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JOHN WESLEY'S INSTITUTED MEANS OF GRACE IN THE
SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

by

Leonard Engram Stadler, Jr.

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

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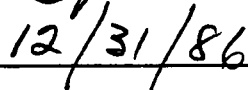
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Abstract

JOHN WESLEY'S INSTITUTED MEANS OF GRACE IN THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Leonard Engram Stadler, Jr.

Utilizing both historical and empirical methodologies, this study attempts to assess the changes in attitude and behavior toward John Wesley's instituted means of grace in the spiritual formation of the local church. To this writer's knowledge, no empirical studies have been conducted in a local United Methodist Church to make such assessments in the way or depth that this project-dissertation does.

Chapter 1 introduces Wesley's instituted means of grace and sets forth the problem in the local church today. Many parishioners are lacking in an awareness that God has instituted certain means for Christians to receive His grace. Six null hypotheses are stated which become the focal point of the empirical study and statistical analyses.

Chapter 2 defines the methodology inherent to the research process. Three distinct groups directly related to the study are delineated. The empirical study evaluates any changes detected in and between a population, experimental group, and a control group. The experimental group is the centerpiece of the empirical study in the local church, since they participated in a ten month learning/formation experience with the instituted means of grace. Changes in attitude and behavior are reflected and measured in a questionnaire, "A Devotional

Life Survey in the Local Church," designed by this writer.

Chapter 3 is a historical examination of Wesley and the instituted means of grace. Historical, theological, and practical foundations are presented in light of Wesley's understanding and insistence on the instituted means of grace for "the people called Methodists." This chapter gives historical underpinnings to the entire project-dissertation.

Chapter 4 reports, analyzes, and interprets the statistical data. The experimental design includes a pretest measurement of both the population and the experimental group, and a posttest measurement after the ten month project with the population, the experimental group, and a control group. The analysis and interpretation of the data are presented categorically either to accept or reject six null hypotheses. The categories of attitude and behavior are broken down systematically into subscales where each instituted means of grace is examined. At the end of this chapter a pastoral perspective on the project itself is presented.

Chapter 5 summarizes the project-dissertation, makes conclusions, and projects long range consequences on the basis of the entire study. There is an extended appendices and bibliography. The result is a presentation on the importance of the instituted means of grace in a ministry of spiritual formation in the local church. In essence, this study seeks to show that Wesley's instituted means of grace are highly significant and relevant for spiritual formation and renewal in the church today.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

"But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift . . . until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7,13).¹

John Wesley (1703-1791), the founder of Methodism, was convinced that Christians could grow "to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" by regular observance and utilization of the "means of grace." For Wesley, the "means of grace" were essential for spiritual growth in the Christian life. He defined the "means of grace" in his sermon under the same title, "By 'means of grace' I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."² Wesley appropriately named these five disciplines "The Instituted Means of Grace."

Wesley believed that prayer, scripture, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian conference were the "ordinary" ways through

¹ The Revised Standard Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1980).

² Albert C. Outler, ed., The Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), Vol. 1, 381.

which God conveyed His grace. Wesley affirmed that God worked through these means to provide enrichment and formation for the spiritual life, particularly since the Apostolic Church recognized that "Christ had ordained certain outward means, for conveying his grace into the souls of men."³

In recent times, Richard J. Foster has emphasized the "spiritual disciplines" as being requisite for spiritual nurture of the Christian life. In his book, the Celebration of Discipline, Foster asserts that the disciplines of the spiritual life are given by God as a means of transformation and receiving His grace. He states, "The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that He can transform us."⁴

Like Wesley and Foster, this writer believes the instituted means of grace are vital ways through which God works to help Christians grow toward "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Therefore, the instituted means of grace are the focus of this study.

The Instituted Means of Grace

In Spiritual Formation

The essence of the Christian life is not a mere belief in a system of doctrine or ethical behavior, nor is it remembering a

³Ibid., p. 378.

⁴Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 6.

historical person who lived nearly two thousand years ago, although these aspects are connected with it. The Christian life is essentially grounded in a person: the crucified and risen Jesus Christ who dwells in the lives of men, women and children.

Spiritual formation is the growth process of the Christian life which is centered in the person of Jesus Christ. It is the journey of the total person moving toward Christ and His wholeness. This dynamic process is never static but is always taking place.

Out of his own spiritual life, Wesley offers a dynamic and progressive principle for spiritual formation. This principle begins with "new life" in Christ and proceeds toward "going on to perfection." In describing the subsequent growth of a Christian after the "new birth," he uses the analogy of an infant who grows and matures into adulthood.

Human life either grows or perishes. An infant needs care, love, nourishment, and guidance. If an infant does not receive these essentials, he will most likely die. In an analogous way, the same is true with "new life" in Christ. Wesley eloquently states,

. . . a child is born of God in a short time, if not in a moment. But it is by slow degrees that he afterwards grows up to the measure of the full stature of Christ. The same relation, therefore, which there is between our natural birth and our growth, there is also between our new birth and our sanctification.⁵

⁵Thomas Jackson, ed., The Works of John Wesley, 14 vols. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1984), VI, 75. (Hereafter this edition will simply be referred to as "Works.")

Wesley's order of salvation lays great emphasis upon spiritual nurture and growth. His emphasis upon the instituted means of grace as a necessity for spiritual growth is relevant for Christians of any age.

In Christianity today, there is a tendency to promote and look for methods or techniques of "doing" spiritual formation. There are many devotional programs and plans which tend to become faddish and involve a minimum of inconvenience and self-giving. According to Robert M. Mulholland, this aspect of spiritual formation is a natural consequence of living in an objective, function oriented culture. Mulholland states, "We are largely governed by a materialistic/humanistic world view which perceives everything 'out there' as something to be grasped, controlled, and manipulated for our own purposes, or even for the purposes of God!"⁶

The very nature of Christian spiritual formation is "being" oriented rather than "doing" oriented. It is not a technique nor a method for self-improvement or self-advancement in the spiritual life. God is never obligated or bound by any techniques, methods, or means of "doing" spiritual formation. The inherent dynamic of spiritual formation is an on-going relationship of "being" with God who transforms, shapes and molds the total person into the image of Christ.

The goal of spiritual formation is to be conformed into the image of Christ. The instituted means of grace are integral to this dynamic

⁶M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., Shaped by the Word (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1985), p. 28.

process. They are not to be seen as an end in themselves or as a gauge to measure spirituality and growth. God initiates the work of His grace through the means He chooses to effect spiritual nurture and growth.

Wesley's instituted means of grace can only be offered to God as a channel for His grace, if He so chooses, to work through those particular means. The means of grace are actually gifts given by God. Mulholland asserts, "We may not initially see them as coming from God's hand; but once we have submitted ourselves humbly to them, have become responsive to the disciplines, and have begun to experience the growth and wholeness they bring, we begin to realize they are a gift of God."⁷

The Problem

Introduction to the Problem

In a general sense, spiritual formation in Protestantism was shaped largely by the major Reformers--Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli. For the most part, these reformers drew heavily on Saint Augustine and the Western tradition.

The Western strand of Christian spirituality tends to be more cognitive and objective, when compared with the Eastern tradition which has been more affective and subjective.⁸ By concentrating on the

⁷Ibid., p. 78.

⁸Urban T. Holmes, A History of Christian Spirituality (Minneapolis: The Seabury Press, 1980), pp. 42-43. See Holmes'

Western tradition, the Reformers lost sight of those formative dynamics contained in the Eastern tradition. This included an emphasis upon the means of grace. Though the Reformers practiced the means of grace, they did not view them in the unitive sense that Wesley did.

Consequently, Wesley's instituted means of grace did not appear at the heart of their spirituality as revealed in their formal writings.

Since the Reformation, Protestants have always been known as "people of the book." Within most Protestant groups, the means of spiritual formation have focused primarily on the Bible, especially the New Testament. Corporate worship has revolved around the reading, hearing, and exposition of the scriptures, as well as public prayer. Private and family devotions have had the same dual focus. The circumscribing of other "means" has resulted in a certain impoverishment with respect to how persons may discover and receive much of God's grace. The poverty of Protestant piety is realized when compared to Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Anglican spirituality.

Wesley, being deeply rooted in the traditions of his own Anglican Church, was eclectic in his spiritual formation. He adapted, enriched, and supplemented his Anglican inheritance from many other sources, such as the Greek classics, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Puritanism, and Pietism.⁹ Hence, the devotional life of Wesley

"A Phenomenology of Prayer" in the introduction in which he describes a method for categorizing the various strands of Christian spirituality.

⁹Outler, pp. 66-96.

shows how a plurality of Christian traditions contributes to making spiritual formation unique and relevant.

Influenced by frontier revivalism, early American Methodists tended to place the accent on the front end of the Christian pilgrimage. In spite of Francis Asbury's efforts, the subsequent growth process in the Christian life was not emphasized.¹⁰ The emphasis on entire sanctification, as something of a termination point, resulted in a loss of the dynamism which Wesley intended.¹¹ Spiritual formation in American Methodism eventually became devoid of his own dynamic devotional principles for cultivating piety. Wesley's insistence upon the instituted means of grace gave substance and guidance to British Methodism in a way that was not duplicated in its American counterpart.

Statement of the Problem

No known empirical studies with John Wesley's instituted means of grace have been conducted in a local United Methodist Church. Therefore, the purpose of this study will be to utilize and assess Wesley's instituted means of grace in a small group experience in order to analyze attitudinal and behavioral changes of the participants with Wesley's instituted means of grace. The expected outcome is that the participants will show positive changes in their attitude and behavior

¹⁰Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 115.

¹¹Thomas A. Langford, Practical Divinity (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), pp. 92-97.

in comparison to those who were not involved in the same intentional/learning experience.

A fundamental problem is that spiritual formation in many local congregations has been diluted simply by a lack of intentionality and discipline from both clergy and laity. Furthermore, superfluous institutionalism, over-programming, and a myriad of trends in contemporary spiritual techniques and methods have obscurely shrouded the distinctive place and use of Wesley's instituted means of grace.

Without a sound theological and traditional basis, there is a great risk of irrelevancy in simply trying out the latest devotional fads. Wesley's instituted means of grace are needed to guide parishioners into a deeper cultivation of their spiritual life and, consequently, to tap into the root structure of spiritual formation in the larger Christian tradition of spirituality.

An intentional ministry of recovering and utilizing Wesley's instituted means of grace in the local church provides a traditional and theological basis for establishing, implementing, and enhancing a spiritual formation ministry. The result of an intentional/learning experience with the instituted means of grace should increase an awareness of God's presence in the totality of life. Such an awareness begins with a positive change in attitude which leads toward behavioral practices with the instituted means of grace.

The Background

This project-dissertation has come out of a pastoral concern for a

contemporary United Methodist congregation to become more aware of God's presence in all of life and how His grace may be received into the Christian life. Based on eight years of pastoral ministry and experience, this writer believes there is little intentionality or discipline in utilizing the instituted means of grace. The result is a lack of awareness of God's presence in the totality of life. The instituted means of grace, which formed the basis of Wesley's own devotional practices, are just as vital for spiritual formation today as in the time of Wesley.

Many are not cognizant that God has specific means of communicating His grace. They may participate in prayers, read the scripture, partake in Communion, hear about fasting, and occasionally participate in small group fellowship. Yet, attitude and behavior toward the instituted means of grace continue to decline. There is a need to heighten the awareness that God's grace is working through these means.

Therefore, this research is an attempt to help increase such an awareness and to re-discover Wesley's instituted means of grace in the spiritual formation of the local church. Hopefully, such an endeavor in itself will perhaps be a means of grace.

The Significance

In recent years the devotional life of John Wesley has received renewed research attention. In his book, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition, Steve Harper suggests, "Wesley's devotional life can be a rich source of help and inspiration to us as we search for our own

particular patterns of devotion."¹²

Little published research has been done with Wesley's instituted means of grace in the spiritual formation of the local church in the twentieth century. This study attempts to analyze the significance of the instituted means of grace in a small group setting in contrast to a larger group not involved in the same learning/formation experience. By analyzing and interpreting statistical data between these two groups and a control group, the study suggests that Wesley's instituted means of grace are integral to a spiritual formation ministry in the local church.

The Null Hypotheses

An intentional learning/formation experience with Wesley's instituted means of grace should have a positive affect on the spiritual formation of the participants. This can be demonstrated in behavioral and attitudinal changes reflected by a measuring instrument. The result should be an increased awareness and practice with the instituted means of grace.

Six null hypotheses are posited and employed for analyzing the data obtained in the study. A null hypothesis defines that which the research project tests and also delineates expected hypotheses from the data to be collected. The observed values are gathered and then

¹²Steve Harper, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983), p. 11.

calculated against the expected values in order to support or reject the null hypothesis. The hypotheses provide a focus for the analysis and interpretation of the statistical data.

It is recognized that the null hypothesis can never be proved, only supported or rejected by the actual data. Concerning the null hypothesis, an eminent British statistician, R.A. Fisher, states,

In relation to any experiment we may speak of this hypothesis as the "null hypothesis" and it should be noted that the null hypothesis is never proved or established, but is possibly disproved, in the course of experimentation. Every experiment may be said to exist only in order to give the facts a chance of disproving the null hypothesis.¹³

The six null hypotheses for this project-dissertation are stated the following way:

(1) There will be no significant difference in attitude or behavior with Wesley's instituted means of grace in the population before and after the project.

(2) There will be no significant difference in attitude or behavior with Wesley's instituted means of grace in the experimental group before and after the project.

(3) There will be no significant difference in attitude or behavior with Wesley's instituted means of grace between the experimental group and population before the project.

(4) There will be no significant difference in attitude or behavior

¹³R. A. Fisher, The Design of Experiments (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1935), p. 16.

with Wesley's instituted means of grace between the experimental group and population after the project.

(5) There will be no significant difference in attitude or behavior with Wesley's instituted means of grace between the experimental group and control group after the project.

(6) There will be no significant difference in attitude or behavior with Wesley's instituted means of grace between the population and control group after the project.

Literature Review

The literature review involved an extensive perusal of major primary and secondary sources. From the literature available, it is apparent that this project-dissertation focuses on a problem in the contemporary United Methodist Church which has not been investigated before. A close examination of the literature indicates that few people have written specifically on Wesley's instituted means of grace. Therefore, as far as can be determined, no study has investigated an intentional/learning experience with John Wesley's instituted means of grace in the spiritual formation of the local church.

A perspective evolved from the sources included in this resume by which the study proceeded. The entries are annotated to describe briefly their content and significance to the study. The literature review itself is comprehensive but not exhaustive while the actual bibliography contains a complete listing of all literature consulted and used in this project-dissertation. These works contributed

significantly to this writer's understanding of Wesley and the instituted means of grace.

John Wesley's Devotional Life

Steve Harper's Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition is foundational to this study. This work provides a succinct overview of the major components of Wesley's devotional life, namely, the "means of grace." Harper defines the instituted means of grace and shows how Wesley utilized them in his devotional life. This book is the spark which ignited this project-dissertation. Also, Steve Harper's doctoral dissertation, The Devotional Life of John Wesley, provides a comprehensive list of Wesley's devotional reading.

The Works of John Wesley, 14 volumes, edited by Thomas Jackson, are the most exhaustive and available set of Wesley's works. This is the major primary source for this project-dissertation. Wesley's journal, letters, and sermons are the primary sources of studying his view and application of the instituted means of grace.

The Works of John Wesley, 34 volumes, edited by Frank Baker, are the new and definitive editions to Wesley's works. Though this series is incomplete, the Sermons, Volume I, edited by Albert C. Outler, has an excellent introduction which sets forth the complex fabric of Wesley's spirituality. The annotations and references on Wesley's sermon, "The Means of Grace," provide a great resource to studying the instituted means of grace. Outler's introduction brings much light to understanding Wesley's eclecticism. This work contributes significantly

to an understanding of the major shaping influences on Wesley's spiritual formation, such as the classics, the patristic fathers, Anglicanism, Puritanism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism.

Wesley's three favorite devotional classics included Thomas a Kempis's The Imitation of Christ, Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Holy Dying, and William Law's A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.

John and Charles Wesley: Selected Writings and Hymns, edited by Frank Whaling with a preface by Albert C. Outler, is a compendium of selected primary works that overview the spirituality of the Wesleys. Whaling's introduction is an excellent commentary on the root structure of Wesleyan spirituality. The spirituality of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Moravians, Anglicans, and Puritans contributed to the unique spirituality of John and Charles Wesley.

C. J. Strank's Anglican Devotion is a survey of the normative devotional literature of the Church of England during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. His selection of works reveals the spiritual depth and flavor of Anglican spirituality during this period. Stranks shows how Anglican devotional writers maintained a catholic spirit. Consequently, there are numerous strands of spirituality coming together in Anglican spirituality, such as Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Puritan traditions--all giving Anglican spirituality a unique and distinctive shape. Next to scripture, Stranks shows that the Book of Common Prayer is perhaps the greatest singular

influence on Anglican devotion. This work illuminates the assorted rays of Anglican devotion which directly influenced Wesley's own devotional life.

Methodist Devotion, by Gordon S. Wakefield, is an inspiring work on spirituality in the Wesleyan tradition. This work contributes significantly to the writer's perspective on how the momentum of Methodist devotion, created by the revivals and campmeetings in the nineteenth century, has steadily declined in the twentieth century.

The Instituted Means of Grace

Anthony Bloom's Beginning to Pray presents some fine insights on the relational dynamics of prayer. He shows the significance of prayer as a means to encounter God.

The Bible in the Wesleyan Heritage, by Mack B. Stokes, contributed significantly to an understanding of how Wesley interpreted and applied the Bible to the Christian life. The book outlines six biblical doctrines that Wesley believed to be vital in the Christian life.

Ole E. Borgen's John Wesley on the Sacraments contributed significantly to an understanding of Wesley's view of the Lord's Supper. Extracting from the numerous works of Wesley, Borgen presents Wesley's theological perspective on the sacraments and discloses their significance to Wesley.

William H. Willimon's Sunday Dinner explores the meaning of the Lord's Supper and how the sacrament is significant for the Christian life and growth. This book shows that the elements of bread and wine

are the normal staples of the Christian life.

God's Chosen Fast, by Arthur Wallis, is an excellent introduction to the biblical nature and practical implications of fasting. Wallis shows that fasting is a means of opening up to God's grace and why this spiritual discipline is important to the Christian life.

Life Together, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, is an excellent treatise on Christian fellowship as a means of grace. This classical work is extremely valuable in showing why Christianity cannot exist in isolation but must be in "community" with Jesus Christ and one another.

Celebration of Discipline, by Richard J. Foster, outlines the history and potentiality of the spiritual disciplines for Christian living today. Though he does not refer to the spiritual disciplines as the instituted means of grace, Foster shows in contemporary terms how and why the classical disciplines of the spiritual life are necessary for Christian growth. This book helped to bring into focus how the spiritual disciplines (i.e., the instituted means of grace) could be utilized today.

Wesley's Application of the Instituted Means of Grace

There are certain primary sources which give an understanding of how Wesley believed the instituted means of grace should be applied in the Christian life. "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies," published in 1739 by Wesley, emphasizes a regular attendance upon all the ordinances of God in the Methodist societies. "The Large Minutes" of the 1744 Conference explicitly sets forth the

whole instituted means of grace and how they are to be utilized by the Methodist people. "The Rules of the Band-Societies," drawn up in 1738, insists that the means of grace be regularly practiced.

John Wesley, edited by Albert C. Outler, is selected excerpts from Wesley's primary material. Outler's excellent commentary on Wesley's sermon, "The Duty of Constant Communion," and an extract from his journal, "The Rift with the Moravians," greatly aided the present writer in understanding why Wesley insisted on the instituted means of grace.

The Early Methodist Class Meeting, by David Lowes Watson, is the most comprehensive scholarly work on the early Methodist "class meeting." Watson skillfully articulates the historical development, the theological nature, and the practical implications of the early Methodist class meeting. This book is foundational to understanding how the class meeting functioned and how it was a means of mutual support.

Methodological Models Today

The Radical Wesley, by Howard A. Snyder, is an inspiring account of how Wesley's small group dynamics can provide patterns for spiritual renewal in the church today. Snyder shows that the church can learn from Wesley's view of spiritual formation in the context of "ecclesiola in ecclesia." Wesley's adaptation of this Moravian concept into "bands" and "class meetings" provides the model for churches today to practice and experience accountable discipleship. This work is also

valuable in understanding how Wesley's Anglican ecclesiastical stance came alive through his devotional life with the instituted means of grace.

Accountable Discipleship, by David Lowes Watson, provides a basic understanding of how the group dynamics of John Wesley's "class meetings" can work in the church today. Watson stresses that the "covenant group" is the appropriate context for accountable discipleship. Watson's adaptation of the covenant group model from Wesley's class meetings provides the contextual framework for an intentional/learning formation experience with the instituted means of grace. This model was adapted and utilized for the experimental group in this project-dissertation.

Methodology

The word "Methodist" was originally a label of derision attached to Wesley and the "holy club" during his Oxford days. The name was given to them as a result of "their observing a more regular method of study and behaviour than was usual with those of their age and station."¹⁴

After his decisive experience at Aldersgate Street, Wesley still adhered to a method in the Christian life and the name Methodist remained with Wesley and his followers. Therefore, in typical Wesleyan fashion, the method for this study was detailed and exacting.

¹⁴ Works, VIII, 339.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study for this project-dissertation included both historical and empirical investigations. Chapter 2 presents the methodology for the whole study. This chapter sets forth explicitly the theoretical framework in which the overall investigation was conducted. Chapter 3 presents a historical investigation of Wesley's understanding and application of the instituted means of grace. This chapter gives an historical underpinning to the empirical study conducted in the local church. Chapter 4 reports the statistical findings of the empirical research conducted in the local church. The data collected from a questionnaire is analyzed and interpreted in order to accept or reject the six null hypotheses. Chapter 5 is a miniscule summary of the entire study and presents plausible conclusions with long range consequences as a result of the study itself.

Length of the Project

The actual implementation of the empirical project in the local church began in December, 1984, and ended in November, 1985. The experimental group commenced on February 3, 1985, and ended on November 17, 1985.

Assumptions

This project-dissertation should be understood in light of the following seven assumptions:

First, it is assumed that God gives much of His grace through specific means.

Second, it is assumed that Wesley's instituted means of grace are the usual, though not exclusive, specific means of grace. They are only instruments, not ends, for God is able to work with or without any means.

Third, it is assumed that scripture encourages Christians to utilize the instituted means of grace as spiritual disciplines for the devotional life.

Fourth, it is assumed that Wesley's instituted means of grace include prayer, scripture, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian conference.

Fifth, it is assumed that the instituted means of grace should have a positive affect on the Christian life, resulting in spiritual formation, renewal and growth.

Sixth, it is assumed that there is a symbiotic relationship between the internal working of the Holy Spirit and the instituted means of grace.

Seventh, it is assumed that measuring "change" in attitude and behavior in the Christian life should be possible given the proper setting, boundaries, and measuring instruments.

Scope

There is a vast amount of material related to spirituality. A problem in studying "spirituality" is that this subject can be

approached from a number of different perspectives, such as ecumenical, theological, biographical, and contemporary movement oriented. Each of these perspectives yields its own unique insights. However, this study is directly related to Wesleyan spirituality. It does not attempt to explore other strands of Christian spirituality or dimensions of Wesleyan theology.

The scope of this project is limited to one congregational setting, namely, the active membership and friends of Christ United Methodist Church in Drexel, North Carolina. In so far as Wesleyan spirituality is concerned, all analyses and interpretations are made in light of Wesley's five instituted means of grace. This framework provides the necessary boundaries for making such assessments.

The study is particularly aimed at Wesley's instituted means of grace in the spiritual formation process. Since Christian spirituality addresses the totality of life, the present writer does not deny that spiritual formation is much broader than the scope of this paper. In this project-dissertation, the study of spiritual formation is narrowed to its relation with the affects of Wesley's instituted means of grace on a particular group of people.

Thus, the empirical research focuses on one process of spiritual formation in one local church setting which is viewed distinctively from a Wesleyan theological and traditional perspective. The scope of the historical research is related to primary and secondary materials which are necessary to understand Wesley's concern for the instituted

means of grace.

Definition of Terms

These terms are used throughout the project-dissertation and are defined in the following way:

Grace: This is the divine presence and unmerited love of God actively manifested toward the whole redemption of humanity.¹⁵

Spiritual Formation: This is the intentional process of being conformed to the image of Christ as the result of the work of God's grace.¹⁶

Spiritual Disciplines: These are the acts of loving obedience offered to God as a means for God to use according to His divine purposes.¹⁷

Means of Grace: These are the normal channels God has chosen through which He gives much of His grace. They are the "ordinary" ways that God enables the Christian to grow in His grace.¹⁸

Instituted Means of Grace: These are the means specifically instituted in the life and teachings of Jesus which include prayer,

¹⁵Philip S. Watson, The Concept of Grace (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 12.

¹⁶Mulholland, p. 27.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁸Steve Harper, John Wesley's Message for Today (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1983), p. 79.

scripture, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian conference.¹⁹

Active Membership: These are members of Christ United Methodist Church who attend the weekly worship service at least two out of four Sundays every month.

The John Wesley Covenant Group: This is the name given to the twelve persons who stepped forward from the population and were randomly selected out of a pool of volunteers. They participated in a learning experience with the instituted means of grace for a ten month period.

Summary

Spiritual formation is a life-long process. It is the primal reality of life. It does not begin and end with a single experience, nor is it a specific event, technique or program. It cannot be divided into segments and analyzed as distinctive stages of growth. It is never static but always on-going. Yet, there is a thread of continuity running through this process from the beginning to the end of life. This thread is grace. God's grace is at the center of the spiritual formation process in the Christian life.

The work of grace is at the heart of spiritual formation. The instituted means of grace can only prepare and bring a person to a point to be open to God's grace. They are offered to God as

¹⁹Harper, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition, p. 19.

disciplined acts of loving obedience to be used by God for His sovereign purposes. In essence, they are a way of "being" with God. Therefore, Wesley's instituted means of grace are openings to God through which His grace works in the spiritual formation process.

Though this project-dissertation focuses on the means of grace, it is also concerned with the life of grace from which all spiritual formation must flow. What is said here about Wesley's instituted means of grace is not intended to be a recipe for merely "doing" spiritual formation. If the whole Christian life is likened to the planting, cultivating and harvesting of fruit, then this study has much to say about the cultivation of the Christian life into the likeness of Christ.

CHAPTER 2

Methodolgy

Wesley's early correspondence with "Aspasia" (Mary Granville Pendarves) and other friends in a small literary society from Oxford revealed his ideal concept of the true Christian. With these words it was evident that the theme of "holy living" had begun to set the direction of Wesley's spiritual pilgrimage:

[To Aspasia, July 19, 1731]

. . . I was made to be happy; to be happy I must love God; in proportion to my love of whom my happiness must increase. To love God I must be like him, holy as he is holy; which implies both the being pure from vicious and foolish passions and the being confirmed in those virtues and rational affections which God comprises in the word "charity." In order to root those out of my soul and plant in their stead I must use (1) such means as are ordered by God, (2) such as are recommended by experience and reason.¹

In this particular letter, Wesley recommended that the means of grace "ordered by God" should be practiced "by experience and reason." This ideal evoked a personal discipline which set the course for Wesley's devotional life. He believed that attitude and behavior should be congruent in the Christian life. In his later years when Wesley wrote the Rules for the societies, he demonstrated in a practical way that the observation of behavior was an index to the attitude of the heart!

¹Richard P. Heitzenrater, The Elusive Mr. Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), I, p. 57.

Overall, this empirical study is a careful observation of the Christian life and experience in the Wesleyan tradition. The methodology is not antithetical to Christian experience. The meaning of the words "empirical" and "experimental" are used in the context of Christian experience. The experimental group in this project was more than an empirical investigation. It was a genuine Christian experience. Regarding empirical studies in religion, Samuel Southard has succinctly stated, "American religion has been characterized by an emphasis upon concrete accomplishment, either through the individual practice of religion, or cooperation through societies and denominations."²

This being the case, it is important to presuppose that attitude precedes and forms behavior; that Christian belief precedes and shapes Christian practice. Yet, there is often an incongruity between belief and practice in the Christian life. What a person believes is not necessarily what a person practices.

Behavior and attitude toward Wesley's instituted means of grace in the spiritual formation of the local church calls for an empirical study. What Christians cognitively believe and practically demonstrate concerning the instituted means of grace may reveal insights and enhance a spiritual formation ministry in the local church. An empirical study with Wesley's instituted means of grace should be informative, enlightening, and appropriate for both clergy and laity.

²Samuel Southard, Religious Inquiry (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), p. 12.

Research Design

The methodology for this project-dissertation endeavors to be an orderly observation, analysis and interpretation of attitudes and behaviors that relate to the instituted means of grace in the local church. The research itself is certainly relevant to pastoral ministry because it has grown out of a specific pastoral concern. Therefore, this project-dissertation was perceived, planned, and implemented on the dual basis of congregational need and pastoral ministry.

The present writer believes that an empirical research design is needed to study the instituted means of grace in the local church setting. As a pastor, there is an authentic interest in wanting to find out what happens to a group of parishioners who are exposed to Wesley's instituted means of grace. Information gained from this project-dissertation will bring forth several important factors:

- (1) The research will supply fresh insights into the spiritual formation dynamics of a local church.
- (2) The research will hopefully inspire and enhance more spiritual formation ministries in the local church.
- (3) There will be a practical understanding of the dynamics of John Wesley's instituted means of grace in the Christian life.
- (4) There will be a greater appreciation for Wesleyan spirituality in the light of the larger Christian tradition.
- (5) The information gathered will hopefully spark and facilitate further research and discussion, thereby motivating clergy and laity to

be more intentional in a spiritual formation ministry with the instituted means of grace.

Design of the Historical Research

The historical research design seeks to summarize the historical basis for the instituted means of grace in light of the Wesleyan tradition. The major sources comprising the historical framework are from primary materials found in Wesley's journal, letters, and sermons. Secondary sources are also utilized in the discussion to help understand Wesley's view and application of the instituted means of grace in his life and ministry. Furthermore, the historical discussion gives a theological perspective on the instituted means of grace in spiritual formation.

Design of the Empirical Research

The empirical research design of this investigation focuses on a pretest-posttest group design. This includes a delayed posttest reaction so that the data determines the statistical significance of the experiment on a sample group over a long-term period.

Prior to the actual formation and implementation of the experimental group, the entire population participated in the pretest. However, the participants of the experimental group re-took the pretest to isolate their responses from the general population. After a ten month period, the posttest was administered separately to the population, the experimental group, and a control group. The

conclusions of this study are derived from the methodology and subsequent statistical data.

Theoretical Framework

Context of the Project

The context of the project was conducted in Christ United Methodist Church in Drexel, North Carolina. The town of Drexel is located in the Western Piedmont area with a population of approximately 1400 persons. The economic base of this community is predominantly industrial.

Christ United Methodist Church has a brief history in the denomination and community. Christ United Methodist Church is the result of a merger of two former United Methodist Churches in 1973. Since the merger, the church has been influential and effective in serving the needs of the community. The membership is approximately 365 persons and dispersed among a wide range of age groups.

Limitations

The following characteristics limited the methodology in the research process:

- (1) The parameter of the "population" was limited to the active members and friends of Christ United Methodist Church in Drexel, North Carolina.
- (2) The population itself was limited to 134 persons.
- (3) The local church is located in a suburban industrial area

with moderate income ranges.

(4) The present minister has served in this church for three years.

(5) The pretest and posttest surveys of the population consisted of those persons present for the morning worship services on December 27, 1984, and November 24, 1985.

(6) This study does not attempt to measure growth in the spiritual life.

(7) The empirical research involves the observation and measurement of a limited number of individuals.

(8) Since the data gathered came from only one United Methodist congregation, global conclusions and generalities about other United Methodist Churches are severely limited.

(9) There is some sacrifice of controlled conditions associated with this empirical study since the present minister implemented the project for his own congregation. However, this does increase the degree of authenticity and should be characteristic of a research project required in most doctor of ministry degree programs.

The Test Groups

Analyses and inferences were made from statistical findings calculated from three distinct and separate groups. Each test group was directly related to the population which normally gathers for the weekly morning worship service.

All inferences and measurements concerning the population were

made from statistics calculated against an experimental group and control group. The experimental and control groups were then tested against each other. The following descriptions constituted the establishment and identity for each group.

The Population. This group consisted of 134 persons which comprised the universe for the study. The population number was derived from the active members and friends in the local church who attended the weekly worship services when the pretest and posttest surveys were administered. This group varied in both age and gender.

Though the number remained constant in both the pretest and posttest, there was no possible way to have the same people since the tests were administered ten months apart. Richard P. Runyan and Audrey Haber state,

It is frequently impossible to study all the members of this given population because the population as defined either has an infinite number of members, or is so large that it defies exhaustive study. Consequently, when we refer to the population we are often dealing with a hypothetical entity.³

A total of twenty-five persons volunteered from the population when the pretest was first administered. These volunteers exhibited a higher level of interest to become participants in the contextual project. The experimental group and the control group came out of this

³Richard P. Runyan and Audrey Haber, Fundamentals of Behavioral Statistics (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1976), p. 208.

group of volunteers.

The Experimental Group. The experimental group consisted of twelve persons who were selected by the random sampling process. They were previously in the population and had been selected from the group of volunteers. Within this group, there were two males and ten females. Their ages ranged from the mid-thirties to sixty and over. A pretest and a posttest were administered to the experimental group.

The Control Group. The control group consisted of the thirteen remaining volunteers who were not selected in the random sampling process. Like the experimental group, they had been in the population and volunteered to become participants in the project. Within this group, there were three males and ten females. Their ages ranged from the mid-twenties to sixty and over. They were observed as having the same level of interest as those who were selected for the experimental group. Since these thirteen persons volunteered but were not chosen in the random selection process, they constituted as a distinct control group.

The Respondents

All respondents of the project were from Christ United Methodist Church of Drexel, North Carolina. The parameter of the population was limited to the active membership and friends of this local church. A sample was randomly selected from the stated population to test the hypotheses.

Though the members of the experimental group were selected at random from a group of volunteers, everyone in the population had equal opportunity to become participants. Announcements concerning the project were made in advance in the monthly church newsletter and during a public worship service. It was explained explicitly that the project was a component of the Doctor of Ministry studies of Asbury Theological Seminary and open to all volunteers. There was no attempt to screen any of the respondents throughout this project on the basis of age, gender, or personal preference.

Treatment Selection

John Wesley discovered an effective way for his society members to cultivate, strengthen and be faithful in the Christian life. He divided them into small groups and called them "classes." Each class consisted of approximately twelve members, one of whom was the leader. They met on a regular weekly basis in order to be accountable in their Christian life to God and to one another.

At the weekly meetings, they sang hymns and prayed together. However, the main agenda was a catechesis--questions asked by the leader to each member, who responded by "giving an account" of his or her Christian life during the past week. They did this according to the "General Rules of the Methodist Societies." The General Rules of the United Societies emphasized three major areas, (1) avoiding those things which were an offense to God and to their neighbor; (2) doing as much as they could to serve God and their neighbor; and (3) using the

instituted means of grace--daily prayer, daily reading of the scriptures, frequent attendance of the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian fellowship.⁴

The John Wesley Covenant Group

The experimental group in the local church was called "The John Wesley Covenant Group." Membership in this group was limited to twelve persons. There was a written covenant which provided a practical framework of intentionality and accountability for the meetings.⁵ The members themselves wrote the covenant which focused on a special emphasis with the instituted means of grace.

The meetings began with silent meditation, an invocation, and a scripture reading from the Psalms. The covenant was openly discussed by the members with each person sharing how "things were going" in light of the covenant. The group then focused on discussing the assigned readings for that session which dealt with one of the instituted means of grace.

The group met twice each month for a duration of ten months, or for a total of twenty meetings. Each meeting was approximately one

⁴Albert C. Outler, ed., John Wesley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 179.

⁵David Lowes Watson, Accountable Discipleship (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1984), pp. 59-60. This book is an excellent work on how the dynamics of the "class meeting" can be utilized today in the local church. The principles of Watson's book were used to establish a framework and a written covenant for the experimental group in this project.

hour and thirty minutes long. The Lord's Supper was administered to the members on a monthly basis. The meetings opened and closed with group prayer.

Resources

Inherent in the problem chosen for this project were the selection of specific resources to serve as the basis and content for the covenant group experience. There were certain qualifications required for selecting the resources. First, the resources had to focus on the instituted means of grace themselves. Each resource had to convey an attitude of the spiritual disciplines as a "means" of opening up to God's grace. Second, the resources had to be practical in approach. This meant they had to deal with "how to." It was not enough simply to introduce and teach the spiritual disciplines. The resources had to be on a practical level, rather than presenting a scholarly theological treatise.

Each participant in the covenant group was given five books. Each book focused on one of the five instituted means of grace. Two months were designated for studying and discussing each instituted means of grace. This meant a thorough reading and discussion of each book during the two month period. The participants were also urged to practice the instituted means of grace throughout the entire process. After ten months, the books on the five instituted means of grace had been carefully perused by the participants. The resources selected and used to study the instituted means of grace included the following:

- (1) Prayer: Exploring the Dimensions of Prayer by Maxie Dunnam, Janice Granna, and Danny Morris
- (2) Scripture: Bible Study That Works by David L. Thompson
- (3) Communion: Sunday Dinner by William H. Willimon
- (4) Fasting: God's Chosen Fast by Arthur Wallis
- (5) Fellowship: Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The Measurement Instrument

A questionnaire is an effective measurement instrument and will reveal characteristic thinking and practice in designated settings. Regarding a "questionnaire" as an effective measuring tool for religious empirical studies, Samuel Southard makes the following observation, "It is an inexpensive method for the collection of general opinions and provides a reasonable amount of objectivity for the analysis of questions concerning people in one locality or institution."⁶

A questionnaire was developed and designed by the present writer as a measuring instrument on the basis of pastoral experience. The questionnaire for this study was entitled "A Devotional Life Survey for the Local Church." This questionnaire dealt with attitude and behavior toward Wesley's instituted means of grace. The technical aspect of the questionnaire was developed in consultation with and approved by Robert

⁶Southard, p. 35.

L. Wilson of Duke Divinity School.⁷

A total of 305 questionnaires was administered throughout the duration of the project: 268 to the population (pretest plus posttest), 24 to the experimental group (pretest plus posttest), and 13 to the control group (posttest only). The frequency in the overall responses on the questionnaire was unusually high. This was indicative of the questionnaire design and the respondents' interests in the subject matter.

The questionnaire design did not attempt to measure spirituality. However, it was determined that change could be measured in the respondents' attitudes toward the instituted means of grace and their frequency of behavioral practice with these spiritual disciplines. Subscales for each instituted means of grace were created from the total survey inventory. Thus, the questionnaire related directly to attitudes and behaviors toward each instituted means of grace. It also gathered basic sociological data, such as age and gender. Anonymity of those who took the survey was guaranteed.

The questionnaire was administered as a pastor and not as a professional consultant. This meant some sacrifice of the controlled conditions that is often associated with empirical studies. However, the administration of the questionnaire did not interfere with the

⁷Robert L. Wilson is currently the Director of the J.M. Ormond Center for Research, Planning and Development, and also serves as Research Professor of Church and Society at Duke Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina.

reliability of the compilation and analysis of the gathered data.

Statistical Procedure

The present writer developed statistical procedures for this project-dissertation in consultation with Robert L. Wilson at Duke Divinity School. Through correspondence and personal visits, comments and suggestions were received from Robert L. Wilson concerning a methodology for sampling, data gathering, data analysis, and testing statistical hypothesis.

Random Sampling. Sampling is vital to a statistical study. Morris James Slonim stated, "Sampling is only one component, but undoubtedly the most important one, of that broad field of scientific method known as statistics."⁸

The population for this study included the "active" members and friends who regularly attend the weekly worship services of Christ United Methodist Church in Drexel, North Carolina. The population, which determined the parameters of the project, was not studied exhaustively. A "sample" was taken from the population which became the focus of the study.

The sample group was chosen by a simple random selection process. Twenty-five persons volunteered from the population who signed up to be randomly selected as participants. The names of these volunteers were

⁸Morris James Slonim, Sampling: A Quick, Reliable Guide to Practical Statistics (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), p. 7.

listed in alphabetical order. A coin was tossed to determine whether the "odd" or "even" numbers would be selected. The coin toss turned up "tails" and the "odd" numbers were chosen to participate. If a person declined the invitation, then the next person on the list was approached. Those volunteers who declined or were not selected by this random selection process became the constituents of a "control group." The sample group was "The John Wesley Covenant Group" which became the focus of the study. This experimental group was the basis for stating the six null hypotheses.

Data Gathering. A questionnaire format on Wesley's instituted means of grace was utilized to gather data for the study. This questionnaire was used to test the groups in an attempt to measure significant changes in attitude and behavior toward Wesley's instituted means of grace. The questionnaire was not changed or altered between the administration of the pretests and posttests.

Test Scores. A scoring key assigning numeric values to the answers on the questionnaire was used to grade each survey. These values were then systematically compiled from each survey to provide mean scores for the "categories" and "subscales" under consideration. A category was defined as either "attitude" or "behavior." A subscale was defined as one of the five instituted means of grace.

The systematic categorization of the statistical variables observed, organized and tested were the following:

(1) Attitudinal Composite Category--the total mean score for all the attitudinal subscales

(2) Attitudinal Prayer Subscale--a subscale that measures attitudinal change toward prayer

(3) Attitudinal Scripture Subscale--a subscale that measures attitudinal change toward scripture

(4) Attitudinal Communion Subscale--a subscale that measures attitudinal change toward Communion

(5) Attitudinal Fasting Subscale--a subscale that measures attitudinal change toward fasting

(6) Attitudinal Fellowship Subscale--a subscale that measures attitudinal change toward fellowship

(7) Behavioral Composite Category--the total mean score for all the behavioral subscales

(8) Behavioral Prayer Subscale--a subscale that measures behavioral change toward prayer

(9) Behavioral Scripture Subscale--a subscale that measures behavioral change toward scripture

(10) Behavioral Communion Subscale--a subscale that measures behavioral change toward Communion

(11) Behavioral Fasting Subscale--a subscale that measures behavioral change toward fasting

(12) Behavioral Fellowship Subscale--a subscale that measures behavioral change toward fellowship.

These variables were available for use in the statistical procedure to answer the questions concerning changes reflected by the various test groups. The systematic compilation, analysis, and interpretation of the statistical data were then presented in order to accept or reject the null hypotheses.

Statistical Analyses

The compiled answers from the questionnaire served as a measuring device to analyze statistical data relevant to the study. The data gathered from the pretesting and posttesting was coded and entered into a computer terminal. Using a statistical software program, this study examined the statistical relationship of attitudes and behaviors toward Wesley's instituted means of grace between the population, the experimental group, and the control group.

The result of the statistical analysis was based on the variations in the level of significance which either rejected or supported the null hypotheses. The conditions for rejecting the null hypothesis were apparent when a given result occurred five percent of the time or less. If the obtained value, however, was greater than the level of significance, then the data supported the null hypothesis. Each null hypothesis was assumed true until rejected by the data.

Statistical Hypotheses. It is hypothesized that participation in a small group with Wesley's instituted means of grace will create some changes in attitude and behavior. Any changes will be reflected in the

analysis from the pretest to the posttest. This study will analyze categorically each group with the stated hypotheses. Different scores for the categories will be compared according to the requirements of the various hypotheses.

The statistical methodology will not attempt to answer all hypothetical questions raised by the data. Proving or disproving each stated null hypothesis will consist in tabulating the frequency of the answers on the questionnaires and running a test to determine statistical significance. Graphs are displayed in the appendices to show whether or not the statistical findings accept or reject the hypotheses.

Statistical Significance. The statistical analysis sought to answer the question, "Was the change from pretest to posttest statistically significant?" For each statistical test employed, the level of significance was set at .05. This meant the probability that the change from pretest to posttest occurring by chance or random error was less than five times out of one hundred.

The .05 level of random probability for statistical significance is considered the norm for most empirical and sociological studies. G. Milton Smith states,

The criteria for the acceptance or rejection of hypotheses are arbitrary, but a conventional rule draws the line at $P = .05$ and regards a hypothesis as inadequate or unsatisfactory for values of P smaller than this.⁹

⁹G. Milton Smith, A Simplified Guide to Statistics (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1970), p. 89.

Statistical Tests. The purpose of this study was to evaluate change in behavior and attitude with the instituted means of grace. The statistical procedures employed for this purpose were parametric and nonparametric statistical tests. These tests determined significant statistical changes in the data which may not be from the result of chance or random error.

Parametric groups are equivalent in numerical size. Nonparametric groups are not equivalent in size. Matched t-tests compare and analyze the mean scores of two parametric groups. The T-tests were used to test the level of significance in and between groups of the same size. The t-tests calculated the probability of possible changes observed in the attitude and behavior in the groups. In this study, when the groups were tested within themselves from pretest to posttest, the t-test was used to determine the level of significance.

Since the groups were different in numerical size when compared to each other, a nonparametric test was used. A nonparametric test was needed to determine the statistical significance of the changes observed in the given frequencies in the various group sizes. The Mann-Whitney test was the nonparametric statistical significance test used to calculate the level of significance between the groups.

Since frequencies are the result of counting, the statistical tests used in this study were applicable to data in discrete form and not percentage. However, percentages were cited in reporting the sociological data. All statistical tests were performed on an Apple

II-C computer. The statistical program was "Stats Plus," published by Human Systems Dynamics of Northridge, California, and written by Stephen Madigan and Virginia Lawrence.

Summary

A study of Wesley's instituted means of grace in a spiritual formation ministry of the local church consisted of historical research to understand Wesley's view and insistence on the instituted means of grace for "a people called Methodists." The experimental research was conducted to study the relevance and dependability of those ideas.

This study involved a twelve month project in the local church. Ten of these months focused on a small group design which went through an intentional learning and practical experience with Wesley's instituted means of grace. All participants in the study came from Christ United Methodist Church in Drexel, North Carolina. The entire study was conceived, developed and implemented as an authentic spiritual formation ministry evolving from a pastoral concern.

In order to measure change in attitude and behavior, "A Devotional Life Survey for the Local Church" was developed by the present writer and administered to the respondents. A pretest was given to the entire population; another pretest was given to the participants of "The John Wesley Covenant Group" in order to isolate their responses. A posttest followed the ten month experiment which was given separately to the population, the experimental group, and a control group. The control group consisted of thirteen volunteers who were not selected at random

to be in the experimental group.

The variables produced by the pretests and posttests determined the statistical significance in the change of attitude and behavior toward the instituted means of grace which occurred during the project. The findings, conclusions, and long range consequences of this study were derived from the data gathered through the prescribed methodology and the shared experiences of those who participated in the experimental group which statistics cannot convey.

CHAPTER 3

Wesley and the Instituted Means of Grace

This chapter focuses on the historical, theological, and practical foundations which undergird Wesley's instituted means of grace. It is basically an attempt to understand Wesley's view and insistence on the instituted means of grace for "the people called Methodists."

Therefore, this chapter seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What did John Wesley insist upon as spiritual disciplines? (2) Why did he insist upon these? (3) How did he insist that they be used by the Methodist people?

Historical Foundations

John Wesley was not necessarily original in his devotional life and practice. His uniqueness was in his eclectic ability to draw from the rich reservoir of various Christian traditions. Wesley's distinctive place in spirituality was not entrenched into any single Christian tradition.¹

Wesley's understanding of the Christian life was influenced by an ecumenical variety of sources. He was exposed to a wide range of Christian devotional practices down through the centuries. His plurality of sources included Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox,

¹Kenneth E. Rowe, The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1976), p. 1.

Anglican, Puritan, Moravian, and even the Greek classics.²

Consequently, Wesley's devotional life, like other aspects of his Christian belief and practice, was enriched with the spices of other traditions.

Though Wesley knew the various ways through which Christians had sought to open themselves up to God's grace (i.e., asceticism), he never deviated from the norms of Anglican devotion. The rich devotional literature of the Church of England aroused Wesley from a state of spiritual complacency which started him on the path to Methodism.³ Throughout his life, Wesley nurtured his devotional practices with the Book of Common Prayer.⁴

Concerning the influence of the Anglican Church on Wesley's devotion, Frank Whaling observed, "Although Wesley's high-churchmanship somewhat abated in later life, he retained his love for the means of grace and for the liturgy of the Church of England."⁵ Hence, Wesley's devotional life and practice was primarily shaped by his Anglican heritage, particularly in regard to his view and understanding

²Outler, The Works of John Wesley, vol. I, pp. 66-96. Outler's scholarly assortment of these sources presents a fine discussion on the major shaping influences of Wesley's devotional life.

³C.J. Stranks, Anglican Devotion (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1961), p. 199.

⁴Frank Whaling, John and Charles Wesley (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 14.

⁵Ibid.

of the means of grace. Albert Outler concluded that "he felt no compulsion to do more than verify the central Anglican tradition with respect to 'the means of grace'."⁶

The Articles of Religion in the Church of England gave a central place to the means of grace. Wesley adhered to the Articles throughout his life and believed that the church existed so that the means of grace could be administered to the followers of Christ. The connotation of the Christian Church in the Articles was not defined by its organization or ministry, but in terms of the means of grace. The thirteenth Article, "Of the Church," stated,

The visible Church of Christ is a Congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's Ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.⁷

Wesley referred to the spiritual disciplines as "the means of grace." In explaining his reason for using this term, Wesley indicated that he did not know of any better term. Wesley noted that it had been used by the church across the centuries. In his sermon wholly dedicated to the means of grace Wesley explained,

I use this expression, 'means of grace,' because I know none better, and because it has been generally used in the Christian church for many ages: in particular by our own church, which directs us to bless God both for the 'means of grace and hope of

⁶Outler, John Wesley, p. 332.

⁷"John Wesley's Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America," Reprint from the Quarterly Review (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1984), p. 310.

glory'; and teaches us that a sacrament is 'an outward sign of inward grace, and a means whereby we receive the same'.⁸

Theological Foundations

For Wesley, the theological nature of the term, "means of grace," suggested utilization and practice, but not without certain limitations. Wesley believed the means of grace were to be highly esteemed and consistently practiced, for they conveyed the grace of God. Yet, they were only the media through which God's grace was to be received.

Wesley fervently warned against the means of grace not to be mistaken as ends. Based on his own experience in earlier years, Wesley confessed that he had misdirected his trust to the means of grace rather than Christ. This was acknowledged in the Fourth Part of Wesley's Journal in 1744 which had two hymns appended, "The Bloody Issue Cured" and "The Means of Grace."⁹ In the hymn entitled, "The Means of Grace," Wesley lamented,

Long have I seem'd to serve Thee, Lord,
With unavailing Pain;
Fasted, and pray'd, and read Thy Word,
and heard it preach'd, in vain.

Oft did I with th'Assembly join
And near thine Altar drew;
A form of Godliness was mine,
The Pow'r I never knew.

⁸ Works, V, 381.

⁹ Ole E. Borgen, John Wesley on the Sacraments (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1985), p. 101.

But I of means have made my boast,
 Of means an idol made;
 The Spirit in the letter lost,
 The substance in the shade.

I do the thing thy Laws enjoin,
 And then the Strife give o'er:
 To Thee I then the whole resign:
 I trust in means no more. ¹⁰

Wesley also avoided the dangers of quietism and consequently, a totally subjective spirituality. In writing to William Law, he rejected any notion of a quietist doctrine inherent in the means of grace. He contended, "This is most true that all the externals of religion are in order to the renewal of our soul in righteousness and true holiness. But it is not true that the external way is one and the internal way another."¹¹

Wesley insisted that the means of grace were indispensable to the Christian life. They were a necessity because God had ordained them to be the ordinary and scriptural way of receiving His grace. His insistence on the means of grace was grounded in the scripture, "But the sense of it is undeniably found in Scripture. For God hath in Scripture ordained prayer, reading or hearing, and receiving the Lord's Supper, as the ordinary means of conveying his grace to man."¹²

Wesley's emphasis on the means of grace was not so much on the

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Nehemiah Curnock, ed., The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley (London: Epworth Press, 1960), II, 320.

¹²Works, I, 278.

means themselves but on the Spirit of God working in and through them. He was careful to point out that the means of grace were worthless and empty apart from the presence of the Holy Spirit. The means of grace were essentially nothing more than channels through which God's grace worked. Their only value was that they were used by God. Wesley proclaimed,

. . . all outward means whatever, if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot conduce, in any degree either to the knowledge or love of God . . . Whosoever, therefore, imagines there is any intrinsic power in any means whatsoever, does greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God. We know there is no inherent power, in the Words that are spoken in prayer; in the letter of scripture read, the sound thereof heard, or the bread and wine received in the Lord's Supper; but that it is God alone who is the giver of every good Gift, the Author of all grace; that the whole power is of Him, whereby, through any of these, there is any blessing conveyed to our souls.¹³

Wesley affirmed that God was able to work with or without the means of grace. God was not bound or limited by any means. He believed that God was "able to give the same grace, though there were no means on the face of the earth."¹⁴ God was above any means He had appointed. Wesley asserted, "He can convey his Grace, either in or out of any of the Means which he hath appointed. Perhaps he will."¹⁵

Nevertheless, Wesley was convinced that the means were useful and

¹³ Works, V, 188.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 200.

edifying to the believer. His conviction did not allow any room for the neglect of the means of grace in the Christian life. In the "Advice to the People Called Methodists," he wrote, "You likewise lay so much stress on the use of those ordinances which you believe to be of God, as to confess there is no salvation for you if you willfully neglect them."¹⁶

Wesley felt that every Christian should be zealous in his attendance upon the means of grace. He encouraged the means of grace to be used with great anticipation of actually communing with God, "expecting that he will meet me there, because he has promised so to do."¹⁷ He affirmed that "all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means which he hath ordained; in using, not in laying them aside."¹⁸

Wesley's uncompromising insistence upon the necessity and duty of using the means of grace never varied from his Aldersgate experience to the end of his life. They were vital to spiritual nurture and renewal. Hence, Wesley exhorted the Methodist people to,

Remember also, to use all means, as means; as ordained, not for their own sake, but in order to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness. If, therefore, they actually tend to this, well; but if not, they are dung and dross. ¹⁹

¹⁶Ibid., VIII, 353-354. See also Curnock, ed., Journal, V, 17.

¹⁷Ibid., V, 196.

¹⁸Ibid., 190.

¹⁹Ibid., 201.

Wesley divided the means of grace into the following categories: the "instituted" and the "prudential" means of grace. The instituted means of grace were those ordinances ordained by God in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. These included prayer, scripture, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian conference.²⁰

On the other hand, Wesley believed that God had also chosen to work through the prudential means as well.²¹ The prudential means of grace were distinct from the instituted means of grace. Wesley recognized the prudential means as three basic principles: doing no harm, doing good, and attending upon all the ordinances of God.²² These principles were given to the church as additional means to fulfill the social implications of the Gospel.²³

The instituted means of grace were the most important to Wesley. They were "specifically appointed by God for the purpose of being channels of God's giving and preserving a life of faith and holiness."²⁴

In the minutes of the 1744 Conference, Wesley urged his ministers

²⁰Ibid., VIII, 321-322. These five instituted means of grace are also listed in: "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies in London, Bristol, Kingswood, etc.," Works, VIII, 269-271; and "Rules of the Band-Societies," Works, VIII, 272-274. See also Curnock, editor, Journal, I, 330.

²¹Harper, John Wesley's Message for Today, p. 79.

²²"The General Rules of the Societies," Works, VIII, 270-271.

²³Harper, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition, p. 64.

²⁴Borgen, p. 105.

to use all the means of grace, both instituted and prudential. He insisted that they "enforce the use of them on all other persons." The minutes exclaimed,

. . . Do you use all the means of grace yourself, and enforce the use of them on all other persons?

They are either Instituted or Prudential:--

I. The Instituted are,

(1.) Prayer; private, family, public; consisting of deprecation, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving. Do you use each of these?

Do you use private prayer every morning and evening? if you can, at five in the evening; and the hour before or after morning preaching?

Do you forecast daily, wherever you are, how to secure these hours? Do you avow it everywhere? Do you ask everywhere, "Have you family prayer?" Do you retire at five o'clock?

(2.) Searching the Scriptures by,

(i.) Reading: Constantly, some part of every day; regularly, all the Bible in order; carefully, with the Notes; seriously, with prayer before and after; fruitfully, immediately practicing what you learn there?

(ii.) Meditating: At set times? by any rule?

(iii.) Hearing: Every morning? carefully; with prayer before, at, after; immediately putting in practice? Have you a New Testament always about you?

(3.) The Lord's Supper: Do you use this at every opportunity? with solemn prayer before; with earnest and deliberate self-devotion?

(4.) Fasting: How do you fast every Friday?

(5.) Christian conference: Are you convinced how important and how difficult it is to "order your conversation right?" Is it "always in grace? seasoned with salt? meet to minister grace to the hearers?" Do not you converse too long at a time? Is not an hour commonly enough? Would it not be well always to have a determinate end in view; and to pray before and after it? ²⁵

Wesley went a step further and made a distinction within the instituted means of grace. For Wesley, there were "chief" instituted

²⁵ Works, VIII, 322-323.

means of grace. The chief means of grace were prayer, scripture, and the Lord's Supper. Though fasting and Christian conference were not considered in the chief category, Wesley nevertheless stressed their importance as instituted means of grace in the devotional life of the Christian.

For Wesley, prayer was the most important instituted means of grace. Prayer held first place in his list of the chief instituted means of grace. Wesley believed all means of grace should include prayer and referred to it as "the grand means of drawing near to God."²⁶ Wesley understood prayer as the lifeline of maintaining the personal relationship between God in Christ and the Christian. He recognized prayer as the means of communication and sustenance in the relationship between God and the individual. He related the significance of prayer to "the breath of our spiritual life."²⁷

Wesley saw no substitute for prayer in perpetuating growth in the spiritual life.²⁸ His personal life was saturated with private prayer throughout the day. He began and ended the day with his thoughts directed toward God. Wesley prayed brief, sentence prayers on

²⁶ John Telford, ed., The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley (London: Epworth Press, 1964), IV, 90.

²⁷ Wesley, Notes Upon the New Testament, p. 762.
This is from Wesley's commentary on I Thessalonians 5:16-17.

²⁸ Works, VI, 81.

the hour. This was one of the ways he sought to bring the daily events before God.²⁹

Wesley's prayer life had both form and spontaneity. The basis of Wesley's prayer life was centered around written prayers.³⁰ Written prayers gave Wesley a focus in his praying. For Wesley, written prayers were not simply to be read but to be prayed. They provided him with insights from other Christians which helped his own spiritual life. Therefore, in his prayer life he studied and used written prayers from the early church, the Book of Common Prayer, and other outstanding persons like Jeremy Taylor and William Law.³¹

The spontaneity of Wesley's praying was found in his use of extemporaneous prayers. This allowed Wesley the freedom to respond to the daily leadings of the Holy Spirit. Wesley's extemporaneous praying incorporated both audible and silent praying. Ejaculatory prayers were another component of his extemporaneous praying.³²

As a spiritual director who guided others in their prayer lives, Wesley shared his written prayers by publishing "A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week" in 1733. These written prayers reflected his weekly pattern and daily themes of praying. The themes

²⁹Harper, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition, p. 21. This work reveals many fine insights into Wesley's prayer life.

³⁰Ibid., p. 20.

³¹Ibid., pp. 24-25.

³²Ibid., p. 21.

in the "collection" included Sunday--Love of God; Monday--Love of Neighbor; Tuesday--Humility; Wednesday--Mortification; Thursday--Resignation and Meekness; Friday--Mortification; and Saturday--Thankfulness.³³

Wesley not only urged persons to be faithful in private prayer but also in corporate prayer. He believed corporate prayer was essential for maintaining a healthy spiritual life. Steeped in the tradition and practice of Anglican devotion, Wesley nurtured his corporate prayer life by using the Book of Common Prayer. He made it a daily practice to join with others in the services of morning and evening prayers.³⁴ Regardless of the form or style, prayer was so important to Wesley that he believed any neglect of it was a "grand hindrance to holiness."³⁵

The second chief instituted means of grace was scripture. The importance of the Bible was certainly profound in Wesley's personal life. From 1729 onwards, Wesley repeatedly referred to himself as "homo unis libri"--a man of one book. He perpetually upheld the centrality and authority of scripture as the norm for Christian faith and practice. It was his primary objective guide for living the Christian life. Wesley read, studied, and preached the scripture as a

³³ Works, XI, 203-237.

³⁴ Harper, p. 23.

³⁵ Works, V, 401.

means to receive God's grace. In the preface to his "Standard Sermons" Wesley proclaimed,

God himself has condescended to teach the way: for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be "homo unius libri." ³⁶

Wesley read the Bible devotionally as a means to encounter the living God. He purposefully read the Bible in the early hours of the morning and the quiet hours of the evening. This was to insure that the time spent with the Bible would be unhurried and reverential. He said, "Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end, to find the way to heaven."³⁷

Furthermore, Wesley's devotional use of the scripture sought to make personal application of God's word. The devotional reading of scripture was a time of reflection and self-examination. He stated, "Whatever light you receive, should be used to the uttermost, and that immediately."³⁸

Wesley read and studied the scripture systematically as a scholar. He not only wanted to encounter God experientially, he also wanted to

³⁶Outler, The Works of John Wesley, I, p. 105.

³⁷John Wesley, Standard Sermons (London: Epworth Press, 1967), vi.

³⁸John Wesley, Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament (Salem, Ohio: Schmul, 1975), I, viii.

know the word of God intellectually. He wrote, collected and published his own "explanatory notes" on the New and Old Testaments as an aid for his followers in their use and understanding of scripture.³⁹ Though these "notes" were largely drawn from other commentaries, they represented Wesley's view on the selected scripture passages.⁴⁰

Wesley maintained that tradition, reason, and experience were valid insofar as they were verified and checked by scripture. In terms of final authority for Christian belief and practice, the Bible stood above tradition, reason, and experience. Wesley wrote, "For as all faith is founded upon divine authority, so there is now no divine authority but the Scriptures; and, therefore, no one can make that to be divine authority which is not contained in them."⁴¹

Wesley realized that ambiguous passages of scripture would be interpreted differently by sincere Christians. He knew that the basic teachings of the Bible needed to be identified, clarified, and emphasized. However, Wesley did state that a clear understanding of scripture "does not prove that they need not be explained, nor their completeness that they need not be enforced."⁴²

³⁹The Explanatory Notes on the New Testament was published in 1755. Later in 1765, The Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament was published.

⁴⁰Harper, p. 30.

⁴¹Works, X, 91.

⁴²Letters, II, 325.

Wesley knew that the Bible had to be correctly understood and interpreted. For the most part, Wesley literally interpreted the Bible. In his correspondence with Samuel Furley, he wrote,

The general rule for interpreting Scripture is this. The literal sense of every text is to be taken, if it be not contrary to some other text; but in that case the obscure text is to be interpreted by those which speak more plainly.⁴³

Wesley's method of interpretation emphasized tradition, reason and experience. In particular, he sought the help of the ancient fathers (tradition).⁴⁴ Influenced by their methods, Wesley interpreted biblical texts in light of the Bible itself. He stated, "As the Scripture is the best expounder of itself, so the best way to know whether anything be of divine authority, is to apply ourselves to the Scripture."⁴⁵ This principle of interpretation was set forth by Clement of Alexandria, one of the early fathers, whom Wesley referred to with respect and approval.⁴⁶

The Lord's Supper was placed third in the chief instituted means of grace.⁴⁷ Throughout his ministerial life, Wesley communed at

⁴³ Letters, III, 128-9.

⁴⁴ Mack B. Stokes, The Bible in the Wesleyan Heritage (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), p. 24.

⁴⁵ Works, X, 94.

⁴⁶ Stokes, p. 24.

⁴⁷ Wesley does not list Baptism as one of the instituted means of grace. However, he does consider Baptism as one of the two sacraments and a powerful ordinance of the church.

least once every four or five days.⁴⁸ For Wesley, the Lord's Supper was the "paradigm of all 'the means of grace'--the chief actual means of actual grace and, as such, literally indispensable in the Christian life."⁴⁹

The Lord's Supper had three dimensions for Wesley--past, present, and future. First, Wesley saw Communion as a "memorial meal." The meal was a memorial because it was remembering the passionate suffering and death of Christ. The wine and bread were symbols and reminders of the New Covenant. However, Wesley's Hebraic understanding of "remembrance" was more than a mere reminder or recollection of some past event. For Wesley, to remember meant to recall the sacrifice of Christ so thoroughly that God actually "re-presents" it in the Lord's Supper, thereby making available the past merits of Christ in the present action of God's grace.⁵⁰

This led Wesley to the second dimension. He saw the Lord's Supper as a special occasion in the present to commune with the "real presence" of Christ. Wesley was never in doubt about the actual presence of Christ in the Supper. He wrote,

Is not the eating of that bread, and the drinking of that cup, the outward, visible means whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness, and peace, and

⁴⁸Harper, John Wesley's Message for Today, p. 82.

⁴⁹Outler, John Wesley, p. 333.

⁵⁰Colin W. Williams, John Wesley's Theology Today (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 159.

joy in the Holy Ghost, which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken, and the blood of Christ once shed for us? Let all, therefore, who truly desire the grace of God, eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. ⁵¹

The "real presence" of Christ in the Lord's Supper was why Wesley saw this sacrament as a "preventing, justifying, and sanctifying ordinance." With the conviction of the Lord's Supper as a "converting ordinance," Wesley wrote, "Ye are the witnesses. For many now present now know, the very beginning of your conversion to God . . . was wrought at the Lord's Supper."⁵²

Wesley repudiated the Roman Catholic concept of "transubstantiation." This was the view that the elements themselves became the actual blood and body of Christ. Wesley also stopped short of Martin Luther's idea of "consubstantiation." This was the view that the presence of Christ was actually above, under, and around the elements without changing their substance. In contrast to both of these viewpoints, Wesley believed the presence of Christ did not come through the elements but through the Spirit. Wesley's "real presence" was simply the notion that the risen Christ was present whenever the Lord's Supper was observed. Thus, the Lord's Supper is a powerful means by which Christ and His benefits are graciously given.

Finally, the third dimension of the Lord's Supper for Wesley was a

⁵¹E. H. Sugden, editor, The Standard Sermons of John Wesley (London: Epworth Press, 1956), I, 253.

⁵²Works, I, 279.

"pledge" which held an eschatological dimension focusing on the promise of God's future glory for Christians.⁵³ In this regard, the observance of the Lord's Supper was a foreshadowing of the heavenly banquet which awaits Christians after this life. In short, the Lord's Supper was a celebration meal where the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant came together. J. C. Bowmer has concluded,

The early Methodists lived, communicated, and died in the reality of the Communion of Saints. The Church militant and the Church Triumphant constitute "one family," . . . divided by the "narrow stream of death." The Lord's Supper was celebrated against the background of "angels and archangels" and with "all the company of heaven." ⁵⁴

Wesley included the practice of fasting as one of the five instituted means of grace. He was convinced that fasting was a definite means of grace because Christ instituted this discipline in His own life. However, Wesley never regarded fasting as a gauge for spiritual maturity or a means for bodily mortification. Fasting was to be practiced as a means for receiving God's grace, and not as an end for seeking merit or favor.

Out of all the spiritual disciplines, Wesley was keenly aware that fasting was the most abused throughout the history of the church. In his seventh discourse on the Sermon on the Mount, Wesley proclaimed, "But of all the means of grace there is scarce any concerning which men

⁵³Borgen, p. 86.

⁵⁴J. C. Bowmer, The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism (London: Dacre Press, 1951), p. 185.

have run into greater extremes, than that of which our Lord speaks . . .
I mean religious fasting."⁵⁵

He closely guarded against the practice of fasting from becoming an extreme form of asceticism. He clearly enunciated this concern in the same sermon,

Yea, the body may sometimes be afflicted too much, so as to be unfit for the works of our calling. This also we are diligently to guard against; for we ought to preserve our health, as a good gift of God. Therefore care is to be taken, whenever we fast, to proportion the fast to our strength.⁵⁶

From a biblical standpoint, Wesley believed fasting was a beneficial means of grace. Based on a biblical understanding, he enunciated three types of fasting. The most common type of fasting found in scripture was total abstinence. This meant not eating any food during the prescribed period. However, Wesley did recognize that some liquid might be used with this type of fasting.⁵⁷

The second type of fasting was a partial abstinence of food. This type of fasting was recommended under certain circumstances, such as during times of illness. Wesley could not find any biblical support for this particular type of fasting. He wrote, "neither can I condemn it; for the scripture does not. It may have a use and receive a

⁵⁵ Works, V, 345. Wesley's most thorough discussion and understanding of fasting is found in the seventh discourse on the Sermon on the Mount.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 359.

⁵⁷ Harper, p. 48

blessing from God."⁵⁸

The third type of fasting was abstinence from pleasant foods. This kind of fast was found in the scripture by those who did not want to defile themselves by eating lavish food. Wesley stated that the sole intention of fasting was to,

Glorify our Father which is in heaven; to express our sorrow and shame for our manifold transgressions of his holy law; to wait for an increase of purifying grace, drawing our affections to things above; to add seriousness and earnestness to our prayers; to avert the wrath of God, and to obtain all the great and precious promises which he hath made to us in Jesus Christ. ⁵⁹

Wesley emphasized that fasting had its greatest efficacy when connected to prayer. He saw the time spent in fasting as a time also devoted to prayer. Wesley stated,

And with fasting let us always join fervent prayer, pouring out our whole souls before God, confessing our sins with all their aggravations, humbling ourselves under his mighty hand, laying open before him all our wants, all our guiltiness and helplessness. This is a season for enlarging our prayers, both in behalf of ourselves and our brethren. ⁶⁰

From a practice initiated in his Oxford days, Wesley continued to practice the spiritual discipline of fasting. He fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays.⁶¹ In the "General Rules of 1743," Wesley encouraged

⁵⁸ Works, V, 346.

⁵⁹ Ibid., V, 357-358.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 360.

⁶¹ Works, VII, 288.

the United Societies to observe and practice fasting as a way of "attending upon all the ordinances of God."⁶²

Wesley was concerned about the lack of interest and practice of fasting by so many persons. He encouraged at least one day of fasting each week. In the "Directions to the Band-Societies" he exhorted all Methodists to fast on Fridays.⁶³

Christian conference was the fifth instituted means of grace. In essence, this was the small group experience which involved praying, studying, serving, sharing and encouraging one another in the Christian faith. Wesley advocated Christian conference as a means to bring together these essentials of the Christian life.

Wesley understood this means of grace to have two basic components: assembling together and Christian conversation or conference. In the "Large Minutes," Wesley disclosed his understanding of Christian "conference" as a means of grace,

Are you convinced how important and how difficult it is to order your conversation right? Is it always in grace? Seasoned with salt? Meet to minister grace to the hearers? Do not you converse too long at a time? Is not an hour commonly enough? Would it not be well, always to have a determinate end in view? And to pray before and after it? ⁶⁴

The other component of this means of Christian conference was

⁶²Ibid., VIII, 271.

⁶³Ibid., p. 274.

⁶⁴Ibid., 323.

fellowship. Wesley's conviction was that the Christian life could not exist, let alone grow, apart from community. By its very nature, Wesley insisted that Christianity was a social religion. He strongly advocated, "Christianity is essentially a social religion; and to turn it into a solitary religion, is indeed to destroy it . . . I mean not only that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all, without society."⁶⁵ Exemplified by the ministry of Jesus with His disciples and undergirded with the "koinonia" concept set forth in the New Testament, Wesley upheld fellowship as being essential in receiving and growing in God's grace. The practical implications of Christian conference are set forth in the next section.

Practical Foundations

The early Methodist movement was primarily a reform movement within the Church of England. It was an "ecclesiolae in ecclesia," or little churches within the church. The movement itself consisted of sincere Christians who desired to be more intentional and disciplined in their Christian living.

Wesley's pattern of disciplined Christian living was influenced primarily from the Religious Societies of England and the communal piety of the Moravians.⁶⁶ Wesley adapted the Moravian concept of

⁶⁵ Works, VII, 207ff.

⁶⁶ Watson, Accountable Discipleship, p. 25. This work provides invaluable insights into the dynamics of the small group experience in the local church.

"ecclesiola in ecclesia" as a model for spiritual renewal in the Church of England.⁶⁷

Wesley was convinced that a small group dynamic was highly practical and integral to Christian growth. He was indebted to the Moravians for this concept of spiritual nurture as "the guiding to maturity of a faith which was received as a gift, by grace."⁶⁸

At the heart of Wesley's small group dynamic was the means of grace. Wesley stressed the response of the believer to the initiatives of God's grace. His insistence for the means of grace eventually erupted into a "rift with the Moravians" over their advocacy of "stillness."⁶⁹

Wesley's practical insistence for the means of grace was also evident in his rejection of predestination held by the Calvinists. In his tract, "Predestination Calmly Considered," Wesley contended that the quest for holiness, after justification and regeneration, was still to be worked out in daily living. The instituted means of grace were the scriptural and ordinary ways through which Christians could receive

⁶⁷Howard A. Snyder, The Radical Wesley (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), p. 45. This book examines Wesley's patterns of spiritual renewal and how they are still relevant and applicable for the church today. Snyder gives a good overview of the Methodist societies, class meetings, and bands.

⁶⁸David Lowes Watson, The Early Methodist Class Meeting (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), p. 74. This is one of the finest scholarly treatments on the origin and nature of the "class meeting" in print today.

⁶⁹Outler, John Wesley, p. 353ff.

and grow in God's grace,

We allow, it is the work of God alone to justify, to sanctify, and to glorify; which three comprehend the whole of salvation. Yet we cannot allow, that man can only resist, and not in any wise "work together with God"; or that God is so the whole worker of our salvation, as to exclude man's working at all . . . for the Scripture is express, that (having received power from God) we are to "work out our own salvation"; and that (after the work of God is begun in our souls) we are "workers together with Him." ⁷⁰

Wesley brought the practicality of spiritual nurture to the early Methodists by forming societies, class meetings, and bands. These three dynamic levels of Christian community became the basis for on-going nurture and discipleship in the Methodist movement. Though the dynamic was different on each level, the total experience provided an effective structure for mutual accountability and experience in Christian discipleship. These groups were the communal expression for all the means of grace, and particularly the instituted means of grace. Without this dimension, Wesley believed that Christian growth in grace was not a possibility.

The societies were the largest group, usually numbering more than forty persons. This group met weekly for Bible exposition, singing, testimony, and prayer. The numerous Methodist societies established in London and Bristol became known as the "United Societies." In the Rules of the United Societies, Wesley strongly advocated attendance upon all the ordinances of God, which included the instituted means of

⁷⁰ Works, X, 230-231.

grace. Wesley insisted,

It is expected all who desire to continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation . . . by attending upon all the ordinances of God. Such are the public worship of God; the ministry of the word, either read or expounded; the Supper of the Lord; private prayer; searching the Scriptures; and fasting, or abstinence. ⁷¹

The bands were a direct influence on Wesley from the Moravians.⁷² When Wesley returned from Herrnhut, he "enthusiastically advocated the system of 'bands' for all the religious societies in London, including that in Fetter Lane."⁷³

The bands preceded the establishment of the Methodist societies and class meetings. A band consisted of four to eight men and women who were grouped according to gender, marital status, and as near as possible in spiritual growth and maturity. In one sense, the band was the confessional component of the Methodist structure. Wesley noted,

These, therefore, wanted some means of closer union; they wanted to pour out their hearts without reserve, particularly with regard to the sin which did still easily beset them, and the temptations which were most apt to prevail over them . . . In compliance with their desire, I divided them into smaller companies; putting the married or single men, and married or single women, together. ⁷⁴

⁷¹Outler, p. 179.

⁷²Snyder, p. 35.

⁷³Frank Baker, John Wesley and the Church of England (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 141.

⁷⁴Works, VIII, 258.

Whereas the band was the confessional unit, the class meeting was the disciplinary unit of the Methodist movement. A. Skevington Wood noted that "the class was the disciplinary unit of the society . . . and the keystone to the entire Methodist edifice."⁷⁵

The class meeting eventually became the core of the Methodist structure. It was the most "effective means of spiritual nurture for the membership as a whole."⁷⁶ The behavioral practices to be maintained were "attending upon all the ordinances of God."⁷⁷ The instituted means of grace were not optional disciplines to be practiced. They were required by Wesley himself to remain in good standing with the class meeting and ultimately membership in the society.

As early as 1742, the class meeting emerged when the society in Bristol divided into classes.⁷⁸ The class meeting was a coeducational experience which consisted of about twelve persons. The group was heterogeneous in age and in levels of Christian experience and maturity. The class leaders were lay people, and their appointment or removal was the prerogative of Wesley and his assistants.⁷⁹ They

⁷⁵A. Skevington Wood, "The Contribution of John Wesley to the Theology of Grace," Clark Pinnock, ed., Grace Unlimited (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), p. 209.

⁷⁶Watson, Accountable Discipleship, p. 42.

⁷⁷ Works, VIII, 271.

⁷⁸Snyder, p. 36.

⁷⁹Watson, p. 38.

were exhorted by Wesley to "see each person in his class, once a week at the least, in order to inquire how their souls prosper."⁸⁰

Wesley reflected,

It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to "bear one another's burdens," and naturally to "care for each other." As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other.⁸¹

At the heart of Wesley and the means of grace is the pulsating conviction that Christian growth is not accidental. Christian maturity does not come instantaneously. The pursuit of holiness of heart and living is an intentional endeavor. God has graciously given specific means through which He nurtures the Christian life into greater conformity in the image of Christ. Though God is not limited or bound to the instituted means of grace, He has chosen to use them as primary ways of effecting Christian growth. Therefore, as the Christian receives the flow of God's grace through prayer, scripture, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian conference, there will be a renewed experience of the love, joy, and power of God.

⁸⁰"Rules of the Band-Societies," Works, VIII, 253.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 254.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The present study of John Wesley's Instituted Means of Grace in the spiritual formation of the local church generated a copious amount of statistical data. This chapter is devoted to a systematic examination of the data gathered from the surveys administered to the groups involved in the study. The collected data was the basis for making all analyses to determine significant statistical differences and to observe emerging trends. The data was carefully examined to discover significant attitudinal and behavioral changes in and between the groups.

There were four basic steps involved in the overall analytical process. The major emphasis of this process involved interpreting statistical changes reflected by the three groups in the surveys.

The first step in the data analysis was to determine if any significant statistical changes actually occurred. In order to make such assessments, statistical significance tests (i.e. t-tests) were performed between two different sets of scores (i.e. pretest and posttest) produced either within the same group or between two different groups. The calculated difference in the mean score was the average gain or loss in raw score for the particular category or subscale being tested. The mean score difference was the primary factor for the statistical test of significance.

This part of the analysis sought to answer the question, "Was the result between the tests statistically significant?" The statistical significance was set at $P = .05$. This meant the probability of a change from pretest to posttest occurring by chance or random error was less than five times out of one hundred.

The second step was to analyze the individual "subscales" under each "category." A subscale was defined as one of the instituted means of grace (i.e. prayer). A category was defined as either attitude or behavior. A category with its subscales consisted of all five instituted means of grace.

The third step in the analysis was the compilation of a separate composite score for attitude and behavior of the data which applied to each null hypothesis. The composite score was calculated by adding all five instituted means of grace together. Based on each composite score, the null hypothesis was either accepted or rejected. If the null hypothesis was accepted, then the data was found to support the hypothesis. If the null hypothesis was rejected, then the data was found not to support the hypothesis.

The fourth step was the process of interpreting the results of the statistical outcome for each hypothesis. The reasons for acceptance and rejection of the null hypothesis were discussed. The interpretive meaning of the results was based on the objective statistical results. Yet, the interpretation was not limited solely to these objective means. Speculations and observations were made by the present writer to give authenticity and practicality to the resulting trends.

In this chapter a comparative analysis was made of the survey responses comparing each of the groups with each null hypothesis. The questions related to the data gathering were categorically explored. These included the attitudinal and behavioral categories and a composite score for each category. The attitudinal data focused on attitudes toward the instituted means of grace. The behavioral data centered on the practices with the instituted means of grace. The instituted means of grace constituted as subscales to be analyzed within the attitudinal and behavioral categories.

A sociological category briefly examined the age and gender distributions in all three groups. For the purpose of this analysis, the population was Group A, the experimental group was Group B, and the control group was Group C.

Sociological Data

The sociological data included the age and gender distributions. There were no statistically significant differences in age and gender between the three groups in this study. The differentiations in the sociological data for the groups are presented below.

It should be noted that the experimental group and control group were included in the population's "pretest" survey but not in their "posttest" survey. The posttest surveys were administered separately to each of the three groups.

Age

The age distribution for the total project had a predominance of persons falling in the 30-39 group and 60-up age range. In the total sample the 60-up age group had 35%, while the 30-39 age group had slightly less with 29%. On the other end of the range, the 10-19 age group had a low of 5%, and the 20-29 age group followed with only 7%. The 40-49 age group had 14%, and the 50-59 age group comprised only 10%.

When comparing the population, experimental, and control groups with the age ranges, the 60-up range showed that the population had 31%, the experimental group 50%, and the control group 23%. The 30-39 range found the population with 15%, the experimental group 25%, and the control group 46%. The next age grouping (40-49) showed that the population had 18%, the experimental group 8%, and the control group 15%. The next to oldest age range (50-59) had a lower percentage than the previous three categories, with the population having 13%, the experimental group 17%, and no response in the control group. The 20-29 age group was thinly represented with only 7% in the population, no responses in the experimental group, and 15% in the control group. The 10-19 age group was the lowest with only 5% for the population and no responses in the experimental and control groups.

The largest age group in the population was the 60-up range with 31%. This was comparable with the experimental group which had 50% in that same age group. The control group had 46% in the 30-39 age range.

Every age range was represented in the population. The experimental group did not have any persons under the age group of 30-39. The control group did not have any persons in the 10-19 and 50-59 age ranges. There were no significant differences in age between the population, the experimental group, and the control group. Chart 1 in Appendix A shows these age distributions.

Gender

There were no significant differences in gender between the population, the experimental group, and the control group. However, the overall male-female distribution indicated more females (71%) than males (29%).

A comparison between the three groups indicated that the females were predominant in all groups. The population had 52%, the experimental group 83%, and the control group 77%. The male distribution exhibited the minority in all groups. The population had 46%, the experimental group only 17%, and the control group 23%. These gender distributions are displayed in Chart 2 in Appendix A.

Hypothesis One

The first null hypothesis stated there would be no significant difference in attitude or behavior with the instituted means of grace in the population before and after the contextual project. This hypothesis examined the possible changes of the attitude and behavior within the population toward the means of grace. The analysis involved comparing the pretest and posttest scores of the population. The

statistical test employed for this analysis was the t-test.

Composite Attitude Score

The composite attitude score for the population displayed a significant change from pretest to posttest. The population pretest mean score was 20.06, while the posttest mean score was 18.46. The obtained difference in the mean score was 1.6. The statistical significance was $P = .02$. This showed a negative change in the overall attitude of the population toward the means of grace. Chart 3 gives the details of these results.

Attitude Subscales

Prayer - For the subscale of prayer, the statistical test indicated no significant change in attitude. The pretest mean score was 2.61, and the posttest mean score was 2.52. This yielded a .09 difference. There was no statistical significance. Chart 5 shows the statistical data.

Scripture - The pretest mean score for the subscale of scripture was 2.69, and the posttest score 2.55. The difference in the mean score was .14. There was no statistical significance in attitude toward scripture. The reader may turn to Chart 7 to see these details.

Communion - The statistical test for the subscale of Communion was the only means of grace where a significant change occurred in the attitude of the population. The pretest score was 5.05, and the posttest score 4.59. This was a difference of .46 which resulted in a negative change in attitude. The statistical significance was $P = .04$.

Chart 9 shows this significant change in attitude.

Fasting - There was no significant change in attitude toward fasting. The pretest mean score was 1.23, while the posttest score was .96. The difference in these scores was .27. There was no statistical significance. Chart 11 displays the statistical results.

Fellowship - There was no change in the population's attitude toward fellowship. The pretest score was 5.19, and the posttest score 4.90. The mean score difference was .29. There was no statistical significance. Chart 13 reveals the results of this analysis.

Interpretation of Attitude

These statistical findings indicated that there was little change in the attitude of the population toward the means of grace. The only statistical significance which did occur was a negative change on the Communion subscale. Based on the data in the composite score, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was no difference in the population's attitude toward the instituted means of grace before and after the project.

In the composite mean score, the attitude subscales for the population indicated no positive changes with the means of grace. Only the result in the Communion subscale was statistically significant with $P = .04$. This was a negative change in attitude. Since the composite score showed a slight negative change from pretest to posttest, the score on the Communion subscale followed this decline.

The overall decrease in the population's attitude toward the means

of grace was a surprising trend. The trend suggested that if the population were left on its own and not involved in the learning experience, they would not increase in their awareness for the means of grace. Therefore, a congregation may not grow in its awareness for the need of the instituted means of grace as basic components in the devotional life.

The conclusions of the specified data concerning the attitude of the population were confirmed in the pretest and posttest sections on each chart. For details of this analysis, the reader may turn to Charts 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13 in the appendix.

Composite Behavior Score

The study of the population's general behavior with the means of grace showed no statistical significance from the pretest to the posttest. The composite pretest mean score was 12.40, and the posttest mean score 11.51. The mean score difference was .89 which showed a decline in the behavior of the population. Chart 15 graphs the details of these results.

Behavior Subscales

Prayer - The behavior of the population toward prayer did not change. The pretest mean score was 4.37, and the posttest score 4.21. The obtained difference was .16. The statistical test did not reach a level of significance, as seen in Chart 17.

Scripture - The population's pretest and posttest mean score for scripture was similar. The pretest score was 2.28, and the posttest

score 2.20. The obtained difference was only .08. There was no statistical significance in the analysis of this data. Chart 19 gives further details.

Communion - The population's behavior with Communion indicated the only statistical significance in the subscales. The pretest mean score was 1.32, and the posttest score 1.10. The obtained difference was .22. The statistical significance was $P = .001$. Chart 21 gives the statistics for this subscale.

Fasting - There was no difference in the mean scores between the pretest and posttest. The pretest mean score for fasting was .28, and the posttest score was the same, at .28. There was no statistical significance. Chart 23 illustrates the results of this test.

Fellowship - The pretest mean score of behavior for fellowship was .34, while the posttest score was .37. There was little difference in the mean score with only .03. There was no statistical significance between the pretest and posttest scores. Chart 25 gives further details.

Interpretation of Behavior

The statistical responses gathered regarding the behavior of the population toward the means of grace did not reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, the null hypothesis was supported by the composite score. There was no significant change in the behavior of the population from pretest to posttest. The accumulated scores showed a negative rather than a positive trend in behavior.

Although the behavior inquiry on the Communion subscale varied, it showed a negative change. The pattern of the population's behavior with Communion declined from 1.32 to 1.10 in the mean score. This indicated that the population's attitude toward Communion also declined. It seemed naturally to follow that the negative change in behavior was parallel to, and possibly preempted, by the negative change in attitude toward this particular means of grace.

It was expected that the behavior of the population would not show a significantly different change in behavior, since this group was not intentionally exposed or involved in a learning experience with Wesley's means of grace. However, the resulting trend of the population's decline in behavior with the means of grace over the designated time period was alarming in, and of, itself. This pointed not only to the validity but to the necessity that small groups in the local church should be organized and involved with the instituted means of grace as a way of cultivating the devotional life. The behavior responses of the population from pretest to posttest are in Charts 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, and 25.

Hypothesis Two

The second null hypothesis focused on the experimental group. This hypothesis examined possible changes in attitude and behavior of the experimental group. It stated that there would be no significant difference in attitude or behavior with Wesley's instituted means of grace in the experimental group before and after the project. The

pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group were tested with the t-test. The statistical analysis sought to determine significant changes which may have occurred between the pretest and posttest.

Composite Attitude Score

The difference in the experimental group's attitude between the pretest and posttest mean scores was 23.17 and 25.17 respectively. The difference of 2.0 in the mean score revealed a positive change. There was a .05 level of significance between the pretest and posttest. This showed that the experimental group's attitude toward the means of grace was positively affected between the time of the pretest and the posttest. Chart 3 shows the statistical results.

Attitude Subscales

Prayer - The results of the pretest and posttest mean score were uniform as indicated in Chart 5. The pretest and posttest mean scores were both 3.0. Consequently, there was no statistical significance in the experimental group's attitude toward prayer.

Scripture - Analogous to the findings in the study above concerning prayer, there were similar results found in the scripture subscale. The mean scores for both the pretest and posttest were 2.92. There was no level of statistical significance. See Chart 7 for more details.

Communion - The data for the Communion subscale showed the pretest score to be 5.42, and the posttest score 5.75. Though there was a positive difference of .33, the statistical test did not show a

level of significance. This result is seen in Chart 9.

Fasting - There was a .002 level of significance in the experimental group's attitude toward fasting. The pretest mean score registered at 2.0, but the posttest mean score was higher at 2.58. The result was a positive difference of .58 in the mean score. Chart 11 portrays the level of significance.

Fellowship - The statistics in the attitude toward Christian fellowship did not statistically change. The pretest mean score was 6.17, and the posttest mean score 6.50. The obtained difference was only .33. There was no statistical significance. Chart 13 shows these results.

Interpretation of Attitude

Although the composite attitude of the experimental group was statistically significant overall, specific significant changes showed up only in the fasting subscale. There was no verifiable evidence of any change in attitude toward prayer and scripture. The data in these subscale scores remained exactly the same from pretest to posttest. The raw score differences for the other subscales resulted in positive changes but did not show statistical significance.

The only subscale to yield a statistically significant change was fasting. The level of significance was $P = .002$. It became apparent that the experimental group's exposure and learning about fasting as a means of grace did have a positive affect on their attitudes. Unlike the population and the control group, the change in attitude was

significant with this group.

Since the composite attitude score reached a level of significance, with two subscales having positive gains in their raw scores and one subscale reaching a level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant change in the attitude of the experimental group between the pretest and posttest. The reporting of this criterion for the experimental group's attitude is reported in Charts 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13.

Composite Behavior Score

The composite behavior of the experimental group did not change after the completion of the project. The statistical findings of the experimental group did not reach a level of significance, though the difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores did show a positive difference. The pretest mean score was 18.83, and the posttest score 19.42. However, the difference in the mean score was not enough to produce a statistical significance. Chart 15 shows the results of this analysis.

Behavior Subscales

Prayer - In observing the responses on the prayer subscale in Chart 17, the pretest score was 5.17 and the posttest 5.25. The difference in these scores was only .08. There was no statistical significance.

Scripture - The mean scores for scripture were not statistically significant. The pretest score was 3.50, and the posttest score 3.67.

The obtained difference was .17. There was no statistically significant change in behavior. The results are seen in Chart 19.

Communion - The pretest score for Communion was 1.83, and the posttest score 1.83. There was no difference in the raw score from pretest to posttest. Consequently, there was no statistical significance in the behavior pattern. Chart 21 graphs the statistical results.

Fasting The pretest mean score for fasting was .25 and the posttest score .50. This was a .25 difference in mean score. Though this was a positive change in behavior, the difference was not statistically significant. See Chart 23 for details.

Fellowship - The findings regarding the behavior of the experimental group with fellowship showed no change. The pretest mean score was .83, while the posttest score was .67. This yielded a .16 difference between the two scores. There was no statistical significance as seen in Chart 25.

Interpretation of Behavior

The statistical outcome of the experimental group's behavior with the means of grace indicated no significant change from pretest to posttest. This was supported from the data gathered in both the composite and subscale scores. The results of the composite behavior and the subscale behavior scores were conclusive in accepting the null hypothesis. Therefore, the behavioral data of the experimental group corroborated with the null hypothesis. There was no significant

difference in the behavior of the experimental group with the instituted means of grace before and after the project.

Since the experimental group exhibited a statistically significant change in attitude, then why was there no significant change in their behavior? The following explanation suggests an answer to this question. If it is presumed that attitude generally precedes behavior, then the experimental group would have demonstrated a significant change in behavior over a longer period of time. The positive score gains for the designated time period pointed to this as a plausible conclusion and a definite emerging trend.

Furthermore, in comparing the experimental group's and population's pretest scores, the experimental group's score was higher in behavior with the means of grace at the beginning of the project. Consequently, their level of behavior was greater than the population's at the beginning of the project. It was surmised that there was a minority of people in the population who had more behavioral practices with the means of grace than the plurality. The statistical data for the behavior of the experimental group is indicated in Charts 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, and 25.

Hypothesis Three

The third null hypothesis viewed the possible differences in attitude and behavior prior to the commencement of the contextual project. The hypothesis focused on the population and experimental group. It stated that there would be no significant difference in

attitude and behavior with the instituted means of grace between the population and the experimental group before the project. This hypothesis looked only at the pretest scores between the two groups. Since the population and experimental groups were different in numerical size, the Mann-Whitney nonparametric test was utilized to determine statistical significance.

Composite Attitude Score

When comparing the pretest results of the population with the experimental group in attitude, a significant difference appeared. There was a .02 level of significance in the composite attitude score between the experimental and population groups. The experimental group pretest score was 23.17, but the population pretest score, 20.06, measured less. This produced a calculated difference of 3.11. Chart 3 gives a visual picture of the statistical results.

Attitude Subscales

Prayer - The attitude in prayer between the population and experimental group did not change. The experimental group pretest score was 3.00, but the population pretest score, 2.61, was less. The obtained difference of .39 was not statistically significant. Chart 5 gives the details.

Scripture - On the scripture subscale, the experimental group scored 2.92, while the population scored less with 2.69. The obtained difference was 23. There was no significant difference in the attitudinal response between the two groups. Chart 7 shows the

statistical findings.

Communion - The differentiation seen in Chart 9 regarding Communion was not found to be significant. The response of the experimental group pretest score was 5.42, and the population pretest response was 5.05. The difference between the two scores was .37.

Fasting - There was a significant difference between the experimental group and the population over fasting. The pretest score was 2.00, and the population pretest score 1.23. The mean score difference between the experimental group and population was .77. This reached the statistical level of significance at .03. For details of this response, the reader may refer to Chart 11.

Fellowship - When comparing the experimental group with the population, there was no significant difference between the groups regarding fellowship. The experimental group pretest scored 6.17, and the population scored 5.19. The difference in the mean score was .98. Chart 13 gives graphic details of the statistical results.

Interpretation of Attitude

It was anticipated that the experimental group might score higher in the attitudinal category than the general population, particularly since they came forward as volunteers. The initial attitude in this project was expected to be greater by those who took the initiative and volunteered than those who did not.

The composite pretest score for attitude confirmed this speculation. The .02 level of significance indicated a statistical

difference in attitude prior to the implementation of the project between the population and experimental group. The null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference in attitude between the population and experimental group before the project commenced.

When examining the subscales, however, the only statistical significance to show up was fasting. The level of significance was .03. The calculated mean scores between the groups were substantially, though not significantly, different in attitude. The resulting trend was that there were some initial differences in attitude toward the means of grace between a small group of interested persons and the population. Charts 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13 show the difference in the initial attitude between the groups.

Composite Behavior Score

The study of behavior between the experimental group and population before the commencement of the project produced some interesting statistical results. The composite behavior score of the experimental group pretested at 18.83, but the population pretest score was significantly less at 12.40. The mean score difference between the two groups was 6.43. The statistical significance was $P < .001$. Chart 15 gives the statistical details.

Behavior Subscales

Prayer - According to Chart 17, the experimental group had a higher pretest score than the population. The experimental group tested at 5.17, while the population scored 4.37. The .8 difference in

mean score resulted in a statistical significance of $P = .03$.

Scripture - When making the comparison between the experimental group and the population on behavior toward scripture, there was a statistically significant level at .002. The experimental pretest score was 3.50, and the population pretest score was 2.28. The obtained difference was 1.22. Chart 19 displays the collected data for this subscale.

Communion - In observing the pretest responses found in this subscale, the experimental group scored 1.83 and the population 1.32. The mean score difference was .51. The statistical significance was $P = .006$. Chart 21 shows the statistical significance level.

Fasting - There was no significant difference between the experimental group and population in their pretest scores of behavior with fasting. The experimental group pretest scored .25, but the population pretest score was slightly higher at .28. This was a difference of .03. These results are seen in Chart 23.

Fellowship - For the fasting subscale, the experimental group pretest had a high mean score of .83, but the population pretest score was significantly less at .34. The calculated difference was .49. The statistical significance for this subscale was $P = .004$. Chart 25 portrays the statistical results.

Interpretation of Behavior

The statistics gathered on the composite pretest score followed the same pattern found in the subscales. All of the means of grace,

except fasting, were found to reach levels of behavioral significance. The significant differences were prayer, scripture, Communion, and fellowship. It was not surprising to find that fasting was insignificant in terms of behavior.

Out of all of the means of grace, fasting was found to be the lowest in mean score with each group. Though it was the least appealing in both the attitudinal and behavioral categories, fasting had not been exposed to the congregation as a means of grace prior to this project. Fasting as a means of grace did stimulate interest and even challenged some of the participants in the experimental group. The emerging trend showed great potential with this means of grace in the devotional life of a congregation.

There was clear statistical evidence that the behavior between the experimental group and population was significantly different before the contextual project began. The null hypothesis was firmly rejected by the analysis of the data. There was a significant difference in behavior with the instituted means of grace between the experimental group and population before the commencement of the project.

It would seem reasonable to suppose that those who were interested in this kind of small group learning experience would also have demonstrated some predisposed behavioral practices with the means of grace. This was evident in the study. The specific data on the pretest study of behavior between the experimental group and population can be seen in Charts 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, and 25.

Hypothesis Four

The fourth null hypothesis speculated no change in attitude and behavior after the completion of the project. The hypothesis declared there would be no significant difference in attitude and behavior with the instituted means of grace between the population and experimental group after the project. The posttest scores of the population and experimental group were analyzed to determine statistical significance. The statistical test utilized was the Mann-Whitney test which examined differences in the mean scores between these two independent nonparametric groups.

Composite Attitude Score

The figures in Chart 3 describe the composite scores in attitude between the experimental group and population after the project. The experimental group posttest indicated a significantly higher score than the population. The statistical significance in the attitude between the two groups was $P < .001$. The posttest score for the experimental group was 25.17, while the posttest result for the population was 18.46. This was a calculated difference of 6.71 in the mean score.

Attitude Subscales

Prayer - The data in Chart 5 is statistically significant between the experimental group and the population. The experimental group measured a strong attitude toward prayer with a posttest score of 3.00. The population's attitude was less with a 2.52 score. The obtained difference in the mean score was .48. The level of significance was

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$P = .03$.

Scripture - In Chart 7, the responses regarding attitude toward scripture did not reach a level of significance. The experimental group registered a posttest score of 2.92, but the population score was less with a 2.55 score. The mean score difference of .37 was not statistically significant.

Communion - In Chart 9, the data indicates that there was a statistically significant level (.04) between the experimental group and population. The experimental group had a mean score of 5.75, and the population 4.59. The 1.16 difference between the mean scores reached a .04 level of significance.

Fasting - Chart 11 shows a significant difference in the attitude toward fasting between the experimental group and population. The scores were 2.58 and 1.62 respectively. The .92 difference was statistically significant with a level of significance of $P < .001$.

Fellowship - The statistical responses concerning the attitude toward fellowship were significant. The posttest score for the experimental group was 6.50, and 4.90 for the population. The difference was 1.60. There was a .004 level of significance. Chart 13 indicates the statistical results.

Interpretation of Attitude

The attitudinal responses for the population and experimental group after the conclusion of the project indicated a statistically significant change in the composite and subscale scores. Therefore,

the gathered data strongly rejected the null hypothesis. There was a significant difference in the attitude with the instituted means of grace between the population and experimental group after the completion of the project.

A close examination of the attitudinal responses of the experimental group disclosed significantly higher scores than the population. The significant differences in four of the five subscale scores were relative to the statistically significant composite score ($P < .001$). However, it was interesting that the attitude toward scripture was not significantly different. This was, perhaps, due to a predominant attitude of Protestants toward scripture, since they have been traditionally known as "people of the book."

A comparison between the attitudinal changes of the means of grace on the subscale scores exhibited fasting to have the greatest significance, followed by fellowship, Communion, and prayer. Charts 3-13 give a visual picture of these attitudinal changes between the population and experimental group after the course of study.

Composite Behavior Score

The composite behavioral scores displayed in Chart 15 for the experimental group and population were significantly different. This significance was derived from a composite mean score difference of 7.91 between the two groups. The experimental group's posttest behavioral score was 19.42. The population posttest score was 11.51. The statistical significance in behavior was $P < .001$.

Behavior Subscales

Prayer - Behavior with prayer between the experimental group and population after the project are displayed in Chart 17. The behavioral differences were statistically significant at the .007 level. The experimental group posttest score was 5.25, and the population 4.21. This yielded a significant mean score difference of 1.04.

Scripture - When studying the behavior with scripture in Chart 19, the statistical significance was $P < .001$. The experimental group figures showed a 3.67 score, and the population 2.20. The difference in the mean score was 1.47.

Communion - On the Communion subscale in Chart 21, the experimental group had a 1.83 mean score, but the population was significantly less with only 1.10. The calculated difference was .73. The statistical significance was $P < .001$.

Fasting - When making a comparison in the posttest scores in behavior with fasting, there was no statistical significance found as seen in Chart 23. The experimental group posttest score was .50, and the population posttest score .28. The difference was only .22.

Fellowship - There was not a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and population in regard to behavior with Christian fellowship. The experimental group mean score was .67, and the population .37. The mean score difference was .30. Chart 25 describes the statistical findings.

Interpretation of Behavior

Concerning the behavioral category, the fourth null hypothesis anticipated there was no significant difference in the behavior between the experimental group and population after the project. However, the statistical testing of the data indicated differently. Based on the statistical test results of the composite score, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference in the behavior with the instituted means of grace between the experimental group and population after the project.

Except for fellowship and fasting, the behavioral subscale scores were all significant. Communion and scripture revealed a high level of significance at $P < .001$, followed by prayer at the .007 level.

One aspect of these responses which was meaningful and helpful was the behavioral change in Communion. Generally speaking, Communion has not been as prominent as prayer and scripture in the devotional life of the Protestant. The significant behavioral change in Communion was certainly a positive trend in the study, and one which Wesley would have highly applauded.

Another interesting twist was the behavioral change noted in the scripture subscale. Since the attitude toward scripture was not significantly different, it would have logically followed a similar pattern on the behavioral subscale. However, this was not the case since there was a significant change in behavior. This was not surprising since scripture is generally regarded as an essential component in the devotional life of the Christian. Charts 15-25 show

the statistical results of the behavioral category and related subscales.

Hypothesis Five

The fifth null hypothesis postulated there was no significant difference in attitude and behavior with the instituted means of grace between the experimental group and the control group after the project. This hypothesis centered on the posttest scores between two relative groups which had similar interests and intentions prior to the formation of the experimental group. The Mann-Whitney test calculated the differences in the mean score and computed significant statistical changes between the variables of these two nonparametric groups.

Composite Attitude Score

The responses represented in Chart 4 show the composite attitude scores between the experimental group and control group after completing the project. The experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group. The experimental group's composite score was 25.17. In contrast to the experimental group, the control group was lower with 22.08. The obtained difference was 3.09. The statistical significance between the two groups was $P < .001$.

Attitude Subscales

Prayer - Chart 6 shows no statistical significance in the prayer subscale between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group posttest score was 3.00, and the control group posttest was 2.77.

The .23 difference in mean score was not statistically significant.

Scripture - The responses on the scripture subscale revealed no change in attitude. The mean score for the experimental group was 2.92, while the control group score (2.92) was the same. The statistical test showed no statistical significance. Chart 8 shows the characteristics of these findings.

Communion - Chart 10 indicates the Communion subscale responses. The attitudinal score of the experimental group was 5.75, but the control group's attitude was lower at 4.85. The obtained difference was .90. There was no statistical significance.

Fasting - There were virtually no significant changes in attitude toward fasting between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group posttest score was 2.58, and the control group score 1.69. The obtained difference was .89. The details of these results are seen in Chart 12.

Fellowship - The attitudinal subscale for fellowship showed no statistical significance. The experimental group mean score was 6.50, and the control group score 6.08. The .42 difference in the mean score was not significant. The specific data can be seen in Chart 14.

Interpretation of Attitude

There was significant change in the general attitude toward the means of grace between the experimental and control groups, although statistical significance does not show up within the individual subscales. The cumulative subscale scores do reach a level of

significance in the composite score. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected based on the level of significance ($P < .001$) in the composite score. There was a significant difference in the attitude with the instituted means of grace between the experimental group and control group after the completion of the project.

There were several characteristics which existed between the experimental and control groups. In the beginning, these groups had the same interests and intentions. They took the initiative to step forward as volunteers out of the population. Generally speaking, their attitude toward the means of grace was congruent.

It was interesting that there was a statistical significance in the composite attitude score between the experimental and control groups, given the fact there were no significant changes in the subscales. A comparison in the subscale scores indicated that the experimental group did score higher on four out of five means of grace. The subscale score on Scripture remained the same for both groups.

It was quite evident from these statistics that the current trend would have resulted in an a significant level of attitude for each means of grace. This suggested that a group of interested people in the local church who were given the opportunity to have an intentional learning experience with the instituted means of grace showed a greater attitude and appreciation for the means of grace. Charts 6-14 depict the statistical results.

Composite Behavior Score

Chart 16 indicates the findings of the composite behavioral responses between the experimental and control groups after the project. The information gathered on the data showed the statistical significance at the .005 level. The experimental group posttest score was 19.42, and the control group posttest score 16.15. The obtained difference between the mean scores was 3.27.

Behavior Subscales

Prayer The prayer subscale score in behavior showed no statistical significance between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group posttest score was 5.25, and the control group score 4.92. The obtained difference in the mean score was .33. Chart 18 reveals the data for this subscale.

Scripture - The responses represented in Chart 20 revealed no statistical change in behavior with scripture. The study between the experimental and control groups produced a .44 difference in the mean score. The result was no statistical change in behavior. The experimental group posttest score was calculated at 3.67, and the control group score 3.23. These statistical responses are in Chart 20.

Communion - The differentiation between the experimental and control groups in Chart 22 showed no statistical significance. The Communion posttest score for the experimental group was 1.83, and the control group score 1.54. The calculated difference in mean score was .29.

Fasting - The responses of the experimental group showed no significant change from the control group in the fasting subscale. The posttest score was .50 for the experimental group, and .08 for the control group. The .42 mean score difference was not statistically significant. Chart 24 shows the results.

Fellowship - In examining the responses on the fellowship subscale, there was no statistical significance. The experimental group posttest score was .67, and the control group score was .46. This was a .21 difference in the mean score. Chart 26 shows the details of these findings.

Interpretation of Behavior

In parallel with the above attitudinal statistics existing between the experimental and control groups, the behavioral statistics in Charts 16-26 indicated a similar pattern. The behavior of the experimental group was greater with the means of grace than the control group's behavior. The level of significance for the composite behavior reached .005. The null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference in behavior with the instituted means of grace after the completion of the project between the experimental and control groups.

The trend in behavior followed the same trend in attitude between these two groups. The specified charts did not show this trend out of coincidence. As the attitude toward the means of grace increased, the behavioral practices also increased. The experimental group's mean

scores for each behavioral subscale were greater than the scores posted by the control group. It was evident that a greater period of time in the small group experience would have resulted in significant behavioral changes with each means of grace.

It was surmised that if the control group had been exposed to the same conditions as the experimental group, there would have been significant changes in the control group's behavior with the instituted means of grace. When a small group in this local church was actively involved in such a learning experience, the ensuing result was a significant change in behavioral practices with Wesley's instituted means of grace.

Hypothesis Six

The sixth null hypothesis concentrated on the population and control group from an end perspective. The hypothesis assumed that there was no significant difference in attitude and behavior with the instituted means of grace between the population and the control group after the completion of the project. Though these two groups were distinct and unique, they were commonly related since they were not involved in the actual exposure and experience with the means of grace. Since these groups were different in numerical size, the posttest analysis required a nonparametric test. The Mann-Whitney statistical test was utilized for the analysis.

Composite Attitude Score

Change occurring between the population's and control group's

posttest scores showed up as being significant. It was noted in Chart 4 that the statistical test measured a high level of significance at $P < .001$. The population posttest score was low at 18.46, but the control group posttest score was much higher at 22.08. The resulting difference was 3.62.

Attitude Subscales

Prayer - Chart 6 shows the attitudinal responses of the population and control groups for the prayer subscale. There was no statistical significance. The population posttest score was 2.52, and the control group score 2.77. The mean score difference was .25.

Scripture - Chart 8 describes the scores between the population and control groups for the scripture subscale. The population posttest score was 2.55, and the control group score 2.92. The difference in mean score was .37. There was not a statistically significant change in attitude.

Communion - The mean score differences for attitude in the Communion subscale are shown in Chart 10. The score for the population posttest was 4.59. Though the control group score was higher at 4.85, it was not statistically significant since the obtained difference was .26.

Fasting - There was a significant difference between the population and control groups in the attitude toward fasting. The population posttest score was .96, while the control group score was 1.69. There was a .73 mean score difference between these two groups.

The level of significance was .04. Chart 12 shows details of the responses.

Fellowship There was no significant difference in attitude toward fellowship between the population and control groups. The population posttest score was noticeably lower (4.90) than the control group score (6.08). The difference was 1.18. There was no statistical significance. Chart 14 gives these statistics for the fellowship subscale.

Interpretation of Attitude

The composite attitudinal responses between the population and control groups showed a statistical significance. The control group revealed an overall predominant attitude toward the means of grace. The level of significance was $P < .001$. The null hypothesis involving the attitudes of the population and control groups was rejected. There was a difference in attitude with the instituted means of grace between the population and control groups after the project.

There were some unexpected responses found in the subscales. The attitude of the control group toward fasting was significantly different from the population's attitude. The level of significance was .04. The other subscale scores for the control group were all higher than the population but not significantly higher.

The interest in fasting by the control group was meaningful and was a distinguishing characteristic from the population. Throughout this whole study, the population showed the least interest in fasting.

In comparison, the experimental and control groups both scored higher in this attitudinal subscale.

These statistics illustrated that the control group was significantly different from the population, even though they did not participate with the experimental group. The trend was obvious since there were those church members in the local church who were interested in developing a more intentional and structured devotional life with the instituted means of grace. Charts 4-14 depict the attitudinal patterns between the population and control group.

Composite Behavior Score

The study in behavior between the population and control groups after the conclusion of the project revealed a significant difference. The result in the statistical test showed a .002 level of significance. The population posttest score displayed a mean score of 11.51. However, the control group posttest was significantly higher at 16.15. The difference was 4.64 in the mean score. The data for the composite behavior can be seen in Chart 16.

Behavior Subscales

Prayer - The reader will note in Chart 18 that there was no statistical significance between the population and control group regarding behavior with prayer. The population posttest score was 4.21, but the control group score was slightly higher at 4.92. The mean score difference was .71. There was not a statistically significant difference.

Scripture - The behavioral responses of the population showed a distinct variation from the control group. The population had a 2.20 score, while the control group was higher with 3.23. The obtained difference in the mean score was 1.03. There was a .02 level of statistical significance. Chart 20 displays the specific data.

Communion - When making the comparison between the population and control groups in behavior with Communion, there was a statistically significant level of .03. The population posttest score was 1.10, but the control group score was significantly higher at 1.54. There was a .44 difference in the mean score. Chart 22 shows the details of these responses.

Fasting - There was no significant difference between the population and control groups regarding behavior with fasting. The population posttest score was .28, but the control group was lower at .08. The calculated difference was .20. Chart 24 indicates the findings of this subscale.

Fellowship - The behavioral subscale of fellowship between the population and control groups was not statistically significant. The population posttest score was .37, and the control group score .46. The obtained difference in the mean score was .09. There was no statistical significance. Chart 26 illustrates the details of the specific data.

Interpretation of Behavior

There was statistical evidence that the control group's behavior

with the instituted means of grace was significantly different from the population. The control group's composite behavior was significantly higher than the population's. The level of significance was .002. On the basis of the composite score, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference in behavior with the instituted means of grace between the population and control groups after the project was consummated.

There were some striking differences in behavior between the population and control groups. In observing the responses in the subscales, there were two means of grace which reached the .05 level of significance: scripture and communion. The level of significance was .02 and .03 respectively. However, there were no significant behavioral differences in prayer, fasting, and fellowship. The control group's score indicated greater behavior toward the means of grace than the demonstrable behavior of the population.

In essence, the control group's behavioral practices were distinct from the population's. The population did not significantly change in its devotional practices. This suggested that the control group's behavior would have increased even more significantly had it been exposed to an intentional/learning experience with Wesley's Instituted Means of Grace. Charts 16-26 display this trend coming out of the statistical findings.

A Pastoral Perspective

The statistical study in this chapter sought to examine the instituted means of grace in the spiritual formation of the local church. The data was reported and analyzed in a systematic manner in order either to verify or nullify six null hypotheses. Bringing together both the analysis and interpretation of the data resulted in meaningful insights. However, the statistical data itself and the tests of significance were somewhat limited in what they could say. Therefore, this pastoral perspective is presented here to bring "flesh and blood" to the statistical study.

The members of the John Wesley Covenant Group had many positive experiences in their sharing, learning, and practicing the instituted means of grace. Through their sharing, the hunger for both fellowship and discipline quickly became evident in the first few weeks. Like wildfire, their contagious exuberance disseminated throughout the whole congregation. As a result, many parishioners became highly inquisitive about "what's happening?" There were those who genuinely expressed interest in participating in future groups. In fact, some of the volunteers who were not randomly selected expressed feelings of disappointment for not being in the covenant group.

As a pastor, it was stimulating and challenging to teach about Wesley's instituted means of grace. The covenant group was fascinated with the devotional life of Wesley and the early Methodists. They were not aware that these five disciplines were the basic dynamics of Wesley's devotional life. They were eager and excited about

incorporating into their own devotional lives the same principles Wesley had practiced.

It was exciting and rewarding to see the changes take place in the attitudes and behavior of the covenant group and overall impact on the whole congregation. In one sense, the John Wesley Covenant Group became a means of grace for the whole church. When this group sought to open themselves up more fully to God, His grace began flowing more efficaciously through them and the church as a whole. By utilizing the instituted means of grace, the covenant group availed themselves to God and His work of grace. The resulting experience was not only change in their attitudes and behaviors, but a re-dedication of their lives in obedience to Christ and the subsequent beginning of spiritual renewal throughout the church.

The pastor and participants became deeply aware that vitality in the Christian life lies in the personal relationship between the human spirit and the risen Christ. There was a greater realization that the Christian life grows and deepens when there is a positive response to the movement and work of God's grace. Wesley's instituted means of grace helped them to respond and to experience the grace of God. They discovered these were the scriptural ways of opening up to God's grace.

From a pastoral perspective it is clear that the Church of Jesus Christ, if it is going to be involved in any serious spiritual formation ministry, needs to re-discover Wesley's instituted means of grace as viable channels of God's efficacious grace. Before there can be a flowering of fruit in the Christian life, there must first be

cultivation in the soil of the soul. Learning, practicing, and experiencing the instituted means of grace is the cultivating process. Through these means, the work of God's grace shapes and forms the Christian life into the image of Christ. Then, spiritual formation no longer remains an abstract idea or statistical concept but a living reality.

CHAPTER 5

Summary

This chapter brings together a concise summary of the preceding chapters and gives the reader a brief glimpse at the major issues relating to the study. There are succinct descriptions of the problem statement, the research methodology, the statistical findings, and personal responses from the participants of the John Wesley Covenant Group. The final two sections suggest plausible conclusions and long range consequences as a result of the entire study.

The Problem Statement

John Wesley was concerned about the means of grace being neglected by the Methodist people. In essence, he believed that any neglect of these means would result in spiritual impotence. In a letter to his brother, Charles, Wesley wrote with this concern on his mind,

Is not the third hindrance the littleness of grace in the generality of the people? Therefore they pray little and with little fervency for a general blessing; and therefore their prayer has little power with God.¹

Wesley's concern is relative to this research project. However, there are many persons in the United Methodist Church today, both clergy and laity, who are unaware of Wesley's instituted means of grace. When a student in seminary, this writer first heard about the

¹Telford, Letters, V, 52.

instituted means of grace in a lecture given by one of Frank Baker's doctoral students, Steve Harper. Prior to this lecture, there was little awareness about the instituted means of grace as being the main components of Wesley's devotional life.

Soon after entering the pastoral ministry, there was curiosity and perplexity over why Wesley's instituted means of grace were not being taught and emphasized today. There was no intentional ministry of spiritual formation being implemented by the clergy with the instituted means of grace in the local church. Furthermore, this was not just a problem at the grassroots level. A preoccupation in the hierarchy with denominational bureaucracy, and subsequently over-programming the local church with devotional methods and techniques, placed the whole of Wesley's instituted means of grace in obscurity if not in oblivion.

These issues caused this writer to ask the following questions: What would happen in the spiritual formation process of a local church if Wesley's instituted means of grace were introduced and implemented? Would such an undertaking facilitate spiritual renewal? Would the instituted means of grace make a difference in the devotional life of parishioners if they were taught, discussed, and practiced in a small group setting? Would there be any attitudinal and behavioral changes as a result of such an event? How could these differentiations be determined? These questions were the motivation for this project-dissertation.

However, until further research is done some of these questions

will have to go unanswered. The main purpose of this particular study was to analyze and interpret the changes in the attitude and behavior toward Wesley's instituted means of grace in the spiritual formation of the local church.

The Methodology

The empirical research was conducted by the present pastor in Christ United Methodist Church at Drexel, North Carolina. The active membership of this church was approximately 200 people. Out of this universe, a total of three groups were identified in the study.

The population was comprised of the active members and friends of Christ United Methodist Church. The experimental and control groups were volunteers who came out of the population to be selected as participants in the small group experience with the instituted means of grace. A posttest was administered separately to all three groups.

The experimental group consisted of twelve persons who were randomly selected from the pool of volunteers. This group was involved in a practical learning experience with Wesley's instituted means of grace. The control group constituted the remaining thirteen volunteers who were not chosen at random.

The intentions and interests of both the experimental group and control group were similar. The persons in these two groups desired to participate in the small group experience. Only those selected at random were chosen to become the actual participants in the John Wesley Covenant Group.

The measuring instrument was a questionnaire, "A Devotional Life Survey for the Local Church," developed by the present writer. This was administered to the population, experimental group, and control group. The mean scores were gathered and tabulated from the surveys. Statistical tests of significance were categorized according to the attitudinal and behavioral responses. The level of significance was set at .05. The composite mean score for each category was the basis for either rejecting or accepting the six null hypotheses posited in Chapter 1.

The Findings

The purpose of the statistical work was to discover significant statistical changes and emerging trends in, and between, the three groups with the instituted means of grace. The statistical findings were the basis for either accepting or rejecting six null hypotheses.

In summarizing the statistical work, it was possible to classify the results of the population group, experimental group, and control group. There were those areas of study which showed a significant statistical change in attitude and behavior, as well as those which were not found to be significant. There were some areas of investigation which were anticipated to show significant change but could not be determined by the data as statistically significant. The statistical data is summarized in the following way:

Attitudinal Summary

(1) Areas which were statistically significant in attitude between the population and the experimental groups fall into the following categories: for pretest and posttest--the composite attitude and fasting; for posttest only--prayer, communion, and fellowship.

(2) Areas which were statistically significant in attitude between the population and control groups fall into the following categories: for pretest and posttest--the composite attitude and fasting.

(3) The only area statistically significant in attitude between the experimental group and control group was the composite attitude.

(4) The statistical responses which were not significant in attitude between the population and the experimental groups fall into the following categories: for pretest and posttest--scripture; for pretest only--prayer, communion, and fellowship.

(5) The statistical responses which were not significant in attitude between the population and the control groups fall into the following categories: for posttest only--prayer, scripture, communion, and fellowship.

(6) The statistical responses which were not significant in attitude between the experimental group and control group fall into the following categories: for posttest only--prayer, scripture, communion, fasting, and fellowship.

Behavioral Summary

(1) Areas which were statistically significant in behavior between the population and the experimental groups fall into the following categories: for pretest and posttest--the composite behavior, prayer, scripture, and communion; for pretest only-- fellowship.

(2) Areas which were statistically significant in behavior between the population and the control groups fall into the following categories: for pretest and posttest--the composite behavior, scripture, and communion.

(3) The only area statistically significant in behavior between the experimental group and control group was the composite behavior.

(4) The statistical responses which were not significant in behavior between the population and the experimental groups fall into the following categories: for pretest and posttest--fasting; for posttest only--fellowship.

(5) The statistical responses which were not significant in behavior between the population and the control groups fall into the following categories: for posttest only--prayer, fasting, and fellowship.

(6) The statistical responses which were not significant in behavior between the experimental group and control group fall into the following categories: for posttest only--prayer, scripture, communion, fasting, and fellowship.

Personal Response Questions

The practical result of this research comes into focus with the personal responses made by the members of the John Wesley Covenant Group. The responses were shared by the group after the project was completed. They reveal the overall impact this experience had on their devotional lives. The questions are presented below and followed by quoted responses from participants of the John Wesley Covenant Group.

Question #1: Has the John Wesley Covenant Group experience been valuable for your spiritual life and growth? Why? Why Not?

"I am growing in my prayer life and reading and studying the Bible."

"It has helped to make my growth in Christ more intentional . . . and to put into practice more of the means of grace."

"This experience strengthened and made stronger my spiritual life."

"It was a growing experience with my fellow Christians toward a fuller Christian walk."

Question #2: Would you do it again? Why? Why Not?

"Yes. Because it has been an indepth learning experience . . . more than I ever received before."

"Yes. I would definitely like to do this again because I have enjoyed the closeness of small group fellowship."

"Yes. It has made my daily devotions and fellowship with God more

personal."

"I have felt God using this group to help me grow as a Christian."

"I have gained so much from this experience."

Question #3: What was most helpful?

"The study on fasting was very helpful. I had studied very little about fasting. Since our study I have fasted and feel I will continue on special occasions to fast."

"The most helpful thing to me was the teaching on the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper has become very precious to me and an integral part of my worship."

Question #4: What was least helpful?

"I cannot really say that anything was not helpful."

"This is hard to answer. . . I would say fasting."

"There was nothing in our study that was not helpful to me."

Question #5: In what ways have your devotional practices changed as a result of participating in the John Wesley Covenant Group?

"My scope of worship has widened because of this educational experience."

"It has made my devotional practices much easier in my daily schedule."

"Bible reading and prayer time became more meaningful to me."

"I have tried to fast once a week or every two weeks."

Question #6: How have your attitudes changed toward the instituted means of grace?

"I now know that there are more 'means of grace' than before the covenant group experience."

"The means of grace are definitely ways God uses to (shape) us. They provide opportunity for the Lord to draw us toward greater service and faithfulness."

"I have seen the need for practicing all 5 'means of grace' more regularly . . . and more intentionally."

"Before the John Wesley Covenant Group, I only considered prayer and Bible reading important to my spiritual life. Now I realize that fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and fasting aid greatly to my closeness with the Lord. I have had greater experiences through these means of grace."

"I had no real thoughts on the 'means of grace.' So, all of this was new to me."

"There was a new feeling of what 'grace' really means."

Question #7: What had the greatest impact upon your life?

"I received a special cleansing in some of our experiences with the Lord's Supper."

"I always saw communion as something you earned the right to take part in, now I see it as God's invitation to each and everyone of us, no matter what age, to come to His table and be with Him."

"My devotional life was changed."

Conclusions

The suggested conclusions of this study are derived from the historical and empirical research. The emerging trends from the statistical data suggests further insights into the spiritual formation of the local church with the instituted means of grace. The personal responses from the participants in the John Wesley Covenant Group are also meaningful to the conclusions of the study.

There are many conclusions which evolve out of a study of this nature. However, there are some specific conclusions which need to be highlighted and point to a need for further research with Wesley's instituted means of grace in the local church. Though cosmic generalizations are consciously avoided, the following conclusions are perhaps relative to other local churches.

First, an intentional/learning experience in the local church with Wesley's instituted means of grace is likely to result in a positive change in the attitude and behavior of the participants. Wesley's instituted means of grace are highly practical and integral to the spiritual formation process in the Christian life. When the instituted means of grace are regularly practiced in the Christian life, then much of God's grace will be received and experienced. The result will be spiritual renewal and vitality.

Second, there is a desperate need for an intentional on-going ministry of the instituted means of grace in the local church. If clergy are going to be serious and deliberate in cultivating their own

devotional lives and helping their parishioners in this area, then Wesley's instituted means of grace need to be main components of their spiritual formation ministry. If the instituted means of grace are neglected, either by the clergy or laity, then the individual and corporate spiritual life of a local church may be severely hindered and never brought to Christian maturity.

Third, if spiritual formation in the Wesleyan tradition is going to be taken seriously by the church today, then the instituted means of grace must be an essential ingredient in that spiritual formation process. An intentional ministry with Wesley's instituted means of grace in the local church will perpetuate spiritual formation in the Wesleyan tradition.

Fourth, Wesley's instituted means of grace are timeless and imperative in their contribution to spiritual formation. They are the scriptural and ordinary ways that God has chosen to dispense much of His grace. They stand at the heart of not only Wesleyan spirituality, but scriptural Christianity.

The instituted means of grace are the primary disciplines exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Wesley, convinced of their importance on this basis alone, identified and utilized the instituted means of grace as channels that God works through to bring spiritual vitality and renewal to the Christian life. He not only utilized them in his own devotional life but insisted upon them for the Methodist people. Wesley discovered that when these

disciplines are applied in an intentional on-going ministry in small groups, then God's grace flows forth in even greater proportions.

Long Range Consequences

Church renewal in the Wesleyan tradition is basically a spiritual matter. A renewed emphasis on the cultivation of the spiritual life is essential for the strengthening and growth of the church. One possible way for spiritual renewal and growth to occur is regular practice of the instituted means of grace: prayer, scripture, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian fellowship. As a consequence of a study that measures change in a congregation's attitude and behavior toward Wesley's instituted means of grace, useful information is provided for those concerned with an intentional on-going ministry of spiritual formation in the local church.

From a denominational point of view, a study of this nature will provide information, stimulation, and even implementation of a spiritual formation ministry with Wesley's instituted means of grace in United Methodist churches. Indirectly, this research can be a resource for further development of spiritual formation ministries in any local church.

Hopefully, this study will spark interest in further studies with the instituted means of grace and will lead to a greater awareness of the instituted means of grace in the designing and implementation of present spiritual formation ministries. Additional research and study with Wesley's instituted means of grace will certainly be relative and

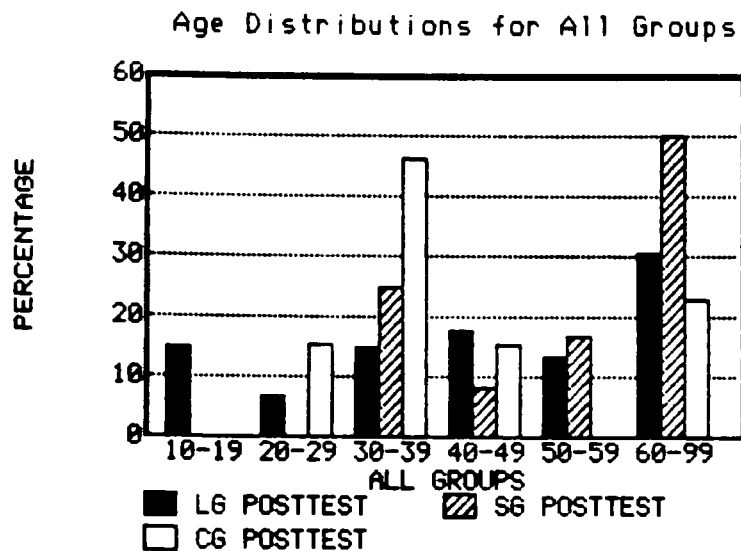
integral to spiritual formation concerns.

Finally, the desperate need of the Church of Jesus Christ today is not for another denominational program or perfunctory committee but for indepth spiritual formation and growth. John Wesley's devotional life with the instituted means of grace calls and challenges the United Methodist Church to move beyond bureaucratic programs and committees and trendy devotional fads to a deeper cultivation and practice of the spiritual life in the Wesleyan tradition. A final word here from Wesley is appropriate not only for Methodists today but for Christians in every generation, "And if they earnestly cry, and faint not; if they seek Him in all the means He hath appointed; if they refuse to be comforted till He come; 'He will come, and will not tarry'." ²

² Works, V, 13.

APPENDIX A

Charts



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

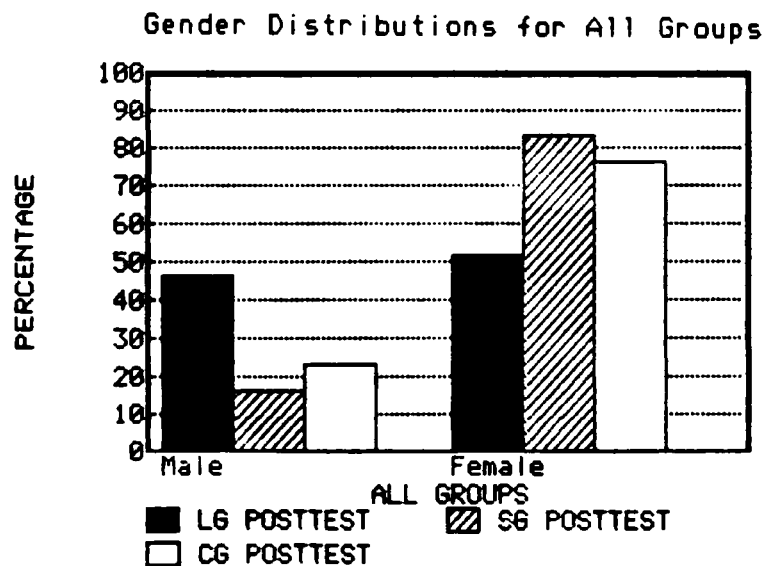
Relationship of LG POST and SG POST - No significance*

Relationship of LG POST and CG POST - No significance

Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance

*No significance = greater than .05

CHART 2



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

Relationship of LG POST and SG POST - No significance

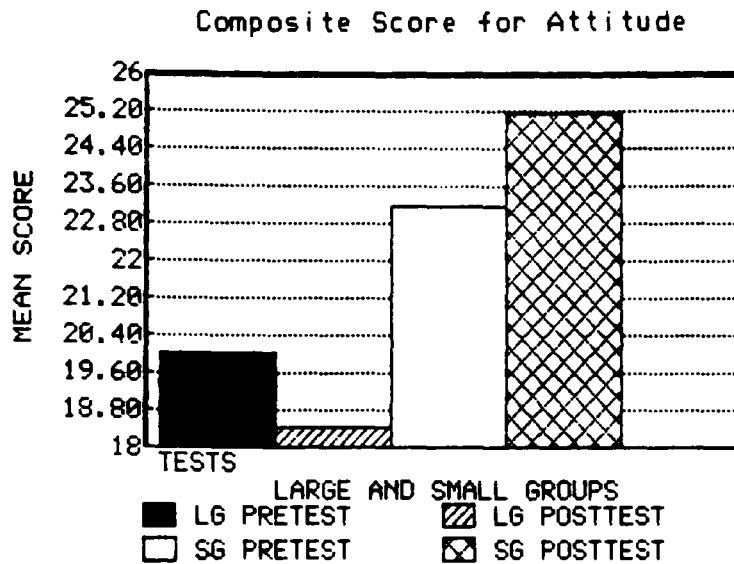
Relationship of LG POST and CG POST - No significance

Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance

Large Group (LG) - Congregational Group

Small Group (SG) - John Wesley Covenant Group

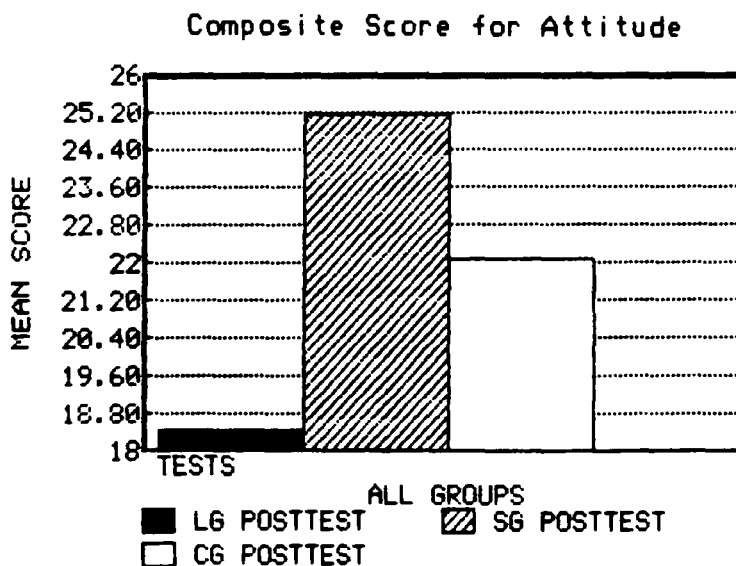
Control Group (CG) - Control Group



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

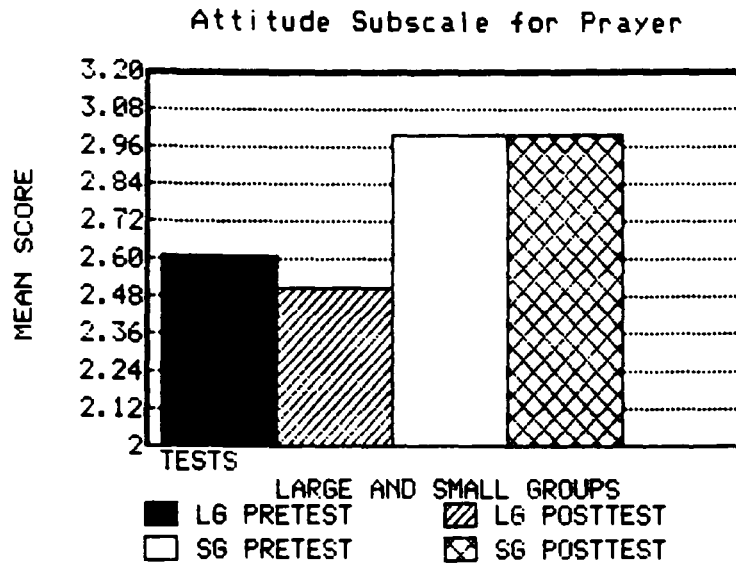
Relationship of LG PRE and LG POST significant at the .02 level
 Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST significant at the .05 level
 Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE significant at the .02 level
 Relationship of LG POST and SG POST significant at the <.001 level

CHART 4



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

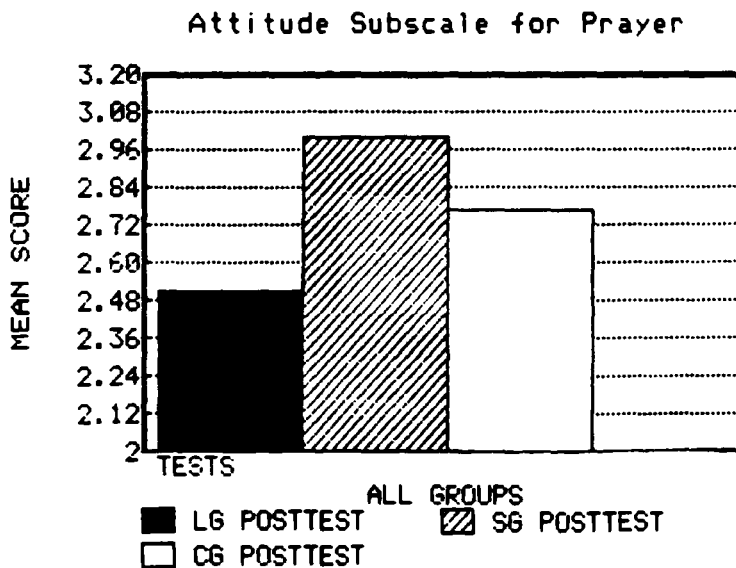
Relationship of LG POST and CG POST significant at the <.001 level
 Relationship of SG POST and CG POST significant at the <.001 level



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

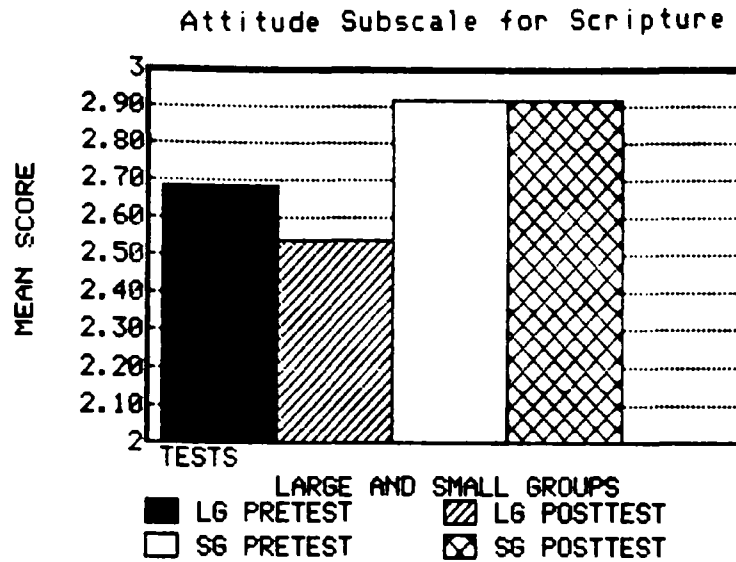
Relationship of LG PRE and LG POST - No significance
 Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST - No significance
 Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE - No significance
 Relationship of LG POST and SG POST significant at the .03 level

CHART 6



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

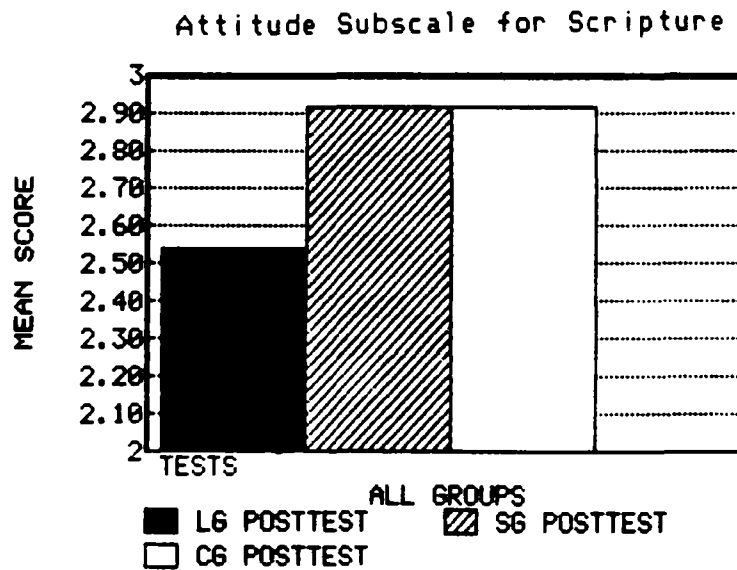
Relationship of LG POST and CG POST - No significance
 Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

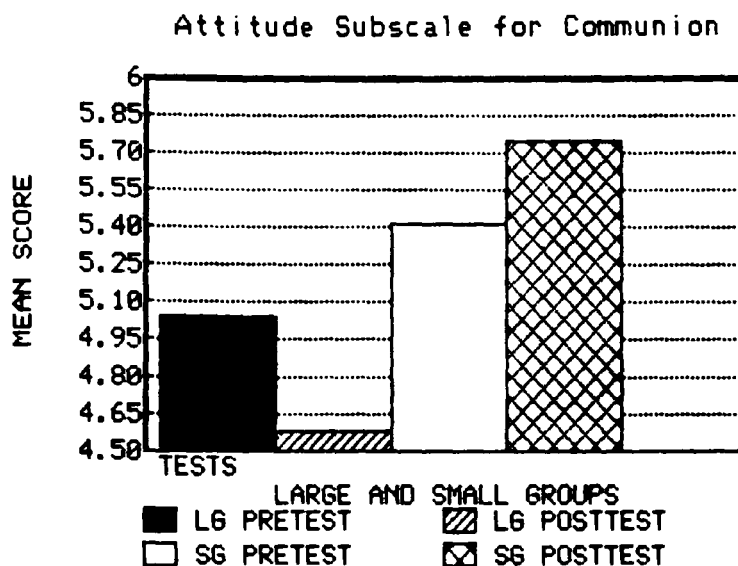
Relationship of LG PRE and LG POST - No significance
 Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST - No significance
 Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE - No significance
 Relationship of LG POST and SG POST - No significance

CHART 8



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

Relationship of LG POST and CG POST - No significance
 Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

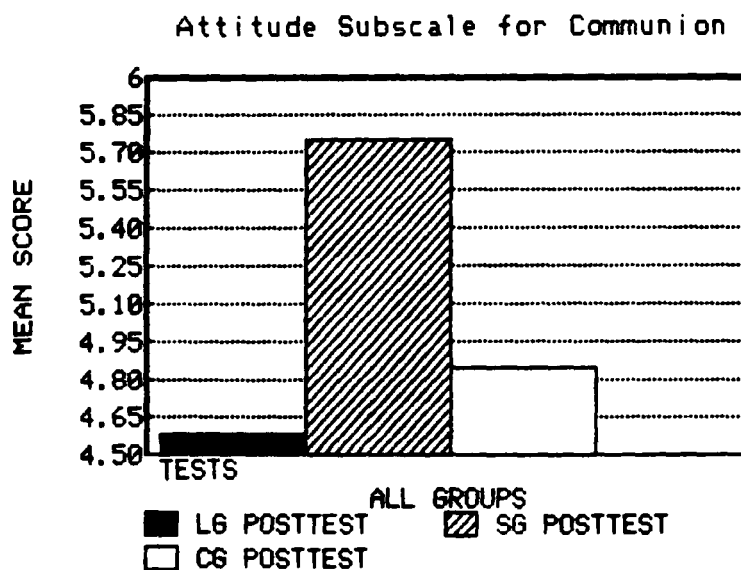
Relationship of LG PRE and LG POST significant at the .04 level

Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST - No significance

Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE - No significance

Relationship of LG POST and SG POST significant at the .04 level

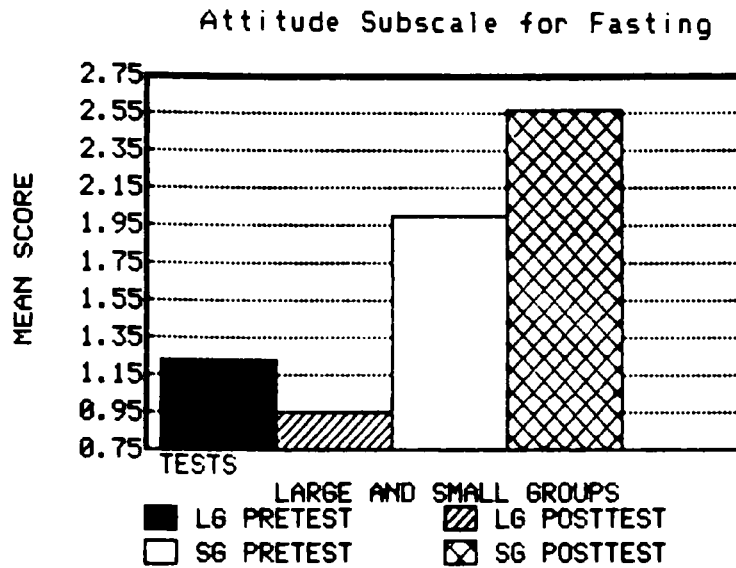
CHART 10



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

Relationship of LG POST and CG POST - No significance

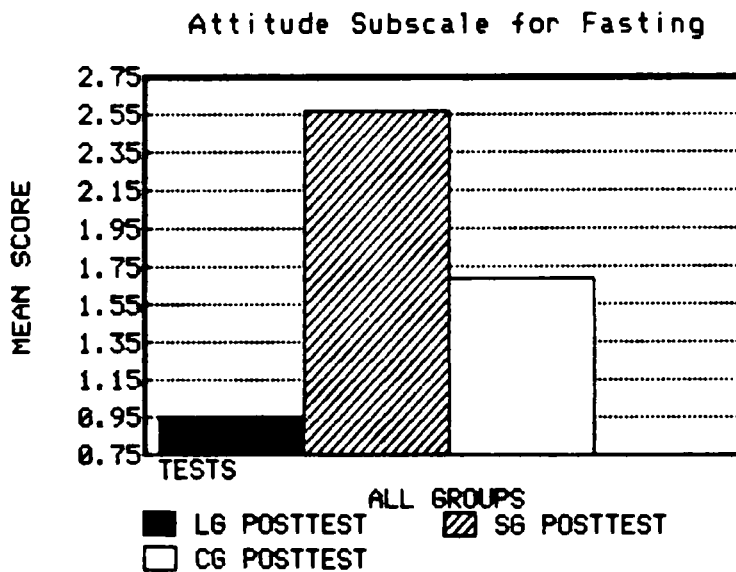
Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

Relationship of LG PRE and LG POST significant at the .04 level
 Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST significant at the .002 level
 Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE significant at the .03 level
 Relationship of LG POST and SG POST significant at the <.001 level

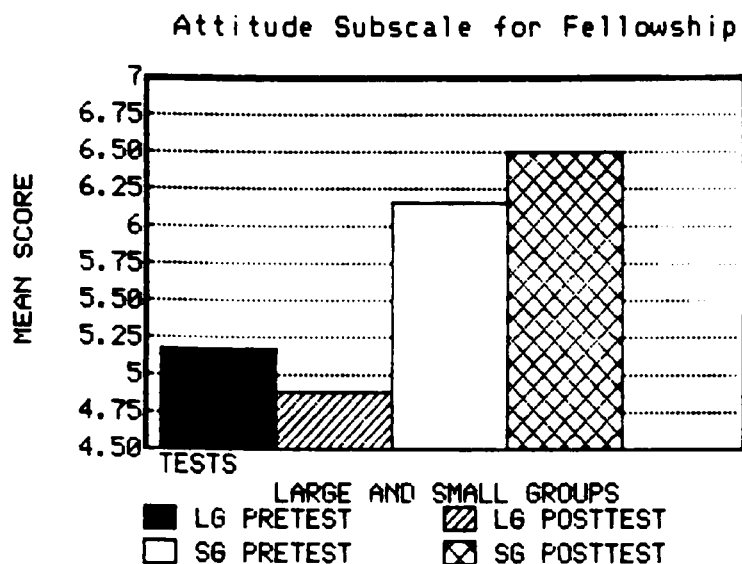
CHART 12



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

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 Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance

CHART 13



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

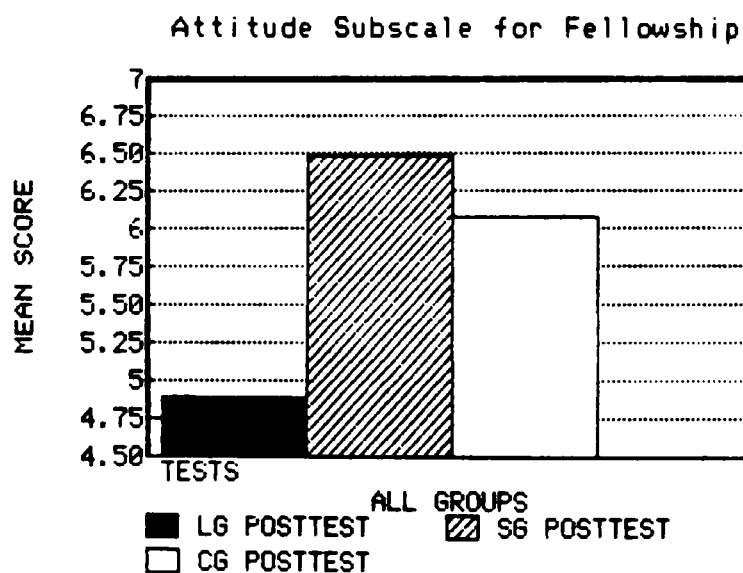
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Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST - No significance

Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE - No significance

Relationship of LG POST and SG POST significant at the .004 level

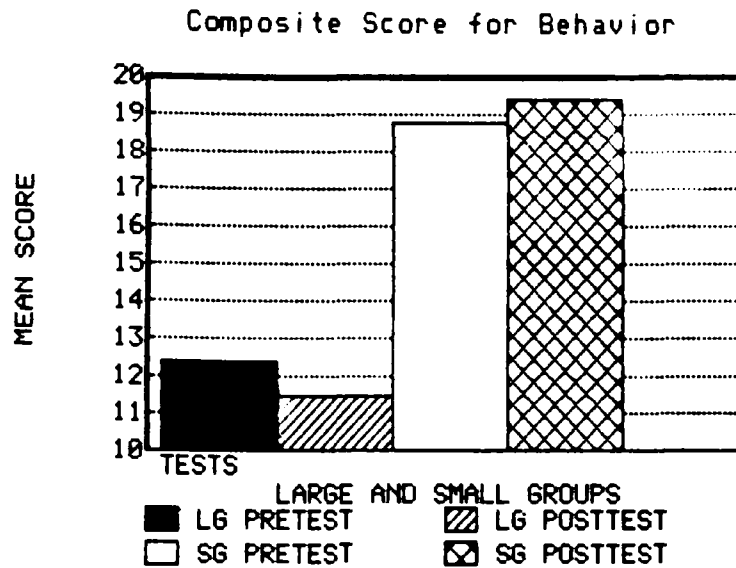
CHART 14



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

Relationship of LG POST and CG POST - No significance

Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

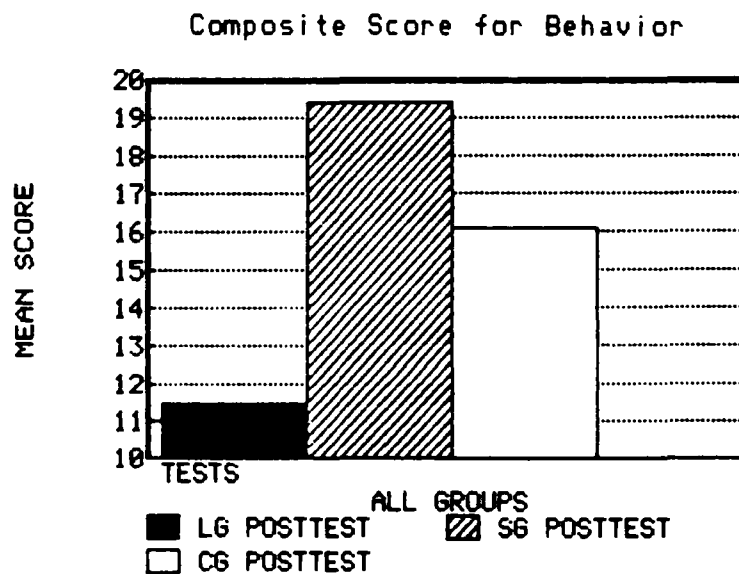
Relationship of LG PRE and LG POST - No significance

Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST - No significance

Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE significant at the $<.001$ level

Relationship of LG POST and SG POST significant at the $<.001$ level

CHART 16

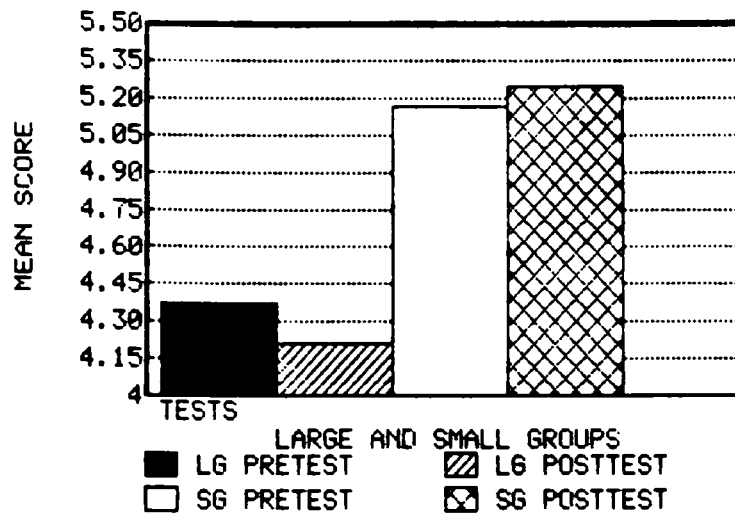


SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

Relationship of LG POST and CG POST significant at the .002 level

Relationship of SG POST and CG POST significant at the .005 level

Behavior Subscale for Prayer

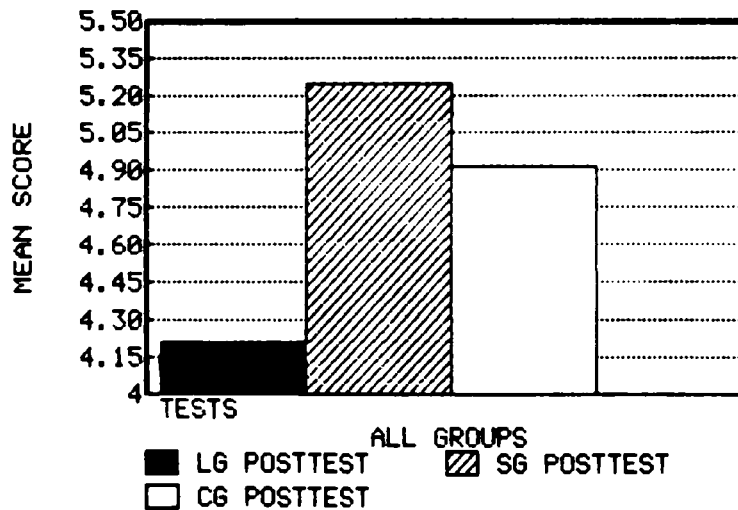


SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

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 Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST - No significance
 Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE significant at the .03 level
 Relationship of LG POST and SG POST significant at the .007 level

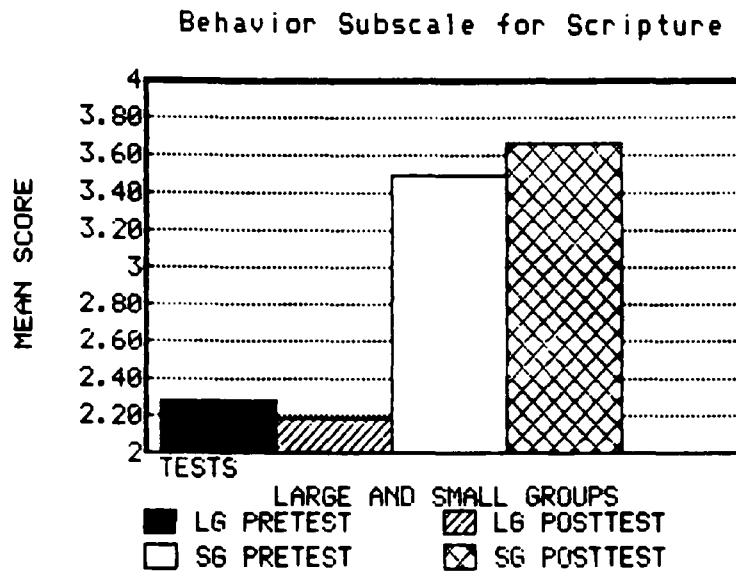
CHART 18

Behavior Subscale for Prayer



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

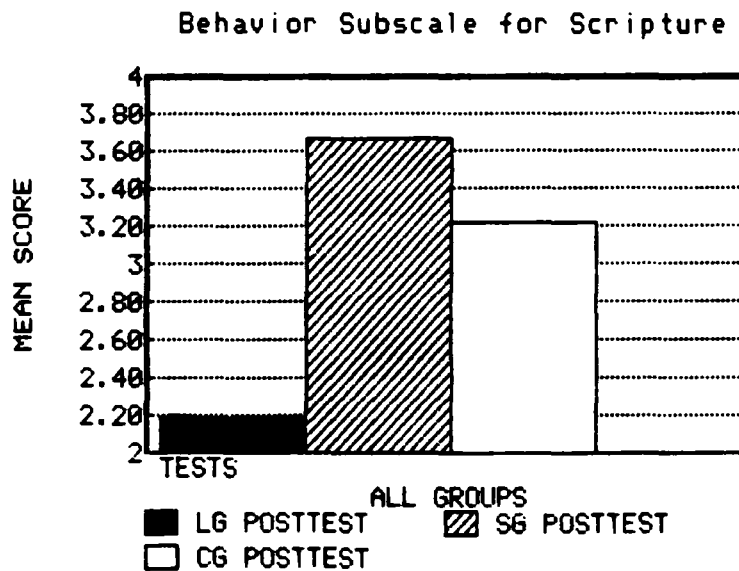
Relationship of LG POST and CG POST - No significance
 Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

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 Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST - No significance
 Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE significant at the .002 level
 Relationship of LG POST and SG POST significant at the <.001 level

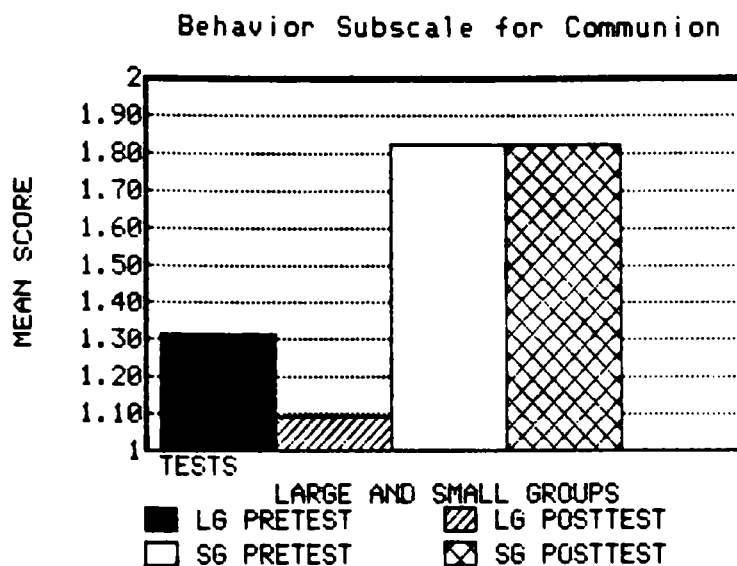
CHART 20



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

Relationship of LG POST and CG POST significant at the .02 level
 Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance

CHART 21



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

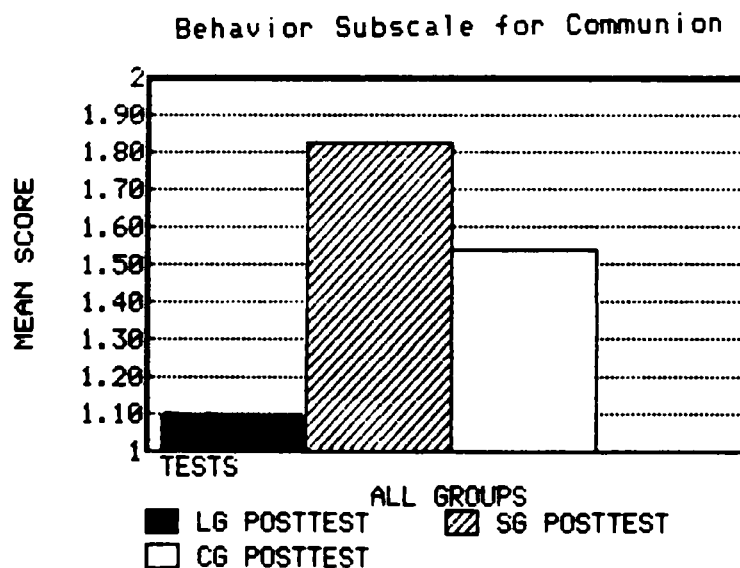
Relationship of LG PRE and LG POST significant at the .001 level

Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST - No significance

Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE significant at the .006 level

Relationship of LG POST and SG POST significant at the <.001 level

CHART 22

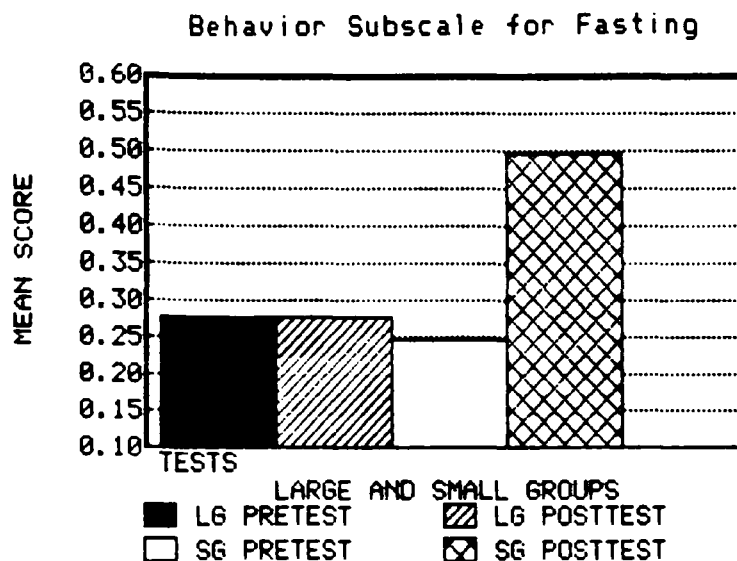


SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

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Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance

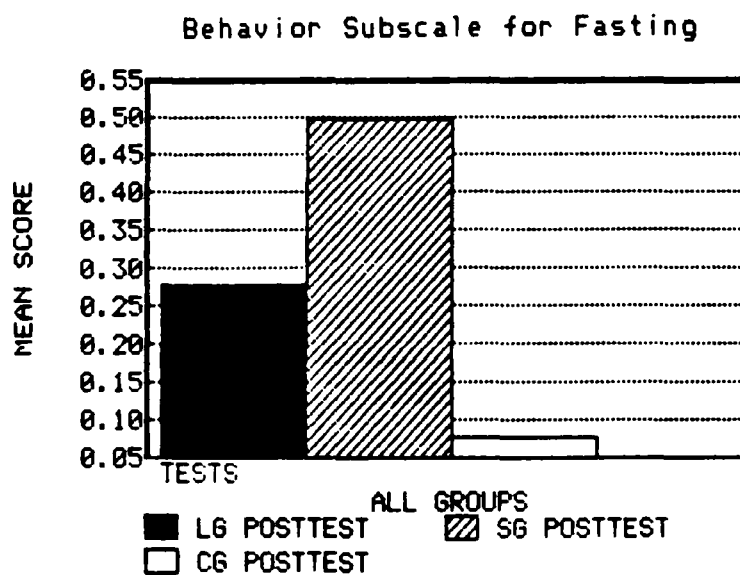
CHART 23



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

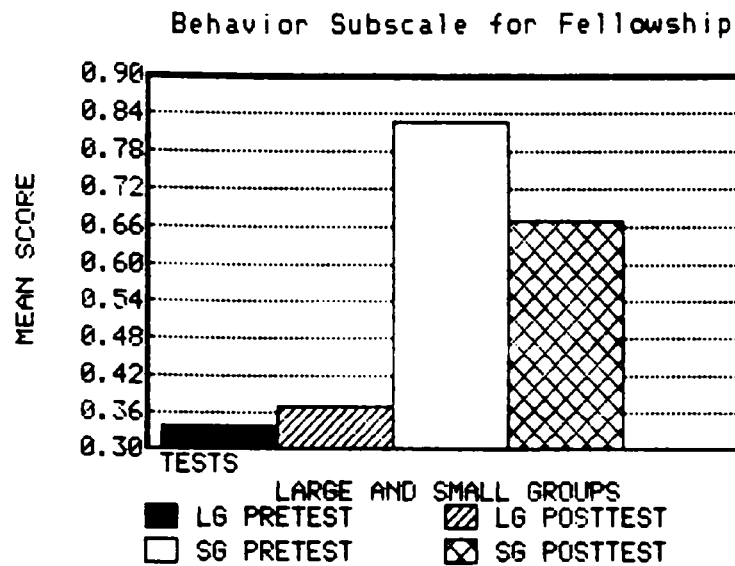
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 Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST - No significance
 Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE - No significance
 Relationship of LG POST and SG POST - No significance

CHART 24



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

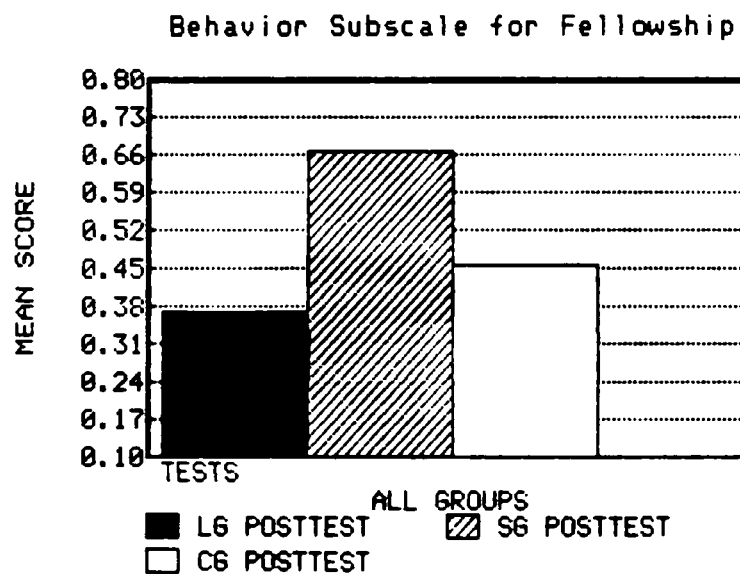
Relationship of LG POST and CG POST - No significance
 Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

Relationship of LG PRE and LG POST - No significance
 Relationship of SG PRE and SG POST - No significance
 Relationship of LG PRE and SG PRE significant at the .004 level
 Relationship of LG POST and SG POST - No significance

CHART 26



SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

Relationship of LG POST and CG POST - No significance
 Relationship of SG POST and CG POST - No significance

APPENDIX B

A Devotional Life Survey for the Local Church

9. HOW OFTEN DO YOU PRAY (OTHER THAN AT MEALTIME)?
____ More than once a day ____ Less than weekly
____ Only once a day ____ Never
____ At least weekly
10. DO YOU OFFER GRACE AT MEALTIME?
____ Always ____ Sometimes ____ Never
11. DO YOU BELIEVE PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH?
____ Yes ____ No
12. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT PRAYER?
____ Yes ____ No
13. WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN AN ORGANIZED PRAYER GROUP?
____ Yes ____ No
14. HOW OFTEN DO YOU READ THE BIBLE?
____ Daily ____ Less than weekly
____ Two or three times a week ____ Never
____ At least weekly
15. DO YOU BELIEVE BIBLE READING/STUDY IS ESSENTIAL FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH?
____ Yes ____ No
16. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE BIBLE?
____ Yes ____ No
17. WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN AN ORGANIZED BIBLE STUDY?
____ Yes ____ No
18. HOW OFTEN DO YOU FAST?
____ Once a month ____ Occasionally
____ Once a week ____ Never tried it
19. DO YOU BELIEVE FASTING IS ESSENTIAL FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH?
____ Yes ____ No
20. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN STUDYING ABOUT FASTING?
____ Yes ____ No
21. WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN ACTUAL FASTING?
____ Yes ____ No

22. CIRCLE A NUMBER BETWEEN 1 TO 5 TO SHOW HOW MEANINGFUL YOU FIND THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Not Meaningful		Very Meaningful		
1	2	3	4	5

23. WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE THE LORD'S SUPPER:

_____ More often _____ Less often _____ The same amount

24. DO YOU BELIEVE THE LORD'S SUPPER IS ESSENTIAL FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH?

_____ Yes _____ No

25. CIRCLE A NUMBER BETWEEN 1 TO 5 TO SHOW HOW MEANINGFUL YOU FIND SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP.

Not Meaningful		Very Meaningful		
1	2	3	4	5

26. DO YOU BELIEVE SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP IS ESSENTIAL FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH?

_____ Yes _____ No

27. ARE YOU PRESENTLY INVOLVED IN A SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP WHOSE PURPOSE INCLUDES PRAYER, BIBLE STUDY, AND/OR SPIRITUAL LIFE DEVELOPMENT?

_____ Yes _____ No

28. IF NOT, WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN SUCH A SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP?

_____ Yes _____ No

29. WHAT OTHER COMMENTS DO YOU WISH TO MAKE ABOUT YOUR DEVOTIONAL LIFE?

APPENDIX C

The John Wesley Covenant Group

A DESIGN FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH'S
SPIRITUAL FORMATION MINISTRY
WITH THE INSTITUTED MEANS OF GRACE

Orientation	Prayer	Scripture	Lord's Supper	Fasting	Fellowship
2 wks	8 wks	8 wks	8 wks	8 wks	4 wks

Note: It should be noted that all of the means of grace are integral throughout the entire ten month process, such as praying, scripture reading, or fellowship. Each section highlights a particular means of grace which is given special attention for the designated time period.

Excerpt from the Local Church Newsletter

WHAT IS THE JOHN WESLEY COVENANT GROUP?

The JOHN WESLEY COVENANT GROUP is a small group modeled after the Wesley "class meeting" which seeks to be intentional in cultivating and developing one's spiritual life through the utilization of the "means of grace."

The John Wesley Covenant Group has many similarities with the early "class meeting." The overall focus is upon the place and use of Wesley's "means of grace" in the spiritual formation of the believer. The means of grace include: prayer, scripture reading, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and intentional fellowship. The "class meeting" model provides a practical framework in which spiritual growth, development, and accountability can actively take place with focused attention upon the means of grace.

Letter to the Volunteers

January 5, 1985

Dear Friend In Christ:

On Sunday, December 30, 1984, I shared with our congregation about the JOHN WESLEY COVENANT GROUP. This small group fellowship will consist of about 10-12 persons who will covenant together with the Lord and one another to grow in His grace, with a particular emphasis upon the "devotional" life.

As a result of indicating your interest by signing up to possibly be selected at random, the John Wesley Covenant Group will be formed and will begin in February, meeting only twice each month for a short-term. As you prayerfully consider this opportunity, please let me know your intentions.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. May our Lord continue to enrich your life with His grace, for I am,

Yours In Christ,

Lenny Stadler
Pastor

Letter to the Selected Participants

January 28, 1985

Dear Friend In Christ:

I want to thank you for accepting the invitation to become an active participant in the "John Wesley Covenant Group." Our initial meeting will be held on Sunday, February 3, 1985, in the parlor of Christ U.M.C. at 5:00 p.m.

At this meeting, I will share with you the history, purpose, and basic format of a "covenant group." Then, we will actually design a "written covenant" especially for our group. As you can see, this will be a very important meeting. I do hope you will make every possible effort to be present and on time.

Until then, may God bless you "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places," (Ephesians 1:3).

Yours In Christ,

Lenny Stadler
Pastor

Letter to the Covenant Group

November 4, 1985

Dear Covenant Group Member:

I hope the John Wesley Covenant Group has been an enriching experience for your spiritual life. For ten months we have met together for prayer, fellowship, worship, and study. The time has now come to give serious thought to what this experience has meant for us.

I have enclosed a questionnaire that I would like for you to complete. Please take time to pray and carefully reflect about your experience in the John Wesley Covenant Group before writing your answers to the questions. You do not need to sign your name to the questionnaire. Please bring the completed questionnaire with you to our final meeting on November 17th at 5:00 p.m.

Words are simply inadequate to express my deepest gratitude to you for your faithfulness and willingness to share in this experience. My prayer is that the "means of grace" will continue to be channels of God's love and grace for your Christian life. May God bless you in every way!

Yours In Christ,

Lenny Stadler
Pastor

Letter to the Control Group

November 8, 1985

Dear Friend:

I need your cooperation and participation for the continuation of my doctoral work. You will find enclosed a "devotional life" survey and stamped envelope for you to return.

The reason I am sending this survey via mail is that last December you had indicated an interest in becoming a part of the John Wesley Covenant Group. It is VERY IMPORTANT to my doctoral studies that I survey those who expressed such an interest separate from the majority who did not indicate any interest and those who participated in the covenant group.

Please do not sign your name to the questionnaire and make sure that you carefully follow the directions as you answer the questions. Please return the questionnaire to me in the stamped envelope as soon as possible.

Thank you for your cooperation in what I believe is a very important study for the on-going spiritual life and growth of our church.

Yours In Christ,

Lenny Stadler

IMPORTANT NOTE: When the survey is administered on November 24th to our whole congregation, PLEASE DO NOT TAKE IT AGAIN! This will insure a clearer statistical analysis. Thank You!

COVENANT GROUP SELECTION

(Random Access Field of 25 Volunteers)

1. Susan Bingham (Accepted--Covenant Group)
2. Frances Buff (Control Group)
3. Mahala Cannon (Declined--Control Group)
4. Odessa Clark (Accepted--Covenant Group)
5. Kay Cooper (Accepted--Covenant Group)
6. Mariane Dameron (Control Group)
7. J.P. Drum (Accepted--Covenant Group)
8. Catana Farmer (Control Group)
9. Scott Farmer (Declined--Control Group)
10. Diane Frye (Accepted--Covenant Group)
11. Rachel Funderburk (Declined--Control Group)
12. Lila Hollifield (Accepted--Covenant Group)
13. Hallie Hoffman (Declined--Control Group)
14. Ruth Huffman (Accepted--Covenant Group)
15. Mary Lail (Accepted--Covenant Group)
16. Sue Mast (Control Group)
17. Lena Mosteller (Accepted--Covenant Group)
18. Rachel Pierson (Control Group)
19. Helen Ross (Accepted--Covenant Group)
20. Cecil Settlemyre (Declined--Control Group)
21. Velva Settlemyre (Declined--Control Group)
22. Jill Temple (Declined--Control Group)
23. Mamie Traylor (Accepted--Covenant Group)
24. Basil Watson (Control Group)
25. Janice Watson (Accepted--Covenant Group)

NOTE: These twenty-five volunteers signed up to be randomly selected as participants in the John Wesley Covenant Group. A coin was tossed to determine whether the "odd" or "even" numbers would be selected. The coin toss turned up "tails" and the "odd" numbers were selected for the "covenant group." In the event of those "odd" persons who chose not to participate, the next person on the list was then approached and asked to be a participant. Those who either declined or were not selected by this random process became the constituents of the "control group."

THE COVENANT

Knowing that Jesus Christ died and rose so that I might have eternal life, I herewith pledge myself to be His disciple, holding nothing back, but yielding all to the gracious initiatives of the Holy Spirit. I faithfully pledge my time, my skills, my resources, my talent, and my strength, to search out God's will for my life, and to be obedient to His will. With God as my Helper, I will strive to do the following:

I will pray each day, privately, and with my family and/or friends.

I will speak words which edify and build-up others and glorify God.

I will read and study the Scriptures each day.

I will worship each Sunday unless prevented.

I will receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion at least once each month.

I will heed the warnings of the Holy Spirit not to sin against God and my neighbor.

I will obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit to serve God and my neighbor.

I will share the Gospel with others as the Holy Spirit leads me.

I will prayerfully care for my body and for the world in which I live.

I will prayerfully seek to help someone in need as often as possible.

I will prayerfully plan the stewardship of my resources.

I will share in Christian fellowship with this group where I will be accountable for my Christian life.

I will pray daily for each person by name in this covenant group.

I hereby make my commitment, trusting in the grace of God to work in my life so that I might have the desire, initiative, and strength to keep this covenant.

Date: _____ Signed: _____

Schedule

1. February 3, 1985: The history, design, and purpose of the "covenant group" will be introduced and discussed. We will write our own "covenant."
2. February 17, 1985: John Wesley's "means of grace" will be introduced as a basis for spiritual growth and nurture.
3. March 3, 1985: PRAYER.
4. March 17, 1985: PRAYER.
5. *March 31, 1985: PRAYER.
6. April 21, 1985: PRAYER.
7. May 5, 1985: SCRIPTURE.
8. May 19, 1985: SCRIPTURE.
9. June 2, 1985: SCRIPTURE.
10. June 16, 1985: SCRIPTURE.
11. July 7, 1985: THE LORD'S SUPPER.
12. July 21, 1985: THE LORD'S SUPPER.
13. August 4, 1985: THE LORD'S SUPPER.
14. August 25, 1985: THE LORD'S SUPPER.
15. September 1, 1985: FASTING.
16. September 15, 1985: FASTING.
17. October 6, 1985: FASTING.
18. October 20, 1985: FASTING.
19. November 3, 1985: CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.
20. November 17, 1985: CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

*NOTE: Due to Easter Sunday being on the first Sunday of April, we will meet March 31st.

REMEMBER: Each meeting will begin promptly at 5:00 p.m.

Record of Attendance

	February 3, 1985	February 17, 1985	March 3, 1985	March 17, 1985	March 31, 1985	April 21, 1985	May 5, 1985	May 19, 1985	June 2, 1985	June 16, 1985	July 7, 1985	July 21, 1985	August 4, 1985	August 25, 1985	September 1, 1985	September 15, 1985	October 6, 1985	October 20, 1985	November 3, 1985	November 17, 1985	
1. Susan Bingham	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2. Odessa Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3. Kay Cooper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4. J.P. Drum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	
5. Diane Frye	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	
6. Lila Hollifield	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
7. Ruth Huffman	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8. Mary Lail	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	
9. Lena Mosteller	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10. Helen Ross	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11. Mamie Traylor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	
12. Janice Watson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	
"Means of Grace"	(Intro.)			(Prayer)				(Scripture)				(Lord's Supper)				(Fasting)				Christian Conference	

Personal Response Questionnaire

1. In what way has your devotional practices changed as a result of participating in the John Wesley Covenant Group?
2. How have your attitudes changed toward the "means of grace?"
3. Has this experience been valuable for your spiritual life and growth? Why? Why Not?
4. Would you do it again? Why? Why Not?
5. What was most helpful?
6. What was least helpful?
7. What had the greatest impact upon your life?

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