

ABSTRACT

LECTIO DIVINA:

A CONTEMPLATIVE APPROACH TO INTIMACY WITH GOD

by

Gloria Jean Westerfield

People come to faith in Christ through the message of the gospel. However, like a relationship between two people, a person's relationship with Christ has to grow in order to plumb the depths of who God is and what he is saying to him or her. There are varieties of spiritual disciplines that Christians use a variety of spiritual disciplines to grow and gain knowledge of God. Bible reading, Bible study, Scripture memorization, and prayer are the most popular disciplines in Western Christianity, and each have specific value for the Christian who uses them. *Lectio divina* is a spiritual discipline from the monastic period. In recent years, Christians who seek a more intimate relationship with God have rediscovered this spiritual discipline. The purpose of this research was to measure the impact of a six-week experiential study and practice of *lectio divina* on the participants' intimacy level with God as indicated by their awareness of God and their quality of relationship with God at First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tennessee.

In this project, I used a triangular, mixed-method research study. To collect quantitative data, I employed pretest/posttest comparison of results from the Spiritual Assessment Inventory, developed by Keith Edwards and Todd Hall. The qualitative data came from responses to weekly guided journal questions and focus group discussion questions. From analysis of the responses from these two tools, I identified themes and subthemes the participants provided.

Following data collection and analysis of the assessment and questions, I compared the two. The awareness scale of the SAI provided statistically significant data. The qualitative data also supported that the spiritual discipline *lectio divina* had a positive impact on the participants' intimacy with God.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

The first pages of the Bible state that God created humanity to be in relationship with him and with each other (Gen. 1:26; 2:18; 3:8-9). Both the Old and New Testaments are replete with words about knowing God (e.g., Exod. 33:17; Deut. 7:9; Ps. 27:8; Hab. 2:14; John 17:21-23; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:10; 1 John 5:20). In addition, some of Christ's last words before his crucifixion describe knowing God. In this passage acclaimed as Jesus' high priestly prayer, he said, "This is eternal life that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3, NASB). These few Scriptures highlight God's desire for his creation to know him.

For more than a decade, I have pondered the concept of knowing God intimately, of feeling his embrace, and of hearing his still, small voice. As a believer in Christ, I know God as my Savior because of Christ's work on the cross. Through personal and group Bible study, I have gained understanding of God's principles laid out in his Word. The Psalmist calls all to know God more intimately. He writes, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" (46:10, NKJV). This verse is a command to know God by actively trusting him and his ways. J. I. Packer writes, "One does not know a living thing till one knows not merely its past history but how it is likely to react and behave under specific circumstances" (35). The pages of Scripture reveal God's history and his actions with humanity.

While knowledge of God and memory of his former actions is a step toward knowing God, it is only the beginning step. Packer explains that God opens himself to his

children and shows them his desire to be in relationship by loving and caring for them (35-37). Henry Blackaby and Claude V. King write about how to experience God:

Knowing God does not come through a program, a study, or a method. Knowing God comes through a relationship with a Person. This is an intimate love relationship with God. Through this relationship, God reveals Himself, His purposes, and His ways. (1)

The author of James 4:8a records, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

Near the end of Jesus’ earthly life, he told his disciples, “He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him” (John 14:21, NIV). Like a relationship between two people, to know God a person has to experience God. One of the most familiar Scripture passages, Psalm 23, speaks of a relationship with God as shepherd and experience of him as the one who leads, guides, provides, protects, who corrects when necessary, and who promises a dwelling place with him now and throughout eternity.

E. Glenn Hinson suspects that the majority of believers in Christ are not satisfied with “their present religious practice and experience” (1). Adding to Hinson’s discussion about believers’ dissatisfaction, Klaus Issler describes his personal frustration with his spiritual practices: “A few years ago I sensed some turbulence in my soul, yet the practices I engaged in and the perspective I had about knowing God were not helping me go deeper” (14). In my journey with Christ, I came to a similar discovery. My spiritual practices were not feeding the hunger in my soul to hear and know God more fully.

After being a Christian for more than four decades and being in full-time ministry for six years, I realized my spiritual life was missing something. For many years, I looked forward to my time with God, which mostly consisted of Bible study, Scripture memorization, and prayer. While these habits gave me some sense of closeness to God,

during the time about which I am writing, I felt distant from God. I lacked interest and consistency in reading his Word, praying, or spending time with him, and I did not clearly hear his voice through the disciplines I was using. These circumstances sent me on a journey to discover spiritual disciplines that would help me know God more intimately and hear his voice more clearly.

The first step of my journey was to take time off from my busy ministry schedule for a three-day personal spiritual retreat. The only agenda I had for my retreat was to spend time with God, make myself open to hearing his voice, and obey what I believed he said to me. My spirit longed to feel the nearness of God. During my retreat, I experienced a sweet presence of God that brought a refreshing to my weary soul and a renewed vigor for ministry. After I returned, I discovered an overwhelming sense of God's presence in my routine prayer time—at times, I would describe my experience as feeling the palpable presence of God. This experience of God was new and exciting. Because of it, I began to search for a way to nurture an intimate awareness of God, not only in special times with him but also in my everyday life. Through this search, God led me to rediscover ancient spiritual disciplines that when used consistently create an atmosphere and opportunity for God to manifest his presence. These spiritual disciplines are contemplative in nature. The first disciplines I learned about were solitude and silence. Being still and silencing the constant flow of thoughts bombarding my mind requires learning to be alone in silence with God. Ruth Haley Barton comments, “This journey requires a willingness to say goodbye to life as we know it because our heart is longing for something more” (*Invitation* 18-19). My second experience with contemplative disciplines was with meditation on Scripture. Finally, while attending a

spiritual formation conference, I heard about *lectio divina*. *Lectio divina* is an ancient Christian discipline made up of five movements—silence, spiritual reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Journaling was already a spiritual discipline that I used to record what I believed God was saying to me from his Word, so to continue this discipline as a follow-up to *lectio divina* was natural.

The discipline of *lectio divina* is formative, nourishing one's inner life, while the modern spiritual disciplines of reading, studying, and memorizing God's Word first engage one's mind, and second may engage one's spiritual life. I do not want to imply that the spiritual disciplines of reading and studying God's Word are unimportant and, therefore, not necessary. Practicing these disciplines taught me about God, his character, and his great love for all humanity. Nonetheless, I longed to have a consistent closeness with God that I did not experience through the modern disciplines alone. When I consistently practice contemplative spiritual disciplines, such as *lectio divina*, I experience the presence of God and more readily hear his still small voice. According to Adrian van Kaam, formative reading of Scripture touches the soul, not just the mind:

[It] aims at nourishing the soul; it should not merely be an exercise of the mind, for in that case the Bible may be reduced to a tool for the collection and dissemination of knowledge. One may get lost in concepts and lose contact with the transcendent richness of God's word. (qtd. in Muto 112)

When I practice *lectio divina*, I present myself before God to give him the opportunity to speak into my innermost being.

According to Klaus Issler, believers must have more than a desire to know God. They also need to adjust their thinking and lifestyle for their desire to come to fruition (24). Bruce Demarest says, "A fulfilling and empowering connection with God cannot develop in busyness. It comes in quietness and prayer, and as we act under His peaceful

guidance in concern for others” (95). Christ left the crowds to be alone with his Father. Following his example, by a regular practice of withdrawing from their routine life to be alone with God, believers nourish and restore with spiritual being.

The contemplative practice called *lectio divina* produces two major benefits for both pastors and congregants. The first benefit is spiritual growth in relationship with God. Demarest quotes Mark McMinn: “Spirituality ... seems so boundless, so infinitely prone to human distortion. We need theological boundaries in order to maintain orthodox and scripturally sound views of redemption, yet we also need the experiential depth of a personal spiritual journey” (21). God “always makes the first move toward us. He awakens our spirits, then leads us on a path that sets us apart for Himself, at the same time satisfying our human soul” (22). In early Christianity, the goal of spiritual training was to produce a continually transformed life, growing in the character of Christ (24).

Susan Muto says *lectio divina*, is an intersection of two elements:

[T]he first is our desire to grow in spiritual self-knowledge, and the second is our intention to let these communications change our lives, if God so wills. These two requirements for formative reading, sustained as they are by meditation and contemplation should lead to personal appropriation. (100)

Lectio divina is a discipline that will facilitate spiritual growth as well as an increasing awareness of God’s presence.

The second benefit is growing in awareness and encountering God. Beyond receiving Christ as savior, the goal of spiritual training in later centuries, especially the twentieth and twenty-first, has been to educate believers in their knowledge of the Bible but give little or no attention to encountering God. The practice of *lectio divina* moves its practitioners beyond a mind filled with knowledge of God and his deeds to an opening of

both the heart and mind to his truth (Demarest 22-27). The use of cognitive abilities alone does little to open a believer's heart to the presence of God. *Lectio divina* engages both the mind (reading, meditating, and prayer) and the heart (silence, prayer, and contemplation). As pastors and parishioners cultivate these contemplative practices, they first learn to be present with God and then to be present in a meaningful way with fellow sojourners.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to measure the impact of a six-week experiential study and practice of *lectio divina* on the participants' intimacy level with God as indicated by their awareness of God and their quality of relationship with God at First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tennessee.

Research Questions

The following questions served to guide the purpose of this study.

Research Question #1

What is the level of the participants' intimacy with God (awareness of and quality of relationship with him) as measured by the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI) prior to the experiential study and practice of *lectio divina*?

Research Question #2

What was the impact on the participants' intimacy level with God (awareness of God and quality of relationship with him) as measured by the Spiritual Assessment Inventory subsequent to the experiential study and practice of *lectio divina*?

Research Question #3

What aspect of the six-week experiential study was the most and/or least helpful for the participants' growth in awareness of God and in quality of relationship with him?

Definition of Terms

Intimacy with God is awareness of and quality of relationship with him. Intimacy with God, as understood by David G. Benner, is an ever-expanding range of shared experiences with God: "Jesus shared his experience with those who were his closest friends. And he invited them to accompany him as he walked through this experience" (72). Jesus continues to invite people to a shared journey with him.

Lectio divina is a personal-reflective approach to reading Scripture that is more about penetration of the heart rather than an explanation of concepts. Muto describes *lectio* as "formative in the sense that we allow the text to serve as a directive source guiding us on our faith and formation journey" (100). The spiritual discipline of *lectio divina* has five phases—*silencio*, *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*.

Silencio (silence) is the discipline of quieting the practitioners' minds while sitting in the quiet presence of God, slowing their mental processes and directing their attention toward the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in order to receive from God whatever he may choose to share.

Lectio is formative reading of Scripture. Participants can read silently, aloud, or listen to another read the passage. The goal for the participants is to listen to the reading with the ears of their heart until God speaks a Word or phrase to them.

Meditatio is focusing one's thoughts on the word or phrase until it becomes personal. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's description of meditation supports this statement:

In our meditation we ponder the chosen text on the strength of the promise that it has something to say to us for this day and for our Christian life, that it is not only God's Word for the Church, but also God's Word for us individually. We expose ourselves to the specific Word until it addresses us personally... [W]e read God's Word as God's Word for us. (82)

Oratio is praying the word or phrase back to God, consecrating ourselves to him as God touches and changes our deepest selves with his word. Some of the ways prayers respond to the received word is confession, intercession, thanksgiving, and worship. The prayer response depends on the word or phrase from God.

Contemplatio is contemplation on the experience of the earlier movements or resting in the presence of the one inviting practitioners to accept his transforming embrace. Sometimes God breaks in on the prayer and embraces his child (Muto 105).

Guided journaling is a process of recording responses to specific questions. In this study, I will provide the participants weekly questions to which they will respond and return. The participants' responses came from their *reflection* of their experience with Scripture through the discipline of *lectio divina*.

Ministry Project

This project was a six-week, small group experiential study and practice of *lectio divina*. The group participants met weekly on Wednesday evening at 6:30. The first session met for ninety minutes and the five remaining sessions met for seventy-five minutes. As the participants gathered, soft music was playing in the background in order to encourage a quiet receptive atmosphere. The group meetings had an opening prayer, fifteen to twenty minutes of didactic material to explain a brief history of *lectio divina* and each movement. During the remainder of each session, the participants experienced the five movements of *lectio divina*. After the group session, the participants received an

e-mail with questions to which they responded and returned to the facilitator within three days of the last session. One week after the study group sessions, the participants gathered to share in a focus group discussion.

Context

The research project context was First Baptist Church (FBC) in Cleveland, Tennessee. The church is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention and Bradley County Baptist Association and is the largest church in Cleveland and the proximate area. The church began in the late 1800s. It now has five thousand members with approximately three thousand attending worship each Sunday. The church's four worship services attend to the needs of both traditional and contemporary worshipers. FBC is a biblically conservative, evangelical church. The congregation is primarily Caucasian, with less than 1 percent of minority and ethnic groups represented. The congregants' occupations range from laborers and blue-collar workers to white-collar professionals. FBC is a mission-sending and mission-sponsoring church for ministries around the world, including the United States.

Additionally, I performed the project with a small group of people. FBC has a small group ministry that meets mostly at the church campus. A few meet in off-campus settings. This small group met on campus. Group participants had not met together before.

Methodology

This project used triangulation, mixed-method research that collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The small group participants took a pretest and posttest Spiritual Assessment Inventory (pre-SAI and post-SAI). The results gathered by the pre-

and post-SAI provided quantitative data for the project. Qualitative data came from two sources—the weekly guided journal responses and the focus group discussion comments.

Participants

The participants in the two small groups were all are regular attenders at FBC. The groups had married couples and female adults. They were all Caucasian. Ages of the group members ranged from 36 to 69. Two Sundays prior to the group beginning, the congregation received a booklet highlighting the fall small group offerings, including an announcement for the project's two small groups. The announcement briefly explained the groups' purpose and the content of the study project, including an invitation to join the group. The announcement also included instructions about registration (see Appendix F). The participants understood that the focus of the project was to evaluate the impact that the introduction of the spiritual discipline, *lectio divina*, had on their individual intimacy level with God as indicated by their awareness of God and their quality of relationship with him.

Instrumentation

The quantitative instrument used is the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (see Appendix B). Todd W. Hall and Keith J. Edwards designed the SAI and reported their original factor analysis in 1996 ("Initial Development" 233). After further work, in 2002 they reported their confirmatory factor analysis on a revised instrument. The revised assessment measures two dimensions, awareness of God and quality of relationship with God, using six scales—awareness, realistic acceptance, disappointment, grandiosity, instability, and a new experimental scale, impression management (Hall and Edwards, "Spiritual Assessment Inventory" 343-55). The assessment consists of forty-seven items

“rated on a five-point scale anchored on each end by the phrases ‘Not true at all’ and ‘Very True.’ A high score on each scale represents the presence of that trait named” (343). For this project, the pre-SAI and post-SAI were identical. The pre-SAI and post-SAI surveys quantitatively measured the impact the study had on the participants’ intimacy with God during the six-week intervention.

The instruments that obtained the qualitative data were two sets of researcher-designed questions. The first set was the weekly guided journal questions (WGJQ) which consisted of the same four questions each week. At the end of each weekly session, the participants received the WGJQ through e-mail (see Appendix C). The participants’ responses to WGJQ produced six sets of data (Week 1 Data, Week 2 Data, Week 3 Data, Week 4 Data, Week 5 Data, and Week 6 Data). The second set of qualitative data came from the focus group discussion questions (FGDQ; see Appendix D).

Variables

The independent variable was the six-week experiential learning group. The dependent variables were the changes in the participants’ awareness of God and their quality of relationship with him (intimacy) as measured by the pre- and post-SAI, their guided journal responses, and their focus group responses from select questions. The intervening variables were the attendance habits of the participants, their motivation level, their age, their gender, and their ethnicity.

Data Collection

A week prior to the first group session, I e-mailed each participant a link to the informed consent, demographic survey, group covenant, and the SAI in SurveyMonkey and asked the participants to respond within three days of receipt of the links.

SurveyMonkey kept the demographic survey and pre-SAI responses confidential.

Additionally, SurveyMonkey kept the pre-SAI data for later analysis and comparison with the post-SAI data. At the first small-group session, the participants received a copy of the leader's commitment to the group and an outline of the six-week, small-group experience. The day after each weekly session, group members received WGJQ by e-mail from SurveyMonkey. They responded to the four questions within three days by return e-mail. After the sixth session, the participants took the post-SAI through SurveyMonkey as they did the pre-SAI. One week after the intervention, the members returned for a focus group discussion. At the focus group discussion, participants gave me permission to audio-record the entire session and to use all the collected data in this research project. Additionally, I took handwritten notes of the participants' responses during the discussion.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis provided a way to compare and contrast the pre-SAI data with the post-SAI quantitative data. Simply put, descriptive statistical analysis presents a way to describe what is and summarizes what the data shows. SurveyMonkey analyzed the data for changes between pre-SAI and post-SAI responses and trends and compared results by age group, gender, length of being a Christian, amount of current quiet time, and educational level.

Text analysis of the qualitative data responses provided a list of recurring words and themes for both the WGQJ and the FGDQ. A comparison of the two data sets showed congruence or no congruence of the repeating words and themes. The final analysis compared the qualitative and quantitative findings.

Generalizability

The results of the study show that other regular attenders of FBC who voice an interest in improving their intimacy with God, through growing awareness of and quality of relationship with God might benefit by participating in a similar group. In addition, this study may be of interest to the leadership of FBC in assessing regular attenders' level of intimacy with God. Other churches within the same denomination also may gain insight about ways to increase intimacy with God in the members of their congregations. Additionally, this study may be of interest to the church leadership of other evangelical churches as a probable representation of their congregants' level of intimacy with God. While church leaders who are not evangelical may show interest in the study, they may find less generalizability for their congregations.

Theological Foundation

One of the reasons for which God created humankind is to fellowship with him. Since God is always in community—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and he created individuals in his image, God intended individuals to be in communion with him, as well as with other human beings. In an unlikely story, the Fall of humanity, God demonstrates his passionate desire for communion with his creation:

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Gen. 3:8-10, NKJV)

God's words, "Adam, where are you?" come from a heart breaking with longing to be with his children. God, who walked and communed with Adam and Eve on a regular

basis, called to them, letting them know he was there for their usual time of fellowship.

These words echo from God's heart his great desire to be with Adam and Eve.

The Genesis story about God coming to and calling for Adam and Eve typifies his action throughout the Bible and all history. God is calling for all his human creation to come have fellowship with him. As God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the garden, God wants regularly to walk and talk with other human beings. A brief review of biblical references supports this concept of ongoing community and fellowship between God and humanity.

In the Old Testament, Enoch, Noah, and some of the patriarchs walked with God (Gen. 5:24; 6:8; 24:40; 48:15). Exodus 33:11 states that Moses is God's friend: "So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." Additionally, Moses initiated a conversation with God and asked, "Please, show me Your glory" (Exod. 33:18). Moses was yearning to know more about the God he served, and God's response demonstrated his loving tenderness and protection as he grants Moses' request (Exod. 33:19-23).

In the New Testament, Jesus continued to have communion with his Father. Scripture describes when Jesus chose the twelve: "It was at this time that he went off to the mountain to pray, and he spent the whole night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12, NASB). When opposition to his ministry grew (Luke 6:11), Jesus withdrew to a place alone to be with his Father. Luke wrote in 5:16 that withdrawing to be with his Father was a common practice for Jesus: "But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray." In the midst of pressing demands, Jesus made time to go away and connect with his Father.

The Message beautifully paraphrases the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30:

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

The main call of Christ while he walked the earth and to people of the world today is, “Come. Be with me. Follow me.” As followers come to Christ, transformation into the image of Christ occurs and Christ births vision and purpose in their spirits to respond to the world, which is in desperate need of a Savior.

Overview

Chapter 2 provides a literature review of current research and theory, giving a theoretical framework for the dissertation project. Chapter 3 details the design and methodology for the study as well as the collection and analysis of the data. Chapter 4 reports the results of the data analysis gathered in this study. Chapter 5 offers a summary and the conclusions of the study, including an evaluation and interpretation of the findings, and provides practical applications for further studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter captures biblical examples and current research and theory on each of the project's major themes. Knowing God is a process. Issler notes, "Desiring to know God is a commendable, necessary first step. But there is no instant spirituality; it is a journey of many steps" (24). Christ's first disciples shared his life for three years. They traveled with him; they ate with him; they worshiped with him; they heard his teaching; they obeyed his words; and, they submitted to his correction when they failed or misunderstood his directives. They knew Jesus. For three years, the disciples were intimate with Christ and his ways. The spiritual discipline, *lectio divina*, provides a tool for its practitioners to draw near to God and to become more aware of God in their lives and enrich their relationship with him.

The purpose of this research was to measure the impact of a six-week experiential study and practice of *lectio divina* on the participants' intimacy level with God as indicated by their awareness of God and their quality of relationship with God at First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tennessee.

Theological Framework

An overview of Scripture points to intimacy with God as an experience that is not only possible but also desired by God, Jesus, and many of his followers. Old Testament Scriptures highlight the concepts of intimacy within the Trinity, intimacy extended to humanity, humanity's longing for intimacy with God, and Christ extending intimacy to the Church. New Testament Scriptures focus on Christ's example as he communed with

God and his teaching the disciples to do the same, God's desire for his disciples to have intimacy with him, followed by Jesus praying that they know God, and God's *restoration* of intimate relationship in the New Jerusalem.

Old Testament Scripture

The Old Testament is an introduction to the person of God, humanity, and his created world. Throughout the Old Testament's thirty-nine books, God reveals his love for humanity as well as his desire for an intimate relationship with them. Through the writers of the Old Testament, God highlights the intimacy within the Trinity and extends his intimacy to humankind who is longing for an intimate relationship with their creator. Finally, the writer of the Song of Solomon compares the highest form of intimate love between a lover and his beloved with God's intimate love for the Church.

Intimacy within the Trinity. From the beginning of time, God created humanity to be in intimate fellowship with him as an expression of the fellowship found in the Trinity: "In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth" (Gen.1:1, NKJV). In this verse, the plural form for God indicates there is communion within the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Mathews 127). In Genesis 1:26, the author uses two plural pronouns to record God saying, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..." According to most of the early Church fathers and theologians, the use of the plural is indicative of the Trinity (Keil and Delitzsch 38). This verse speaks of a collaborative effort within the Godhead. God's image is in communion within the Trinity. Since God created human beings in his image, then he created them for communion with him and with each other as seen patterned in Genesis 2 and 3.

God extended intimacy. After God created the animals, Adam worked in cooperation with him to name them all (Gen. 2:20). In the account of Eve's creation, God brings Eve to Adam, showing his fellowship with both: "He made ... a woman, and He brought her to the man" (Gen. 2:22). God's words that most reveal his deep longing for relationship is found in the context of the Fall: "Adam, where are You?" (Gen. 3:9). These words echo the heart of God who will not leave Adam and Eve alone (Keil and Delitzsch 61). Carl Fredrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch state, "This human mode of intercourse between man and God is not a mere figure of speech, but a reality, having its foundation in the nature of humanity, or rather in the fact that man was created in the image of God" (61). As God had been doing from their creation, he came to spend time with Adam and Eve, but he did not find them. Keil and Delitzsch understand God's visit in the sense: "God having given man a bodily shape, when He created him in His own image, revealed Himself in a manner suited to his bodily senses, that He might thus preserve him in living communion with Himself" (61). In their disobedience, Adam and Eve hid from God, but he still called to them and provided a covering for their nakedness and their sin.

Despite the Fall, which broke the intense fellowship that Adam and Eve first experienced, God still communed intimately with other Old Testament figures. In Genesis 5, the writer records that Adam's descendants lived and then they died. However, when the author writes about Enoch, he says, "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:24, NASB). Genesis only uses the phrase "walked with God" when referring to Enoch and Noah (Gen. 6:9). This phrase refers to a close communion, a confidential exchange, and a walking side by side with God (Keil and Delitzsch 79). The

phrase “walked with God” is reminiscent of Adam’s initial experience found in Genesis 3:8 (Mathews 313). “Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6:9) and “found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8). In these verses, God rewarded and validated the close, personal relationship Noah had with him by not only sparing Noah from the flood but also sparing his family.

In Genesis 24:40 and 48:15, the author slightly changes the language from “walked with God” to “walked before the Lord” (Mathews 357). Genesis 12:1-3 records God’s call to Abram and his threefold promise of land, nation, and blessing. In Scripture, the blessing of God is more than material things: “The essence of blessing is having God present in a special way. Blessing is God’s presence, not just his gifts. ... God often told Abraham, ‘I am with you’ or ‘I will be with you’” (Hughes and Laney xxii). In Genesis 18:33, the writer records another aspect of the intimate fellowship, God spoke to Abraham and Abraham listened.

While the Old Testament contains many examples of God talking to, meeting with, and enjoying his people, the account of God’s encounter with Moses is noteworthy. Exodus 33:11 refers to Moses as God’s friend, “So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend...” (NKJV). This verse describes the special relationship that Moses had with God.

Longing for intimacy. In Exodus, Moses initiated a conversation with God, relaying his desire to see God. He asked, “Please, show me Your glory. ” God responded:

And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.” (Exod. 33:21-23)

Moses' heart was yearning to know more about the God he served, and God's response demonstrated his loving tenderness and protection as he granted Moses' request.

Similarly, the Psalm of David flows with intimate longings from a heart turned toward God (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). In Psalm 27:4, David longs to dwell in the Lord's presence: "One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple" (NASB). In Psalm 42, the sons of Korah express a deep yearning for communion with God: "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" (vv. 1-2). God hears the longings of a heart that desires to be with him.

Restoration of intimacy. A survey of the Old Testament would not be complete without a look at the role of the prophet to correct and restore an intimate relationship with God. God anointed King David to serve him and to lead Israel. First Samuel 13:14 records God's words about David: "The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people." Even though David sought God's heart, still he committed a grave sin by lying with Bathsheba and killing her husband to cover up his sin. God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David. Unlike Saul, David's predecessor, he genuinely and contritely repented. Although God forgave David, David and Bathsheba lost the first child of their union, and the results of David's sin continued to impact him and the nation the rest of his days (2 Sam. 12:1-15; Walvoord and Zuck 468). God demonstrated his desire for continued relationship with David by sending a prophet to point out the sin David was trying to hide. God's desire for

intimate relationship with his children never changes, but *restoration* does not occur until a person repents of the sin that is grievous in God's sight.

Similarly, God brought correction on the nation of Israel and Judah through the prophets. The prophet Isaiah wrote indicting Judah of their sinful condition and telling them of the consequences. Even though Isaiah knew Babylon would take Judah away from its land, he called the people back to a covenantal relationship with God. He spoke of God's judgment on Judah while at the same time he foretold that God would restore the nation to their land and establish his kingdom (Walvoord and Zuck 1031). The prophet Jeremiah declared to Judah for forty years that the only way to escape calamity is to surrender to God's will. Similar to the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah intermingles promise of *restoration*. While Judah is in captivity, God raises Daniel and Ezekiel to encourage repentance and to remind the people of God's promise of *restoration*. Hosea prophesied to Israel of its adulterous ways as well as God's promise to restore the Northern kingdom. He calls for Israel to seek God's forgiveness so that he can heal their idolatry and faithlessness (Hos.14:2, 4; Boa and Wilkinson, "Hosea" 851-53). Both judgment and *restoration* speak of God's desire for intimate fellowship. God loves his children too much to leave them exiled from him.

Christ extended intimacy. Old Testament examples of God extending intimacy to his people would not be complete without a look at the love story found in the Song of Solomon:

Allegorically, it pictures Israel as God's espoused bride (Hos. 2:19-20), and the church as the bride of Christ. As human life finds its highest fulfillment in the love of man and woman, so spiritual life finds its highest fulfillment in the love of God for his people and Christ for his church. (Boa and Wilkinson, "Song of Solomon" 646)

Both Jewish tradition (the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Targum) and early Church leaders (Hippolytus, Origen, Jerome, Athanasius, Augustine, and Bernard of Clairvaux) accept an allegorical interpretation of the Song (Walvoord and Zuck 1009). Based on this view, the Song is a story of the intimate longing of Christ for his beloved bride, the Church. The Beloved cries, “Draw me after you and let us run together...” (1:4a). Similarly, in 4:9-10, Jesus revealed the depth of his enjoyment and desire for his bride as he echoes back to his bride her own words, “How much better is your love than wine” (Bickle 12.1). In both the Old and New Testaments, writers illustrate God’s love for his people with the bride and bridegroom metaphor.

New Testament Scripture

Jesus came into the world to reveal the Father’s character and actions in human form. While on earth, Jesus demonstrated to his disciples and the rest of the world his communion with the Father and taught them the importance of being alone with the Father to commune with him. In the last hours before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed for all Christ followers to know God in his fullness, being in unity with the Trinity. Finally, Jesus’ sacrificial love epitomizes God’s desire for restored intimacy with all humanity.

Jesus’ example. In the New Testament, Jesus’ relationship with his father is the chief example of intimate fellowship. Before Jesus chose the twelve, “He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12). At this time in Jesus’ ministry, opposition was growing (Luke 6:11). Because of the hostility, Jesus withdrew to a place to be alone with his Father to receive renewed strength and guidance as he selected the men who would be with him for three years and who would eventually carry on the ministry that he began (Wiersbe 160). Withdrawing to be with his

father was a common practice for Jesus. Luke writes, “But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray” (5:16). Leon Morris notes that in the midst of pressing demands Jesus had to go away and connect with his Father (128). Throughout the Gospels, Jesus left the din of people to be alone with God (e.g., Matt. 4:1-11; 14:13, 23; 17:1-9; 26:36-46; Mark 6:31).

Jesus taught disciples. In like manner, Jesus taught his disciples the importance of being alone in prayer to fellowship with God (Eyre 11): “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you” (Matt. 6:6). Mark writes, “[W]hen the twelve returned from a preaching and healing mission, Jesus instructed them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a lonely place’” (Foster 97). Similarly, Jesus’ call to his disciples was to leave everything and be with him: “Follow Me, and ... [i]mmediately they left their nets and followed Him” (Mark 1:17-18). Jesus not only spent time with his Father but he also taught his disciples to do the same.

God’s desires intimacy. John 14:23 is an even more revealing verse about God’s desire for intimate fellowship with humankind. Jesus told his disciples that he and his Father would come and make their home with each believer: “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (NIV). Concerning this verse, D. A. Carson writes, “[Jesus] simultaneously joins with the Father (their equality is implicit) in making a ‘dwelling place’ in the believer” (504). The indwelling presence of God makes ongoing companionship, friendship, and spiritual union possible for every child of God.

Prayer to know God. Finally, in John 14 Jesus declared in his prayer, “This is eternal life that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3, NASB). John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck comment, “Eternal life, as defined here by Jesus, involves the experience of knowing the only true God through His Son.... It is a personal relationship of intimacy which is continuous and dynamic” (2.331). This *knowing* frequently describes the intimate sexual relationship between a husband and his wife. Thus, Jesus said that a person who knows God is in an intimate personal relationship with him similar to the sexual relationship between a husband and wife. Later in his prayer, Jesus expanded the imagery of the believer’s relationship with the Godhead. In John 17:21 he prayed “that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.” Jesus prayed that all believers would experience the same kind of mutual indwelling by the Godhead and with each other that exists between the Father and the Son—a unity of fellowship that will show others that Christ came from God and is God.

Restoration of intimacy. Revelation 21:3 records the culmination of the unity for which Christ prayed and the *restoration* of the relationship that was broken in the Fall: “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God’” (NIV). God’s plan for his people at the end of the age is to dwell in their midst forever.

Early Church

A brief look at the early Church reveals that some believers followed Jesus’ example of withdrawing from populated areas to commune with God. Kenneth Boa

writes, “Beginning in the third century, a number of men and women entered the deserts of Egypt to live solitary lives in the quest for greater intimacy with God” (Boa 485).

While history also records that their choice of spiritual lifestyle led to ascetic (severe) excesses, one cannot help but initially admire these believers’ pursuit of God in all his mystery. They had a hunger for a close walk with God. Because of these changes, some believers withdrew from populated areas to be alone with God.

In AD 311, the church gained legal status. At that time, “most of its members began to think of the world as quite compatible with the profession of discipleship to Christ” (Willard, *Spirit* 140). Others, however, “found this situation unbearable, and individuals and small groups began to set themselves apart to engage in what they felt to be a more intensely spiritual mode of existence” (140). This movement eventually gave birth to monasticism that taught three spiritual stages of spiritual growth—purgation, illumination, and union with God. Always behind this movement toward solitude was a desire for intimacy and communion with God:

From the time of the Desert Fathers (c. 200-500 A.D.) to the present there have been multitudes of persons who believed that humankind has a special kinship with God, and that God can be known, worshipped, obeyed, experienced, and loved. These pioneers in Christian spirituality, from Anthony to E. Stanley Jones, shared their conviction that there could be an immediate and intuitive relationship with God. (Grubbs 30)

Many mothers and fathers of the faith have sought this intimate relationship with God regardless of the personal cost. Their journey speaks of the hunger for the intimate fellowship with God that he always intended.

Spiritual Life

The Bible teaches that humans are tripartite beings—body, soul, and spirit. While these three are interrelated, one affecting the other, God connects with their spirits by his

spirit (Ro. 8:16). Therefore, the issue at hand is how humans open their spirits to God's spirit. One biblical example comes from the early Church: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42, NASB). Luke highlights four practices of the early Church—hearing and receiving teaching, having fellowship with like-minded people, sharing a common meal, and praying. Through these spiritual practices, the Church grew in numbers and by inference, individuals grew in understanding and application of the teachings they heard.

The apostle Paul gives us another example. He writes, "[W]alk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal. 6:16). By using the word *walk*, Paul is implying that the spirit life is not static. On the contrary, it is dynamic, always changing and moving forward. Unless Christ followers are moving forward, they become like believers in the book of Hebrews who stayed spiritual children, repeatedly needing to hear the basic truths of the gospel rather than growing in knowledge and discernment of the Spirit and Word (5:12-13). James also warns followers of their outcome when they choose not to continue to grow spiritually:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. (1:22-24, NIV)

Growing Christ followers listen to his teachings and apply them in their lives.

Richard J. Foster teaches, "The classical Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm" (1). Spiritual disciplines are necessary for spiritual growth:

The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us.... By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done.... The inner righteousness we seek is not something that is poured on our heads. God has ordained the Disciplines of the spiritual life as the means by which we place ourselves where he can bless us. (7)

Some spiritual disciplines are readily accepted and used in Protestant evangelical circles.

John Grayston summarizes some of these disciplines:

The practice of regular “Bible” reading and prayer is as old as Scripture itself. Joshua is enjoined to meditate on the Book of the Law day and night (Joshua 1:7), an example followed by the Psalmists (e.g., Ps. 119:117). It appears to have been Jesus’ own practice—his familiarity with Scripture suggests that it must have formed a significant part of his personal spiritual life. Paul encourages the Colossians to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16) and extols the virtues of Scripture to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:14-17). (102)

To the contrary, the contemplative disciplines that I chose for this project are relatively new to many evangelical Christians. Nonetheless, these disciplines find their roots in the mothers and fathers of monasticism and offer another way to draw close to God.

Intimacy with God

Augustine says, “[F]or Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee” (1.1). Augustine’s words describe the heart’s yearnings for intimacy with God. According to Michael D. Fiorello, “[I]ntimacy with God is an essential element of one’s Christian experience” (155):

Intimacy with God is grounded on one’s understanding of God’s nature but this in itself does not constitute an intimate relationship. Intimacy can be defined as a deep and profound friendship; a close familiarity that affects one’s innermost being, rooted in a sense of belonging which results in confidence. (157)

Fiorello’s definition of intimacy is consistent with Hall and Edwards’ two dimensions—awareness of God and quality of relationship. The deeper a friendship with God, the more

aware of his presence individuals become. The deeper the quality of relationship with God is, the more individuals see positive effects in their innermost beings.

Contemplative Disciplines

Lectio divina belongs to a group of Christian spiritual disciplines that are contemplative or reflective in nature. With the transition from modernity to postmodernity, individuals are rediscovering the contemplative spiritual life. Contemplative spirituality is more process oriented than goal oriented. Spiritually, the postmodern era focuses more on personal transformation than on the information gathering of the modern era. Humanity longs for authentic and transparent relationships with God and with others. Postmodern individuals are willing to do as James says, confess their sins to one another and pray for deliverance and healing for one another (5:16). Like the earlier contemplatives, postmodern individuals desire to know God, not just know about him. They want to experience God in their day-to-day Christian journey. They desire to walk closely enough to God to hear the Spirit direct them to go this way, make this turn, or to go down that road. These words describe an intimate relationship with God. Dallas Willard comments, “Many serious and thoughtful Christians are looking for ways into an intelligent and powerful Christlikeness that can inform their entire existence and not just produce special religious moments” (“Spiritual Disciplines” 101). Humankind longs to experience every aspect of being in relationship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They want to walk and talk with and listen to God as Adam and Eve did and to know God as God knows them.

The spiritual discipline of *lectio divina* will facilitate a more intimate relationship with God than the modern disciplines of mere Bible reading and petitionary or intercessory prayer. Willard comments about the purpose of spiritual disciplines:

The aim of disciplines in the spiritual life—and, specifically, in the following of Christ—is the transformation of the total state of the soul. It is the renewal of the whole person from the inside, involving differences in thought, feeling, and character that may never be manifest in outward behavior at all. (“Spiritual Disciplines” 107)

By using spiritual disciplines, Christ followers present themselves before God so they become more in tune with the word of God and with the movement of his Spirit in their lives (107).

Lectio Divina

Roots of *lectio divina* come from the Jewish synagogue practice of Scripture memorization called *haga* (Paintner and Wynkoop 2). Early in the fifth century, John Cassian introduced *lectio divina* to the Western church after studying the monastic traditions of the Eastern desert fathers and mothers (Boa 96). Christine Valters Paintner and Lucy Wynkoop report, “The desert mothers and fathers believed that they heard God speaking to them personally and immediately, through Scripture. They saw Scripture as a privileged place for encountering God” (2). In the sixth century, *lectio* became a part of the Benedictine tradition (Howard 52). St. Benedict taught his disciples to have time for prayer and time for prayerful reading—*lectio divina* (Howard 52; *Rule* 48.1). Later, in the twelfth century, a Carthusian monk, Guigo II, wrote a systematic approach to *lectio* called *The Ladder of Monks*. Guigo II organized *lectio divina* into stages or steps of a process—*lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio* (Paintner and Wynkoop 2-3). However, the practice of *lectio divina* eventually ceased:

By the end of the Middle Ages it came to be seen as a method that should be restricted to the spiritually elite. As time passed, even monastics lost the simplicity of sacred reading as it was replaced by more complicated systems and forms of mental prayer. (Boa 176)

When *lectio divina* fell into disuse, the simplicity and power of praying back to God his holy Scripture also was lost (176).

The original term for this concept of reading and praying Scripture was Greek and presumably came from Origen (Paintner and Wynkoop 2). The Greek word was translated into Latin as *lectio divina*, which literally means “reading God” (Funk 9). Divine reading, sacred reading, devotional reading, spiritual reading, and formative reading are other phrases used for *lectio*. The process of *lectio divina* is more than reading for cognition or understanding the text. It “is an encounter between God and the human person” (9), mediated through the voices of the text and the senses of the reader. Funk “believes that *lectio* is the most important prayer practice because it is through Scripture that one personally enters into Christ through the life of Jesus, his teaching, his works, and his impact on others” (9). Funk also states: “Through the tool of *lectio divina*, we can literally ‘know’ God and enter into a relationship just as we do with our friends” (9). While other objects, such as an art form, nature, and spiritual writings, can be the focus of *lectio divina*, for the purpose of this project Scripture is the object.

In the West and certain parts of Africa and Asia, Bible studies and courses abound, yet Christians continue to be spiritually thirsty and find their relationships with God less than inspiring and fulfilling. Commenting on one of the reasons for this dilemma, Dirk Nelson says that Christians have become “knowers of the Bible” without becoming “knowers” of the God of the Bible (35). During the period of the Enlightenment, the church fell prey to rationalism as did most if not all cultural

institutions: “We inherited the legacy of the power of learning which is the use of analysis and logic as well as the belief in the omni-competence of the human mind”

(Nelson, 36). Because analysis and reason became *gods*, Bible readers became information gatherers, rather than children formed by God (Nelson 36). M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. describes the information gathering like this:

We have a deeply ingrained way of reading in which we are the masters of the material we read. We come to a text with our own agenda firmly in place.... when what we are reading does not adapt itself to our agenda we reject it or we exercise control over it by grasping it with our mind.
(*Shaped by the Word* 19)

The goal of *lectio divina* is just the opposite. The sacred reading of *lectio divina* “is a way praying and of receiving the Word of God. It invites us to explore the biblical text for understanding a deeper relationship with Christ” (Butler 303). Readers come to the text, allowing the God of the text to speak to the deep needs of their core being. They come allowing God to touch their emotions and imagination with his Word. Primarily, when people approach the Bible from the perspective of rationalism, they come, as Mulholland says, with their own agenda. In *lectio divina*, readers draw near to God and his Word and anticipate him to draw near to shape and change them, as he desires (Jas. 4:8).

Silencio

The classical view of *lectio divina* includes four movements—*lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, *contemplatio*. Mulholland suggests adding an introductory element of *silencio* and a concluding element of *incarnatio*. He believes the two extra movements enable *lectio divina* “to be effective for persons shaped by an informational culture” (*Invitation* 112). He credits Muto for giving him this insight (112). Adele Ahlberg Calhoun notes

that *silencio* is a natural place to begin *lectio divina* in order to silence external and internal noises (168). Bradley C. Bohrer emphasizes that *silencio* prepares individuals for the inward journey where *lectio divina* takes the practitioner (62). Mulholland gives his insight on *silencio*:

Silencio is our preparation for spiritual reading. Shaped as we are by an information culture, trained to approach a text as the ones who are in control of the text, we need to take time, at the beginning of the process of spiritual reading, to engage in a deep internal shift in the posture of our being. (*Invitation* 112-13)

External noise and internal noise such as worry and churning thoughts bombard peoples' minds, grappling for their attention. Learning to be silent or ignoring these thoughts is necessary to hear God's still, small voice. The Palmist correctly reminds his readers, "Be still, and know that I am God..." (46.10). Because of the importance of learning to silence both inner and outer noise in order to hear God speaking through Scripture, I am including *silencio* as my first of five movements. However, I am not including *incarnatio*, which focuses how a person applies what God says. The focus of this study project is to examine the effects of *lectio divina* on relational intimacy between God and its practitioners.

Lectio

Lectio is simply reading the text, usually slowly two or three times. Often times reading is aloud. Mulholland says that by reading aloud "our ears hear the words and our tongues 'taste' them" (*Invitation* 114). *Lectio* involves the senses, emotions, and imagination, not merely the intellect. *Lectio* is about coming to read the Scripture with openness to hear, with intimacy, and with receptivity: "We open ourselves to a revealing

God who delights to come close to change us” (Nelson 36). In *lectio*, the participant reads until a word or phrase touches his or her heart.

Meditatio

In the movement called *meditatio* or meditation, the reader processes through rumination the word or phrase received in *lectio*. Mulholland says that *lectio* is the process of receiving food from the text while *meditatio* is the processing of chewing on it (*Invitation* 114). *Meditatio* is a way of being with all the Holy Spirit stirs within—images, thoughts, memories, inspiring connections to other Scripture passages, or words of a song, to name a few.

Nelson describes *meditatio* in this way:

Meditation frees the creative Holy Spirit to fill our minds with connections, connecting our past experiences with the biblical witness, connecting the people in the narrative with persons known by me, connecting my emotions with the lives, pleas, exclamations of the characters in the stories. (Nelson 42)

Paintner and Wynkoop state, “As we meditate on the text, it works on us and we can trust that whatever arises up within us is precisely what we need to hear” (35). When the word reveals disharmony, dissonance, or brokenness in the reader’s life, the reader not only hears but also struggles with what God is saying. When the reader surrenders to what God says, he or she is ready to move deeper into the next movement (Nelson 40; Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word* 149-50).

Oratio

Oratio, or prayer, is the fourth step in *lectio divina*, which is the response sparked in the reader when his or her heart has first been touched by God (Paintner and Wynkoop 43). The reader prays back to God what *lectio* and *meditatio* revealed. God speaks to the

reader's inner need for healing, and the reader prays to God in confession, repentance, and forgiveness. The reader may express his or her awe at the wonder and mystery of God or great thanksgiving for his love, mercy, and grace. *Oratio* is the appropriate prayer response to what God reveals (Nelson 43-44).

Contemplatio

Contemplatio is “fundamentally an awareness of the presence of God in our lives” (Paintner and Wynkoop 57). It is perhaps the least understood movement in *lectio*. Christopher S. Webb says, “In the Christian tradition, *contemplatio* is becoming still in the presence of God, neither speaking nor necessarily being spoken to, but simply waiting attentively and lovingly on God” (4). *Contemplatio* is unitive because it closes the gap between the practitioner and God (Painter and Wynkoop 58). Barton describes this time as “a posture of total yieldedness and abandon to the great Lover of your soul” (*Sacred Rhythms* 61). Simply put, *contemplatio* is resting in God's presence.

Instructional Design/Experiential Learning

The project's instructional design is experiential learning or experiential education, which some research uses interchangeably in the context of a small group. Since the spiritual discipline of *lectio divina* does not have a didactic component, experiential learning accurately describes what is taking place as participants learn a new way of reading Scripture through the *lectio divina* process. As with any new discipline, participants using it must experience each movement and the flow from one to another, not just hear a teacher explain the five movements.

Linda H. Lewis and Carol J. Williams explain that during the 1980s and 1990s, experiential learning moved “from the periphery of education to the center” (5). This

educational method became a way to help students apply what they learned in a classroom or their field-based experiences (107). Applying experiential learning in the context of a church small-group setting prepares the participants to “engage in lifelong learning for kingdom purposes” (108). Experiential learning, with its reflective processes, provides an “explanation for the unique ways that individuals can learn more effectively from experiences” (108). The two terms experiential learning and experiential education often are interchanged but at times refer to different things. However, “generally *experiential learning* refers to the process of learning, while *experiential education* refers to programs or contexts that make use of experiential learning” (original emphasis 108). This project was concerned with both process of learning and the program and context in which experiential learning takes place. Morris Keeton and P. Tate describe the connection between the learner and the learning experience:

[T]he learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied.... It involves direct encounter with the phenomenon being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter or only considering the possibility of doing something with it. (qtd. in Hedin 109)

James W. Gentry, who writes about experiential learning in business education, quotes Sophocles: “One must learn by doing the thing, for though you think you know it—you have no certainty, until you try” (9). This statement is certainly true regarding learning to use the spiritual discipline *lectio divina*. One may know what the movements of *lectio divina* are, but without trying it and practicing, one will never master the beauty and benefit of engaging in this discipline. Norma S. Hedin states that in order for learning to occur, “[s]tudents not only must engage in experience, but also reflect on those experiences in deep and thoughtful ways and construct meaning out of those experiences” (115). In the process of *lectio divina*, readers engage the text of Scripture and then reflect

on the reading through *meditatio* or meditation in order to hear their personal meaning of the text from God.

In experiential learning, the teacher becomes the teacher/trainer and takes on a facilitative role rather than an authoritative one. Because the role of the teacher is now different, both the student and teacher/facilitator share in the success of the learning process. Vanessa Avery-Wall states, “This is because ... the source of knowledge lies foremost in the students’ life experiences” (37). Within the small group project setting, I chose to use teacher/facilitator or just facilitator.

As stated, the teacher has certain responsibilities:

- *Managing the group process*, which includes soliciting ideas and perspectives, summarizing important discussion topics, and balancing participation;
- *Creating a safe, comfortable, inclusive, and respectful environment* for open sharing: “An important part of maintaining a safe environment is reinforcing agreements and confidentiality and adhering to ground rules” (Avery-Wall 38); and,
- *Facilitating balanced participation*, which involves encouraging all *participants* to contribute to the group and individual learning (38).

In the context of this research and project, experiential learning focuses on learning skills of being silent and being comfortable in the presence of God and of formative reading of the bible, allowing the text to speak personally to the reader rather than reading for cognitive content: “One of the emphases of experiential learning is that it is whole person learning rather than just learning in the cognitive domain...” (Jarvis 553). *Reflection* on religious experience is another aspect of experiential learning, but this focus goes beyond the scope of the current project. Teaching in this project integrates

giving information in short didactic format and the experiential practice of the information received from the teacher/facilitator.

Spiritual Assessment Inventory

SAI is a “theoretically-based measure of spiritual maturity viewed from a Judeo-Christian perspective and designed for clinical use by pastoral counselors and psychotherapists, as well as researchers” (Hall and Edwards, “Initial Development” 233). It is “based on a model of spiritual maturity that integrates relational maturity from an object relations perspective and experiential God-awareness based on New Testament teaching and contemplative spirituality principles” (233). The instrument is a forty-seven-item measurement tool designed to assess five constructs: awareness of God (A), realistic acceptance (RA), disappointment (D), grandiosity (G), and instability (I); (Hall, Reise, and Haviland 159). Participants respond to each item using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all True) to 5 (Very True); (Sandage, Jankowski, and Link 20).

SAI measures spiritual maturity based on “two distinct but related dimensions of one’s self-God relationship” (Hall and Edwards, “Initial Development” 234). The first dimension looks at a person’s self-God relationship awareness and addresses the question, “To what degree is a person aware of God in his or her daily life?” (234). The second dimension explores the person’s experienced quality of his or her relationship with God and addresses the question, “What is the quality of one’s relationship with God?” (234). According to Hall and Edwards, “[T]he awareness concept is derived from New Testament teachings on the nature of communication with God and contemplative spirituality traditions. The quality concept is defined in terms of an object relations view of relational maturity” (234). In an e-mail communication with one of the creators of the

SAI, Hall states that he believes the awareness-of-God subscale taps into an individual's level of intimacy with God and the realistic acceptance subscale measures a person's tendency to work through difficulties with God in relationship with him (see Appendix A).

Hall and Edwards state, "[The] notion of relationship provides an overall theological framework for spiritual maturity" ("Initial Development" 234). They tie this concept to Genesis 1:26, which talks about God creating humankind in the image of God because they believe the relationship interpretation is the most accurate when compared to other interpretations. In addition to Genesis 1:26, Genesis 1:27, John 4:8, and Mark 12:28-31 support this view. In Mark 12, the author gives two great commandments that involve a person's relationship with God and with others (235). Hall and Edwards conclude, "If the essence of human beings is relational, then spiritual maturity should be viewed in this light" (235). From a psychological perspective, "Carter and Barnhurst (1986) argued that maturity with respect to God and others is realized through the dynamic of relationship, and the index of this maturity is intimacy" (Hall and Edwards 235). Growing more intimate with God facilitates relational and spiritual maturity with him.

Awareness of God

Spiritual maturity or intimacy with God naturally involves a personal relationship with him. The Bible records many accounts of God communicating with his people and he is still communicating with his people today. Willard says the primary objective way God addresses people is through the human voice. The primary subjective way he addresses people is through the still, small voice or people's thoughts and feelings. When

God speaks in the subjective way, he causes the awareness to come to focus through the Holy Spirit (Hall and Edwards, “Initial Development” 236).

Awareness of God as a dimension of spiritual maturity or spiritual intimacy finds support in contemplative spirituality. Hall and Edwards refer to Janice Edwards’ hypothesis “that God is intricately involved in all of life, regardless of people’s awareness of God’s presence. Spiritual maturity from Edwards’ perspective involves becoming increasingly aware of how God is intricately involved in every aspect of one’s life” (“Initial Development” 237):

As individuals grow in every aspect in their spiritual maturity, they become more aware that life and religious experience are the same event, woven together. This involves developing an awareness of God’s responses, and an ability to listen to God, to notice his presence, and to savor his responses. (237)

Increasing spiritual maturity and increasing awareness of God in all of life are inseparable.

Quality of Relationship with God

The developers of SAI designed the quality dimension to assess three developmental levels of relationship with God from an object relations perspective—unstable, grandiose, and realistic acceptance. Persons with unstable relationships “tend to have problems trusting God and viewing him as loving” (Hall and Edwards, “Initial Development” 237). Individuals with grandiose relationships look to others to regulate their self-esteem and “tend to be primarily concerned with God’s personal protection and provision for their needs” (238). Conversely, people who have realistic acceptance can tolerate mixed feelings in their relationships with God. They deal with their emotions until they resolve their ambivalence. They may become disappointed with God, but they

maintain hope that God is with them and their relationship with him is intact no matter how bad the problem may seem (238).

Correspondence between Awareness and Quality Dimensions

Hall and Edwards sought to build the SAI on a “coherent theory of spiritual maturity that incorporates a psychologically and theologically sound relational anthropology” (“Initial Development” 238). Hall and Edwards state, “The Awareness dimension was hypothesized to be related to but distinct from the Quality dimension. The two impact each other, but they are also distinct aspects of spiritual maturity” (238). Quality of relationship and awareness of God do not always correlate well. Individuals may relate immaturely with God but still have a strong awareness of his presence and actions in their lives. Conversely, individuals may relate maturely with God but have little awareness of God’s voice or actions (238).

Factor Analysis

During the developmental stage of SAI, Hall and Edwards performed two factor analyses using two different versions of the assessment on two different samples: “The first analysis was exploratory and served to confirm the general theoretical framework. It also suggested ways in which the instrument could be revised” (“Initial Development” 242). The first analysis extracted three factors:

The first two factors corresponded to the hypothesized Quality and Awareness dimensions. The third factor only had two items with loadings above .30. While this third factor was the basis for an expansion of items measuring Realistic Acceptance in the second study, it was omitted from the remainder of the initial analysis. (242)

The first analysis established thirteen items for the awareness factor and eight for the quality factor for use in the second analysis (242).

In 2002, Hall and Edwards performed two additional studies—“exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses on a revised SAI.... [The] results supported the factor structure of the SAI...” (“Spiritual Assessment Inventory” 341). As part of the studies, Hall and Edwards correlated SAI’s five subscales with other conceptually related scales: the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWB), the Intrinsic/Extrinsic-Revised (I/E), the Bell Object Relations Inventory (BORI), the Defense Styles Questionnaire (DSQ), and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; 341-44). They chose BORI for its conceptual relationship with the SAI, particularly its quality subscales. SWB and I/E examined convergent and incremental validity. DSQ evaluated the construct validity of the disappointment subscale (formerly defensiveness), while NPI helped further evaluate the validity of the grandiosity subscale. The correlation results “also supported the construct validity of the SAI” (341). Two-step multiple regressions supported the incremental validity of the SAI.

In 2007 Todd W. Hall, Steven P. Reise, and Mark G. Haviland applied Item Response Theory “to evaluate the psychometric properties of the Spiritual Assessment Inventory” (157). The researchers found that “the SAI scales are highly univocal—each measures one and only one common trait” (173). Likewise, the scales reliably measure the intended constructs (159) and “provide a reasonable degree of information and precision...” (175). While the SAI has good validity and reliability, its construct also has some bias. The SAI is a self-assessment tool. The SAI results are only as good as the accuracy of the person’s assessment of self. Nonetheless, since “[the] SAI was designed specifically to study change and growth in Christian populations” (173), it meets the

needs for this project, which measured a change in intimacy with God after the six-week intervention.

Triangulation, Mixed-Methods Research Design

The research design for this project is triangulation, mixed-method, which includes concurrent collection of both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell 573). After collection of data is complete, the researcher “analyzes both datasets separately, compares the results from the analysis of both datasets, and makes an interpretation as to whether the results support or contradict each other” (557). The direct comparison of the analysis of the different methods of data collection provides triangulation:

The strength of this design is that it combines the advantages of each form of data; that is, quantitative data provide for generalizability, whereas qualitative data offer information about the context or setting.... One difficulty with this design is how to transform one form of data into the other form to integrate and compare databases. (558)

One asset in triangulation, mixed-method research is that one form of data may provide strengths to offset the weaknesses of the other form of data (557). In this research method, the researcher often gives equal priority to both quantitative and qualitative methods of collection (557). Todd D. Jick and others agree that both methods are complementary (602). He believes triangulation gives a “more complete, holistic, and contextual portrayal of the unit(s) under study” (603). Another concurring voice comes from Sheena McCormack et al.’s research. They posit that the use of mixed methods and triangulation research gave a more composite and holistic picture, and more accurate results than simply comparing different methods (7).

Summary

St. Richard uttered this prayer as he lay dying:

Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits which you have given us,
for all the pains and insults which you have borne for us.
Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,
may we know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly,
day by day.
Amen. (“Prayer of St. Richard of Chichester”)

A large statute of St. Richard with his prayer inscribed upon it stands outside the west door of the Chichester Cathedral in England. While the last three phrases of St. Richard’s prayer provided inspiration for the popular song of the 1970s “Day by Day” (“Godspell” *Songlyrics.com*), they also express the heart longings of many Christ followers. The psalmist David expresses the longing of his heart: “O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in your sanctuary and gazed upon your power and glory” (Ps. 63:1-2, NLT). A. W. Tozer expresses God’s desire:

God wills that we should push into His presence and live our whole life there. This is to be known to us in conscious experience. It is more than a doctrine to be held; it is a life to be enjoyed every moment of every day. (6)

These words not only describe a spiritual hunger within humanity but also, upon their reading, they create a thirst and a longing for an intimate walk with God. Humankind’s longing for God is what prompted the desert fathers and their followers to pursue a contemplative spiritual life.

Today, many exhibit a renewed interest in the contemplative spiritual disciplines. In the Christian sense, *lectio divina* encompasses five contemplative movements. First is *silencio*, which focuses on growing silent in the mind and interior life. Formative reading is second. It focuses on reading the Word reflectively and waiting for God to speak through his Word to the reader. Third is meditating on what God said to the reader through his still small voice or his word. The fourth movement, *oratio*, focuses on praying back to God what he revealed. The final movement, *contemplatio*, is resting in God's presence. Muto describes contemplation as: "Suddenly, in a contemplative moment of true intimacy, the Lord himself embraces the seeker. He does not wait until the longing soul has had all its say but breaks in upon the middle of the prayer" (105). *Lectio divina* is focused mind and heart on the presence of God.

The two dimensions of the SAI, awareness of God and quality of relationship, capture the essence of intimacy. Analysis and comparison of the pretest and posttest assessments shows the impact that *lectio divina* had on the two dimensions of intimacy, which also closely align with Fiorello's definition of intimacy. A close friendship with God affects Christ followers' quality of relationship with him as well as awareness of his presence and actions in their lives.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

Reading, studying, and meditating on Scripture each has something to offer. Churches teach their members that to grow spiritually they should read a certain number of chapters each day, depending on whether the day is a workday or a weekend day. In general, the church places little emphasis on letting the biblical material speak to the readers. This type of reading can become similar to reading a novel rather than reading to hear what God is saying from his Word. Reading and studying the Bible produces good results if readers are looking for knowledge and information about God and his disciples. This type of reading is necessary and appropriate at times, but it seldom draws readers into communion with God. However, formative reading, such as *lectio divina*, encourages readers to choose small passages to read and be open to God's openness to them. Formative reading focuses on developing a relationship with the author of the book, not merely the words of the book.

Christ followers wonder why they do not feel close to God. Tricia McCary Rhodes confesses, "For many years I read the Bible, prayed, and was committed to a life of obedience. But often, at the end of the day, I looked back with an emptiness borne of failure to hear God's voice or see His Hand" (15). When people accept Christ's salvation, pastors often refer to this act as coming into a relationship with God, yet the spiritual disciplines of reading the Bible and prayer by themselves do little for relational growth.

The purpose of this research was to measure the impact of a six-week experiential study and practice of *lectio divina* on the participants' intimacy level with God as

indicated by their awareness of God and their quality of relationship with God at First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tennessee.

Research Questions

Three questions directed the data collection for analysis of the project intervention. Research Question #1 (RQ1) and Research Question #2 (RQ2) produced quantitative data from the pre-SAI and post-SAI. WGJQ and FGDQ yielded qualitative data primarily related to Research Question #3 (RQ3).

Research Question #1

What is the level of the participants' intimacy with God (awareness of and quality of relationship with him) as measured by the SAI prior to the experiential study and practice of *lectio divina*?

The responses to the pre-SAI provided quantitative data of the participants' assessment of their intimacy level with God prior to the project intervention. Participants attuned to God's presence working in and through their lives often experience a closeness with God that others may not. Likewise, participants who believe they have a good relationship with God experience a similar intimacy. Additionally, the pre-SAI responses provide an intimacy baseline for the qualitative responses for the WGJQ.

Research Question #2

What was the impact on the participants' intimacy level with God (awareness of God and quality of relationship with him) as measured by the SAI subsequent to the experiential study and practice of *lectio divina*?

The participants' responses to the post-SAI (RQ2) provided quantitative data to compare with the pre-SAI from RQ1. In this context, the post-SAI is a self-assessment

that measured the impact of the six-week intervention. Additionally, each week the responses from WGJQ1, WGJQ2, WGJQ3, and WGJQ4 provided qualitative data. Finally, the responses to FGDQ1, FGDQ2, FGDQ3, and FGDQ4 also provided qualitative data. The responses from WGJQ1, WGJQ2, FGDQ1, and FGDQ2 are of specific interest and importance as they relate directly to RQ2 as together they measure both elements of the definition of intimacy with God—awareness of God and quality of relationship with him.

Research Question #3

What aspect of the six-week experiential study was the most and/or least helpful for the participants' growth in awareness of God and in quality of relationship with him?

RQ3 collected qualitative data from two sources. The first set of data comes from the participants' responses to WGJQ1, WGJQ2, WGJQ3, and WGJQ4 collected after sessions 1 through 6. The second set of data came from the participants' responses to FGDQ1, FGDQ2, FGDQ3, and FGDQ4.

Population and Participants

The participants for this project were regular attenders of a five thousand member Southern Baptist Church—First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tennessee. All participants responded to the church-wide announcement by registering for the group (see Appendix J). The two participant criteria for the group was—they must be at least 18 years old and commit to attend the six-week intervention and focus group discussion one week after the group sessions. A personal crisis is an exception to the last criteria. Participants provided the following demographic information: age range, race, gender, highest educational level completed, denominational preference, years of being a Christian, number of

devotional times each week, church attendance routine, and knowledge of spiritual disciplines, specifically *lectio divina* and meditation (see Appendix E).

Thirty-two participants enrolled in the two groups. However, only eight participants completed the six-week group intervention and follow-up focus group discussion. Those who completed the process included two couples and four women, single or unaccompanied. Their ages ranged from 36-69. All but one participant had been Christians for more than twenty years. All have some form of regular devotional time.

Design of the Study

The premise for this study is that the practice of *lectio divina* will positively affect each participant's intimacy with God. *Lectio divina* is a contemplative spiritual discipline that has five movements—*silencio*, *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. The movements flow naturally from one to the other to open the practitioner to the flow of the Holy Spirit.

The triangulation, mixed-method design allowed me to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, which served to triangulate the results for validation. RQ1 and RQ2 provided quantitative data for comparison of the participants' self-assessment of their spiritual intimacy with God prior to and after the intervention, respectively. Weekly journal responses and discussion group responses provided qualitative data.

The project offered two identical groups on different nights of the week. Group 1 met on Wednesday evening, and Group 2 met on Sunday evening. The project had three major phases. Phase I consisted of collection of demographic material, informed consent, and a group covenant, including a statement providing permission for the group leader to use the participants' pre-SAI, post-SAI, WGJQ, and FGDQ responses in the completion

of the dissertation research. During this phase, the registered participants received the Demographic Survey (DS), informed consent, the group covenant and the pre-SAI by e-mail from SurveyMonkey. The registrants responded by filling in the appropriate material, answering the pre-SAI, and upon completion, returning each document to SurveyMonkey.

Phase II included six group sessions. The first session presented a brief history and overview of the five movements of *lectio divina* followed by the group practice of *lectio*. Sessions two through six provided a short didactic, giving attention to one of the movements of *lectio divina*—*silencio*, *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, *contemplatio*, respectively—followed by the group experience of *lectio divina*. Additionally, phase II included the collection of the participants' responses to the WGJQ. After each session, participants received four questions by e-mail from SurveyMonkey to answer and return no later than three days after receipt of questions. Each session used the same four questions. At the end of the sixth session, participants received the post-SAI. Phase III of the project was the focus group discussion one week after the sixth group meeting. I read each of the five questions and asked each participant to respond.

Instrumentation

This project uses four instruments—a demographic survey, the pretest and posttest Spiritual Assessment Inventory, the weekly guided journal questions, and the focus group discussion questions. The SAI is a standardized instrument and the other three instruments are researcher designed. Each instrument provided a specific set of information for later analysis.

Demographic survey. The DS instrument has nine questions (see Appendix E).

A unique number identified each survey, corresponding with the number assigned to each participant by the group leader. The survey collected this information about each participant—age, race, gender, educational level, denominational preference, number of years as a Christian, frequency of quiet/devotional times per week, frequency of church attendance, and knowledge of *lectio divina*.

The pretest and posttest Spiritual Assessment Inventory. The SAI is a standardized instrument developed by Hall and Edwards in 1996. SAI “is a relationally-based measure designed to assess two dimensions of spiritual development: Awareness of God and Quality of Relationship with God” (“Spiritual Assessment Inventory” 341). This instrument has forty-seven questions used to assess five scales: awareness, realistic acceptance, disappointment, instability, and grandiosity. The answers to the SAI provided quantitative data for the research project.

After three factor analysis studies, the five scales of the revised SAI demonstrated good internal consistency reliability based on Cronbach’s alpha values, .73-.95. (Hall and Edwards, “Spiritual Assessment Inventory” 345; Hall, Reise, and Haviland 158). The five scales reliably measure the intended constructs (Hall, Reise, and Haviland 159). Correlations of the five scales of the SAI with five other conceptually related instruments support the construct validity of the SAI scales (Hall and Edwards, “Spiritual Assessment Inventory” 353).

Weekly guided journal questions. The WGJQ has four questions that asked the participants to reflect personally as they answered them (see Appendix C). Questions 1 and 2 asked about the participants’ changes in their awareness of God and in their quality

of relationship with God. Question 3 assessed the participants' impression of the spiritual discipline *lectio divina*. The final question encouraged the participants to share what they heard God say to them from the Scripture used in the weekly session.

The focus group discussion questions. The FGDQ has four questions (see Appendix D). Questions 1 and 2 asked the participants to report any changes in their awareness of God and quality of relationship with him because of their participation in the six-week study. Question 3 asked participants if they planned to continue practicing *lectio divina* on a regular basis. Question 4 ascertained if the participants would recommend a similar group to others.

Expert Review

The researcher-designed WGJQ and FGDQ required a review. The review experts for this project were Verna J. Lowe, EdD, Dean of the College of Education at Eastern Kentucky University, Chris A. Kiesling, PhD, Interim Dean of the School of Practical Theology and Professor of Human Development and Christian Discipleship, and Milton Lowe, DMin, Director of Networking, Beeson International Center and DMIN Academic Coach at Asbury Theological Seminary. Each person received a letter outlining the project's problem, purpose statement, and three research questions (see Appendix K). Additionally, they received a copy of the WGJQ and FGDQ (see Appendixes C and D) and the protocol for the review (see Appendixes L and M). The experts looked at the WGJQ and FGDQ to see if each aligned with the purpose statement and research questions. Additionally, they looked at WGJQ1, WGJQ2, WGJQ3, WGJQ4, FGDQ1, FGDQ2, FGDQ3, and FGDQ4 to appraise each for need, clarity, elimination, and additions.

Variables

The independent variable was the six-week experiential study and practice of *lectio divina*. The independent variable included both informational and formational components. The informational component was the short didactic at each weekly session that provided the participants with a description of the five movements in *lectio divina*. The dependent variable was the change in the group members' awareness of God and their quality of relationship with him (intimacy) as a result of participating in the six-week experiential group.

John W. Creswell writes, "An intervening variable ... 'stands' between the independent and dependent variables and exercises an influence on the dependent variable apart from the independent variable. Intervening variables transmit (or mediate) the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable" (129). In this study, several intervening variables were present. Gender was an intervening variable since the group had more women than men. Marital status was another intervening variable. The majority of group participants was single or attended alone. Educational background ranged from high school diploma to college degree. None of the participants was familiar with *lectio divina* prior to this study. Attendance and participation in the group study was essentially the same for all participants. Most of participants appeared motivated to learn the discipline of *lectio divina*, as well as eager to have more awareness of and better quality of relationship with God.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are both important concepts. In general, the more reliable the scores of an instrument, the more valid the scores may be. The best instrument is one that has scores that are both reliable and valid:

Reliability means that scores from an instrument are stable and consistent.... Validity, however, means that the individual's scores from an instrument make sense, are meaningful, and enable you, as the researcher, to draw good conclusions from the sample you are studying to the population. (Creswell 169)

In order for an instrument or a question to be valid, it must measure what it says it is measuring.

The SAI has a reliability coefficient of .73-.95. Both ends of the continuum are within the acceptable range for good reliability: "The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the times in the scale" (Gliem and Gliem 87). Based on George and Mallery's rules of thumb, the SAI reliability coefficient range is from acceptable to excellent (Gliem and Gliem 87). Further, Joseph A. Gliem and Rosemary R. Gliem point out "that an alpha score of .8 is a reasonable goal" (87). Additionally, the use of SAI is in concert with appropriate use for the assessment measure.

The expert review provides assessment of both reliability and validity for the WGJQ and the FGDQ. The expert review evaluated reliability of the questions by appraising the format and style of each for individual understanding and clarity. In addition to evaluating reliability, the expert review also assessed for validity. The expert review appraised each question for alignment with the study.

Data Collection

This project collected several types of data—demographic data, pretest and posttest quantitative data, qualitative responses to the weekly guided journal questions, and qualitative responses to the focus group discussion questions. As described in the previous section, the intervention had three major phases. This outline describes in more detail how data collection occurred each week and how the three phases correlated with each session.

Phase I (One Week Prior to Session 1)

1. Participants received by e-mail from SurveyMonkey, completed, and returned the demographic survey.
2. Participants received by e-mail from SurveyMonkey, completed, and returned the pre-SAI.

Phase II (Week 1-6/Session 1-6)

Week 1/Session 1.

1. Participants read and signed the informed consent (see Appendix G).
2. Participants read and signed group covenant (see Appendix H).
3. Participants received leader's/researcher's commitment to the group (see Appendix I).
4. Participants received an outline for the six sessions.
5. Session focus described.
 - a. Teaching—a very brief historical overview about *lectio divina* and its five movements, and

- b. Group experience of *lectio divina* using Scripture passage, Psalm 23, facilitated by group leader (see Appendix N).
- 6. Leader sent WGJQ (the same for each of the six sessions) to participants via e-mail.
- 7. Participants returned WGJQ responses by e-mail.
- 8. Data was saved in SurveyMonkey for later analysis.

Week 2/Session 2.

- 1. Session focus described.
 - a. Teaching topic—*silencio*, and
 - b. Group experience of *lectio divina* using Scripture passage, Mark 1:1-4, 7-8, facilitated by group leader (see Appendix N).
- 2. Leader sent WGJQ (the same for each of the six sessions) to participants via e-mail.
- 3. Participants returned WGJQ by e-mail.
- 4. Data was saved in SurveyMonkey for later analysis

Week 3/Session 3.

- 1. Session focus described.
 - a. Teaching topic—*lectio*, and
 - b. Group experience of *lectio divina* using Scripture passage, Philippians 2:1-8, facilitated by group leader (see Appendix N).
- 2. Leader sent WGJQ (the same for each of the six sessions) to participants via e-mail.
- 3. Participants returned WGJQ by e-mail.

4. Data was saved in SurveyMonkey for later analysis.

Week 4/Session 4.

1. Session focus described.
 - a. Teaching topic—*meditatio*, and
 - b. Group experience of *lectio divina* using Scripture passage, 1 Peter 2:1-4, 11-12, facilitated by group leader (see Appendix N).
2. Leader sent WGJQ (the same for each of the six sessions) to participants via e-mail.
3. Participants returned WGJQ by e-mail.
4. Data was saved in SurveyMonkey for later analysis.

Week 5/Session 5.

1. Session focus described.
 - a. Teaching topic—*oratio*, and
 - b. Group experience of *lectio divina* using Scripture passage, Ephesians 3:14-19, facilitated by group leader (see Appendix N).
2. Leader sent WGJQ (the same for each of the six sessions) to participants via e-mail.
3. Participants returned WGJQ by e-mail.
4. Data was saved in SurveyMonkey for later analysis.

Week 6/Session 6.

1. Session focus described.
 - a. Teaching topic—*contemplatio*, and

- b. Group experience of *lectio divina* using Scripture passage, 1 John 2:1-8, facilitated by group leader (see Appendix N).
2. Leader sent post-SAI by e-mail from SurveyMonkey.
3. Participants completed, and returned post-SAI by e-mail.
4. Post-SAI saved for analysis
5. Leader sent WGJQ (the same for each of the six sessions) to participants via e-mail.
6. Participants completed and returned WGJQ by e-mail.
7. Data from WGJQ was saved for analysis.

Phase III (Focus Group Discussion)

1. The leader read each of the four FGDQ and asked each participant to respond.
2. The leader recorded the participant responses.
3. The leader took written notes during the session.
4. The leader manually entered responses to FGJQ into SurveyMonkey and saved the data for analysis.

Data Analysis

SurveyMonkey is a Web-based program used to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. After receiving permission from Hall, the creator of the SAI (see Appendix O), I entered the SAI questions and their five-point Likert scale responses into SurveyMonkey in order to receive the quantitative data. Similarly, I entered the WGJQ and the FGDQ into SurveyMonkey.

The program provided descriptive statistical analysis on the pre-SAI and post-SAI. Additionally, the program analyzed the data for change between pre-SAI and post-

SAI responses and compared the change by age group, length of time being a Christian, frequency of current quiet time, and educational level to evaluate the impact these intervening variables had on the data.

The saved qualitative data from the WGJQ and the FGDQ responses was the source for text analysis. This analytical process looked for recurring words and themes and their frequency within the data. To complete the data analysis of all the data, I compared the qualitative summary with the change in quantitative data. This process served to validate or refute the quantitative change.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures were of primary concern throughout this research project. The protection of each participant's psychological well-being was an important issue to consider. Three documents addressed the issue of confidentiality of data collection, data analysis, and data security.

In the informed consent, I committed to keep all collected data confidential (see Appendix G). This data included the pre-SAI and post-SAI responses, the DS personal responses, all WGJQ responses, and all FGDQ responses. The use of SurveyMonkey aided in keeping the participants' responses confidential by encrypting the data. In addition, SurveyMonkey provides a layer of protection, ensuring that only identified participants could enter any responses into the program.

The group covenant outlined the members' responsibility to each other and the appropriate behavior of group members (see Appendix H). In item III of the group covenant, the participants agreed to keep confidential anything shared in the group by members. This item served to reinforce the psychological well-being of each participant.

The final document outlined my commitment to the group (see Appendix I). Items 6 and 7 specifically addressed my assurance to confidentiality of all data. Additionally, I pledged to destroy all participant demographic information after the completion of the project.

Because the focus group discussion included all the participants, they heard each other's responses. However, as with all other data, the responses were confidential within the group. Likewise, the completed dissertation contained no participant names with responses.

I stored the dissertation with its written analysis on my personal laptop, which requires a password. I was the only person who could access this computer and analysis. Additionally, I backed up the completed dissertation and analysis on a flash drive and kept the flash drive in a secure location at home.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

Believers come to Christ because they recognize their need for a Savior to deliver them from their sinful behaviors. Pastors invite them into a relationship with God, instructing new believers to read their Bibles daily and to pray to God about their needs and the needs of others. However, followers of Christ mainly read for content about God and his actions, not for cultivating a relationship. Additionally, in this fast-paced society, believers who long for intimacy with God all too often allow their desire to slip into the background of their lives rather than keeping it in the forefront of their priorities.

Intentional, focused time between two people is required in order for an intimate relationship to grow between them. The same is true between a person and God. Intimacy with God is becoming aware of his presence and growing in relationship with him through shared experiences.

The purpose of this research was to measure the impact of a six-week experiential study and practice of *lectio divina* on the participants' intimacy level with God as indicated by their awareness of God and their quality of relationship with God at First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tennessee.

Participants

The participants in the two small groups were all regular attenders at FBC. Eight group members completed all six weeks of the intervention and the seventh week for the focus group discussion. The groups had two married couples and four single or unaccompanied female adults (see Figure 4.1). All participants were Caucasian and all

were regular attenders of First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tennessee. The ratio of male to female was 1 to 3 (see Figure 4.1).

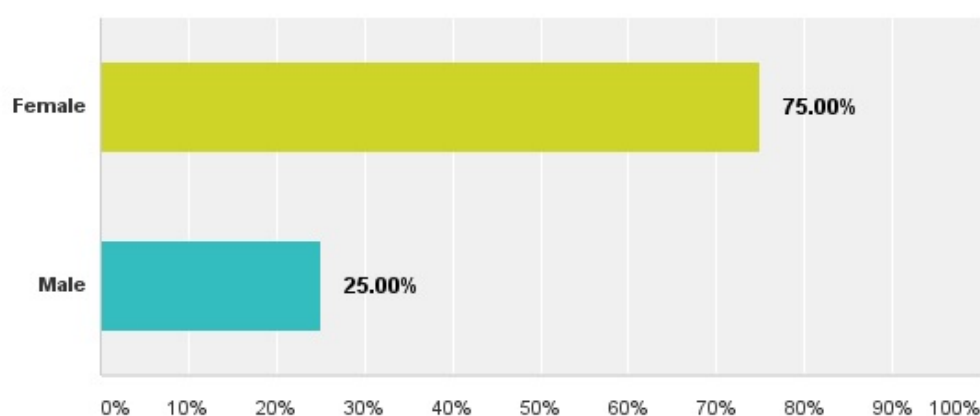


Figure 4.1. Gender of participants

Participant ages fell into three ranges: 36-49 (n=1), 50-59 (n=4), and 60-69 (n=3; see Figure 4.2). All of the group members have been Christian over twenty years except one who identified that he or she has been a Christian from 11-20 years (see Figure 4.3). No one in the groups was familiar with *lectio divina*, while three of the eight indicated they were familiar with meditation, which is one of the movements in *lectio divina*.

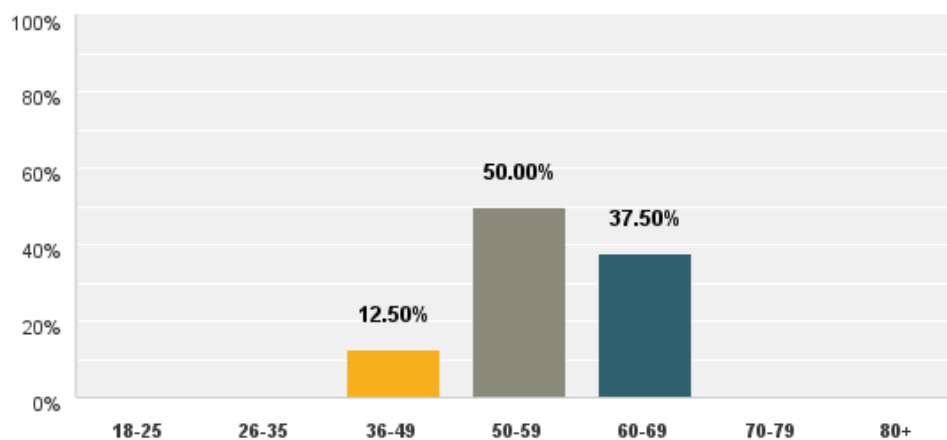


Figure 4.2. Age of participants.

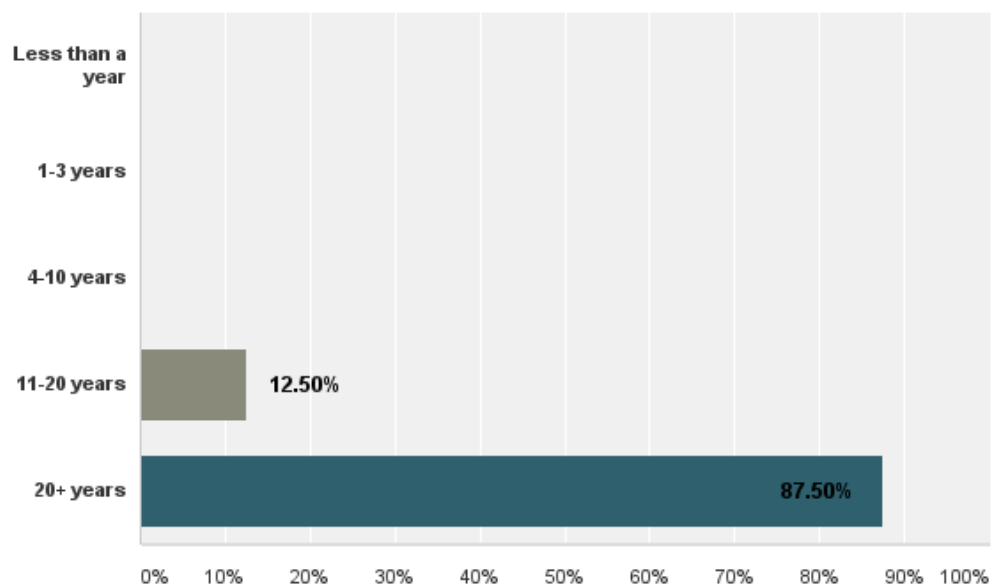


Figure 4.3. Number of years participants have been Christians.

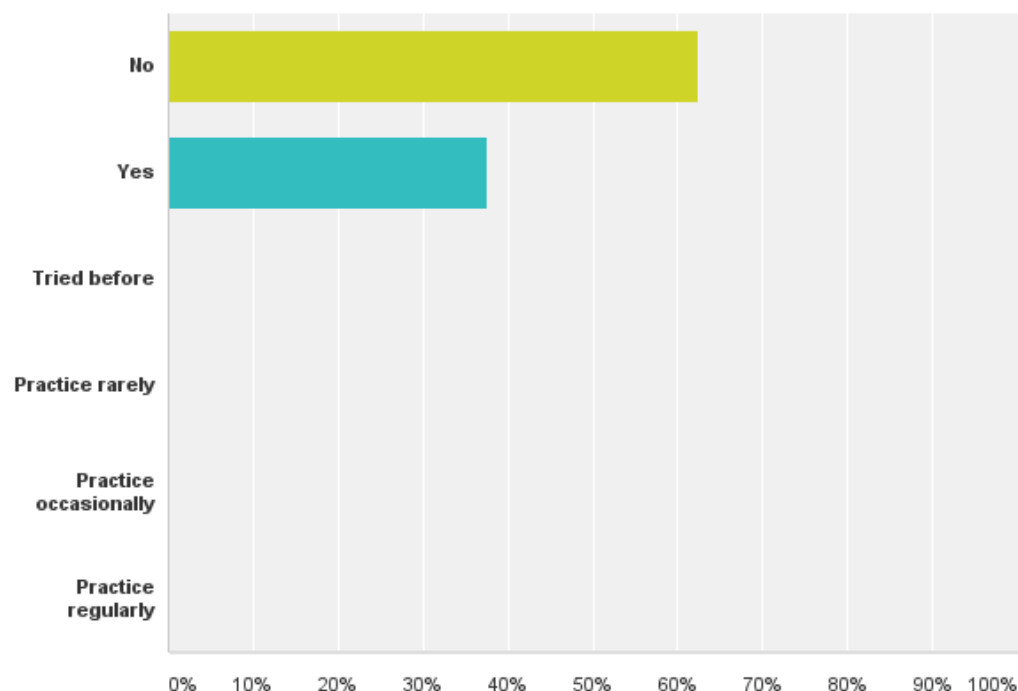


Figure 4.4. Familiarity with meditation.

Research Question #1

What is the level of the participants' intimacy with God (awareness of and quality of relationship with him) as measured by the SAI prior to the experiential study and practice of *lectio divina*? The primary resource for answering RQ1 is the pre-SAI. The SAI is a standardized instrument that provided a baseline of the participants' intimacy level with God prior to the project intervention. The SAI measured two dimensions: awareness of God and quality of relationship with God. To measure the two dimensions, the SAI used five scales—the awareness scale measured the awareness of God dimension

while the four other scales, realistic acceptance, disappointment, grandiosity, and instability, measured the quality of relationship with God dimension (see Table 4.1). The SAI has one additional scale, impression management, which is for use in a clinical setting (Hall and Edwards, “Spiritual Assessment Inventory” 342). The impression management is a measure of test-taking attitude. At this time, the impression management scale is experimental and needs further research to determine its usefulness (353). Because of these factors, analysis of the SAI results does not include the impression management scale.

Table 4.1. Pre- and Post-Spiritual Assessment Inventory Results (N=8)

SAI Scale	Pretest		Posttest		P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Awareness	3.195	0.780	3.617	0.579	0.025
Realistic Acceptance	3.943	1.231	4.048	0.929	0.088
Disappointment	1.796	1.286	1.571	1.014	0.185
Instability	1.857	0.818	1.635	0.587	0.152
Grandiosity	1.408	0.455	1.429	0.693	0.450

Table 4.1 shows the pretest and posttest mean score for each scale and its standard deviation (SD). The SAI has nineteen questions for the awareness scale; seven questions for both the disappointment and realistic acceptance scales; seven questions for the grandiosity scale; and, nine questions for the instability scale.

Research Question #2

What was the impact on the participants' intimacy level with God (awareness of God and quality of relationship with him) as measured by the SAI subsequent to the experiential study and practice of *lectio divina*? The participants' responses to the post-SAI (RQ2) provided quantitative data to compare with the pre-SAI from RQ1. The post-SAI measured whether the six-week intervention affected the participants' self-assessment of their awareness of God and their quality of relationship with him. Additionally, the responses to the questions, WGJQ1, WGJQ2, FGDQ1, and FGDQ2, provided qualitative data, which is of specific interest and importance as they relate directly to RQ2.

The awareness scale demonstrated a mean increase of 0.422 between the pre-SAI and the post-SAI while the SD decreased 0.101. The realistic acceptance mean also increased by 0.105 with a decrease of 0.312 decrease in the SD. The means of the disappointment (0.225) and instability scales (0.222) both decreased and their respective SDs (0.275 and 0.231), also decreased. The mean grandiosity scale increased a small amount (0.021) as did the SD (0.138).

Use of the *t*-test produced a *p*-value that determined statistical significance for the difference between the pre-SAI and post-SAI results. The null hypothesis for this study says, "There is no difference between the pre-SAI and post-SAI results because of the six-week project intervention." *P* is the numeric value given for the probability that the difference between the pre-SAI and the post-SAI results when compared to the alpha value of 0.05 could have been produced by chance if the null hypothesis were true (Creswell 196-97). When the *p*-value is equal to or less than the alpha level, the null

hypothesis failed, indicating that the data has statistical significance. Conversely, a p -value that is greater than the alpha level means that one cannot reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, the data does not have statistical significance. Using these criteria, the results from four of the SAI scales were not statistically significant: realistic acceptance (0.088), disappointment (0.185), instability (0.152), and grandiosity (0.450). The awareness scale has statistical significance with a p -value of 0.025.

The qualitative questions, WGQ1, WGJQ2, FGDQ1, and FGDQ2, supporting this research question directed the participants' responses into two themes: awareness and quality of relationship. These themes relate to the definition of intimacy with God—awareness of and quality of relationship with him. Examination of the qualitative responses provided several subthemes (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Themes and Subthemes from WGJQ1, WGJQ2, FGDQ1, and FGDQ2 (N=8)

Awareness	Quality of Relationship
Hearing God	Increased desire for intimacy
Listening	Listening
Intentional focus	Feel closer to God
Distractions	Understanding awareness
Process	Time with God a priority
Individually unique	Renewed

All participants agreed that becoming still in order to hear God is a process. Life has many distractions, and learning to quiet the noise of their minds is difficult. Silence and quiet remain issues for all the participants. Most of the participants experienced a

sense of God's presence that was not easy to define and was unique to the individual and the context of the situation. All agreed that the group time provided an intentional opportunity to be in God's presence and the spiritual practice of *lectio divina* provided a framework or outline for focusing on God. The responses showed that while the participants were committed to listening for God, hearing him is growing slowly.

When comparing the themes of the awareness scale with the themes and subthemes reported by participants' responses to WGJQ1, WGJQ2, WGJQ3, and WGJQ4, there is an obvious correlation. Two themes emerge from the awareness scale—hearing God and awareness of his presence, actions, and directions. The participants' responses—hearing God, feeling closer to God, and understanding awareness of God—correlate well with the awareness scale themes. This correlation supports the statistical significance of the SAI's awareness scale.

Research Question #3

What aspect of the six-week experiential study was the most and/or least helpful for the participants' growth in awareness of God and in quality of relationship with him? The data responses answering RQ3 came from two sources. WGJQ1, WGJQ2, WGJQ3, and WGJQ4 provided qualitative data from each of the six weeks. The second set of data came from the participants' responses during the focus discussion during the seventh group meeting to FGDQ1, FGDQ2, FGDQ3, and FGDQ4.

Table 4.3. Themes and subthemes from WGJQ1, 2, 3, 4, FGDQ1, 2, 3, and 4 (N=8)

Positive	Negative
Meaningful quiet time	Nothing
Encourages personal <i>reflection</i>	Six weeks is too short
Intentional focus	Difficulty focusing
Desire to continue <i>lectio divina</i>	Requires personal discipline
Helpful when used regularly	Learning to be still
God's presence	Difficulty minimizing distractions
Group time	Challenges to process
Hearing God	
Format, order, method for quiet time	
Listening for God	
Feel closer to God	

Participants in both groups recognized and verbalized both orally and written many benefits to practicing *lectio divina*. In describing the process, the participants used such adjectives as blessed, grand, active, helpful, and meaningful. The participants praised the process because of the format and order it brought to their quiet time with God. Other positive comments duplicate some of the subthemes from Table 4.3: God's presence, hearing God, feeling closer to God, and listening for God. During the focus group most participants verbalized the desire to continue, while at the same time recognizing that the practice requires personal discipline and skills that are new such as minimizing distractions, sitting still, and focusing on God or on a Scripture passage can and probably will present challenges to continued use.

Summary of Major Findings

This project looked at the spiritual discipline *lectio divina* and its impact on the participants' intimacy with God. The pretest and posttest SAI, WGJQ, and focus group discussion revealed the following findings:

1. *Lectio divina* provides a good format for connecting with God and his Word—experiencing his presence and his voice.
2. Learning to be silent is difficult.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

Worship services, Bible study groups, and Sunday school classes abound within the Church. In each of these settings, participants hear about God, his ways, and his principles for daily living. However, seldom do they hear that God desires an intimate relationship with each individual. Close examination of Scripture illustrates that many of God's children had very close relationships with him. A growing relationship with anyone, including God, requires intentional, focused time with that person. The purpose of this research was to measure the impact of a six-week experiential study and practice of *lectio divina* on the participants' intimacy level with God as indicated by their awareness of God and their quality of relationship with God at First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tennessee.

***Lectio Divina*—A Helpful Spiritual Discipline**

When asked to talk about a positive aspect of the six-week project, a participant answered, "The *lectio divina* movements are very common-sense ways to approach and really make prayer time more meaningful." History supports this participant's conclusion. In the sixth century, St. Benedict established his rule for monastic living, which included *lectio*. Some six years later, Guigo II systematically organized *lectio divina* into the four steps—*lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio* (Painter and Wynkoop 2-3). *Lectio divina* was lost to the church for a period. However, in Christ followers show a renewed interest in it. Dirk Nelson, calls *lectio divina* a "new" phenomenon from early Christianity (35). Mary Margaret Funk reminds participants that in *lectio divina*, the

person encounters God and God encounters the person. It is a fluid process wherein one movement flows easily and logically into the other, from silence, to reading, to meditating, to praying, and finally to contemplating or resting in God's presence. One of the positive aspects that the participants noted was experiencing God's presence, which came about as the participants began to feel more at home with silence so that God could meet them and speak to them as he chose. Willard teaches that spiritual disciplines are a means for Christ followers to come before him and open themselves to his Word and his Spirit ("Spiritual Disciplines" 107). From the experience of *lectio divina*, group participants began to hear God speak personally to them as they read the weekly Bible passage. Some participants verbalized hearing the conviction of God, while others talked about prayerful worship. Both of these experiences came from meditating on the fresh word that God gave (Painter and Wynkoop 35; Nelson 40; Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word* 149-50).

Learning Silence

The concept of silence is virtually foreign to twenty-first-century people, including Christians. Noise is everywhere, even in a classroom at church. Noise distracts people from focusing on what is important. Noise comes from external sources as well as internal sources. All the participants reported struggling with becoming silent. Several participants recorded that learning to be silent after dealing with the stresses of their everyday lives is one of the reasons they enrolled in this group. Incorporating *silencio* into *lectio divina* is the necessary preparation for hearing God's still, small voice even as it comes from the pages of Scripture. Some of the difficulties that participants reported are normal issues with learning to be silent—random thoughts, guilt about their difficulty,

not enough practice, and too lengthy silence. Researchers agree that becoming silent is not easy. However, it is necessary to receive the most benefit from *lectio divina* (Mulholland; Muto; Bohrer; and Calhoun).

Implications of the Findings

The results of the major findings suggest the need for more research into the efficacy of the SAI use in small-scale samples. Its awareness scale appears reliable for measuring the awareness dimension. The other four scales—realistic acceptance, disappointment, instability, and grandiosity—may not be applicable outside the clinical setting.

Limitations of the Study

The participants of the study volunteered to participate through a general registration period for Bible studies and small groups in the church. The participants were encouraged to commit to attend the complete six-week intervention and focus group discussion; however, only eight participants out of thirty-two did so. The small sample size contributed to the lack of statistical significance of the findings, as well as to the research's generalizability to other populations, even FBC. Responses of a larger sample size may have provided better quantitative analysis. The small sample size cannot compensate for outlying observations while a larger sample might. Additionally, a larger sample size might have provided a larger variety of responses to the WGJQs and FGDQs.

Unexpected Observations

Several participants experienced either a renewed or an initial understanding that setting a regular time to be with God is important, and must be a priority to grow in intimacy with God. While this observation is a logical conclusion, the study focus was on

the how-to process of *lectio divina*, not a general understanding of a devotional time with God. This unexpected observation is beneficial for those who gained this understanding, and hopefully they will follow through and spend regular, intentional time with God.

Recommendations

Having completed this project, I have four suggestions that I would make. First, I would recommend a larger sample size, ranging from at least 15 to 30. Second, I would include a suggestion to the participants to practice a minimum of fifteen minutes silence each day so they become more skilled in and comfortable with the exercise. Third, I would recommend practicing *lectio divina* once a week in addition to the group experience. One participant from the Sunday group immediately started using *lectio divina* in her personal quiet time, and she reported that Scripture has come alive to her. Before, she was reading the Bible almost every day but only reading it once and going on. Now that she is reading it more meditatively several times at a sitting, she hears God speak more clearly than before. Fourth, I would recommend lengthening the number of weeks in the intervention. One participant who was having difficulty quieting her mind reported that she benefited from the group experience. She said she experienced a quiet and a peace in the group that she could not seem to achieve on her own. Others made similar comments, such as benefiting from an appointed time to meet with God. The group experience appeared beneficial to many in more than simply coming together to learn a new spiritual discipline.

Postscript

As I reflect on the intervention within this research project, I wonder why some of the participants left the group. Here are a few of my thoughts that may help explain the

loss of participants. Only one participant of the original thirty-two had any experience with *lectio divina*. None of the eight participants who finished the group had previous experience with *lectio divina*. Additionally, *lectio divina* is not a spiritual discipline within the tradition of First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tennessee. For the younger participants, perhaps my method of teaching was too directive. This generation prefers to participate and draw their own conclusions. One of the original participants reported that the movement of *silencio* was too long. The process of learning to silence one's inner thoughts is never easy; however, starting with a very small amount of silence and slowly lengthening the time with each new session may have increased the participants' comfort level with *silencio*. When I read the WGJQ reflections of those who did complete the group, I see that some were connecting with the process and benefiting from it. I am proud of them and want to thank them for their candid responses in the focus group discussion. My hope is that they will continue to pursue an intimate journey with God.

APPENDIX A

E-MAIL COMMUNICATIONS WITH TODD HALL

Tue, Jun 1, 2010 at 10:58 AM

SAI

FROM Gloria WESTERFIELD
TO Todd Hall

Dr. Hall,

I am a DMin student at Asbury Theological Seminary and in the process of research for my dissertation project. I have been reading quite a bit on the Spiritual Assessment Inventory and want your opinion about using it in a small group setting specifically to measure “intimacy with God” before and after introducing the group members to contemplative disciplines.

If you believe this is an appropriate tool for my research, would you please give me a copy of the latest version or tell me how I can obtain it.

Respectfully,

Gloria Westerfield

Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.
Ephesians 3:20 (NLT)

Tue, Jun 1, 2010 at 1:57 PM

Re: SAI

FROM Todd W. Hall
To Gloria WESTERFIELD

Hi Gloria,

Yes, I think the awareness of God subscale taps into that, as well as the realistic acceptance scale, which measures a person's tendency to work through difficulties with God in relationship with him.

I attached the scale and the two articles on the development of the SAI. I hope your research goes well.

Take care,

Todd

Todd W. Hall, Ph.D.
Director, Institute for Research on Psychology & Spirituality
Associate Professor of Psychology
Editor, Journal of Psychology & Theology
Biola University

Facebook Page: facebook.com/drtoddwhall
Twitter: @drtoddwhall

APPENDIX B
PRETEST AND POSTTEST
SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT INVENTORY (V7.1R)

Todd W. Hall, Ph.D.

Keith J. Edwards, Ph.D.

Instructions

1. Please respond to each statement below by circling the number that best represents your experience to the right of the statement.
2. It is best to answer according to what *really reflects* your experience rather than what you think your experience should be.
3. Give the answer that comes to mind first. Don't spend too much time thinking about an item.
4. Give the best possible response to each statement even if it does not provide all the information you would like.
5. Try your best to respond to all statements. Your answers will be completely confidential.
6. Some of the statements consist of two parts as shown here:
 - 2.1 There are times when I feel disappointed with God.
 - 2.2 When this happens, I still want our relationship to continue.

Your response to 2.2 tells how true statement 2.2 is for you when you have the experience of feeling disappointed with God described in statement 2.1.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Substantially	Very
	True	True	True	True	True
<hr/>					
1. I have a sense of how God is working in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
2.1 There are times when I feel disappointed with God.	1	2	3	4	5
2.2 When this happens, I still want our relationship to continue.	1	2	3	4	5
3. God's presence feels very real to me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am afraid that God will give up on me.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I seem to have a unique ability to influence God					
through my prayers.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Listening to God is an essential part of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am always in a worshipful mood when I go to church.	1	2	3	4	5
8.1 There are times when I feel frustrated with God.	1	2	3	4	5
8.2 When I feel this way, I still desire to put effort into our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am aware of God prompting me to do things.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My emotional connection with God is unstable.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My experiences of God's responses to me impact me greatly.	1	2	3	4	5
12.1 There are times when I feel irritated at God.	1	2	3	4	5
12.2 When I feel this way, I am able to come to some sense					
of resolution in our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
13. God recognizes that I am more spiritual than most people.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I always seek God's guidance for every decision I make.	1	2	3	4	5

15. I am aware of God's presence in my interactions with other people. 1 2 3 4 5
16. There are times when I feel that God is punishing me. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I am aware of God responding to me in a variety of ways. 1 2 3 4 5
- 18.1 There are times when I feel angry at God. 1 2 3 4 5
- 18.2 When this happens, I still have the sense that God will
always be with me. 1 2 3 4 5
19. I am aware of God attending to me in times of need. 1 2 3 4 5
20. God understands that my needs are more important
than most people's. 1 2 3 4 5
21. I am aware of God telling me to do something. 1 2 3 4 5
22. I worry that I will be left out of God's plans. 1 2 3 4 5
23. My experiences of God's presence impacts me greatly. 1 2 3 4 5
24. I am always as kind at home as I am at church. 1 2 3 4 5
25. I have a sense of the direction in which God is guiding me. 1 2 3 4 5
26. My relationship with God is an extraordinary one that most people
would not understand. 1 2 3 4 5
27. There are times when I feel betrayed by God. 1 2 3 4 5
- 27.2 When I feel this way, I put effort into restoring our relationship. 1 2 3 4 5
28. I am aware of God communicating to me in a variety of ways. 1 2 3 4 5
29. Manipulating God seems to be the best way to get what I want. 1 2 3 4 5
30. I am aware of God's presence in times of need. 1 2 3 4 5
31. From day to day, I sense God being with me. 1 2 3 4 5
32. I pray for all my friends and relatives every day. 1 2 3 4 5

- 33.1 There are times when I feel frustrated by God for not responding
to my prayers. 1 2 3 4 5
- 33.2 When I feel this way, I am able to talk it through with God. 1 2 3 4 5
34. I have a sense of God communicating guidance to me. 1 2 3 4 5
35. When I sin, I tend to withdraw from God. 1 2 3 4 5
36. I experience an awareness of God speaking to me personally. 1 2 3 4 5
37. I find my prayers to God are more effective than other people's. 1 2 3 4 5
38. I am always in the mood to pray. 1 2 3 4 5
39. I feel I have to please God or he might reject me. 1 2 3 4 5
40. I have a strong impression of God's presence. 1 2 3 4 5
41. There are times when I feel that God is angry at me. 1 2 3 4 5
42. I am aware of God being very near to me. 1 2 3 4 5
43. When I sin, I am afraid of what God will do to me. 1 2 3 4 5
44. When I consult God about decisions in my life, I am aware
of His direction and help. 1 2 3 4 5
45. I seem to be more gifted than most people in discerning God's will. 1 2 3 4 5
46. When I feel God is not protecting me, I tend to feel worthless. 1 2 3 4 5
- 47.1 There are times when I feel like God has let me down. 1 2 3 4 5
- 47.2 When this happens, my trust in God is not completely broken. 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX C
WEEKLY GUIDED JOURNAL QUESTIONS
FOR SESSIONS 1-6

1. Has your awareness of God changed because of this week's group session? Please explain.
2. Has your quality of relationship with God changed because of this week's group session? Please explain.
3. Please record a few words, *at your comfort level*, if you heard God say something from the Scripture passage you read during this week's session. Explain. Sometimes God merely wants us in his presence in a focused way.
4. What are your positive and/or negative responses to the *lectio divina* process after the group session?

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Has your awareness of God changed because of your participation in the six-week group? Please explain.
2. Has your quality of relationship with God changed because of your participation in the six-week group? Please explain.
3. After completing six weeks of group sessions of *lectio divina*, do you plan to continue the practice of *lectio divina*? Please explain.
4. What aspect of the *lectio divina* process has been most helpful? least helpful? Please explain.
5. Would you recommend this group or a similar group to others? Please explain.

APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Survey/participant number _____

Please answer by circling the appropriate number or word in each group.

Age: 18-25 26-35 36-49 50-59 60-69 70-79 80+

Race: Caucasian African-American Hispanic Other explain _____

Gender: Male Female

Education Level (Highest Completed): Some high school High school graduate
 Some college College graduate Graduate degree Postgraduate degree

Church denominational preference _____

How long you have been a Christian?

Less than a year 1-3 years 4-10 years 11-20 years 20+ years

How many times a week do you have a quiet time/devotional time?

0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 5-6 6-7 more than 7

How often do you attend church?

Special occasions monthly several times a month weekly several times a week

Are you familiar with the spiritual discipline, *lectio divina*?

No Yes Tried before Practice rarely Practice occasionally Practice regularly

Are you familiar with the spiritual discipline meditation?

No Yes Tried before Practice rarely Practice occasionally Practice regularly

APPENDIX F
PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY AND STATE_____

PREFERRED PHONE NUMBER_____

E-MAIL ADDRESS_____

APPENDIX G

INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Study Group Member,

I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary conducting research of the impact that a six-week experiential study and practice of *lectio divina* has on the participants' intimacy level with God as indicated by their awareness of and their quality of relationship with Him. This research project includes a six-week intervention plus a focus group discussion during the seventh week. I invite you to join in this small group research project.

The project involves participants taking a pretest and posttest evaluation, answering four weekly guided journal questions after each week of the six-week intervention, and responding to four focus group discussion questions one week after the sixth session. During the six-week experiential group sessions, I will provide you with a brief history of *lectio divina* and an explanation of each of its five movements, and a time to practice the spiritual discipline of *lectio divina*.

Your pretest and posttest assessment scores, weekly guided journal responses, your focus group responses, and any personal demographic information you provide are confidential. I will store this information on my laptop that is password protected and will back it up on a flash drive kept in a secure location in my home. In the completed dissertation, I will never connect a name to specific responses or their analysis.

Participation in this research project is voluntary. By signing this consent form, you are giving me permission to use assessment scores and other responses in the completion of my dissertation. If you are willing to take part in the study group, there is a place for you to sign at the end of this letter.

Let me thank you now for your willingness to help me with my project and your desire to explore ways of becoming intimately involved with God in your life.

Sincerely,

Gloria J. Westerfield

I volunteer to participate in the study as described and indicate by my signature below.

Signature_____ Date_____

Print Your Name_____

APPENDIX H

GROUP COVENANT

- I. I agree to attend each session, including the Focus Group Discussion, unless I have an emergency. I will text message, call, or e-mail the group leader if an emergency happens as soon as is reasonably appropriate.
- II. I agree to participate in the short didactic, practice of *lectio divina*, and discussion as appropriate.
- III. I agree to keep confidential anything shared in the group.
- IV. I agree to give honest responses, to the best of my ability, in the pretest and posttest Spiritual Assessment Inventory, to the Weekly Guided Journal Questions, and to the Focus Group Discussion Questions. Honesty will give the best data for analysis and will provide me the most growth.
- V. I agree to show respect to every participant by giving everyone an opportunity to ask questions or share an insight with the group.
- VI. I agree to answer the Weekly Guided Journal Questions in a timely manner, returning my responses by e-mail no longer than three days after the session.
- VII. I agree to allow the group leader to audio-record the Focus Group Discussion, as well as take handwritten notes.

Signature_____

Date_____

APPENDIX I

LEADER'S/RESEARCHER'S COMMITMENT TO THE GROUP

1. I commit to be prompt and ready for each session.
2. I commit to send out the Weekly Guided Journal Questions by the day after each session.
3. I commit to respond to the best of my ability to questions and concerns voiced by participants.
4. I commit to be respectful to each participant, recognizing that each of us is on our own journey.
5. I commit to keep the group focused while allowing all to share freely at appropriate times.
6. I commit to keep all personal information, comments, and responses confidential.
7. I commit to destroy all demographic information after I finish the dissertation process. I will keep pre-SAI, post-SAI, WGJQ, and FGDQ responses indefinitely. I will never reveal the respondent of any of the data.
8. I commit to be available by phone or e-mail throughout the project.
9. I commit to respond to all phone messages and e-mails the day I receive them.

Respectfully,

Gloria Jean Westerfield

Doctor of Ministry Student

APPENDIX J

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENT

Knowing God Intimately

I want to invite you to participate in a small group that will introduce you to a Christian spiritual discipline that will help you read a short Bible passage while focusing on what God is saying to you personally. This discipline includes five movements: *silence, reading, reflecting, responding, and resting*. God desires for each of us to know him intimately and to learn to hear his still small voice. The Psalmist wrote, “Be still, and know that I am God...!” (46:10a, NKJV). This group is open to any adult interested in deepening his/her relationship with God.

Depending on your schedule, you may join Knowing God Intimately on Wednesday, August 20 at 6:00 p.m. or Sunday, August 24. Both groups will meet for seven weeks, ending on October 1 and October 5, respectively. Gloria Westerfield is the small group leader. For more information about this exciting group, see Gloria in the atrium. She is eager to answer your questions and assist you in registering for her group.

APPENDIX K
LETTER TO EXPERT REVIEWERS

February 23, 2014

Dear Reviewer,

I want to thank you for performing the expert review on my Weekly Guided Journal Questions (WGJQ) and Focus Group Discussion Questions (FGDQ) for my project. Each instrument is researcher designed and has four questions. You are receiving separate protocols for WGJQ and FGDQ. Included in this short letter is a summary of the problem, project purpose statement, and research questions.

Problem—The problem is finding a spiritual discipline that will facilitate intimacy with God through a growing awareness and quality of relationship with Him.

Purpose—The purpose of this research was to measure the impact of a six-week experiential study and practice of *lectio divina* on the participants' intimacy level with God as indicated by their awareness of God and their quality of relationship with God at First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tennessee.

Research Questions

- RQ1. What is the level of the participants' intimacy with God (awareness of and quality of relationship with him) as measured by the SAI prior to the experiential study and practice of *lectio divina*?
- RQ2. What was the impact on the participants' intimacy level with God (awareness of God and quality of relationship with him) as measured by the SAI subsequent to the experiential study and practice of *lectio divina*?
- RQ3. What was the impact of the six-week experiential study on the participants' lives?

Respectfully,

Gloria Westerfield

APPENDIX L
EXPERT REVIEW
FOR WEEKLY GUIDED JOURNAL QUESTIONS

Guide for review:

Does this instrument align with the purpose statement and reseach questions?

What questions are needed and should be included?

What questions should be eliminated?

Should any questions be added?

1. How has your awareness of God changed (if at all) because of this week's group session?

Not Needed _____

Needed _____

Clear _____

Unclear _____

Suggestions to clarify _____

2. How has your quality of relationship with God changed (if at all) because of this week's group session?

Not Needed _____

Needed _____

Clear _____

Unclear _____

Suggestions to clarify _____

3. What is your impression of the process of *lectio divina* after the group session?

Not Needed _____

Needed _____

Clear _____

Unclear _____

Suggestions to clarify _____

4. Please record a few words, *at your comfort level*, what you heard God say from the Scripture passage you read during this week's session. If you did not hear anything, say so. Sometimes God merely wants us in his presence in a focused way.

Not Needed _____

Needed _____

Clear _____

Unclear _____

Suggestions to clarify _____

Additional comments _____

APPENDIX M
EXPERT REVIEW PROTOCOL
FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Guide for review:

Does this instrument align with the purpose statement and research questions?

What questions are needed and should be included?

What questions should be eliminated?

Should any questions be added?

1. How has your awareness of God changed (if at all) because of your participation in the six-week group?

Not Needed _____

Needed _____

Clear _____

Unclear _____

Suggestions to clarify _____

2. How has your quality of relationship with God changed (if at all) because of your participation in the six-week group?

Not Needed _____

Needed _____

Clear _____

Unclear _____

Suggestions to clarify _____

3. After completing six weeks in group sessions of *lectio divina*, do you plan to continue the practice of *lectio divina*?

Not Needed _____

Needed _____

Clear _____

Unclear _____

Suggestions to clarify _____

4. Would you recommend this group or a similar group to others?

Not Needed _____

Needed _____

Clear _____

Unclear _____

Suggestions to clarify _____

Additional comments _____

APPENDIX N

WEEKLY SCRIPTURES FOR *LECTIO DIVINA*

Week 1/Session 1	Psalm 23
Week 2/Session 2	Mark 1:1-4, 7-8
Week 3/Session 3	Philippians 2:1-8
Week 4/Session 4	1 Peter 2:1-4, 11-12
Week 5/Session 5	Ephesians 3:14-19
Week 6/Session 6	1 John 4:16-19

APPENDIX O

PERMISSION TO USE SAI IN SURVEYMONKEY

Hi Gloria,

Sure, that is fine. Best of luck with your project!

Take care,

Todd

Todd W. Hall, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
Director, Institute for Research on Psychology & Spirituality
Editor, Journal of Psychology & Theology
Biola University

On Mar. 14, 2014, at 10:02 a.m., Gloria WESTERFIELD wrote:

Dr. Hall,

I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary and will be using your Spiritual Assessment Inventory to assess intimacy levels of participants in my project, "*Lectio divina: A Contemplative Approach to Intimacy with God.*"

I also plan to use SurveyMonkey to collect and analyze my data.

I plan to send the SAI directly from SurveyMonkey by e-mail to each participant and then the participants will return their responses directly to SurveyMonkey. In order for me to utilize this feature in this program, I need to type the SAI into SurveyMonkey. I am asking you for permission to do this. I will send both a pre-SAI and a post-SAI to the participants of a small group consisting of approximately twelve people.

May I have your permission to use the SAI in this way?

Respectfully,

Gloria Westerfield

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