, sons, and daughters.

David won the fight against the Amalekites, while Saul lost the battle against the Philistines. After the death of Saul, David became king. During his time as king, David had a son named Solomon, who later became king. King Solomon loved the Lord as much as his father, King David, because of his obedience to the same statutes. The story of King Solomon describes how he believed in the power of prayer through his father. This behavior has been tested and proven.

Praying for Wisdom

King Solomon made God a priority in his life by praising Him, praying, and giving thousands of burnt offerings. So God came to him in a dream and made him an offer he could not refuse. God told Solomon that he could have whatever his heart desired. This dream became a

¹²⁶ Robert D. Bergen, “2 Samuel” in *1,2 Samuel*. Vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 266.

reality. Solomon and God were having a personal conversation about his needs. Solomon could have asked for silver and gold. However, he asks God for wisdom, and a discerning heart, to understand the people. Gary Inrig mentioned, “When our prayers align with the purpose and program of God, it brings delight to him. God responded to Solomon by affirming his request. He had asked for what truly mattered and prayed in God’s will. God promised Solomon that he would receive what he had asked for: discernment in administering justice and a wise and discerning heart.”¹²⁷

Praying for Understanding and Revelation

With discernment also comes understanding and insight or revelation. God has given gifts of prophecy to those who diligently seek after Him. Daniel is an example of trusting in God for an answer. Daniel was a teenager and prophet taken away from his home to be a servant to King Nebuchadnezzar. One night the king had a dream and needed an answer to the meaning. He summoned his wise men to interpret the dream. They could not understand the meaning. So, the king ordered the wise men to death, including Daniel and his friends, since they were training to be wise men without knowledge.

Daniel inquired the guard, why such a harsh punishment? After the guard explained, Daniel asked the king for more time. Miller stated, “The request was granted because the prophet assured the king that his God, Yahweh, could reveal the dream and its interpretation to him within a reasonable interval.”¹²⁸ This act of faith is sincere in Daniel’s behavior; to trust that God, Yahweh, would answer his prayer of revelation.

¹²⁷ Gary Inrig, “1 Kings” in *1 and 2 Kings*, Holman Old Testament Commentary, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2003), 42.

¹²⁸ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, Vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 85.

Daniel explained to his friends how their life was in danger because of a dream. Moreover, they all pleaded to God to have mercy on their lives. Miller also mentioned, “During the revelation of the dream came to Daniel in a vision, and he praised the Lord for graciously granting their request.”¹²⁹ Moreover, Miller projects that Daniel and his friends prayed until God revealed the information about the king’s dream. These are young teenagers about to die. Who could go to sleep at such a difficult time?¹³⁰

Then Daniel went to the guard to receive permission to speak to the king regarding his dream. The king granted permission to Daniel. Miller stated, “Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel, paid him honor, and ordered an offering and incense be presented to him. The king said to Daniel, Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.”¹³¹

Praying for Healing

Many want healing. However, a sovereign God will allow one to breathe the breath of life. It is also the act of faith that heals. In the Book of Mark, the woman with the issue of blood found healing by touching the hem of Jesus' robe. Jesus told her that her faith healed the blood disorder she had. Praying for healing is void if there is no faith.

On April 6, 2020, the President of Ethiopia hosted a national prayer for COVID-19 in the palace. Christians and Muslims interpreted the pandemic as the wrath of God and His punishment for sin. Many Ethiopians believed this month-long prayer to be a divine intervention to prevent the further spread of the virus. Ostebo and Tronvoll stated, “Prayer, fasting, and

¹²⁹ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, Vol. 18, 85.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

coming together in houses of worship were thus seen as fundamental and crucial to plead God to act with mercy.”¹³²

According to Acts 27, Apostle Paul was on a ship to Rome, accused of being a rebel. However, the ship was in a powerful storm that landed them on the island of Malta. Apostle Paul had the gift of healing that he received, which restored his sight (1 Cor 12). While on the island gathering wood for a fire, he was bitten on the hand by a poisonous snake mistaking it for bark. During those times, there was no medicine for snake bites. His hand did not swell, nor did he get a fever or die (Acts 28). The men were amazed and changed their attitude about Paul being a prisoner and called him a god.

There on the island of Malta was a man named Publius, the chief of Malta. His father had been suffering from feverish dysentery. This fever is a bacteria found in goat’s milk and could last for months or years. The Scripture mentions that Paul prayed over him and laid hands on him. Acts 28:8 says, “And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.” The father of Publius healed right away. Darrell L. Bock stated, “This is the only place where prayer and the laying of hands are combined for healing in Acts.”¹³³

Before Paul laid his hands on the man, he prayed Proverbs 15:29, “The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.” As one islander observed with Paul, he was connected to God instead of a god. After the healing of Publius' father, they suggest he could be a god. This suggestion is why Paul prayed to God before he performed the miracle. He

¹³² Terje Ostebo, Kjetil Tronvoll, & Marit Tolo Ostebo, “Religion and the ‘Secular shadow’: Responses to Covid-19 in Ethiopia,” *Religion* 52:2 (June 2021), 339.

¹³³ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament, ed. Moises Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 744.

wanted those who witnessed the healing to understand that the power came from God. Furthermore, it is faith in praying that God will hear those who pray.

Praying for a Breakthrough

When life gets complicated, it can be hard to pray. Paul and Silas were persecuted and imprisoned for preaching God’s Word; instead of complaining or feeling discouraged, they prayed and praised God. They were not only praying but singing to the Lord. Acts 16:25-26 states, “And at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bands were loosed.”

A divine deliverance occurs in the context of their singing and praising God at midnight. Every prisoner could hear them praying and singing to God before the earthquake. Bock stated, “An earthquake shakes the prison, so the doors open, and the fetters come free from the walls. God is the primary agent in these events, and special providence is at work as these chains come loose.”¹³⁴

Here witnesses were there to see the power of God through prayer and praise. In Acts 16, the guard awoke from sleep, saw the prison doors open, and thought everyone had escaped. However, Paul assured him they were all still there. Paul, Silas, and the rest of the prisoners could have escaped while the guard was sleeping. However, here again, it is the power of prayer. John Eckhardt mentioned, “Fasting, coupled with prayer, is one of the most powerful weapons you can use to release breakthrough.”¹³⁵ Prayer also is humility to do what is right and pleasing to God.

¹³⁴ Bock, *Acts*, 540.

¹³⁵ John Eckhardt, *Break Every Chain: 25 Strongholds and How to Defeat Them* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House Book Group, 2021), Ch. 3.

Fasting for the Holy Spirit

Even when it came to His physical appetite, Jesus often fasted for lengthy periods without food to release His spiritual power. Here, Jesus shows how praying and fasting go hand in hand when it comes to the power of God. Fasting is another way of getting closer to God but also receiving the Spirit of God. Mahesh Chavda stated, “God tends to show up in His glory and power whenever and wherever His people set themselves to pray and fast before Him.”¹³⁶

Fasting for Protection

Esther, the Jewish virgin who replaced Vashti, the queen of Persia, she and her people did not eat or drink for three days to save themselves from being killed. Esther 4:16 says, “Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.” Moreover, Esther was seen by her king because the people prayed and fasted for three days. He granted her whatever she wanted and saved the lives of her people.

Praying and Fasting with Purpose

Luke 2:37, a prophet named Anna, an 84-year-old widow, lived in the temple. After her husband died, she devoted her life to praying and fasting. Anna prayed and fasted night and day before God. In doing so, she could look into God’s face incarnate. Chavda also mentioned, “Fasting is found throughout the Bible. It always seems to show up when ordinary people need

¹³⁶ Mahesh Chavda, *The Hidden Power of Prayer & Fasting: Releasing the Awesome Power of the Praying Church* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1998), 141.

extraordinary power, provision, and perseverance to overcome impossible odds, enemies, or obstructions.”¹³⁷ The purpose of Anna continuously praying was to show who Jesus was.

Fasting for Instructions

Fasting is to sustain from food but also about humility and faith. GCGC must be confident that when they pray and fast, God will answer and give them the strength to persevere. Abraham’s faith had given him the confidence to leave home after hearing the voice of God. He and his wife were also given a child beyond their childbearing years because of their faith in God. Fasting also strengthens the body physically. It purifies the body of toxins and poisons by slowing the aging process. Franklin stated, “Moses often fasts, which included forty-day fasts, and the Bible says in Deuteronomy 34:7, Moses was 120 years old when he died.”¹³⁸ There is proof that fasting and praying can be healthy when doing God’s will.

Conclusion

If the body is not strong enough or the mind cannot withhold all the knowledge God gives, how will it be possible to carry out the plans and purpose of God? Fasting pleases God, and He will reward those who fast and pray with the right intentions. In Isaiah 58:3-4, the children of Israel were fasting with anger in their hearts and treating it as a ritual. They did not hear from God due to their actions during their fast. God was not suggesting that they stop fasting but continue with humility. Towns said, “Turn to Me with all your heart, fasting. Do not tear your clothing; instead, tear your hearts (Joel 2:12-13).”¹³⁹

The OT describes fasting as self-denial due to the suffering of God’s people. They did not fully understand how to fast or the purpose of praying and fasting. In 1 Samuel 1:7, Hannah was

¹³⁷ Chavda, *The Hidden Power of Prayer & Fasting*, 144.

¹³⁸ Franklin, *Fasting*, 41.

¹³⁹ Towns, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*, 21.

so worried about not having a child that she would not eat. However, she later became the mother of Samuel. King David also fasted at the death of Abner, a friend, and soldier, in 2 Samuel 3:35. Towns also stated, “Fasting came to be practiced as an external means of demonstrating and later encouraging an internal feeling of remorse for sin. In the NT, fasting was a widely practiced discipline, especially among the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist.”¹⁴⁰

In Acts 2, they waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit. It was the promise of God in Luke 24. Luke said they were all on one accord, praying and fasting when the Holy Spirit came rushing in like a sound out of heaven. Bock expressed, “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly, a sound came out of heaven like the rush of a mighty wind and filled the entire house where they were sitting.”¹⁴¹ God’s promise was fulfilled when those waiting on Him came together in unity, fasting, and praying.

Theoretical Foundations

When it comes to prayer, Corey Russell teaches that Mary of Bethany was always at the feet of Jesus. Those who seek after Him should have no distractions that take away time from God. Mary is an example of how God desires the church to be each day, at His feet, serving Him and waiting to hear what He has to say.

GCGC may ask if prayer works. Is there any guarantee that praying to God will be effective when situations do not always go right? What proof is there in praying and fasting? Lewis stated, “The thing we pray for may happen, but how can you ever know it will not? Even if the thing were indisputably miraculous, it would not follow that the miracle had occurred

¹⁴⁰ Towns, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*, 24-25.

¹⁴¹ Bock, *Acts*, 93.

because of prayers.”¹⁴² However, there is not always a guarantee that what one prays for will occur. There are guarantees that God answers prayers when the heart is true and humble.

However, it may not be the answer they are hoping to hear.

Augustine was the greatest theologian of the first millennium of Christian history. Keller stated, “His first principle is that before you know what to pray for and how to pray for it, you must become a particular person. You must account yourself desolate in this world, however great the prosperity of your life may be. Unless you have that clearly in view, your prayers may go wrong.”¹⁴³ Augustine wanted people to know it was not about getting what they wanted but having peace amid the storm. If GCGC can grasp that concept of faith, there is hope in praying.

GCGC used the Augustine theory of prayer. Augustine suggests that praying is gratifying to peace of mind and comfort in knowing God. However, the model that will be different is adding fasting to the equation. Fasting and prayer will bring the theory that God answers prayers, which suggests that fasting is the portal to God's ears. Second Chronicles 7:14 states, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” Fasting, along with prayer, releases blessings. Franklin stated, “When you pray, you can release that thirtyfold return, but when both prayer and giving are part of your life, I believe that releases the sixtyfold blessing. But when all three – giving, praying, and fasting – are part of their life, a hundredfold return is released!”¹⁴⁴

Jentezen Franklin wrote about a man named Pastor Bob Rodgers, who authored a book called *101 Reasons to Fast*. In Rodgers’s book, he explains how people discovered the medical

¹⁴² C. S. Lewis, *How to Pray*, 3.

¹⁴³ Tim Keller, *Prayer*, 84.

¹⁴⁴ Franklin, *Fasting*, 12.

benefits fasting has on the body and how tests have proven that the average American consumes four pounds of chemical preservatives with other additives each year, which causes diseases. Pastor Rogers also stated, “Fasting gives your body time to heal itself in relieving nervousness and tension, giving the digestive system a rest, and lowering cholesterol.”¹⁴⁵ With this model, GCGC will build on the effectiveness of fasting in healing the body. The research on fasting and praying should confirm the testimony of his theory of healing.

Franklin also mentions a medical doctor named Dr. Tanner, who decided at age 50 to fast for 43 days without food, under medical supervision, and was much healthier. At age 60, Dr. Tanner fasted for 50 days and saw the glory of God. At age 77, he fasted for 53 days, and his gray hair turned black, the same color as his youth. Dr. Tanner lived to be 93 years old.¹⁴⁶

Due to toxins in the body, fasting empties the body by removing impurities when drinking plenty of water. Franklin stated, “When you fast, drink plenty of water. Water is a great flushing agent in fasting. One sign that toxins and poisons are eliminated is the concentration of toxins in our urine.”¹⁴⁷

The Daniel Fast comes from how the prophet ate in Daniel 1:12 and 10:3. Some may practice this type of fasting by eating vegetables and drinking water. Others may argue that fruit and other sources that have grown from seed are acceptable. When Daniel was fasting, the food was tasteless. Therefore, it showed that no salt or seasonings were applied. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that has lost its way. This model helps clear the mind, body, and soul to give in to God.

¹⁴⁵ Franklin, *Fasting*, 40.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

Daniel, while in exile, rejected eating rich food and asked if he could only eat vegetables and water (Dan 1:8). His request was granted. Moreover, after ten days, Daniel and his three friends were healthier than all the young men. Fasting is a way to honor God. Daniel's love for God directed him to be obedient by eating foods that connected him to a closer relationship with God. Every time Daniel prayed, God answered. This model shows how God will move when He hears them praying.

Another model is when King David fasted and prayed for his dying son with Bathsheba for seven days before the Lord in the book of 2 Samuel chapter 12. The Lord was not pleased with King David because he committed adultery. He knew God was angry with him, but he fasted and prayed with all his heart. His son died on the seventh day of his fast, and King David ceased fasting and praying. This model may compare to the statement by Augustine about not always getting what one wants but having peace amid the storms of life.

King David did not get what he wanted through his praying and fasting. However, he had peace amid his sorrow. King David was sincere about fasting and praying because of his love for God. Second Samuel 12:22 says, "And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?"

King David did not give up because he sinned against God. He repented and kept his faith in God. Fasting and praying are not always about obtaining blessings from God but about a relationship with Him.

The several types of fasting and praying researched by various scholars and their theories have been fair. Overall, some did not include a combination of fasting and praying. To fully explore the effectiveness, praying and fasting should undergo more work. As stated by Augustine, one must become a particular kind of person to understand prayer. GCGC will

discuss the concept of renewing the mind through reading the Scriptures, praying, and fasting to utilize the Holy Spirit fully.

In Iran, issues with mental health are common. Due to these health issues, the Bandar Abbas Branch of Islamic Azad University (BABIAU) wanted to research and examine the impact of praying and fasting on students' mental health. The method used for this research was to select 200 undergraduate students (115 boys and 85 girls) by a multi-stage cluster random sampling process. The ages of the students were between 18 and 30. Before the research, the students took a mental health questionnaire (GHQ-28) two weeks before Ramadan as a pre-test and two weeks after Ramadan as a post-test.

Ramadan in Islam is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar and the holy month of fasting. After Ramadan, using a one-way ANOVA test and t-test, the students who fasted and prayed received good scores on all the mental health subscales. It was evident that those who did not fast at all due to medical reasons, religion, or could not fast received reduced scores. In conclusion, fasting, even for pleasure, can enhance an individual's mental health.¹⁴⁸

Comparing the theory of BABIAU, GCGC participants fasted three days a week and prayed three times a day for six weeks. They also filled out a pre-questionnaire before the research and a post-questionnaire afterward. The principle used by BABIAU was for religious purposes. They fasted and prayed to prove in healing. GCGC prayed and fasted because they desired closer relationships with God.

The research that BABIAU conducted justified that praying and fasting are ways that help specific individuals with mental illness. This theory proved effective among young people

¹⁴⁸ A. Amirfakhraei, and A. Alinaghizadeh, "The Impact of Praying and Fasting on the Mental Health of Students Attending the Bandar Abbas Branch of Islamic Azad University in Iran in 2012," *Life Science Journal* 9, no 3 (2012): 2179, <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>.

ranging from eighteen to thirty years of age. Because it was effective, it could help people globally. The age group of GCGC ranges from the twenties to the mid-eighties. Moreover, the GCGC members prayed at the same time daily.

Ethiopia has a theory interpreted by Christians and Muslims that the COVID-19 pandemic was a punishment from God for sin.¹⁴⁹ The religious perceptions and practices concerning official public health reflect prayer and fasting as a cure. Ethiopia is called the land of many believers. Moreover, on April 6, 2020, President Sahle-Work Zewde hosted a national day of prayer for COVID-19. The Ethiopian Interreligious Council organized and broadcast the event on national television. This ceremony was at the beginning of a month-long prayer for God to heal their land from COVID-19. Ostebo, Tronvoll, and Marit mention, “The data for this research was collected by 16 researchers in the Amhara, Tigray, and Oromia regions of Ethiopia. Every field researcher except for one in the health system worked as a lecturer or assistant professor at local universities in all the regions and were trained in social science or humanities.”¹⁵⁰

Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia rationalized COVID-19 as an expression of God’s wrath due to immorality and sin that struck the Western world. Furthermore, prayer and fasting were the only ways to cure this pandemic. The government shut down, including closing the church doors, which caused division between the church and the government. The church needed its doors open to pray and fast and ask God for repentance. They feared God could not save them if the church closed.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Ostebo, Tronvolle, Marit, "Religion and the Secular Shadow," 340.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 341.

¹⁵¹ Ostebo, Tronvolle, Marit, "Religion and the Secular Shadow," 353.

Months later, the Ethiopian church could open its doors by wearing masks. There was a division among some priests who believed that if COVID-19 was demonic, it did not matter if they wore masks. Some priests did not want to associate with those who wore masks, suggesting they were unbelievers in their faith. Ostebo, Tronvoll, and Marit mention, “One Orthodox priest in the Amhara region said that we can only protect ourselves by praying and going to church, not by using facemasks or social distancing, telling people not to wear facemasks.”¹⁵² Other priests determined that wearing masks were safe and wise. Some priests suggested that God gives them the wisdom to do right. However, healing from God through medicine is a miracle. Practices that justify this research are the scientific discovery of Moderna, Pfizer, Johnson, and Johnson vaccines.

Churches Specializing in Prayer and Fasting

Many churches specialize in prayer and fasting. This section focuses on the similarities and the scheduling of how they guide their congregation. Moreover, it will show that prayer and fasting are a way of life worldwide and how they agree that it draws one closer to God.

Tapestry Church

This multicultural church is located near McGinley Square in Jersey City, New Jersey. They conduct different fasts each year; corporate, 14-day, 21-, and 40-day fasts. In August of 2021, Tapestry ran a 14-day Daniel Fast as a church. The Daniel Fast is an opportunity for people to draw closer to God by focusing on prayer. During this fast, one should restrict foods they enjoy as an act of worship and consecration to the Lord, not to duplicate what Daniel did

¹⁵² Ibid., 356.

but the spirit in which he did it.¹⁵³ Tapestry Church focused on growing closer to the Lord and not concentrating on the specific food on the list of approved foods.

New Life Christian Church

New Life Christian Church celebrates prayer and fasting during Easter. These two acts connect them directly to God. On March 6, 2022, New Life Christian Church began a six-week fast. Brennan Loveless states, “The initiative’s purpose is to help people hear God’s voice, follow Him daily, and develop the spiritual discipline of fasting.”¹⁵⁴ They pray and fast during this time to obtain growth and obedience, as GCGC participants did during their six-week research. They were transforming their minds to renew their relationship with God.

Christ’s Church

Christ’s Church annually brings in the New Year with a 21-day Daniel Fast and prayer. The church encourages individuals with medical conditions to consult a physician. Jason Cullum states, “Fasting is a discipline that helps to shift our priorities. It puts Him first and allows us to hear His plan and receive His direction and blessings. Putting God first is the key if you want success in your life, marriage, and work.”¹⁵⁵ Consulting a physician is a wise choice before changing a diet, especially for those on medication. The researcher did not write a disclosure statement regarding those taking medicine. However, she informed them through a telephone interview (Appendix E) that they could eat solid foods when taking medication—fasting with prayer sacrifices the body to hear from God.

¹⁵³ Anthony Langston, “Be Transformed,” Tapestry Church, <https://www.jctapestry.com>, (accessed September 16, 2022).

¹⁵⁴ Brennan Loveless, “Prayer and Fasting: Hear, Follow, Grow,” New Life Christian Church, <https://newlife.church/fasting>, (accessed September 16, 2022).

¹⁵⁵ Jason Cullum, “Dangerous Series: 21 Days of Praying and Fasting,” Christ’s Church, <https://www.christs.church/fast?rq=fasting>, (accessed September 16, 2022).

Redeemer Churches and Ministries

The Redeemer Churches have five ministries located in New York. Regarding fasting and prayer, their focus is not abstinence or dependence on food. However, they depend on God more than what to eat. *Tim Keller wrote an excerpt from John Chrysostom's Third Homily on the Statues*. Keller stated:

Don't just fast with your mouth, but also with your eyes, and your ears, and your feet, and your hands, and all the members of your body. Let the hands fast by being cleansed of plunder and greed. Let the feet fast by ceasing to run to immoral shows. Let the eyes fast by refusing to stare lewdly at lovely faces. After all, looking is the food of the eyes. Let the ear fast as well. The fasting of the ear consists in refusing to pay attention to evil gossip and slander. Let the mouth, too, fast from disgraceful speech and criticisms. For what does it profit us if we abstain from the flesh of birds and fish yet bite and devour our brothers?¹⁵⁶

The participants of GCGC were trying to achieve this goal in their fasting, praying to be filled with the Spirit of God for spiritual food or fulfillment while drawing closer to Him.

Church of the Highlands

This church is a non-denominational church that encourages prayer and fasting. Each year in January, they pray and fast for 21 days. They have seven basic steps they use each year.

Chris Hodges says,

The first step is they set an object for their fast. Each person has a reason they are fasting. Commit to the fast by choosing how long it will be. Prepare by repenting of your sins and physically by reducing meals each day. Make a schedule and set aside time for prayer and the fast. Break your fasting gradually by eating smaller amounts of food. And lastly, humble yourself before God and expect results.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Timothy Keller, "Prayer and Fasting," Redeemer Church, <https://www.redeemer.com>, (accessed September 16, 2022).

¹⁵⁷ Chris Hodges, "21 Days of Prayer", Church of the Highlands, <https://www.churchofthehighlands.com/media/message/prayer-and-fasting1>, (accessed September 16, 2022).

Generations Church

Generations Church has a yearly "prayer and fast" in January. According to the church, Scripture does not require everyone to participate, but it benefits those who are believers. First, one must know why one should fast and write down specific prayer requests. Prepare spiritually by asking for forgiveness of sins and rejecting worldly desires to concentrate more on prayers to God. Kevin Wall states, "The type of fast you go on is up to you. You could go on a full fast in which you only drink liquids, or you may desire to fast like Daniel. The type of fast you choose is between you and God. He will honor your best sacrifice. It is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking Him to which God responds with a blessing (Isaiah 58, Jeremiah 14:12, 1 Corinthians 8:8)."¹⁵⁸ Fasting is not always from food. Temporarily sacrificing something else to spend more time in prayer is still considered fasting.

Cross Points Church

Cross Points Church leaves many of the details of a fast in the hands of the church member. The church member is free to decide the fast type, the fast's schedule, and the fast's length. Commitment is crucial to receiving God's best blessing and attaining intimate communion with Him. Bill Bright stated, "Fasting and prayer can also work on a much grander scale. According to Scripture, personal experience, and observation, I am convinced that when God's people fast with a proper Biblical motive--seeking God's face, not His hand with a broken, repentant, and contrite spirit, God will hear from heaven and heal our lives, our churches, our communities, our nation, and world."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Kevin Wall, "Prayer and Fasting," Generations Church, <https://generationschurch.com>, (accessed September 17, 2022).

¹⁵⁹ Bill Bright, "Your Personal Guide to Fasting and Prayer," Cross Points Church, <https://crosspointchurch.com/personal-guide-to-fasting-and-praying>, (accessed September 17, 2022).

Life Church

Life Church focuses on four fast types: complete, partial, selective, and soul fasting. The complete fast allows one to drink only liquids, mainly water. The partial is for 14-16 hours a day without food. With the selective, the Daniel Fast has meat, dairy, eggs, sugar, and bread, requiring fruits, vegetables, water, and 100% fruit juices, nuts, and whole grains. John and Leslie Siebeling stated, “The soul fast prevents one from lifestyle changes outside of food, such as the internet and television, to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. Fasting creates a spiritual hunger, and it helps us submit our flesh to God and experience more of His presence. If we don’t fast alongside prayer and Bible study, fasting is just a diet.”¹⁶⁰

Four Square Church

The church is a Pentecostal and Full Gospel church. The congregation believes in prayer and fasting, evidenced by the worldwide 21-day fast from January 10 through January 20, 2022. Randy Remington stated, “Throughout the 21 days, we’ll be offering particular prayer points and daily activities just for kids because we believe you’re never too young to learn about the power of prayer.”¹⁶¹ Their program was different from the GCGC participants because they had a workshop on the topic for children.

The Agape Christian Church

Agape Christian Church believes that the length of the fast is whatever the spirit of God lays in one’s heart. At the beginning of January 2020, this church participated in a five-day fast. Agape Christian Church has six purposes: purity, revival, guidance, humility, power, and

¹⁶⁰ John and Leslie Siebeling, “Fasting and Prayer,” The Life Church, <https://thelifechurch.com/fasting-and-prayer>, (accessed September 18, 2022).

¹⁶¹ Randy Remington, “21-Day Fast”, Four Square Church, <https://resources.foursquare.org/video/join-foursquare-for-21-days-of-prayer-fasting-2022>, (accessed September 18).

healing.¹⁶² Most churches are similar in that they conduct a fast at the beginning of the New Year, consisting of the Daniel Fast and prayer. The difference between their method and that of GCGC is that the church is online, and there is no scheduled time. Moreover, GCGC encouraged a corporate fast at least twice a year.

¹⁶² Michael Obioma Nwahmoh, "Prayer and Fasting Guidelines," The Agape Christian Church, <https://www.theagapechristianchurch.org/2022-church-wide-prayer-fasting>, (accessed September 18, 2022).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter reflects on the research methods for the effectiveness of prayer and fasting. This topic aimed to show how the participants could build a closer relationship with God and others while better understanding why Christians pray and fast. GCGC must consistently learn the importance of prayer and fasting to feel capable in a congregational setting.

The researcher aimed to have members of a small church come together to experience why they should pray and fast by sustaining and understanding that more time spent with God leads to a closer relationship with Him. This intervention showed that eleven participants prayed three times a day and fasted three days a week for six weeks, which led to a more significant experience and a more personal relationship with God. Moreover, to improve their mental, physical, and spiritual health, these participants took part in this research of their own free will.

Intervention Design

The problem was that GCGC members did not spend enough time in prayer and fasting. The research aimed to show how important this topic was when prayer and fasting were applied together. The intervention design's goal was to allow eleven volunteers to participate in a six-week research study on how to pray and fast. The objective was to restore or strengthen a relationship with God. The intervention design gathered the participants via Zoom to discuss how to pray and fast effectively.

The researcher suggested that GCGC learn more about the importance of this topic by participating in this research. Once the researcher provided the participants with the details, they were eager to start. Moreover, during the meetings, the participants found it easy to grow spiritually by taking time to pray for each other. It also showed how being consistent is all that is required.

Different measures had to be accomplished before the research began. First, the research material had to be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before recruiting participants. Certain documents, such as permission requests, consent forms, recruitment material, and questionnaire forms, had to be approved before the research. If the materials used did not align with the board's guidelines, the research study would not commence. Furthermore, once documents and materials were satisfactory, the researcher could not change any forms during the research without written authorization. Any changes without permission could terminate the study. The IRB aimed to ensure that the proper steps were taken to protect the rights of those participating in the research as human subjects. Moreover, for the legal protection and safeguard of the school.

Recruit Participants

Once the approval from the IRB was received, the researcher sent a permission request letter (see Appendix A) to GCGC. The permission requests explained the background of the research and why the church needed to do the research study. Furthermore, the letter explained that if members of the congregation would like to participate in a prayer and fasting research project for six weeks, it would be voluntary.

The researcher received a permission response letter (see Appendix B) from the Vice-President of the Board of Directors of GCGC, accepting the proposal and granting permission to contact members and invite them to participate in the research.

Recruiting participants for the research began with sending out a recruitment letter (see Appendix C). This letter was sent via email and messenger. A letter went out to homes with self-addressed envelopes for those without a computer. The letter clarified information about the researcher, the research, and the importance of the topic of prayer and fasting. It also explained

that participants needed to keep a daily journal and how long the study would take to complete.

If participants agree to volunteer, they must sign a consent document (see Appendix D). The consent form contained the following information about the research:

1. This research is voluntary. No compensation will be issued.
2. The participants must be eighteen years of age and a member of GCGC.
3. The purpose of the research.
4. A completed questionnaire before and after the research.
5. The benefits of the research.
6. Material needed, such as Bible, notebook, and food.
7. Contact information of the researcher.

Most importantly, all information recorded by the researcher was kept private. Data is stored for three years on a password-locked computer. Also, recordings from interviews and focus groups were transcribed and will be kept only for the researcher. After three years, the researcher will dispose of the research materials appropriately. The participants were forewarned that confidentiality could not be guaranteed in group settings, such as Zoom. However, they understood that the conversation should stay among the group. Lastly, if anyone decided to withdraw from the study, all data collected was destroyed immediately and was not used in the results and conclusions of the research study. After mailing the recruitment letter, fourteen participants agreed to volunteer for the study. After authorization from the IRB, the church, and recruiting participants, the research launched within a week. Those who consented to participate received a call from the researcher (see Appendix E).

When the researcher contacted the participants via phone, she greeted them with a warm welcome and an expression of gratitude for volunteering to participate in this research. The call also explained the purpose and nature of the research and the importance of prayer and fasting. As stated above, the researcher advised the participants of the context in the consent form they were to sign. The researcher familiarized each participant with the questionnaires, meetings, and

the need to schedule a personal interview. The participants were interviewed over the phone and recorded.

The researcher further explained to the participants that they would need a Bible for daily reading, the internet for searching Scriptures, and a daily journal to submit weekly progress. The Daniel Fast also requires specific food. Participants were informed that the research was for six weeks. At the end of each interview, the researcher prayed with the participant and gave words of encouragement.

The methods used to gather data were questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. The questionnaire the participants filled out provided insight into their spiritual life. Weekly focus groups were scheduled, allowing participants to describe their progress and give positive feedback. Moreover, the focus group allowed the participants to share their weekly experiences and encourage one another. It was an informal face-to-face conversation via Zoom, so participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts without feeling tense.

The participants were excited to be a part of something different. They could not wait for the weekly meetings to discuss what God had done for them. Listening to the joy in their voices was more than a researcher could hope. Prayer and fasting became a challenge to their lives, as if they were expecting something big to happen.

Three married couples participated. One such couple was always joyful, speaking about how they enjoyed shopping for various food needed for research. They expressed how they missed eating salads. It was becoming their favorite meal. However, there was a second couple where the wife was tired of eating salads and began searching the internet for recipes that would be filling. During the meetings, she would emphasize the various meals online that she found

very tasty to the palate, such as veggie burgers. The third couple both enjoyed salads because they desired a healthier lifestyle. The researcher noted that recipes would be helpful in the future.

Being online made it convenient not to worry about being dressed for the occasion. Everyone, including the researcher, felt comfortable in the attire of sweatpants, t-shirts, and jeans. It was at-home research, so the participants were not obligated to be in formal attire. They were not required to meet at a church, so they did not have to worry about attire, transportation, and other worries.

The first couple always sat in chairs during the meetings. They gave the impression that they were in church, with a Bible in their hands and ready to start. To make light of it, other participants would tease them. They were constantly joyful for conversation that broke the silence each week. Before the meeting started, the researcher asked for a volunteer to open prayer. Sometimes, a participant would be willing; if not, that was acceptable. Each week, more participants began to feel comfortable praying in front of others and were taking the research seriously.

Pre-Prayer and Fasting Questionnaire

During the second week, the participants received a pre-prayer and fasting questionnaire (see Appendix F) about their prayer life and basic understanding of fasting. Pre-testing questions were to help understand the problems of the participants. These questions helped the researcher prepare to focus on specific areas of their spiritual life. Moreover, to identify the problem and find a solution.

Participants who received a questionnaire answered each question honestly and to the best of their ability. Questions included, “Why do they believe in God?” Belief is essential to how individuals think and behave. For example, if a person does not believe that brushing their

teeth daily is healthy for the mouth, they may not do it. The results would be cavities or gum disease. To understand their faith was to know their thoughts.

When praying, believing in God is vital to trust that He will answer prayers. Sam A. Hardy stated, “Forty-five percent of people across thirty-four nations say that belief in God is necessary to be moral and have good values.”¹⁶³ Another question was, “What is your understanding of prayer?” Linda Woodhead says, “While offering meaning to everyday activities, prayer is a powerful instrument to improve and increase well-being, not least in situations of suffering and grief – in other words, in precisely those situations in which it is hardest to find meaning in life.”¹⁶⁴ Whether people believe in God or not, most people pray. However, do they know why they pray? Mordecai Schreiber mentions, “I learned two important lessons about the human condition in our troubled twenty-first century: first, millions of people worldwide pray; and second, prayer is an essential human need.”¹⁶⁵ People pray because of need; they lack something and want to feel a sense of substance in their life, which is why this research is essential. To take what they lack and fill it with the presence of God.

Another question regarding prayer was, “How would you feel if your prayers were not answered right away?” David Wilkinson states, “But the invitation from God is to come into a transforming conversation with him. There is delight in a conversation with my child, even if it is a request for a pony, a car, or an ice cream! I would much rather have the conversation than no

¹⁶³ Sam A. Hardy, “What Aspects of Religiosity are Associated with Values?,” *Department of Sociology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Brigham Young University* 61, no. 2 (June 2022): 374.

¹⁶⁴ Linda Woodhead, *Conclusion: Prayer as Changing the Subject: In a Sociology of Prayer* (Routledge: University of Lancaster, 2017), 3.

¹⁶⁵ Mordecai Schreiber, “*Why People Pray: The Universal Power of Prayer*” (New York, NY: Beaufort Books, 2016), 3.

conversation at all. We pray in the light of what God does.”¹⁶⁶ God does not have to answer prayers. People are to pray to get closer to Him and to have a personal relationship.

Regarding fasting, the researcher asked if participants understood the meaning of fasting and believed it was necessary. Lisa Harper of Today's Christian Woman says,

Of course, many examples in Scripture reveal abstaining from eating for spiritual reasons in a positive light: when Daniel fasted while repenting on behalf of God’s people (Dan 9:3-19); when Jesus fasted 40 days while Satan tempted Him in the desert (Matt 4:1-11). This means fasting with a pure heart can be an effective way to humble oneself and honor God during seasons of intense prayer and worship.¹⁶⁷

Therefore, fasting is a means of humility for spiritual reasons used with intense prayer. Derek Prince stated, “Fasting is also a means by which a believer brings his body into subjection. Rightly practiced, fasting brings both soul and body into subjection to the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶⁸

The participants' last question was, “What kind of relationship do you want to have with God?” This question is fundamental regarding getting closer to Him. Dallas Willard states, “God has created us for intimate friendship with himself - now and forever. This is the Christian viewpoint. It is clear throughout the Bible, especially in passages such as Exodus 29:43-46, 33:11; Psalm 23; Isaiah 41:8; John 15:14; and Hebrews 13:5-6. As with all close personal relationships, God can be counted on to speak to each other when and as appropriate.”¹⁶⁹

Interview Questions

The researcher conducted interviews to see where the participants were in their spiritual life. Knowing where the participants were spiritually has given the researcher more clarity on

¹⁶⁶ David Wilkinson, *When I Pray What Does God Do* (Oxford, England: Monarch Books, 2015) Ch. 7.

¹⁶⁷ Lisa Harper “Q: Why does Jesus say some prayers won’t be answered unless we pray and fast?” *Today’s Christian Woman*, Mar. – Apr. (2009): 20.

¹⁶⁸ Derek Prince, *Shaping History Through Prayer and Fasting* (Charlotte, NC: Whitaker House, 2002), Ch. 7.

¹⁶⁹ Willard, Dallas, *Hearing God: Developing a conversational relationship with God* (Chicago, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), Ch. 1.

what strongholds to pray against. In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul writes about how strongholds keep the mind from always thinking negative thoughts, which can lead to sinful behavior. Bill Vincent says, “Strongholds are characterized by habit patterns of thoughts that exist in the area of our soul, mind, will, emotions, and personality. They are hidden so deeply within our soul that they can influence the negative thought patterns of our life.”¹⁷⁰ Once habits of wrong thinking form, it can be challenging to change the mindset. However, with fasting and prayer, all things are possible through Jesus (Phil 4:13).

Being a small church made it convenient, comfortable, and easier to conduct interviews over the phone. Research in Australia showed how churches with small groups have higher levels of participation. Ian Hussey stated, “An Australian researcher named Powell concluded that small groups are used in Australian congregations to develop the community and as a tool for discipleship. The format often encourages greater levels of personal intimacy, facilitating attachment.”¹⁷¹ The questions asked were about their knowledge of prayer, fasting, and the Bible (Appendix G). All questions were voluntary and confidential. The consent form they signed assured them that their project records would be kept private and secure by the researcher. However, the data researched will be for others to replicate. The researcher will discard any data that could identify the participants after three years. They were provided with a schedule via email or mail, so they would know the days and times to pray and fast. As a small church, having the research occur in each participant’s home was suitable for personal intimacy.

The researcher kept a weekly reflective journal of the project to keep track of progress. A journal accounted for the project’s different phases and each participant’s progress. The

¹⁷⁰ Bill Vincent, *Spiritual Warfare: The Complete Collection* (Litchfield, IL: Revival Waves of Glory Books and Publishing, 2021), Ch.1.

¹⁷¹ Ian Hussey, “Investigating High Levels of Small Group Participation in Churches: Case Study Research from Australia,” *Department of Ministry and Practice, Malyon Theological College* 13, no. 4 (2020): 372.

participants provided weekly notes, which helped the researcher gather information and stay on task. A reflective journal was a vital part of the project to analyze weekly progress. The participants also completed a post-praying and fasting project survey (see Appendix J). The participants answered questions about any lifestyle changes that may help others replicate this research.

Praying and Fasting Schedule

A fair trial period to evaluate this research was six weeks. The participants were provided with a schedule of the days and times to begin. There were three times for corporate prayer (praying together). Participants could choose different prayer times if it affected their schedule so they could pray three times daily. Moreover, they started understanding how fasting and corporate prayer could help them grow spiritually. It was not mandatory if they did not want to participate in the research. However, it would help GCGC to unite spiritually because it is written in the Scriptures how Jesus prayed and fasted often.

The intervention encouraged GCGC to pray personally and for others without hesitation. Fasting allows the Holy Spirit to show them humility and provide a sense of faith to create a desire if they pray daily. Moreover, the participants started seeing a change in their character to desire to be more of the likeness of God, to be more compassionate and patient, and to have the desire to do more of His will and less of their own.

The participants kept a daily journal of their weekly prayer and fasting life. They were to write down things they needed to pray about using Scripture. If they desired to heal their body, they were to write a prayer for healing in their journal. If the need was for a financial blessing, peace, joy, marital problems, to be delivered from all forms of addiction, or prayer for a disobedient child, whatever the need, they were to write it in their prayer journal. God will

comfort them regardless of their desire and allow peace in their lives. The researcher directed the participants to the internet to research the Scriptures about their problems. Suppose they did not have a computer or did not know how to look up specific Scriptures, the researcher assisted by sending information via email. Even though the participants participated in corporate prayer, they understood prayer to be a one-on-one conversation with God.

The researcher instructed participants on how to pray scriptural prayers. One example of a scriptural prayer is Philippians 4:6, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” They began to understand that praying God’s Word to Him will not come back void. Some decided to keep a daily diary, writing down their prayers in a prayer journal until they felt comfortable praying aloud.

In Daniel 6:10, Daniel prayed three times a day. Additionally, King David prayed in the evening, morning, and noon (Ps 55:17). Comparing the number of times they fasted in the OT, the researcher wanted to see if the results would be similar. Therefore, the participants of GCGC prayed daily at 9 am, noon, and 6 pm for six weeks, as outlined in Table 1. The participants prayed simultaneously but in their own homes.

Table 1: Prayer times: six weeks.

9 am (Corporate Prayer)	12 noon (Corporate Prayer)	6 pm (Corporate Prayer)
Sunday – Saturday	Sunday – Saturday	Sunday - Saturday

The Daniel Fast required fruits, vegetables, 100% fruit juice, and water. The researcher suggested that those who participated with medical conditions had the option of a denial fast. A denial requires one to deny an enjoyable activity to glorify God (e.g., social media, television,

texting). The fasting schedule began at 6:30 pm on Sundays and went on until 6:30 pm on Wednesdays weekly for six weeks (see Table 2). The object was to spend more time with God and less time with worldly things. Fasting is not just a ritual but a requirement that pleases God.

Table 2: Fasting schedule: six weeks.

February 2022						
Fasting Schedule (6 weeks)						
Sunday 6 pm -Wednesday 6 pm Weekly						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1 All Day	2 Ends 6 pm	3	4	5
6 Starts 6 pm	7 All Day	8 All Day	9 Ends 6 pm	10	11	12
13 Starts 6 pm	14 All Day	15 All Day	16 Ends 6 pm	17	18	19
20 Starts 6 pm	21 All Day	22 All Day	23 Ends 6 pm	24	25	26
27 Starts 6 pm	28 All Day					

The participants received copies of these schedules (Tables 1 and 2). The results were that GCGC could be more effective in prayer and fasting if practiced often. A fast without prayer is just a diet and, with it, is subject to the will of God. Prayer allows the Spirit of God to control the lives of those who fast. Fasting empties the old self to pour in the newness of God. Fasting also directs the appetite of being hungry toward God to clear the mind, body, and soul, so individuals can hear His voice more clearly, allowing complete dependence on Him.

In the past, fasting and praying were due primarily to church laws and traditions. During Lent, the Catholic Church ate fish each Friday and fasted. Other countries and different religions observe this tradition of fasting. People followed these traditions because they felt an obligation to the church. The participants volunteered for this research because they wanted to make a

difference in their life, not because of church tradition. The researcher hopes to continue this approach of voluntarily spending time with God. Furthermore, the participants desired to understand the importance of how it will affect their lives by having a one-on-one personal relationship with God on a different level than before.

Measuring the effects of the intervention was done through qualitative research. The information from participants revealed their experiences and perspectives on the problem or the issue they had when it came to fasting and praying to work toward a solution. Qualitative research was needed to ensure the participants understood the nature of the problem. It also helped the researcher analyze their experiences leading to finding resources that will aid in preparing for future research.

Data Analysis Procedure

The primary data was obtained through action research from interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and survey participants. Ernest T. Stringer states, “Interviews allow participants to describe the situation in their terms. It is a reflective process that enables the interviewee to explore their experience in detail and to reveal the many features of that experience that affect the issue investigated.”¹⁷²

The purpose of the research was to clarify participants’ understanding of the issue; that is why the researcher reviewed literature appropriate for the topic. Most data research comes from scholars who have investigated similar situations. Stringer says, “While the research literature does not provide definitive answers to all issues, it provides information that has been thoroughly

¹⁷² Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*. 4th Edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 105.

established through rigorous and systematic studies that provide much higher degrees of certainty than gained from other sources – press reports, political statements, and so on.”¹⁷³

Conclusion

GCGC began to understand the purpose and the effectiveness of prayer and fasting by reading Scriptures showing the life of Jesus and the prophets. These passages demonstrated how prayer and fasting glorify God and invite Him into the believers' lives. Moreover, without God, the participants would not reach their full potential. They were encouraged through the Scriptures and understood that praying is direct communication with God while fasting allowed them to have a closer relationship with Him.

Tim Sensing stated, “How will the problem be solved or better understood? Moreover, how are you going to study the problem?”¹⁷⁴ To better understand the problem included interviews with the participants and planning meetings. Furthermore, teaching them why and how they should pray and fast effectively. Therefore, researching the problem consisted of conducting surveys before and after the research and having the participants fill out questionnaires about their experiences of praying and fasting. These surveys helped the researcher understand how to help those at GCGC with the problem.

If someone decided not to participate or leave, the researcher encouraged them that it would help them to become more effective in praying and fasting and develop a stronger relationship with God. They also understood that it was more than research to help with the problem in the church. Praying in unison could build a more vital church. If they continued to participate in the study of fasting and prayer, it could be the key to opening God’s ear.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 120.

¹⁷⁴ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Stock Publishers, 2011), 26.

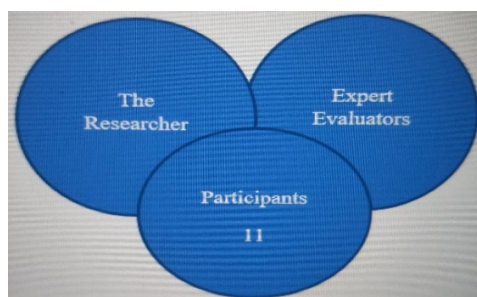
As a result of this intervention, the participants enjoyed fasting and prayer. The second outcome was that they were becoming humbler. The third outcome was that fasting cleansed impurities of the body. The fourth was emptying the old self and becoming one with Christ. The final and most successful outcome was that their relationship with God was closer than before the research. Moreover, they found a new friend in Him during this research.

The researcher will continue to learn new actions about the subject for future use. This research was not just data collected for the moment. Tim Sensing says research is “to continue the path of lifelong learning.”¹⁷⁵ There are no quick fixes to praying and fasting or hearing from God. Whether one prays or fasts for one day, one week, or 21 or 40 days, it is a lifelong learning experience with the Lord. Talk to Him daily, and He will always be there to answer prayers.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The purpose of this study was to show that GCGC can build a closer relationship with God through effective prayer and fasting. The objective was to use questionnaires, schedules, and surveys to collect data measuring how often they prayed and fasted over six weeks. This analysis identified how prayer and fasting affected their overall faith and spiritual conviction. The triangulation approach (Figure 1) showed how many participated, the researcher, and the knowledge that different evaluators have investigated the same problem.

Figure 1: Data Triangulation



¹⁷⁵ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 64.

The results are supported by the actual experiences of each participant, according to the data collected by the researcher. The data gained clarity and understanding of those affected to construct successful solutions. All data collected helped the researcher explore insights that may help future researchers. The importance was to gather data from outside expert evaluators who have investigated the same problem to compare and contrast, seeing the differences and similarities the researcher and evaluators have in common and recognizing the gaps. The results were also evaluated through interviews and focused group discussions validating the information from all who participated with different points of view. Since the problem is with GCGC, each participant will have personal reasons for their problems. The focus was to examine their insights and understand the reasons for the different views, which assisted in finding the best solution for the problem.

The researcher identified the problem within the congregation of GCGC when it came to prayer and fasting. Members of GCGC were not comfortable when praying in a congregational setting. Methods used to identify root causes were pre-and post-praying and fasting questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Some participants reported that hectic schedules and uncertainty in the fast procedures led to inconsistency in praying and fasting. Once the root cause was determined, it was time to develop a strategy for action.

To understand prayer and fasting was to participate in the activity consistently. A plan to implement was set in place to get evidence of the effectiveness of this topic. Fourteen participants volunteered for the research because they wanted a closer relationship with God. All of those who participated knew how to pray. However, 60% did not know about fasting. The researcher decided to use the Daniel Fast, which consists primarily of fruits and vegetables.

There were two themes used that identified with the topic and were helpful to this research. The first theme was the closeness to God. Implementing prayer with fasting is a direct way of communicating with Him. This intervention was to have the participants pray three times a day and fast three days per week for six weeks. Consistency in the process led to positive results.

One participant stated that their prayer was not habitual. It was not consistent. Therefore, when praying and fasting simultaneously every day, a habit begins to form. This intervention resulted in a willful mindset. Having the participants pray three times a day and fast three days weekly provided findings that show they want to participate because it has become a habit. After the research, they have a heart to pray, a mind that thinks of God daily, and a soul that hungers for Him. The Scripture says to train up a child in the way they should go, and when they are old, they will not depart from it (Prov 22:6). Six weeks of training is enough time to develop a habit. What better-acquired behavior than that of praying and fasting?

Another part of the theme was a belief in God. Many participants believed in God because of the things He has done for them in the past. To pray and believe that He will hear what is said is to have faith. That is why this question was essential to ask. How could they want to participate in prayer and fasting without trusting in Him?

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). Since praying is direct communication with God, one will draw closer to Him. Prayer forms the last part of theme one, which is having a relationship with God. Being close to Him by believing in His Word will create a personal relationship, which results from praying and fasting and the beginning of solving the problem of GCGC.

When the participants volunteered to pray and fast for six weeks, they drew closer to God, trusting and believing that He heard their prayers as they gave up meat to renew their relationship with Him. The participants drew closer to God because of their faith in knowing His existence is real.

Another feature of this study was doing research in a small church. GCGC has only twenty-three members, of which fourteen volunteered. Three of the fourteen who volunteered decided to leave due to personal obligations. Therefore, eleven members continued faithfully for six weeks. The researcher monitored their weekly progress by receiving information from journals through emails, text messages, and messenger. One method the researcher could have used to make it easier to acquire notes from the participants would have been an online survey app. Each week the researcher made calls and sent text messages reminding the participants to submit their journal notes for the week.

Focus group meetings (see Appendix I) were online each week. The researcher communicated via text message to schedule the sessions according to the work schedule of the participants. Sometimes there would be a second meeting to accommodate everyone. Performing research online made it convenient but caused a few issues. One of the participants was always on the road, making it easy for him to call in. However, his phone signal would go out depending on the location. Another issue with it being online was that some would hide their faces or fade in and out. If the researcher could do it again, she would have everyone meet in one place weekly. Direct communication would help them be more open and learn how to build their confidence in a congregational setting.

The reasonable thing about being online is that it is free and easy to use. If the researcher needed to reschedule, people did not have to worry about taking off work or gas money. The

entire research was online to create a comfortable and relaxed environment for the participants.

They were able to fast and pray in the privacy of their homes, which allowed them to concentrate and not feel uncomfortable in a congregational setting.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter outlines the results the researcher gathered during the research. Data was collected through questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. Different themes capture the data that emerged, giving detailed interpretations of the eleven participants' six-week journey.

In research, there will be results. The researcher always hopes for the best and most favorable results. In reality, however, a few setbacks are always expected. One should focus on accomplishments and not get distracted by unfulfillment. Did the research address the problem of effective prayer and fasting? To become productive is to be consistent. Fourteen small church members volunteered to participate in a six-week research study to get closer to God. Although three chose to leave, eleven decided to stay. The participants already had a relationship with God, but each needed the closeness God had with Enoch, a Father-son relationship. This relationship brings the confidence of being able to communicate with trust.

During the six weeks, the participant's relationship with God grew, and so did their belief in Him. People expect to hear from God and for prayers to be answered when they pray. One of the pre-praying and fasting questions was, "how would you feel if your prayers were not answered immediately?" Most responded that God has His timing and that being patient is the key. While a few answered that it would be a sense of abandonment. Tyrone said, "I would not be that upset, but if I don't see any results, I would feel abandoned or let down."

Sarah stated, "I would feel like He's not listening to me." Jackie said, "I know God's timing is right on time." Thomas answered, "I don't feel bad; I will just be patient with God's process." Becky mentioned, "I don't think about it. I pray when I'm stressed, then go on with my day. Sometimes, it's just a thank you. I'm grateful." Kimani responded, "I feel that the timing is not right." Ann explained, "I know that He doesn't work on my time, but when it's right, I

believe the longer it takes for Him to answer our prayer, I think He wants us not to do what we have done again.” Chris noted, “I feel it will get answered; I just have to be patient, that’s all.”

Trish replied:

I trust that God will answer my prayers. The ones that make me laugh the most are the ones that are so obvious that you almost feel dumb for praying about it when you were fully capable of doing it on your own; you just didn’t know it. I guess that’s what praying is for, but it’s still funny to be able to laugh at yourself all over again. Sometimes I still get anxious and edgy, but I remember He may not come when you want Him, but He’s always right on time.

Luke responded, “Like I’m misinterpreting what God has already given me in response to my prayer.” Moreover, Jessica added that “I don’t worry about it. God works on His own time.” These participants trust and believe that God will respond to their prayers in His time. Only a few had some doubts before the research.

After the research, the data of the post-praying and fasting survey asked the participants, “What expectations did you receive from God when you prayed?” Sarah, who felt that her prayers were not heard, stated, "As long as I continued to pray and fast, all the crazy things I went through came to a halt. I feel as if He hears me better." The researcher was overwhelmed with joy when she read this statement.

Theme 1: Closer to God

Praying communicates with God while fasting spiritually empties the body and purifies the soul. When prayer and fasting are combined, it helps one draw closer to God. Being consistent in prayer and fasting will help in getting closer to Him. Prayer and fasting should be done by sitting in a quiet place, reading the Bible, and meditating on the Scriptures to hear God. James 4:8 says, “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.” James is saying that approaching God is drawing nearer to Him, and God Himself will come close to those who seek Him.

Belief in God

Before and after the research study, the researcher asked the participants, “Why do you believe in God?” Jackie responded, “He saved me from sin and knew my heart.” Kimani stated, “I used to believe because my family taught me to believe. Now I believe because God speaks to my soul and because of what the Bible says about the promises of God.” Trish explained, “God undeniably leads me, which He blessed in an unexplainable way. When God wants to work through me, He does, and I am not always aware of what He is doing; however, I know it is Him.” Tyrone expressed, “I believe in God because a higher being created all.” James stated, “My belief existed through my family.” Luke explained, “Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, I would not truly know who God is.” Sarah shared, “Because I was taught there is a higher power.” Chris noted, “Because of things I have seen in my life that I cannot explain, I know for myself there is a God.” Becky stated, “I grew up knowing about Him.” Jessica expressed, “I was to believe in God through my childhood teaching.” Ann explained, “God holds my future – All things are possible, and He loves me.” Thomas shared, “God had shown me lightness in my darkness when I did not have belief, which is why I believe in His existence.”

To have a relationship with God, one must first believe in God. For the participants to have a relationship with God, they must trust God. Psalms 9:10 says, “And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” Prayer and fasting can strengthen an existing relationship built on trust. How can a person foster a relationship without talking to someone or someone talking back?

Relationship with God

The participants received the post-fasting question, “Do you think fasting and praying have brought you to a closer relationship with God?” Jackie answered:

I have a good relationship with God, and it is personal. I talk to God, and He talks to me. I am pretty good at discerning things. However, I have mixed feelings. Furthermore, I have an excellent connection with God, knowing He listens, responds, and hears me. Nevertheless, every day that I pray allows my relationship with God to be better.

Jackie related her experience with Enoch when she shared, “The type of relationship I want with Him is like the relationship He had with Enoch.” What Jackie expressed was very captivating about Enoch. Enoch’s experience with God was one of the most extraordinary experiences ever told. Genesis 5:24 says, “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” To walk with God is to have a personal relationship. Moreover, it is to have God be a part of one’s daily life and give Him authority over every decision made.

Furthermore, Jackie expresses how hearing God’s voice would be a joy to her by saying, “I wish it were back when people talked to God audibly and heard His voice. However, it is a way to hear Him spiritually, not literally. Moreover, that is through prayer and fasting.” When Jackie expressed, “I want a relationship with God like married couples have, they begin to look like one another. I want to be so close to God that I start to look like Him spiritually.” Jackie longs to have a deep intimate relationship with God. Wanting people to see the godliness in her daily walk shows Jackie's love for God and how she honors Him. Then Jackie noted, “The type of relationship I wish to have with God is when people see me, they might think I am Jesus walking down the street. I want my life to reflect God, so it instantly shows.”

Jackie intrigued the researcher when she said, “I am trying to be God’s best friend. If this makes sense, I want to look like God, pertaining to my shared example of Enoch. My

drawing closer to God soon became the feeling of having a best friend I could always pour my heart out. I love God!" Having a best friend is special. However, wanting God to be one's best friend speaks of love.

Moreover, the Scripture was fulfilled when the Apostle James stated, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God's friend" (James 2:23). Then Jackie stated, "I used the gift of singing that God gave me and combined it with prayer and worship. It felt as though God and I were growing instantly. I am excited for all the weeks to come!" Jackie said, "Fasting has allowed me to make a sacrifice to my flesh, and by doing this, I have become closer to God, especially when I pray. GOD HAS HEARD MY CRY!"

Kimani explained, "At this moment, my relationship with God is close. It is not as close as it could be because I slacked off reading my Bible. Also, I allowed things to get ahead of what I promised God I would do." Kimani feels guilty for being disobedient to her promise to God by taking responsibility for her actions. Kimani was encouraged by saying, "I do my best to read devotional books and the Bible because nothing can take the place of the Bible. Where my relationship can be better with God, it is close. Not as close as it could be however, it is not God's fault because He is near and not hard to find." Kimani confessed that her closeness to God relies on how much time she spends with Him, which is impressive.

However, Kimani also shared, "I want a closer relationship with God. Moreover, it is up to me to have this personal relationship with Him. Praying and fasting will help to strengthen my faith." It is incredible how Kimani understands that having a relationship with God is a choice. The Bible states that when praying and fasting, one must believe God will be pleased when a Christian prays and fasts. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith, it is impossible to please him:

for he, that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Kimani stated, "I want a father and daughter relationship with God. For Him to be my best friend, someone I can listen to, and He listens to me." Can anyone imagine the closeness between a father and daughter? Now imagine wanting that same relationship with God. After the research, Kimani said, “My relationship with God is closer than when I first started.” Kimani also stated, “It is just like any other relationship. This statement embraces how Kimani was starting to feel comfortable talking to God. When putting time and effort into it, the focus is more concentrated on that person.” Kimani shared, “I spent more time thinking about God, and my relationship grew.”

Like Moses fasting with God in the OT, Jesus spent time with God fasting for forty days and nights in the NT. Matthew recounts, “And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, He answered and said, ‘It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’” (Matt 4:2,4). Fasting also incorporates reading the Word of God, which is food for the soul. The Scriptures will draw people closer to God. During the focus group and meetings, the participants learned that Scriptures were important when communicating with God.

It was astonishing to hear Trish say, “I feel more powerful in my Faith. I can only pray that my Faith and physical condition one day will want the same thing, to be closer to God and serve my brothers and sisters in Christ for no reason but God and [*sic*] want nothing in return.” As a researcher, it is joyful to know that fasting and praying have contributed to giving Trish the power to want to defeat her physical condition.

Trish then stated, “Fasting and praying have brought me into a closer relationship with God. My relationship is growing with God, and I am becoming more familiar with Him.

However, I fear being close to Him because it honestly scares me to feel good when I see things more positively.” Trish is expressing joy as fear, the too-good-to-be-true moment in her life. In life, people self-sabotage by allowing guilt to get in the way of joy. Jesus did not want us to struggle and live on earth without happiness. The Book of John explains the plans that Jesus had for us. John 10:10 states, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.” If fasting and praying have brought joy into one’s life, count it all pleasure. Trish said, “I want to have the faith Jesus had when He healed people. That is the type of relationship I would like to have.” Trish continues to express healing in her body by wanting the faith to heal.

James expressed his love for others when he said, “I desire to have a close relationship with God. My relationship with God is that of love. To me, God is love. Furthermore, everyone I love, I desire to love them as God would.” This expression of love is what God mentioned in 1 John 4:12, “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, perfecting his love in us.” These words from James are a joy to hear as a researcher. James ended by saying, “I would like to have a unique type of relationship with God. When I make a terrible decision, God knows my heart enough to correct me and change my path to do the right thing. Praying and fasting will humble me and strengthen my faith to be more like a child of God.”

In the book, *Getting Closer to God*, William Jeynes wrote, “Few spiritual disciplines are as important as constantly communing with God. One way toward this end is to pray whenever you have a free moment. As this becomes a habit, you will pray to God amid times when there is a free moment”¹⁷⁶. The participants prayed three times a day during the research and fasted three

¹⁷⁶ William Jeynes, *Getting Closer to God* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2009), 5-6.

days per week for six weeks. The intention was for them to form a habit of becoming more open to God so He could work in them as they grow, trusting in God and surrendering to Him.

When Tyrone responded about his relationship with God, he shared, “I believe praying and fasting will help strengthen my faith, humble me, and help me grow spiritually. Someone once told me that my greater is coming. So humility is something I need to see the bigger picture God has in store for my family and me, and I believe praying and fasting will help me.”

Astonishingly, Tyrone’s faith is already working after reading his statement. Tyrone says, “I think that prayer, more than fasting, will align me with the character of Christ because prayer is the most extensive form of communication with God. I want a relationship with God that will be everlasting.” Tyrone desires a lifetime of love with God, which is impressive.

Being close is what God desires from those who seek after Him, to be in a relationship with Him for eternity. Knowing that Tyrone desires to have a lifetime relationship with God through fasting and praying is priceless. Tyrone explained, “After completing the research, my head is on a smooth and balanced level, leading to righteousness with Him. The more righteous I became, God drew closer. Before I prayed, the presence of God was near me.” John 15:4 says, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” Tyrone’s experience of the presence of God is overwhelming. Praying and fasting has allowed him to have a new level in his relationship to experience being closer to God.

Tyrone shared, “After I prayed, I felt relieved as if God had already answered my prayers. Before praying, I was agitated and irritated. After praying, I was more humble due to the presence of God.” Through praying, humility gave him peace of mind. Isaiah 26:3a says, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.” Many people strive for peace of

mind. Tyrone was agitated and irritated before he prayed. However, he was able to obtain peace afterward.

In the beginning, Luke was unsure of his relationship with God before the research. Luke described his research experience as life-changing: “My life has changed for the better. I feel closer to God. My relationship with God is real. I feel like God has an open line of communication with me. God speaks to me in ways I can understand.” Luke explains that praying and fasting have allowed him to understand the voice of God. He continues by saying,

Our relationship is where I can see what He wants me to see. I can acknowledge what needs to be recognized. Even when I am not having a conversation with God while talking to others, I still have a conversation with God through everything He is showing me. God communicates with me through my life experiences. Our relationship is continuously growing.

Seeing the relationship that Luke has experienced is a joy, knowing that this research project has allowed him to have a relationship he thought was impossible. Luke says, “The closer I get to God, the more I understand His will for my life. I know my life is less about me and more about God and glorifying His name. I want others to look at me and see His godliness and my continued relationship with God.” This reply brings joy to the researcher, knowing that Luke’s life is changing. Then Luke’s last words were heartfelt, “I want a forever relationship with God to be an instrument for His glory. Praying and fasting will continuously strengthen my faith, give me extreme humility, and align me to be more like Christ.” To be an instrument is to allow someone to lead. Luke may have been unsure at the beginning about his relationship with God. However, he understands God’s love through fasting and praying.

The book of Joel suggests emptying the heart and the stomach when fasting and praying by crying out unto God. Joel 2:12a says, “Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.” Jentezen Franklin

wrote, “Fasting stirs a hunger in your spirit that goes deeper than the temporary hunger you experience in your flesh. When you hunger for God, He will fill you.”¹⁷⁷ As mentioned above, when fasting with prayer, the desire to eat naturally is fulfilled spiritually with God's presence through the Word of God.

Sarah shared, “I wanted to participate in this research to get closer to God.” After the research, Sarah explained, “Praying has brought me closer to God. Therefore, I will continue to pray daily. For praying is needed each day.” Knowing that Sarah enjoys praying is a joy. However, Chris stated, “I feel my relationship with God is growing stronger and stronger.” Nehemiah 8:10 talks about the joy of the Lord being a strength. Becky explained, “It was hard at first for me to fast; however, praying opened my eyes to see that a change in my heart was needed. I admit that my prayer time has increased more than in the past. Once I started to change my heart, it became easier for me to draw closer to God in prayer.” How wonderful to see that Becky acknowledged how praying changed her heart. To have a changed heart is to change how a person feels, their opinion, and their intentions on how they think about something.

When Becky began this research, she expressed how difficult it was for her to fast. However, praying changed her thinking, and she could move in a different direction. Romans 12:2 says, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Jessica noted, “As far as my relationship with God, it is good. When I pray to God, it is not just to ask for things but also to talk to Him daily. I want God to be my best friend, so He can continue to strengthen my faith in Him, humbling me to have the passion and mindset of Christ.” Moreover, Ann shared, “Now that I am praying more, I am closer to God than in the past.

¹⁷⁷ Franklin, *Fasting*, 83.

Listening to God in prayer has given me the mindset of obedience to His commandments while desiring to walk, talk and imitate who I am in Christ.”

The participants’ testimonies are about how prayer and fasting have affected their lives to draw closer to God. What started as just participation became a desire to know God better. Deuteronomy 4:29 says, “But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.” The participants started seeking and desiring to have a closer relationship with God for six weeks. At the end of the six weeks, God heard their prayers.

Theme 2: Research in a Small Church

Fourteen members of a small church decided to participate at the beginning of the research study. After the participants received the proper documents and signed the consent forms, they were eager to participate in this project. Not just to help for research purposes but to learn more about praying and fasting so they could be closer to God. Having a strong desire to guide the participants on their way to developing a relationship with God made it easy for the researcher to participate with them.

Mariet Mikaelian conducted research in Southern California on various denominations from members of church-based small groups that experienced transformative learning. The primary data collected consisted of interviews with the participants. Twenty participants from six different denominations; Denomination, Presbyterian, Quaker, and Non-Denominational, and two that were kept confidential; ethnic groups from ages 25-54 consisted of Caucasian, Hispanic, Armenian, Korean, Filipino, and mixed. Mikaelian concluded, “Twenty participants emphasized the importance of the small group in fostering transformative learning and spiritual growth. One participant mentioned that the true church is a small group because they can get the rest from the

podcast. Another participant stated that sermons, church participation, and worship are enjoyable, but small groups offer growth.”¹⁷⁸

It was a challenge as a researcher to stay motivated during adversities. Motivation is easy to have at the beginning of a new project. However, it makes it challenging to keep motivated when conflict comes. A few times, there was a lack of motivation during the rough patches for the participants and the researcher. Nevertheless, the researcher persevered because this project was to help others understand that there will be difficult moments.

Christians must not give up but endure challenging moments. Having issues during the project was an expected part of the research process. These challenges taught the researcher and the participants to become overcomers. Navigating the research challenges was worth the energy to understand better the intricacies of starting any research project.

Overcoming a lack of motivation as a researcher became more apparent after speaking to the mentor. When a project becomes overwhelming, it could be due to many tasks. The mentor reminded the researcher of the milestones, making it easier to make progress and pick up the pace. As a researcher, setting short-term goals was helpful. Nevertheless, the researcher learned that each short-term goal becomes long-term progress.

After the first three weeks, Johnny, Janet, and Thomas decided not to participate in the research due to personal issues, so they withdrew. In the beginning, all the participants had instructions that they could still pray if the fast became too difficult. If the participant worked or went to school, praying at least three times at their convenience would still suffice. For some participants, this project was their first time praying and fasting. The researcher suggested they could pray short prayers by saying, “thank you, Lord; help me, Lord,” or “forgive me, Lord.”

¹⁷⁸ Mariet Mikaelian, “The Transformative Learning Experiences of Southern California Church-based Small Group Members,” *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 2 (Aug. 2018): 178.

Just three words. Short prayers will take a few seconds of their time, and God will still be honored.

All the participants needed the understanding that starting a conversation with God does not take many words. It was disappointing to begin with fourteen participants and quickly reduce to eleven. However, volunteers leaving the group was a part of the research process. Remembering that Jesus had twelve disciples brought joy into the air, as having eleven participants was like that of Jesus with His twelve disciples.

So, how did this number affect the researcher? The researcher was pleased with eleven participants; eleven was considered a blessing. As James stated in James 1:2, “Count it all joy.” The researcher begins to cry to the Lord literally and spiritually, thanking Him for the eleven participants who stayed. During weeks four through six, the participants went through various life situations but never gave up through their continued praying and fasting. This part of the research was one of the most challenging moments. However, the researcher continued to pray for them and asked God to help during this time.

From the beginning of the research, the researcher prayed for each participant individually during the morning prayer at nine am until it became habitual. For those participants who decided to leave, the researcher prayed daily for them during the remainder of the six weeks. Eleven participants remained faithful even through difficult moments. They chose to endure despite what they were going through in their personal lives. At this point, knowing that praying and fasting were helping them overcome their issues allowed the researcher to see the work of God in their life.

As a researcher watching and evaluating each participant weekly, expecting the unexpected is sometimes put on hold. Nevertheless, discouragement can occur when a participant calls and wants to leave the study. There are no words to describe that feeling.

Losing self-confidence as a researcher is not a good experience, but it can happen. It is research, and things are not always going to go the way they should. Some days it was a struggle trying not to become so overwhelmed with worry. There is great responsibility in overseeing the welfare of others. Remembering the Scripture in 1 Samuel 30 about how King David encouraged himself in the Lord was a positive approach to overcoming the struggle—aligned with a positive mindset on finishing strong and taking five to ten-minute breaks made a big difference in staying on task.

Moreover, it was a time of happiness knowing they wanted to continue to pray and fast. There was psychological stress as a researcher for the project. The fear of participants wanting to leave was always a possibility. One question in the methodological interventions pertained to what the researcher would do if someone decided not to continue. The answer was to pray for them.

Witnessing participants not wanting to participate was different. It was not just about the research; it was about keeping a small church together and staying focused on God's plan for their lives as a church. As a pastor, it hurts when others are hurting, and doing all that is possible to help. Sometimes, however, that is not good enough. Therefore, planning what to do does not have the same effect as when it actually occurs.

Participating in the research was exciting because a leader is all about leadership. Leaders should not have their followers do something they are unwilling to do. It was a significant challenge as a researcher during these six weeks. There were good times and trying times. It was

easy to relate to the participants as a researcher while participating and then watching. The researcher could relate whenever the participants went through a rough patch because the researcher was also going through similar hard times. All through it, praying and fasting helped handle all the negative energy. If the researcher had not participated, situations would be difficult. This research allowed challenges in different areas of the researcher's life that led to spiritual growth and accountability. Problem-solving is a part of life; however, no one can solve every problem.

While situations may arise, one's reaction will make a big difference. There will always be challenges that will occur during research. No matter how much material is gathered or the number of participants that sign up, there will always be issues to doubt a researcher's ability to do the job well. However, one thing that affected this researcher's heart in a good way was that eleven out of fourteen that prayed and fasted effectively continued to the end. Wanda Elaine Belvin states, "Jesus chose His twelve disciples early in His earthly ministry. He set the trend for small groups by selecting His disciples. Jesus set the example for His disciples. Matthew 18:20 informs the readers, 'For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'"¹⁷⁹ This passage encourages that there does not have to be a large gathering for the Lord to dwell among them and answer their prayers.

Theme 3: How the Research Affected the Participants

This research focused on fourteen GCGC members. The project's purpose was that GCGC could not pray and fast effectively. Three of fourteen participants decided that time was not in their favor within the first three weeks. However, the participants were excited about

¹⁷⁹ Wanda Elaine Belvin, "The Decline of Youth at Ministry Under the Sky," (D.Min. Project, Liberty University, 2022), 43. Doctoral Dissertations and Projects. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/3515>.

getting started during the first week. Each participant dealt with different issues and volunteered to participate in this project for spiritual guidance.

Each participant discussed how this research affected their spiritual growth and changed their outlook on prayer and fasting. They were very excited to volunteer and allowed to participate. Knowing how eager they were to be a part of something big felt good as a researcher.

Jackie shared how praying and fasting worked in her life when she checked out at a local grocery store. Jackie stated, “A customer behind me commented on my cart filled with fruits and vegetables and asked if I was fasting, and I replied yes. The customer was a minister and prophesized and told me about my spiritual life and that when she looked at me, she could see the Spirit of God on me.” Jackie owes it all to fasting and praying by saying, “I was amazed at what fasting is doing in my life.”

Other participants have been receiving multiple job interviews and unexpected financial blessings. Kimani stated, “The enemy instantly began attacking me during my first week of the fast. I think the enemy knows the blessings set before me.” Then Kimani began to look at life differently during the research. Kimani shared, “Being a schoolteacher; the students came up against me while fasting and praying. However, the issues with the students did not go away. Something inside me said not to teach only the subject but to teach the children regardless of how they act towards me.” Knowing that praying and fasting allowed Kimani to find good in challenges was exciting.

James welcomed prayer and fasting by stating, “Because of my situation with my family, I feel like I need to do this. I need to show some discipline for God to let Him know that I have discipline as a man of God. It makes me feel good to know that I am doing something for God

than Him doing something for me.” James wanted to change his life, not out of obligation, but to help him with his struggles with his family.

Tyrone did not understand the necessity of fasting from the beginning. However, he has seen many things change that he did not imagine since his youth. Now that Tyrone is an adult, his advice to others is, “Fasting gets results.” After praying three times a day for six weeks, he understands the concept of prayer and feels that he is praying effectively. He says, “On the days we do not fast, my family and I have not had the desire to eat meat in large quantities. Meat is not an item in the home like before the fast. I recommend fasting to those who never fasted or understood the fast and try to help them the way I understood it.”

However, fasting is not a diet. It has encouraged Tyrone and his family to eat healthier. Chris also stated, “I ate healthier foods and maintained eating fruits and vegetables.” Tyrone’s understanding of fasting was not as straightforward as it could have been. However, it did not stop him from continuing the project. As a researcher, his desire to share his experience with others is overwhelming.

Before the research, Trish did not pray often or fast. Trish stated, “Regarding the fast, I was not praying as much as I am on the fast. So, I would say it’s effective and helpful because I feel drawn to it. I have been fighting with my body and mind through spiritual warfare. Praying about it allows me to trust God more.” It was a big step for Trish because this fast was her first, and there have been physical and emotional challenges due to spiritual warfare.

The sacrifices of fasting do not compare to when Jesus fasted. As seen in Matthew 4, Jesus fasting 40 days and nights crossed her mind during the fast. Trish compared the three times the devil tempted Jesus during His fast by saying, “The three times he tempted Him, I believe it supposed [*sic*] to represent the trilogy of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” Due to this Scripture,

fasting and praying were not a problem for her. Trish explained, “This being my first fast, there have been challenges physically and emotionally. However, I need to pray more often than nine am, twelve, and six pm.” Therefore, she began praying more than three times a day.

Ann was having a difficult time praying before the research. However, Ann explains, “It is much better now. I feel the need to write my prayers rather than speak to God aloud, which has been effective. Now that I am praying more, I thank God every morning for waking up my children.” She has received unexpected monetary gifts, which are not as crucial as having peace in her life. However, Ann expresses, “I now have peace of mind, and I am becoming closer to God due to praying and fasting, and I plan to continue.” Having peace in her life is most vital to her right now.

The researcher says, “Those who participated found that praying and fasting were not a big challenge. However, it was somewhat challenging to find the time to prepare food due to working and taking care of their families or buying food due to finances.” Nevertheless, most participants would organize their food lists on the days they were not fasting to be ready for the following week.

Sarah prays more now than before the research and reads her Bible often. Before the project, Sarah says, “I did not feel like my praying was effective, but many great things have happened to me since the research. I can feel God listening to me since I have been praying and fasting. And I feel good inside and out.” Hearing how Sarah calls on God when facing temptations was a joy. Then Sarah wrote in her journal, “When fasting, I found it challenging not to eat certain foods. Then I started praying and asked God to help me with all the temptations I was going through, and prayer became easier. Fasting is easier now.”

There will be challenges when a Christian dedicates one's life to God. Sarah said, "I found it difficult to wake up on time for praying, but I found a quick solution." In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul wrote, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." God will make a way of escape from temptations. The participant is now having a genuine unconditional relationship with God. Sarah said, "I now have a more family type, daughter-dad, relationship that I cannot explain. Whenever I talk to God, it makes me happy." However, she noted that her financial issues have been cleared due to fasting and praying. The first week was hard for Sarah with fasting. Sarah stated, "I cheated on the second day of the fast. And I was scared because of the promise I had made to God. I asked for forgiveness and continued the fast that same day. The same week, God blessed me financially." Because of being obedient to God, Sarah was blessed financially and rejoiced to say, "I was happy to participate in this research. It was a decision made because I wanted to be closer to God. I am happy to have a great teacher who teaches me the Bible and how to pray." It is overwhelming to know that Sarah appreciates the researcher and enjoys the life that fasting and praying provide her. Becky was also having issues financially. Becky stated, "Even though my financial issues remain the same, praying gives me a sense of security." Becky's testimony is a sign of faith. Even though her financial problems are not solved, she will continue praying because it makes her feel safe in the arms of Jesus.

The participants have been affected by the research. Their testimonies will hopefully help others who desire to pray and fast effectively. Chris expressed how he felt closer to God and that He was listening to his needs more often. Chris stated, "Having many things going on in my life,

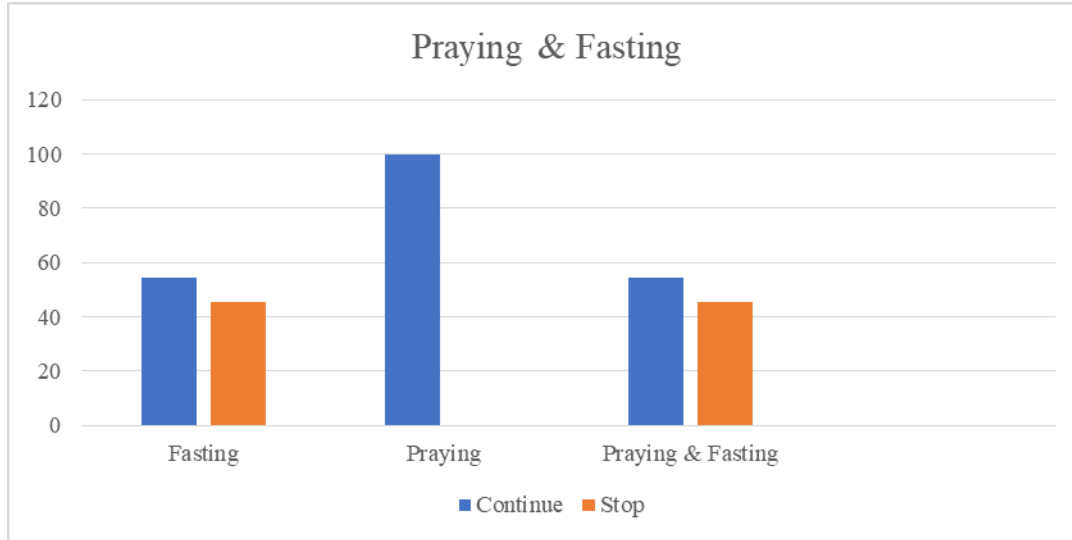
I prayed at least once weekly. However, I found the fast easier than praying often.” Not as many participants found fasting more effective than praying less. Chris was an exception.

Jessica had a beautiful experience at work during her first-week prayer fast. Jessica expressed, “I asked God for more work hours, which the manager said was impossible due to decreased customers. But it happened during her first week of fasting and praying. When I looked at schedule, I had more hours.” Miracles happen when you give God time He deserves.

Then there was Luke, who had difficulty when it came to fasting. Luke shared, “At times, hunger tried to overcome my will. But denying the body food helped me no longer have an appetite or want anything in substitution. Fasting challenged my appetite that nothing could fill this hole in my stomach but God.” To hear Luke say nothing could feel his hunger except God was amazing. Then Luke stated, “While praying, I feel whole; the anger, frustration, and hunger went away by filling up with the Word of God. Even when being challenged, praying helps me feel at peace.” The Scripture that God will keep us in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Jesus, came to mind (Isa 26:3).

Figure 2 below shows the percentage of participants and anticipated continuation rates to praying and fasting. Regarding praying, 100% agreed to continue after the research; 55% agreed to continue fasting; 45% did not want to fast again, and 55% chose to continue to pray and fast.

Figure 2: Praying & Fasting Resolution



Theme 4: Relationships that Evolved During the Research

Relationships with the participants grew stronger each week at the meetings. The meetings were scheduled for one hour each week. The participants enjoyed them, so the meetings were extended to two hours. Because some participants worked, there were two different times on the same day. Participants who came to the first meeting often returned for the second.

One participant took a leave of absence from work to focus on the research. It was impressive and unique that a participant was willing to make a sacrifice to get closer to God. The participant felt it would be difficult to pray often and eat the food needed at work without being tempted to eat other things.

Some participants were going through health issues, and through praying together, everyone became closer. The participants became mindful of others during the meetings. Whoever led prayer would pray for a participant they remembered having health problems or other issues. Those participating in the research started becoming more like a family and found it easier to address their struggles.

Every participant learned how to pray and fast effectively by consistently praying daily and fasting often. Having a scheduled time allowed them to stay focused on God. Writing down Scriptures that pertain to their specific needs and praying them back to God was an exercise to teach them how to be effective in prayer.

The meetings allowed the participants to ask questions and encourage one another. Each week a participant opened up the meeting with prayer while another closed. When the participants had their interviews, they prayed at the end. Every time a participant would call the researcher, the researcher asked if they wanted to pray. In this way, each participant was encouraged to pray each week. Praying aloud was the primary difficulty at GCGC. Some participants volunteered to pray during the meetings, which would help inspire others to pray openly.

Participants prayed three times a day for seven days and fasted three days per week to develop the habit. The project was something new and challenging for them. Participants were arranging their lives to do something they did not understand entirely with a desire to get closer to God.

As time passed, the participants saw changes in their lives by praying and fasting each week and enjoyed sharing their accomplishments to help encourage one another. The final meeting was very heartfelt. No one wanted the research to end. Each participant, however, was encouraged to pray for everyone during the final meeting. The final meeting felt like a prayer revival and was successful. Every participant left the meeting crying out to God. As the researcher, it was a joy knowing that GCGC would not find it difficult to pray when asked.

Those who participated may not have received all the answers they sought, but that does not mean God was silent. There was no question whether an event happened because of their

prayer. On this topic, C.S. Lewis shares, "When the event you prayed for occurs, your praying has always contributed to it. When the opposite event occurs, your prayer has never been ignored; it has been considered and refused for your ultimate good and the good of the whole universe. But this is, and must remain, a matter of faith."¹⁸⁰

Even when it came to His physical appetite, Jesus often fasted for long periods without food to release His spiritual power. Chavda stated, "God tends to show up in His glory and power whenever and wherever His people set themselves to pray and fast before Him."¹⁸¹ The *Daniel Fast* is modeled after the fast seen in Daniel 1:12 and 10:3. Daniel's love for God led him to be obedient by eating foods that connected him to a closer relationship with God. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that has lost its way. This model helps clear the mind, body, and soul to give in to God.

The researcher was amazed by the eleven participants who volunteered their time to participate in the research. "And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them; Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). This Scripture shows us that Jesus is not demanding people to follow Him, but only those who want to deny their flesh. These eleven participants decided to take the time to get closer to God. During this time, relationships with each other evolved. The most important relationship, however, is the closeness they receive with God.

Everyone did not get the same results when they prayed and fasted because each participant sought something different from God. Will everyone get results? Yes. The results will be, hearing from God immediately, waiting for an answer, or He may say no. First John 5:14

¹⁸⁰ Lewis, *How to Pray*, 17.

¹⁸¹ Chavda, *The Hidden Power of Prayer & Fasting*, 141.

says, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.” God does answer prayers. In Acts 16, Paul, and Silas, wanted to go to Asia and preach the gospel, and God said no. However, His answer was yes to going to Macedonia. Then in Acts 12, when the Christians were praying for the release of Peter from jail, God answered their request immediately.

Nevertheless, each participant developed a relationship with others as Jesus developed a relationship with the disciples. As a researcher, seeing the participants open up to each other gave them the hope they needed later to go out and pray for others. More importantly, the relationship that evolved was with God. One of the questions asked on the questionnaire was, “What is your relationship with God?” As a researcher listening to the final meeting and hearing them cry out during the last prayer, it was evident that their relationship with Him had evolved.

Summary of Results

This research showed that prayer and fasting, when applied together, strengthen and restore relationships with God, drawing one closer to Him. As a researcher, asking the question, “Why do you believe in God?” was a way to examine the participant’s beliefs. For a relationship with God to grow in their life, they first must consider and trust in Him. Therefore, eleven participants fasted three days per week and prayed three times a day for six weeks.

All the participants, however, trusted that God listened to them while they prayed. That trust brought them closer to God in six weeks than when they first began. Each participant has developed a closer relationship with God, hearing from Him in their own way. One participant named Jackie stated, “Fasting has allowed me to make a sacrifice to my flesh, and by doing this, I have become closer to God, especially when I pray. GOD HAS HEARD MY CRY!” Another participant named Tyrone explained, “After completing the research, my head is on a smooth

and balanced level, leading to righteousness with Him. The more righteous I became, God, drew closer."

It is impactful for other churches to see how research in a small church can help others understand that when praying and fasting are applied together, they can change one's spiritual walk and draw one closer to God. Furthermore, the participants opened up due to the meetings, and relationships evolved. During the sessions, one participant would open up with prayer while another would close.

As a researcher, it was indeed an experience that will never be forgotten—knowing that eleven participants of a small church decided to give six weeks of their life to build a closer relationship with God. How can a person foster a relationship without talking to someone or someone talking back? In this research, the participants used prayer as a way of communication and fasting as a spiritual detox so they could hear and receive the presence of God. That is how one becomes effective in praying and fasting.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This research aimed to demonstrate how prayer and fasting can draw one closer to God. When the participants answered why they believed in God, some said they were taught early by their parents through church and personal experience. John Rajanayakam stated, “When we pray for a child and teach a child to pray, we are planting the seed for future praying families and generations. Prayer is a discipline that needs to be practiced. A child must be trained to pray so much that it becomes their first response, even as they pursue other options.”¹⁸²

Knowing how to pray as a child was the start of being effective in praying and fasting. Believing in the existence of God was the beginning of having a personal relationship with Him. However, to have a relationship, one must communicate. The research taught that prayer is communication with God, while fasting is a spiritual detox. Nevertheless, prayer is not just communicating with God for oneself but interceding for others. Frank C. Laubach says,

If you pray for a man a thousand miles away, his unconscious mind may be attuned outward toward you at that very moment. If so, he will get your prayer, which may start a desire for God in him. Desire is what tunes men into God. If you thus help turn a man toward God, you perform the service of a telephone operator; you connect the man with God. That helps God to speak to him directly.¹⁸³

Each participant did exceptionally well. They understood the purpose of fasting and why they should pray often. However, suppose someone wanted to replicate this research. In that case, the study could be enhanced by developing a Bible study curriculum and offering additional information on prayer and more details on the nutritional benefits of the Daniel Fast. Offering added information on fasting and prayer in research could help one exceed their goal.

¹⁸² John Rajanayakam, *Crosswind: A Runbook on Praying for Children* (Bloomington, IN: WesBow Press, 2022), Ch. 1.

¹⁸³ Frank C. Laubach, *Prayer: The Mightiest Force in the World* (ProQuest Ebook Central: Burtyrki Books, 2020), 24.

There are many reasons to pray and fast. In Matthew 4:1-2, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He prayed and fasted for 40 days and nights. Jesus did not succumb to the devil's temptations through prayer and fasting. Prayer and fasting can help fight strongholds when tempted by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Prayer is a way to communicate with God and build a closer relationship with Him. It is also a command by God in Luke 18:1 that believers should always pray and never give up. Jesus teaches that praying is trusting in God. The Bible explains what to do and why one should do it. Fasting is voluntary and mainly practiced in the OT. Jesus did not fast often. The only Scripture of Him fasting is Matthew 4 when the disciples could not cast out a demonic spirit from a young man. Why? Because the disciples were weak in their faith. Jesus explained in Matthew 17 that their belief could be strengthened only through praying and fasting.

If the world sees how removing certain foods can be helpful to the body through a spiritual viewpoint, it could bring those who are doubtful to God. Dineva, Krasteva, and Chankova stated, "Fasting is an intriguing issue that offers many perspectives for people not only within but also without the monastery walls. Food-restricted behavior as practiced in Orthodox Christianity shall be considered as beneficial for people's health and, as such, it can reveal a lot of additional spiritual values for non-believers."¹⁸⁴ Therefore fasting can be seen as a worldview example of the church helping with health issues, which can lead non-believers to Christ.

Praying and fasting also allows one to be humble before God. It is not humility before Him but expressing humility. Psalm 35:13 shows fasting and praying as self-humbling in the presence of God. That, being created in His image, nothing can be done without Him. Moreover,

¹⁸⁴ Teodora Kiryakova-Dineva, Ruska Krasteva and Yana Chankova, "Synergetic Effects Between Fasting, Well-Being and Anti-Consumption." *British food journal* 121, no. 7 (June 2019): 1467.

fasting creates a dependence on God and not on the self. Philippians 4:13 reads, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

The three reasons Christians fast are communicating with God, building faith, and becoming humble. The Gospel of Luke informs one how to be humble before God and not self-centered. Catherine J. Wright wrote, “When we live out of a false self, we are reduced to a life of petty competitiveness and anxious attempts to bolster our honor and importance in society and even with God. Luke’s ideal of humility centers around a true sense of oneself in relationship to God.”¹⁸⁵

This is why creating Bible study material would be essential for anyone seeking more information about the topic. Starting a Bible study program with enough material to teach participants the meaning of fasting and praying would have given this research more substance. The second would be to relieve financial burdens by partnering with food banks to help with the cost of food.

Research Implications

In a study of 109 Muslim athletes aged eighteen to twenty-three, seventy-five men and thirty-four women participated in fasting during Ramadan 2019. The athletes fasted for twenty-nine or thirty consecutive days according to their belief in the Quran. This research was to examine coping strategies during the fast. During this time, the athletes could eat two meals daily without food or beverage restrictions at night; the first meal after sunset and the smaller meal before dawn. All the participants continued their usual training during Ramadan, from May 5th to June 3rd, 2019. Each participant was provided with a questionnaire on self-coping strategies. Djemai, Hammad, Qarra, and Dabayebbeh stated, “Seventy percent of athletes found that they

¹⁸⁵ Catherine J. Wright, *Spiritual Practices of Jesus: Learning Simplicity, Humility, and Prayer with Luke’s Earliest Readers* (ProQuest Ebook Central: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 67.

developed good or very good coping mechanisms. Most (59%) of the athletes said they were psychologically prepared for the potential effects of fasting. This research shows that athletes develop self-adjusting strategies to counter the effects of fasting.”¹⁸⁶

The article by Allison Collier was to reclaim the discipline of fasting from a Baptist viewpoint and learn the appreciation of food. For many Baptist churches, fasting is an uncommon practice. Collier believes that fasting should be in a congregational setting with the knowledge that fasting, prayer, and almsgiving are disciplines that should always be together. One of the problems was gluttony. Because of world hunger and overeating, the Baptist church sought common ground between the two.¹⁸⁷

Food is something to be desired by God and not overindulged. Collier stated, “When congregations learn to acknowledge the goodness of food and temper their desires, they will find the discipline of fasting results in drawing individuals closer into a relationship with God and equipping congregations to enter into Christ’s suffering and to share in his compassion toward others.”¹⁸⁸ Fasting, prayer, and almsgiving are disciplines that should always be put together and done in a congregational setting. Collier believes denying the body of food is a spiritual discipline that could help with gluttony. There is a need to learn the theology behind the practice of fasting, and it would be feasible for pastors to lead a Bible study on fasting or even incorporate a sermon.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Haidar Djemai, Rami Hammad, Salem Al Qarra, and Ibrahim M. Dabayebbeh, “Self-Coping Strategies Among Jordanian Athletes During Ramadan Fasting: A Questionnaire Proposal,” *Asian Journal of Sports Medicine* 11, no. 4 (December 2020): 1-2.

¹⁸⁷ Allison Collier, “Fasting: A Congregational Call for Baptists to Reclaim a Neglected,” *USA Review and Expositor* 117, no. 4 (November 2020) 464, 466.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Collier, “Fasting: A Congregational Call...,” 468, 472.

The research of the 109 Muslim athletes discussed by Haidar Djemai differed from GCGC because they had time to prepare psychologically and nutritionally. Ramadan is a Muslim fast that is celebrated every year at the same time. Therefore, it is traditional for their culture to be prepared for this time of the year. The fact is that these young men and women were trained athletes who knew how to prepare their bodies for sacrifice. However, when one compares the time both research groups spent fasting and praying, GCGC spent 12 days longer.

GCGC participants were unique because they were not athletic or did not have a year to prepare their minds and bodies. However, while fasting, prayer became their spiritual food, which gave them the strength to persevere and have the mindset to complete the research and build a closer relationship with God.

In the article, Collier expresses how the Baptist church deemed it necessary to practice fasting in one place as a congregation. The opportunity of fasting was not often; therefore, the Baptist church found it difficult to understand the purpose. Because of their eating problem with gluttony, the fast was to help with spiritual discipline. The uniqueness here is that GCGC participants practiced in their homes, and their situation was not overeating. However, having weekly meetings gave them a congregational setting that allowed them to suffer together as though they were under the same roof. Nevertheless, the Baptist church and GCGC had one expected quality, the need to create a Bible study to understand prayer and fasting better.

The researcher learned that many people have differences and communicate with God uniquely. However, because those who participated in the research had the same problem, it brought everyone closer, as stated in the literature review, with unity. Chapter 2 discussed that when people humble themselves before God and others, it will be easier to pray for one another and pray together. The meetings allowed the participants to build strength by encouraging and

praying for each other for healing and not giving up on the research and other essential things. Furthermore, participants gained a sense of purpose because God answered their prayers, which confirms that they are powerful tools when prayer and fasting are combined.

Research Applications

Many people do not understand the purpose of praying and fasting together. This research is an example of how to apply the two for a closer relationship with God, strength, and healing in the mind, body, and soul. Anyone who would like to replicate this research for spiritual growth can see that the results aligned with the purpose that resulted in a personal relationship with God. The participants developed a closer and more intimate relationship with Him through prayer and fasting. Furthermore, many desired to continue fasting, while others acknowledged that prayer was needed more in their life.

The methods used were praying three times a day and fasting three days per week for six weeks. The results may be different if those replicating use other fasting methods and vary the length of time of the research. Different types of fasts are available, which could alter the results. Some plans are a complete fast, with no food or water, like the research Franklin discussed of Dr. Tanner, who fasted for 50 days and saw the glory of God. A denial fast is removing something one loves, like watching television or being on social media while still eating. Though the results may alter, the desire should be the same: developing a closer relationship with God to fulfill His plan and purpose.

While assessing this research, one must continue praying and fasting to strengthen one's relationship with God. To be effective in this topic, one must continue to seek His guidance daily. Prayer is something one should do without ceasing. In developing a relationship with anyone, communication is essential. The purpose is to be inseparable from God.

Research Limitations

The research limitations did not have too much impact on the results. Some rules needed to be in place. Making notes about what could occur to prepare the mind was helpful to the researcher. Fourteen participants volunteered at the beginning, and eleven chose to continue. Attrition was expected. However, it was a blessing that there were enough who wanted to continue and that it did not affect the outcome of the results.

One unexpected thing was that some participants had multiple work shifts. One participant was a truck driver on the road at different times. Another was a nurse with a rotating schedule, and her off days varied. Therefore, the researcher had to schedule two weekly meetings to accommodate those who could not attend. However, the other participants who participated in the first meeting would volunteer and return to the second one for support, evidence that being a small church builds closer relationships.

Further Research

Create Bible Study Material

In taking part in research, it is significant to know all the specifics. When the participants volunteered to pray three times a day and fast three times each week, they had limited knowledge of why it is of great value to pray and fast together. Second Timothy 2:15 reads, “**Study to show thyself approved** unto God,” which means the participants should work hard and do their best. Each of them did their best; however, a documented Bible study could have enhanced the research experience and results. It is crucial to study the Word of God. Dwight L. Moody says, “If we feed on the Word of God, it would be easy to speak to others about the Word of God, and

not only that, but we will also be growing in grace the entire time, and others will notice the change in our walk and conversation.”¹⁹⁰

Each week there was a meeting where the participants encouraged each other and discussed their progress. During the meeting, Tyrone mentioned, "It was difficult to understand some of the questions on the questionnaire." His reply made it more apparent that Bible material was needed. This statement prompted the researcher to conclude that for future studies to be more successful, Bible study material should be included. The researcher could have implemented time to research the Scriptures during the meetings and encourage one another.

On the pre-praying fasting questionnaire, the participants were asked, “What is your understanding of prayer?” Trish responded that prayer was “Communication with our Father in Heaven through Christ with the assistance of the Holy Ghost.” Kimani said, “Prayer is a relationship and communication between God and humanity.” James stated that prayer is “Praying to God.” Tyrone believed prayer to be “Communication with God.” Thomas’s understanding of prayer is “Sending a message to God: Pretty much like He’s lending an ear as our creator to listen to His children.” Ann mentioned, “Prayer is a way to talk with God to give you strength and healing.” Sarah responded, “My understanding of prayer is sending a message by talking to Jesus so He can relay it to God.” Jessica explained, “My understanding of prayer is a conversation to get in touch with God.” Chris said, “Letting God know you believe in Him, and He is someone you can talk to when there is nobody that will listen or understand you.” Becky wrote that “Prayer is to talk to God and a way to connect.” Luke said, “Prayer to me is the endless line of communication we have with God. Also, prayer is meant for reflection on

¹⁹⁰ Dwight L. Moody, *How to Study the Bible: Updated Edition* (Aneko Press, 2017), 4.

wrongdoings. A means to not only reflect but change." Jackie reflected by saying, "Praying is to tell God what you want and need, and to protect us against the enemy."

Everything the participants described that prayer means to them is true. Praying is communicating with God. However, prayer has to do with more than just communication. There is more to be taught about praying, such as why it is necessary to have a relationship with God. What do we receive from God when we pray? What is the purpose of praying? Is praying in private different from praying with others? Is praying more than just telling God about problems and getting closer? Having Bible study material would answer these questions and aid more in the research.

Since GCGC is a small church, implementing a Bible study plan would have been easy to begin. Each week, the participants would have an opportunity to know why God wants prayer in their life. Not just to build a relationship with Him but relationships with one another. Although relationships evolved during the research, learning to pray for one another would have affected the church considerably. Creating a Bible study with quality material could teach them how to pray for each other. Moreover, they will know how to pray for others when they go out to make disciples.

Another question in the research was, "Have you ever fasted or know any Scriptures on fasting?" Five of the eleven participants stated that it was their first time fasting, and they did not have any knowledge of Scripture about the topic. It is vital to create Bible study material for this reason. Scripture is essential when praying and fasting. Prayer and fasting exist throughout the Bible for different reasons. Praying the Scriptures should be constant in every prayer. In Nehemiah 9, the Israelite's prayer quotes other parts of the Bible when they confess their sins. Also, in Matthew 27 and Mark 15, when Jesus died on the cross, He prayed to His Father, "My

God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" That Scripture is also found in Psalm 22. If Jesus quoted God's Word on the cross, it must be significant when praying. Scripture glorifies God the Father.¹⁹¹

Having Bible study material is not an option. Going through this research is the only way to come to this conclusion. It would have been practical to have material on the topic at the beginning, which is why it is an idea now. However, anyone seeking to duplicate this research can take this information to continue the process.

It is easy to get off track and lose focus on what to pray for. To get closer to God, the participants could have focused more on thanking and glorifying Him and not just on things they needed or wanted. Praying using Scripture while fasting helps one stay focused on prayer. Having Bible study material available would allow for all these ideas to be taught, and the participant's prayers could bring them closer to God. This advice will help the next person do so much more when it comes to praying and fasting. Creating a Bible study with suitable material will be excellent for anyone attempting to duplicate this research.

Fasting was also an issue for some of the participants. As mentioned earlier, for some, it was their first time. Many did not understand the Daniel Fast and why it was chosen instead of a complete fast or what types of food they could eat. Many different types of fasts could have been implemented during the research. One main reason a complete fast was not chosen is not knowing if the participants had any medical issues or if they were on any medication that would not allow them to be without food. Nevertheless, any fast will be sufficient for God with the right intentions.

¹⁹¹ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 197.

The researcher chose the Daniel Fast because they can eat various fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, herbs, spices, seasonings including salt and pepper, oils, such as coconut, olive, sesame, nuts, seeds, water, and 100% fruit juice. The researcher provided each participant with a Daniel Fast food list. However, Bible study material explaining these various food groups would have been helpful. Also, making it clear that participants could eat as many fruits and vegetables as they wanted would have been helpful. Since this was the participants first time eating foods a different way, additional material would have been helpful. Therefore, the researcher thought creating a Bible study curriculum would benefit.

Bible Study Curriculum

A Bible curriculum provides a better understanding of the Scriptures so that those attempting to replicate this research will have a better understanding of the topic.

A. Organizing

1. Make clear the purpose of the Bible study.
2. Identify Scriptures on the topic.
3. Define the desired outcome for those participating in the research.
4. Stay focused on the theme that is being studied.
5. Organize and structure the Bible study. Make sure the time and days are consistent.

The purpose of the Bible study is to learn more about prayer and fasting. The outcome is the desire to communicate more with God through prayer and fasting by identifying Scriptures on the topic and learning how to pray for others. At the same time, understanding and learning which Scriptures can be used in praying.

B. Steps for Expounding Scripture

1. Pray. Before researching and applying Scripture, Bible study must begin with prayer.

2. Ask the questions: What is prayer and fasting? When, why, and how do we pray and fast?
3. Answer the questions with God's truth and not opinion.
4. Keep a journal of all Scriptures studied to be remembered.

Praying before researching the Scriptures can help clear the mind and allow God's wisdom and knowledge of what He desires people to learn from the Scriptures. When examining the Scriptures of fasting and praying, choose at least five Scriptures on each topic. Siegbert W. Becker says to study the Bible requires specific tools: "There are certain basic tools that we need to study Scripture. First, we need a Bible. The next most important tool is a language dictionary and concordance. And as you read the Scriptures, underline the passages which have special meaning for us. Underlining them will help to fix them in our memory."¹⁹²

Everyone should have the same version of the Bible to make it easier to study, preferably the King James Version, because it is widely used, along with a version of their choice. Understanding the Bible, however, can be challenging. A version that breaks the Scriptures down will make it simple for the reader. Having a computer or tablet for digital versions of the Bible makes it easy to look up other resources online. A Bible dictionary or concordance helps to look up words. Keeping a journal or notebook is valuable in writing down Scriptures and comments.

Six-week Bible Plan

Week 1: What Does the Bible Say about Prayer?

Luke 4:1-4

Mark 1:35

Key Words: Overcoming Temptation – Quote Scriptures in Praying – Persistence – Private Prayer

¹⁹² Siegbert W. Becker, *"How to Study Your Bible."*

Week 2: What Does the Bible say about Fasting?

Exodus 13:3

Daniel 1:12-15 and 10:2-3

Key Words: Fasting – Eating Unleavened Bread – Daniel Fast – Healthy Living

Week 3: How Do You Fast and Pray Biblically?

The Lord's Prayer Matthew 6:5-15

Fasting Matthew 6:16-18

Key Words: Pray with humility and passion – Fast in secret

Week 4: What Is the Daniel Fast?

Daniel 1:8

Key Words: Defile the body, fruits, and vegetables.

Week 5: How Can Prayer and Fasting Change Your Life?

Isaiah 58:5-9

Week 6: Summary

Search for Scriptures that apply to your situation.

Write the Scripture in your journal.

Apply the Scriptures to your prayer while fasting.

The Bible does not give too much detail about the types of foods that Daniel ate (see Figure 3 below). A nutrition list for the Daniel Fast is helpful when deciding what to eat. Daniel R. Hyde says, “Christian fasting is a religious abstaining from food or any other legitimate provision of God for a set period. What is the purpose of this practice? Fasting humbles the body

and soul before God as an aid to draw near to Him in prayer. Apart from prayer, fasting is of no benefit.”¹⁹³

Researching the Scriptures will give a Christian answers from God concerning prayer. Jack and Judy Hartman stated, "You have been given the privilege of going directly to God in prayer at any time. God already knows every need that you have. '...the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought....' (I Chronicles 28:9 NIV)".¹⁹⁴ He hears every prayer and desire. John Starke said,

Prayer changes us by shrinking the gap between who we are and who we long to become in Christ. We are neither saved nor sanctified by good habits, but certain habits put us in the way of transformation and change. The practice of prayer consists of primary rhythms (communion, meditation, and solitude) and secondary rhythms (Sabbath resting, fasting and feasting, and corporate worship).¹⁹⁵

This is the reason it is essential to study the Bible.

There were two sermons Christ preached on the mountainside. The Beatitudes and The Lord’s Prayer. The Beatitudes are in Matthew 5, and The Lord’s Prayer is in Matthew 6, where Jesus taught how to pray and fast. The Daniel Fast is a portion of time when one temporarily abstains from certain foods and drinks to have a closer relationship with God.

This Bible study curriculum guides anyone attempting to duplicate this research. It shows how to organize an educational program, what to expound on before starting, the right tools to use, the Scriptures, and how to apply them when praying and fasting. This curriculum can help

¹⁹³ Daniel R. Hyde, *Why Should I Fast?* (ProQuest Ebook Central: Reformation Heritage Books 2015), Ch. 1.

¹⁹⁴ Jack Hartman and Judy Hartman, *Effective Prayer: Releasing God's Mighty Power* (ProQuest Ebook Central: Lamplight Ministries, 2019), Ch. 1.

¹⁹⁵ John Starke, *The Possibility of Prayer: Finding Stillness with God in a Restless World* (ProQuest Ebook Central: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 93-94.

future participants learn to brainstorm, reflect, pray, fast, and seek the voice of God as they seize the understanding of their purpose of praying and fasting.

Figure 3: The Daniel Fast Guide



Foods to include in your eating plan during the Daniel Fast

All fruits. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Fruits include but are apples, apricots, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cantaloupe, cherries, cranberries, figs, grapefruit, grapes, guava, honeydew melon, kiwi, lemons, limes, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, papayas, peaches, pears, pineapples, plums, prunes, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tangelos, tangerines, watermelon.

All vegetables. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Vegetables include but are artichokes, asparagus, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chili peppers, collard greens, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, ginger root, kale, leeks, lettuce, mushrooms, mustard greens, okra, onions, parsley, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, scallions, spinach, sprouts, squashes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, watercress, yams, zucchini, veggie burgers are an option if you are not allergic to soy.

All whole grains, including whole wheat, brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats, barley, grits, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat tortillas, rice cakes and popcorn.

All nuts and seeds, including sunflower seeds, cashews, peanuts, sesame. Also nut butters including peanut butter.

All legumes. These can be canned or dried. Legumes include dried beans, pinto beans, split peas, lentils, black eyed peas, kidney beans, black beans, cannellini beans, white beans.

All quality oils including olive, canola, grape seed, peanut, and sesame.

Beverages: spring water, distilled water or other pure waters.

Other: tofu, soy products, vinegar, seasonings, salt, herbs and spices.

Note: Unsweetened plant-based milks and juices can be used in recipes or on cereal, but the only beverage on the Daniel Fast is water.

Be blessed on your fast.

Partner With Food Banks

One of the obstacles mentioned by the participants was not being able to afford the food used for fasting. Participants with large families found it challenging to purchase food for their household and food for the fasting portion of the research. During week one, Sarah wrote in her journal:

On the first day, I did mess up on the fasting part, but other than that, I think I did good. As a result of my fasting and prayer, my blessings have been flowing. First, I did complete the rest of my fasting and prayer, which is what I prayed for since the only thing in my house was oranges, applesauce, potatoes, and water. Then my tax return happened to be more than expected.

It was great news that Sarah received her taxes. However, the need to assist with the food portion of this research was evident. Due to rising prices in food, fruits and vegetables are costly.

Produce is the leading food required for the Daniel Fast. One option the researcher suggested would be to go to local food banks to see if they would offer support in aiding a church fasting program. Fresh produce is not always available, but canned vegetables could be a substitute.

Food banks usually warehouse an enormous amount of food in their community. The researcher would team up with local food banks in the participants' area to make arrangements for picking up the food needed for the research. According to Feeding America, 51% of food banks rely on people to volunteer. Food programs help millions of people find food and grocery help in their communities by inputting their zip codes. They have food banks in the community to help those who need food.¹⁹⁶

As a researcher, partnering up with the local food bank as a volunteer would also be helpful. Canice Prendergast stated, "Food banks exist to serve the marginalized; often those the

¹⁹⁶ Feeding America, "Hunger in America," <https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank>. (accessed July 15, 2022).

market economy has left behind.”¹⁹⁷ If the local food banks can help feed people in the community and assist with the research, volunteering is a commitment worth sacrificing for the participants. The researcher will be helping others in the community through volunteering. It would be rewarding to partner with a worthwhile cause. When inputting the zip code in the researcher’s local area, the food bank was Greater Chicago Food Depository.

Another concept would be to partner with churches in the community that may also have food pantries. The church would understand the importance of fasting and praying and may offer their services. The names of churches in the area with food pantries are Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, and St. Paul Lutheran Church Food Pantry. Also, the local township has a food pantry. The number of food pantries was over 700 in Cook county. Many resources can be accessed online or by visiting a local food bank to obtain information on how to apply for or discuss a partnership. Whatever is necessary to help to improve this research is worth the time.

The researcher visited two local food banks in the community exploring how to partner with them and gathering information for anyone seeking to duplicate this research with anticipated participants. The first is called The Pantry, and the second is St. Irenaeus Church. When visiting The Pantry, the researcher stated the purpose of the visit and the nature of the research. The director, Ms. Jones, was delighted to assist with information to help with future studies. Ms. Jones explained that if someone required food, they were welcome to visit any food bank in their area. The director gave a list of all the areas covered in the county to anyone who may require food for research and a permanent resource. Ms. Jones mentioned that The Pantry was a no-contact drive-thru due to COVID restrictions. The day and time are every Tuesday and

¹⁹⁷ Canice Prendergast, “How Food Banks Use Markets to Feed the Poor,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 4 (2017), 149.

Thursday, from one pm until three pm. Patrons can obtain non-perishable food, fresh produce, dairy products, meat, and even personal care items.

Due to the nature of the research consisting of a fast, with the primary source of food being fresh produce, the researcher inquired if the participants could readily obtain fruits and vegetables. Ms. Jones stated that The Pantry donates free produce on the second Friday of every month, from ten am until noon, for anyone during July through the first week of December.

The researcher asked the director what information was needed for anyone seeking to duplicate this research. Ms. Jones explained that anticipated participants were to fill out a form (see Figure 4 below) containing their name, address, source of income, and phone number to receive food and produce.

Furthermore, Ms. Jones mentioned that The Pantry receives its food from the Greater Chicago Food Depository, which the researcher stated earlier. The director suggested visiting the website and inputting a zip code to locate local food pantries in local communities. Before leaving The Pantry, the researcher thanked Ms. Jones for the time spent and for helping any churches seeking to start a fasting program.

The researcher visited St. Irenaeus Church to understand their food bank distribution process. Registration was much easier here than at The Pantry. All that was needed to sign up was identification stating that the address was registered in the community and the number of household members so the food could be distributed according to household size. The church will issue a card with all the member's information for future visits. The researcher signed up and received a card to see how simple it was. St. Irenaeus Church services nine zip codes in the area. They are open Mondays, from nine am to one pm, and Thursdays, from two pm to six pm.

They also donate non-perishable food, fresh produce, dairy products, and meat on the first Friday of the month.

Figure 4: Food Pantry Document

The image displays two documents side-by-side. On the left is a registration form for 'The Pantry of Rich Township, Inc.' with fields for client name, address, household size, and household members. On the right is a promotional sign for a 'FREE FOOD PANTRY' held every Tuesday and Thursday from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM. The sign lists items received: non-perishable food, fresh produce, dairy products, meat, and personal care items, with a note that items are subject to availability. It also includes a contact instruction for those needing assistance or more information.

Registration Form Fields:

- Date of Visit: _____
- *Client Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____
- Gender (Circle): Male Female Other (Specify) _____
- *Address: _____ City/Zip Code: _____
- *Are you currently on Medicaid? (Circle) Yes No
- *Are you a member of the United Way Food Bank Assistance Program (UWAP)? Yes No
- *Are you receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)? Yes No
- *Are there any special needs? _____
- Household Size (H): _____ Telephone: _____
- call home
- Household Members:
- Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____
- Gender (Circle): Male Female Other (Specify) _____
- Relationship to you: _____
- Address (Circle): Adult Elderly Student Veteran Disabled Other _____
- Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____
- Gender (Circle): Male Female Other (Specify) _____
- Relationship to you: _____
- Address (Circle): Adult Elderly Student Veteran Disabled Other _____

Promotional Sign Text:

Rich Township
The Pantry
of Rich Township, Inc.

FREE FOOD PANTRY

NO CONTACT DRIVE-THRU
EVERY TUESDAY & THURSDAY
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

You will receive: Non-perishable food, fresh produce, dairy products, meat, and personal care items depending on availability.

Please let us know if you need baby food, formula or incontinence supplies.

If you need assistance or more information, please call _____

Some food banks may assist anyone attempting to duplicate this research and needing non-perishable food. Therefore, it would be feasible to investigate food banks before conducting the research. The researcher was amazed at the friendly service of both The Pantry and St. Irenaeus Church for assisting with their time, information, and donations. However, the researcher has decided to continue to fast periodically with GCGC and has partnered with St. Irenaeus.

APPENDIX A

Permission Request

January 10, 2022

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a research project to understand how to pray and fast effectively. The title of this project is “The Effectiveness of Praying and Fasting.” This project aims to teach the importance of how to pray and fast effectively. And to build a closer relationship with God and each other.

I am requesting your permission to contact God’s Chosen Generation Church members to invite them to participate in this project.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older. They will be asked to complete the attached survey and contact me to schedule an interview. The data will be used to develop strategies to help find a resolution. Participants will be presented with informed consent information before the start of the study. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to [REDACTED]. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Encl: 2

APPENDIX B

Permission Response Letter

January 10, 2022

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

After a careful review of your project proposal entitled “The Effectiveness of Praying and Fasting,” we have decided to grant you permission to contact members and invite them to participate in your research.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- We will provide our membership list to Pastor Estes, and Pastor Estes may use the list to contact our members to invite them to participate in her project.
- We grant permission for Pastor Estes to contact God’s Chosen Generation Church members and invite them to participate in her project.
- We will not provide potential participant information to [REDACTED], but we agree to provide her research information to members of God’s Chosen Generation Church on her behalf.
- We request a copy of the results upon research completion or publication.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Email/Letter

January 22, 2022

Participants Address

Dear Participant:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of this project is to teach the importance of prayer and fasting and show how to build a closer relationship with God and each other. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join this project.

Participants must be eighteen years of age or older and members of God's Chosen Generation Church. Once you have agreed to participate in the research, you will be asked to sign a consent form, answer a questionnaire before and after the project, have a personal interview, and participate in a focus group with other church members for general feedback. You will need to keep a daily journal while fasting and praying. This journal will help you track your activities and see how far you have progressed. The project should take six to eight weeks to complete. Names and other identifying information will be requested for this research, but the information will remain confidential.

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

A consent document will be sent one week before your interview via email or postal mail. The consent document contains additional information about this project. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview. Participants will receive a thank you dinner for taking the time to help me with this project.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

Title of the Project: The Effectiveness of Praying and Fasting

Principal Investigator: [REDACTED]

Invitation to be part of a Project

You are invited to participate in a project. To participate, you must be eighteen years of age and a member of God's Chosen Generation Church. Taking part in this project is voluntary.

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

What is the project about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the project is to teach the importance of prayer and fasting and show how they can build a closer relationship with God and each other. The project is being done to allow members of God's Chosen Generation Church to understand the importance of praying and fasting. It is also being done to gather information to compare with other theories to analyze the best solution to a problem.

What will happen if you take part in this project?

If you agree to participate in this project, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a questionnaire.
2. Set up a thirty-minute interview via Zoom, Duo, or Messenger to discuss the questionnaire.
3. If feasible, set up a focus group with church members to exchange and share ideas to create a solution.
4. To keep a daily journal of your praying and fasting activities.

I will notify all participants to choose a time and date that is suitable for all members. Upon receiving the information, participants will be informed forty-eight to seventy-two hours before the meeting.

How could you or others benefit from this project?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this project are learning how to be more effective in praying and fasting, by developing a more personal relationship with God, seeing how others strengthen their relationship with God to hear from Him, spiritual growth, to overcome temptation, bringing deliverance and breakthroughs of everyday life situations, and obedience to God.

What risks might you experience from being in this project?

The risks involved in this project include participants no longer wanting to abstain from certain foods or weight loss.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this project will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. The project records will be stored securely, and only the investigator will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future project studies or with other investigators. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be anonymous. Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms/codes. 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.
- Interviews/focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the investigator will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

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

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this project.

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

To participate in the project, you will need to pay for your Bible, notebooks, and food. If you have difficulties purchasing items, please inform me. I will be able to assist.

Is project participation voluntary?

Participation in this project is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

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

If you choose to withdraw from the project, please contact the investigator at the email address/phone number in the next paragraph. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from

you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this project. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the research if you choose to withdraw.

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

The investigator conducting this project is Vanessa Estes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project and would like to talk to someone other than the investigator, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, [REDACTED]

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subject 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 agree to be in this project. Make sure you understand what the project is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The investigator will keep a copy with the project records. If you have any questions about the project after you sign this document, you can contact the project 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 research.

The investigator has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this project.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Legally Authorized Representative Permission

By signing this document, you are agreeing to the person named below participating in this project. Make sure you understand what the project is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The investigator will keep a copy with the project

records. If you have any questions about the project after you sign this document, you can contact the project team using the information provided above.


I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I agree for the person named below to take part in this project.

The investigator has my permission to audio-record the person named below as part of their participation in this project.

Printed Subject Name


Printed LAR Name and Relationship to Subject

LAR Signature

 01/22/2022

Date

APPENDIX E

Telephone Script

Hello, participant. First, I would like to thank you for participating in this project on *The Effectiveness of Praying and Fasting*. The purpose of this project is to teach how important it is to pray and fast effectively. To be effective is in a manner to achieve the best results.

Next, To get started, you will need to sign a consent form allowing me to use the information received for this project. I can email you the form, mail it to you or drop it off. All information is confidential. After receiving the consent form, you will need to answer a questionnaire before and after the project. At your convenience, I would like to schedule a personal interview with you. There will be a time when I request all those participating to be in a Zoom meeting to share ideas. Those ideas will be among others and will not be confidential if you are in those meetings.

Second, you will need the following items: A Bible for daily reading, the internet for searching Scriptures on your issues, and a daily journal, which you will submit to me at the end of each week. Now, I want to explain why we pray and fast and how we pray and fast.

Lastly, this project will last six weeks on Sunday and Wednesday evenings at six pm. The fast will consist of fruits, vegetables, and water. When taking medication, you can eat solid foods. I will also be sending you some additional information on fasting. We will pray three times daily; nine am, noon, and six pm. A Bible will be a good resource for teaching you about praying. I would also like for everyone to participate in the noon prayer. Keeping a journal will help keep track of your daily activities and progress. If you have further questions, you can always text or call me at [REDACTED] or email me at [REDACTED] Thank you for your participation, and may God bless you in the following weeks of your spiritual journey.

APPENDIX F

Pre-Praying/Fasting Questionnaire

Name: _____

Date: _____

Participants, please answer the following questions below truthfully and to the best of your ability. This questionnaire is designed to help you to achieve a closer relationship with God. Again, thank you for your participation in this project.

1. Why do you believe in God?
2. What is your understanding of prayer?
3. Why would it be difficult to pray daily?
4. What are obstacles that may hinder you from praying daily?
5. If asked to pray multiple times a day, what would keep you from doing so?
6. When you pray, what is it that you expect from God?
7. When your prayers don't get answered right away, how do you feel?
8. What is your understanding of fasting?
9. What would keep you from doing a fast?
10. If you ever fasted, what results did you receive after you fasted?
11. Why do you believe fasting to be necessary/unnecessary in your life?
12. How often do you believe it is necessary to fast (e.g., 1- 21 days per month, yearly, etc.)?
13. Can you write any Scriptures that confirm prayer and fasting?
14. What kind of relationship do you want with God?

APPENDIX G

Interview Questions

Name: _____

Date: _____

Participants, please answer the following questions below truthfully and to the best of your ability. This interview is to help you to achieve a closer relationship with God. Again, thank you for your participation in this project.

- Tell me about your prayer life as a child.
- Who taught you how to pray?
- Have you ever felt it difficult to pray?
- Talk about a time when you felt praying made things better.
- Do you think you are praying effectively?
- What is your understanding of why we pray?
- What is your knowledge of the scriptures about praying and fasting?
- Do you know what it means to fast?
- Would you find it difficult to sustain from certain foods and beverages during a fast?
- What is your relationship with God?
- What kind of relationship do you want with God?
- Do you think that praying and fasting will strengthen your faith, give you humility, and align you with God?
- Would you like to share any previous fasting/praying experiences?
- What is your greatest reservation about being part of this research?

APPENDIX H

Praying and Fasting Schedule

Table 1: Prayer times for the next six to eight weeks based on this project.

9 am	Noon (Corporate Prayer)	6 pm
Sunday – Saturday	Sunday – Saturday	Sunday - Saturday

Table 2: Fasting schedule: six to eight weeks based on this project.

January 2022						
Fasting Schedule (6-8 weeks)						
Beginning January 23, 2022						
Sunday 6 pm -Wednesday 6 pm						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 6 pm	24 cont.	25 cont.	26 6 pm	27	28	29
30 6 pm	31 cont.					

APPENDIX I

Focus Group Questions

Name: _____ Date: _____

Participants, please answer the following questions below truthfully and to the best of your ability. These results are designed to help you achieve a closer relationship with God. Please be advised that this focus group is private, and answers should not be discussed outside the group. Again, thank you for your participation in this project.

1. Do you understand the purpose of prayer?
2. Do you know how to pray effectively?
3. How can we encourage one another to pray more often?
4. What are the main reasons that make praying hard to do?
5. Do you know the importance of fasting?
6. How often do you think someone should fast?
7. What would be a problem in participating in fasting?
8. How can we help one another stay focused with praying and fasting?
9. What was the greatest challenge in being part of this research?
10. If I were going to conduct the research again, what would I change?
11. Will you continue to fast and pray?

APPENDIX J

Post-Praying/Fasting Project Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

Participants, please answer the following survey questions below truthfully and to the best of your ability. These results are to help you achieve a closer relationship with God. Again, thank you for your participation in this project.

1. How do you feel now after praying three times a day to when you first started?
2. Can you describe now how praying more has affected your life?
3. Describe your desire to pray now compared to when you first began.
4. What things now are keeping you from praying?
5. What expectations did you receive from God when you prayed?
6. If you didn't receive the answer you desired when you prayed, what are your thoughts now?
7. What are your overall thoughts on praying?
8. What mindset are you in now since you fasted?
9. What did you receive from fasting?
10. What are your overall thoughts on fasting?
11. Do you think fasting and praying have brought you into a closer relationship with God?

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 9, 2021

[REDACTED]

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY21-22-440 The DMIN IRB Application Process

Dear [REDACTED]

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

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]