

ABSTRACT

The Three Ws Project

By

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This study identifies a spiritual deficit on the part of the believer and the need to transition the believer from a place of spiritual stagnation to spiritual well-being. Through the review of statistical data that identifies spiritual decline in the life of the average believer in North America, the deterioration is extrapolated to the decline seen in First Baptist Church in Evansville, Indiana. Problems identified include a basic lack of literacy in the Word, a lack of routine practice of spiritual disciplines, a lack of engagement of worship, and the lack of commitment to a personal work of the ministry as it relates to the local body of Christ.

The purpose of this project was to measure changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavior among the volunteers who took part in a six week Internet Bible study with online journaling and who were present for a preaching series based on the need for spiritual engagement of the believer. The Bible study and preaching series focused on the need for spiritual engagement of the believer in worship, in a personal walk with the Lord, and in commitment to a personal work in the ministry—the three ‘Ws.’ A sample of forty-two attendees of First Baptist Church in the Evansville area who were age eighteen or over and volunteered to engage in the project were included.

Major findings of the study included a marked response by volunteers to the accountability offered by the study to the regular practice of spiritual disciplines. The volunteers also reported that they valued the opportunity for their pastor to hear their

personal stories, and they identified as believers with the personal stories in the devotional. Participants also reported some changes in attitude, knowledge, and behavior through the implementation of the six week sermon series by reporting the recognition of a measure of change in focus from self to God. Participants of the focus group also indicated a greater commitment to pursuing their work in the ministry of their local church body.

The Three Ws Project

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by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter identifies the need for believers to be focused and engaged in personal commitment to Christ and the local church body in the Evansville, Indiana. This chapter will describe the **problem** of moving believers from a place of stagnation to active spiritual well-being. The rationale for the project will be described and supported by an analysis of current research within the last five years.

Research questions will be discussed that measured the changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavior among the volunteer participants of First Baptist Church who took part in a six week Internet bible study with online journaling and a preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work). The goal of motivation of the believer toward spiritual practices will be discussed in this chapter as well as the effectiveness of the project in assisting the believer to demonstrate personal commitment to spiritual growth.

Chapter One builds the basis for measuring changes in attitude, knowledge, and behavior of volunteers from First Baptist Church who participated in a six week intervention based on the Three Ws Project that was focused on engaging the believer in three areas (Worship, Walk, and Work). The review of relevant literature for the research spanned the last five years to assist the researcher in identifying trends that provided data to direct the focus

of the project. The rationale for the project is discussed, unfolding the progression of the project from the discovery of a personal experience in ministry and backed up by research. As a part of the overview, this project included several aspects such as the statement of the problem, purpose of the project, research questions, definition of key terms, participants, methodology of the project, research instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter continues with generalization that provides additional insight for the significance of the project and its usefulness in other ministry settings. The chapter closes by outlining the research project.

Personal Introduction

I have been serving as senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Evansville IN, for five and a half years. In December 2018, when our church was having an open house at the office for our congregation, I began to feel heavy hearted over the spiritual condition of the church. Over the next quarter, I became increasingly burdened about the congregation as a whole. I could see not only a decline in the spiritual condition of our congregation and the congregation's financial stability but also stagnation in the overall interest and personal commitment to spiritual growth. As a result, I began to fast and pray, seeking the Lord regarding the burden on my heart.

The more I prayed and fasted, the greater the burden continued to increase to the point that I questioned whether I should resign and find a replacement who could provide a vision for spiritual well-being and future stability of the church's ministry. God then began to reveal to me that the real need was for me to step up to engage the congregation of believers and to provide vision and leadership. I began to discern the

need to move the believer as well as the entire church toward engaging in spiritual growth and well-being. God began to give me a vision for my church which was to engage the believers of First Baptist in their worship, daily walk, and work in the ministry to move the congregation toward spiritual growth and well-being.

Tied to spiritual well-being and growth in the individual lives of the believer, worship engages the believer to actively seek the Lord. “Church attendance is a key part of the health of the church. We exist to glorify God. If we’re doing worship well, as a church, more people will begin to attend worship and we’ll see more new commitments” (Lifeway, 2017). My concern is simply that the believers of First Baptist would have a greater desire to seek faithful participation and engagement in the ministry of worship which will promote spiritual well-being.

I also desired to see measurable spiritual growth and well-being in the lives of believers which is tied to engagement in their daily practices of faith to strengthen their walk with the Lord. Engaging in a daily walk affects the believer’s private expressions of faith. Of equal importance, a daily walk provides the conduit of growth that can only be experienced in the intimacy of an active relationship with Christ.

The final area of concern was that I might empower the believers at First Baptist Church to identify and claim possession of a particular work in the ministry. Linked to the believer’s spiritual vitality is that of the believer’s work in the ministry as expressed by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4.11-12. Those verses draw out the fact that God has called ministers to equip the saints (believers) for the work of the ministry. My desire is to faithfully serve First Baptist Church in such a way that draws the people into an overcoming victorious relationship with the Lord.

Statement of the Problem

The problem being addressed in the project consists of the lack of spiritual well-being and stagnation in the spiritual life of the believer. Statistical data identifies an overall spiritual decline in the life of the average believer in America. Organized religion is on the decline in America, with a disconnection of faith and faith practices (Pew, 2016). Pew's 2007 Religious Landscape study identified 16 percent of Americans as claiming no religious affiliation, and in 2015 that number rose to 23 percent, almost a quarter of Americans.

Young adults, the future of the church, no longer view church attendance as a priority. Although church attendance is only one of the practices of spirituality, research identifies church attendance as "a good indicator of faith practice" (Barna, 2016). Two-thirds of American young people who attended a Protestant church regularly as a teenager dropped out for at least a year between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two (Earls 2019). Additionally, although the majority of Americans (73 percent) identify themselves as Christian and verbalize that their faith is very important to them, only a small proportion of these Americans regularly *practice* their faith (Barna, 2016). When monthly church attendance was considered as a faith practice, the percentage of Christians who practiced their faith dropped to 31 percent. Other faith practices, as defined by Barna Group's study, include attending church at least once a month, prayer, reading the Bible, volunteering for the church, or engaging in a small group (Barna, 2016).

Another aspect of the problem involves evaluating the crucial need for believers to engage in a personal walk with God. However, one of the most disturbing facts about

Christians in America is that they are not getting into the Word of God to strengthen their walk with the Lord. “A third of Americans who attend a Protestant church regularly (32%) say they read the Bible personally every day. Around a quarter (27%) say they read it a few times a week.” (Lifeway, 2019)

“The majority of Christians do not miss their time with God if they do not perform personal devotional time. A third of Protestant churchgoers (33%) strongly agree that they desperately miss their time with God if they go several days without reading the Bible. Almost 3 in 5 at least somewhat agree (58%).” (Lifeway, 2019).

Spiritual stagnation and the lack of spiritual wellbeing could be defined as having a multiplicity of identities or causes; however, there are some clear indications of decline or stagnation of spiritual growth in the life of the believer. These indications are borne out by evidence from Pew Research that found a decline in religious services attendance from 2007 to 2014 with about a third of Americans reporting weekly attendance and a third saying they go rarely or never (Pew, 2018). The obvious decline spiritually in the churches in America can be extrapolated to the decline in First Baptist Church in Evansville, Indiana.

First Baptist reports indicate that about 25 to 30 percent fewer individuals attend our weekly worship than those reported to be active members. Additionally, of the 161 who are reported as members of First Baptist Church on the American Baptist Indiana/Kentucky region annual report, only fourteen to twenty attend our weekly Bible study. Even though those stats point to numbers, the indication is that those who are connected to our church have been exemplifying a lack of commitment to spiritual practices. Without attendance at religious services, believers cannot experience and engage in

worship. Engagement in worship allows for individual expression and response. There is a need to cultivate a desire in the life of the believer to engage in an individual expression of worship in a public setting.

Lifeway research sums up the greater motivation behind this project as it relates to the believers who take part in the ministry of First Baptist church. “Following Christ involves movement,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. “And that movement can either be walking with Christ or straying from that path. Churches must be vigilant and proactive in encouraging the progress of believers.” (Lifeway, 2018)

The same problems identified through research have been identified in my personal ministry. Problems identified through informal interviews and observation as a pastor include a basic lack of literacy of the Word, a prevalent cultural acceptance of entertainment, and a focus on personal interests that seem to reflect materialism and self-focus. A need to engage believers to pursue their work in the ministry also exists.

Based on personal interviews as a pastor, the vast majority are unable to articulate their purpose in life and ministry as a Christian. The real focus of the project is to move the believer from a state of inertia into an active state of spiritual well-being. Based on the current research, a critical need exists to assess the overall effectiveness of engaging the believer in worship, a personal walk with Christ, and in a significant work of the ministry. The potential benefit to this research will identify the root causes for spiritual stagnation, quantify how spiritual stagnation and well-being is defined, and address potential pathways to change.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to measure the changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavior among the volunteer participants who took part in a six week Internet bible study with online journaling and preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work)?

Research Questions

Research Question #1

What were the levels of knowledge, attitude, and behavior among the volunteer participants who took part in a six-week Internet bible study with online journaling and preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work) prior to the experience?

Research Question #2

What were the levels of knowledge, attitude, and behavior among the volunteer participants who took part in a six week Internet bible study with online journaling and preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work) following the experience?

Research Question #3

What aspects of the six week Internet bible study with online journaling and preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work) had the greatest impact on observed changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavior among the participants?

Rationale for the Project

The first reason for the project is the need to awaken the believer to an active faith that reflects the characteristics of the faith described by the New Testament church. In the early church, an expectancy of the moving of the Holy Spirit in their midst was present. This abundant faith as displayed by the New Testament church was the result of the knowledge that Christ died to give life and that life more abundantly (John 10.10). The community of the believers in the early church depicts a sharing of their lives in practical methods such as frequent fellowship and worship, caring for the needs of the widows and the orphans, and prioritization of the expansion of the message of the gospel.

In modern churches, clergy and music ministers are given the responsibility of providing a worship experience. Believers may sit in the pew as a spectator. In the believer's modern life, worship is given a one-hour time slot rather than a daily practice.

In the early church, prayer was given a prominent place and significance in the life of the believer whereas, in the churches in America today, the pastor or deacon may pray for less than five minutes during the opening, closing, and offertory. Jesus declared that he would spit-out of his mouth those who claimed to know Him but were lukewarm (Rev. 3.16).

The second rationale for the project is to transition First Baptist Church in Evansville, Indiana from a place of spiritual decline to a place of active engagement in worship with congregants frequently practicing personal spiritual disciplines and dynamic ministry commitments. Revelations depicts seven churches that have commendable qualities and even successful ministries; however, Jesus speaking through John by the Holy Spirit calls those churches to make appropriate changes to become

thriving churches that are pleasing to his Spirit and focused on his mission and ministry. Although the website of First Baptist Church details several ministry opportunities focused on reaching out to the needs of our people and community, the church has continued to decline in spiritual well-being and vitality.

Definition of Key Terms

1. Worship is defined as “1: reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power *also*: an act of expressing such reverence. 2: a form of religious practice with its creed and ritual.” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

2. Walk is defined as the daily spiritual practices that build up the believer’s relationship with the Lord as found in 1 John 1.7, “walk in the light as he is in the light.”

3. Work is defined as works: performance of moral or religious acts (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) as found in Ephesians 4.11-12 “work in the ministry.”

Delimitations

The attendees of the congregation of First Baptist Church Evansville, Indiana participated in this study. The sample consisted of only thirty to sixty participants who volunteered to engage in the research and were willing to participate in either online Bible study or the six week sermon series. Participants were encouraged, but not required, to take part in both the Bible study as well as the sermon series in the Three Ws research project for the six weeks.

The sample included total church attendees and did not exclude lay and volunteer leaders. The sample did exclude attendees of the church under eighteen years of age as well as those attendees considered to be part of a vulnerable population.

Review of Relevant Literature

This project utilized a vast number of literature sources in order to lay a solid foundation of respected, trustworthy guidance for exploring this significant topic in relation to the spiritual life and well-being of believers. The literature review attempted to utilize some of the leading thinkers regarding strong spiritual discipleship that engages the believer in practices that lead to growth in a journey of faith.

Several authors provided a basis of direction for the three areas within the Three Ws research. Worship was the first focus of the project in order to engage the believer toward spiritual growth authors. Peterson, for example, drew a connection between worship and a structure for life (Peterson 32). Worship should be regarded as an integral part of life rather than a rote practice of faith on a specific day. Foster reviews the absolute necessity for prioritization of worship in the spiritual life of the believer. He discusses the need for engaging the church in authentic worship where intimacy with God is primary (Foster 161).

The second focus of research, a believer's daily walk of faith, can be evaluated in the light of the practice of spiritual disciplines. Massey's work on spiritual disciplines points to the way in which God uses the practice of spiritual disciplines to fulfill the Christian experience (Massey 14). In addition, the literature review evaluates the connection between the spiritual discipline of scripture reading and the work of God changing the believer (Yancey 54).

Finally, the third focus of research, the work of the ministry in the life of the believer, is developed through respected authors such as Charles Stanley. Stanley writes about the significance of giving to people and meeting the physical needs of others as well as other acts of obedience to God that allow the believer to experience joy (Practice

Basic Spiritual Disciplines, (Stanley, “Practicing” 69). Multiple authors were consulted for this project to provide a clear understanding of the use of spiritual disciplines in the life of the believer.

The theological framework for the project was based on various aspects of Wesleyan theology with relevant authors such as Wynkoop, Thorsen, Oden, and Longden. The topics of the importance of engaging in worship, the importance of the daily disciplines of the believer’s walk, and the concept of the work of the ministry was explored in light of the theological lens.

The writers of the Old and New Testament as well as theologians have identified the importance of the spiritual well-being of the believer. As an individual believer grows in faith and experiences spiritual wellness, the church at large is impacted. On behalf of the church, the contributing factors to the process of establishing and maintaining the spiritual health of believers have been investigated.

The weight of evidence points largely to the implementation of those spiritual practices that cultivate an active pursuit of the Lord. Each believer has an intrinsic need to develop certain practices of faith in order to experience a daily walk with the Lord that allows the Lord to invade and envelop the life of the believer. This literature review draws a clear correlation from leading the believer down the road of spiritual growth and well-being to engaging the believer in three specific areas. The literature takes a broad view of the topic to gain a focus of contributing factors that move the believer in the direction of vitality and life in Christ.

Research Methodology

The project was primarily a mixed method study which consisted of both quantitative as well as qualitative research involving the use of a researcher designed instrumentation for those attendees of First Baptist Church Evansville who took part in a six week intervention based on the Three Ws Project (Worship, Walk, and Work). The participants took part in a researcher designed pre and post-test for the collection of quantitative data. Qualitative data was collected utilizing researcher designed instruments for both semi-structured interviews and a focus group. Additionally, online journaling was implemented for further qualitative data collection.

Type of Research

The method utilized by this research was an intervention as the research had the potential to demonstrate transformation in the local church body in a reproducible pattern for other churches. Mixed methods were utilized with the primary method of research being both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data was gathered from pre and post-tests. Qualitative data was gathered by randomly selecting volunteers to take part in a focus group of eight individuals, and seven other volunteers were interviewed while nine additional volunteers took part in the online journaling. Samples included those who participated in either the sermon series alone or both the online Bible study and sermon series.

The instruments for this project consisted of the pre and post-tests, informal interviews conducted with the church leadership of First Baptist Church, a focus group made up of 10 percent of the total sample group, and online journaling. The project was a six week Bible study and a targeted sermon series over a period of six weeks for the

purpose of motivating believers to engage in three specific areas of their journey of faith: worship of the Lord, their daily walk with the Lord, and their work in the ministry, all of which assist the believer to experience spiritual growth and well-being.

Participants

The participants for this research have been attendees of First Baptist Church in the Evansville area that volunteered to engage in the project. The participants who volunteered were not excluded based on gender, race, or disability. However, those under age eighteen were excluded. The participants took part in both the online Bible study and were present for the sermon series. All of the participants were involved in the ministry of First Baptist Church to some degree.

Instrumentation

The instruments utilized in this study were a researcher designed congregational pre and post-test survey, a focus group questionnaire, an interview questionnaire, and online journaling. The pre and post-tests measured the overall spiritual well-being used to identify how to transition the believer from a place of stagnation to active, dedicated faith.

Additionally, the qualitative data was obtained using a researcher designed instrument in a focus group with a survey of questions from a sampling of approximately 10 percent of the total participants. An interview questionnaire was also utilized in this project to collect data from interviews of seven individuals who serve as leaders of First Baptist Church. Each participant answered the same open-ended questions. Online journaling measured the internal changes identified in the spiritual life of the participants with qualitative data being obtained. Multiple instruments were applied in order to gather

a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data to adequately address the issue of stagnation and decline.

- Survey questions pre-test-rq1
- Survey questions post-test-rq2
- Focus group Questionnaire -rq3
- Interviews Questionnaire -rq4
- Online Journaling-rq5

Data Collection

Data collection began in October 2019 and continued through December of 2019. Data from the pre and post-tests as well as online journaling was collected from October 2019 thru December 2019. The sermon series began the second week of October and ran through the end of November for a total of six weeks. The pre and post tests were administered to the participants of the online Bible study with journaling. The participants who were also present for the sermon series were contrasted with the participants who were only present for the sermon series. The written pre and post-tests were administered in a group setting with a sample of thirty to sixty people for each group. The general time line consisted of six weeks for the instruments to be administered. Data was collected from the focus groups, which included about a 10 percent of each sample, through the administration of a researcher designed tool with a survey of questions.

Additionally, data was collected by conducting one-on-one interviews with seven of those serving in leadership of First Baptist Church. Data was collected to identify what was most effective in engaging believers in spiritual practices such as worship, walk, and

work which moves them toward spiritual growth and well-being. Data was collected from all instruments which included a survey pre and post-test, focus group questionnaire, and interview questionnaire—all of which were researcher designed instruments.

Data Analysis

The primary methods of data collection entailed both a pre and post-survey, a focus group questionnaire, an interview questionnaire of the participants of the six week Bible study, and online journaling. The data collection occurred prior to the project, coincided concurrently with the project, and immediately followed the six weeks that the project was conducted. The mixed method of research was accomplished with the quantitative data consisting of both the pre and post-test surveys and qualitative data consisting of the focus group questionnaires, interview questionnaires, and online journals.

The qualitative data of the research consisted of the data gathered during the project and immediately following the project. First, data was gathered from those participants who journaled during the Bible study. Next, data was collected from the questionnaires completed during the interviews. The final qualitative data was collected from the focus group and interview questionnaires conducted at the end of the six week project.

Generalizability

This project's significance lies in the practical application of tools to bring about personal spiritual wellbeing as well as collective spiritual growth in the church. The transferability of the findings would extend to other churches with the same demographic, a population of less than 250 members, that are experiencing a decline

spiritually. The variance in replication would depend on the individual church's motivation and willingness to participate. Additionally, this project would transfer not only to other urban churches but to those in a rural setting. Crossing the boundaries between denominations, this project would be applicable to other Protestant churches due to the foundations of this project being based on the Biblical text. The lack of socio-economic factors would still allow the implementation of the studied instruments of research.

Project Overview

The Three Ws project endeavors to evaluate changes in the attitude, knowledge, and behavior of those who took part in a six week intervention focused on the Three Ws of (Worship, Walk, and Work). Chapter Two describes and reviews current research from relevant authors and practitioners' work on the topic of spiritual wellbeing and growth as it relates to worship, walk, and work in the life of the believer. Chapter Three examines the ways in which the researcher exercises the research questions in the project. Chapter Three also scrutinizes the research questions that provided guidance for the overall study. Chapter Four details the analysis of the data findings revealed from both the quantitative data collected from the pre and post-test, as well as the data collected from the qualitative research utilized in this study, including online journaling, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group. Chapter Five Details the major findings of the project and the repercussions of those findings on the current practice of ministry as well as future ministry.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The vitality of the believer was the primary concern for the project, especially as it relates to those congregants of First Baptist Church Evansville, Indiana. The project evaluated the contribution of the Word of God as well as the contribution of current literature to those disciplines that engage the believer in an active growing walk with God, bringing about and maintaining spiritual well-being in their daily lives. The project focused on the goal of discerning those practices that are respected to be essential in maturing the believer. The model of the New Testament believer was examined to determine what spiritual disciplines were practiced in the early church that impacted the spiritual well-being and growth of the believer.

The inspiration for the project came from the analyzation of the spiritual lives of the believers at First Baptist Church and evaluated the desire for growth as it relates to the practice of spiritual disciplines as well as personal spiritual growth. The vision for the project was born out of a desire to see the Lord bring the believer to the next vertical level in their individual daily walk with God. The project drew upon developing three distinct areas for spiritual expression of engagement: the need to engage believers in regular expressions of worship, the need for the believer to engage in a daily walk with the Lord, and the need for the believer to commit to a personal work of the ministry according to Ephesians 4.11-12.

Although the establishment of the concept of spiritual well-being could be attributed as a consequence of many practices and disciplines of Christian faith, several

crucial, coexisting parallel themes and practices of faith exists. The development of spiritual well-being in the life of the believer could be influenced and impacted through many different factors of spiritual practices that nourish the believer. However, parallel themes of Bible reading, obedience, prayer, fellowship, worship, and service that are vital to the growth of the believer have been commonly accepted and defined as contributory disciplines within the Biblical text and current scholarship. In fact, some sources define the exercise of spiritual disciplines as essential to discipleship (Hurley 25).

This chapter presents the Biblical basis of the project. The chapter also explores the theological foundations of this project. The literature review spans the broad topic of spiritual well-being and the connection with spiritual practices. The chapter overviewed the topic of spiritual disciplines or practices that enable the believer to experience spiritual well-being and growth. The chapter was divided into a number of sub-categories for clarity as well as emphasis, to pinpoint specific practices, and to identify what the contribution of authorities on the topic have discerned as significant to the growth of the believer.

Spiritual well-being exists as an ever evolving, transforming state of flux, rather than stasis, with sustainable measurement of growth as an outcome. Spiritual well-being only exists and is significant in the light of the reality of a living God. Freeman states that, “The significance of spiritual disciplines and personal formation rests upon the reality of a living God. The cosmos and the psyche, with all the dynamics and myriads of formations, can only be understood, properly formed, and directed by their Maker” (Freeman 92). This process takes place within the mind and heart of an individual and affects the intellect and emotions. Spiritual growth, according to Holdzkom, takes place

during the quiet of prayer, the study of Scriptures, or during a collective service of worship within a community of believers (Holdzkom 6).

Spiritual growth is experienced as an encounter with the Living Jesus in prayer, study, and worship, which leads to a deepening of discipleship as it is expressed in service and life witness. Spiritual growth is experienced as encounter with the Living Jesus in prayer, study, and worship, which leads to a deepening of discipleship as it is expressed in service and life witness; however, the presence of the Lord is also encountered in that service and life witness, which leads to an inner spiritual growth and awareness of Christ's presence in the quiet times of reflection on life experiences. (Holdzkom 7)

Spiritual well-being and growth are observed as one believer disciples another, teaching them the practical, foundational essential of the Christian faith. Discipleship requires a consistent, patient teaching of the disciplines of the Christian faith. As a primary goal and duty of every Christian, "Discipleship is the center of the Great Commission and the fundamental demand on believers today" (Whittaker V).

Discipleship and the practice of spiritual disciplines were first modeled by Jesus who, shortly after he called the twelve disciples, began to teach them about the spiritual disciplines of stewardship, prayer, and fasting. Hurley proposes that these disciplines create space where, God engages in the spiritual transformation of men and women into the likeness of His Son. Spiritual growth and well-being may be commensurate with the level of devotion to the practice of personal spiritual disciplines (Hurley 14). As Greuter posits that, "God uses our daily spiritual practices of spiritual disciplines to increase Christ's presence in us. As we acquiesce to the transforming work of God, the spirit of

Christ miraculously and systematically changes us from being wholly unholy into the image of Christ” (Greuter 203).

The practice of spiritual disciplines, then, only serve as tools that are used for the greater work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Conway compared the spiritual disciplines to externals that allow the believer’s heart to see truth and respond to the invitation to growth. He went on to use a simile of the spiritual disciplines and stated that they are like the towel and basin Jesus used to wash the disciple’s feet in John 13, externals that allowed the disciples’ hearts to see truth and respond (Conway 15).

He goes on to state that, “The spiritual disciplines provide a set of external tools that facilitate and provide structure for spiritual growth in the inner man” (Conway 15). Rather than being merely rote practices that produce little measurable benefit, the practice of spiritual disciplines offers a pathway to God’s gifts which then lead to godliness and holiness (St. John 45). This study was conducted by researching a vast number of books and periodicals in order to provide valid insight to the process by which an individual or local body of believers may experience spiritual well-being and growth in their individual and corporate walk with the Lord.

Biblical Foundations

The concept of engaging the believer in the journey of faith is contained throughout both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Themes are seen that include engaging the believer in spiritual practices such as worship, reading the Bible, prayer, fasting, fellowship of the believers, discipline, and serving the Lord. Throughout this literature review, attention has been given to current and past insight on facilitating spiritual well-being in the believer.

The experience of discipleship comes through following Jesus and training in Christlikeness. The project director defines a disciple as both a learner and a follower, a person who learns by following Jesus. Defining a disciple as such means viewing all believers as disciples, regardless of maturity level (Snellings 15).

The revelation of scripture is filled with instances of believers that were spiritually strong, providing the basis for the topic of engaging the believer in practices that assist in the pursuit of overall spiritual well-being. From the beginning of creation unto present, mankind has struggled to engage in a walk with the Lord. The story of scripture details the premise that God has a particular plan for man to follow in order to live pleasing to Him. However, as we consider the Biblical account, the motivation of mankind to please the Lord has waxed and waned with a lack of “spiritual wellness.” The Bible details numerous accounts of man’s interaction and endeavor to live a life that is pleasing to God. Richard Foster draws on Scripture to identify examples of individuals that endeavored to live reflecting of spiritual well-being:

In reality these different Traditions describe various dimensions of the spiritual life. We find their emphasis throughout the teaching of Scripture — from the Pentateuch to the prophets, from the wisdom literature to the Gospels, from the Epistles to the Apocalypse. And many are the lives that illustrate these themes: Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Moses, Ruth, David, Hannah, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Mary, Peter, Elizabeth, Paul, Tabitha, Lydia, John ... the list could go on and on (Foster, Loc.105).

Old Testament

The Old Testament records accounts of individuals with lives reflective of spiritual well-being that God used as examples for others to follow. God in his mercy provided leaders such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Joshua. Even the Old Testament prophets like Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, engaged the people of God toward lives of spiritual well-being, following the traditions of the true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Of course, the writings of King David and King Solomon engaged the believer toward the truth of God. Finally, the Old Testament closes with many of the minor prophets charging God's people to engage into a walk with God the Lord, such as Micah, Zephaniah, as well as others. Recorded in the New Testament, the story continues with the people of God banding together, following the apostle's direction toward lives reflective of spiritual well-being.

New Testament

The New Testament lays a clear foundation for spiritual well-being in the life of the believer; the early church accounts also delineate a healthy example of Christianity lived out in community. The basis of this study finds its foundations in the pages of the Scripture with an in depth look at the New Testament by examining the patterns and practices developed under the direction of the early church leaders in the pages of the Book of Acts.

The Book of Acts

The Book of Acts details the inception and unfolding of the beginning of the New Testament church. Acts 2:42 exemplifies how the early church developed a community of believers who experienced spiritual well-being: "And they continued steadfastly in the

apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” The church spent time in corporate worship, in daily practices of prayer and the word, and serving in their work of the ministry of the Lord. Acts 2.42 portrays the atmosphere of the early church, growing spiritually as they share life together, determined to follow the apostles’ teachings. The concepts of continuing steadfastly, doctrine, fellowship, and prayer held significance to the spiritual well-being of the New Testament church and are seen and associated with spiritual growth. Looking at this verse in Acts, a number of practices observed by the New Testament church are evident that serve as an excellent example for believers and churches to follow as they attempt to engage the believer in the practice of spiritual disciplines. These concepts/disciplines could potentially assist the believer in growing in Christ and maintaining spiritual well-being.

Steadfastly. The first observation seen in Acts 2.42 is that of how the disciplines of the faith were handled by the early church. “And they continued steadfastly” (Acts 2.42). Steadfastly, according to the Greek, is *bebaios* and means firmness in continuing in the apostles teaching (Roberts Word Picture). Steadfastness depicts an image of perseverance. Throughout the persecution by the Roman invasion of Israel, the early church continued steadfastly in the faith, continuing in the practices of faith:

And they continued steadfastly - They persevered in, or they adhered to. This is the inspired record of the result. That any of these apostatized is nowhere recorded, and is not to be presumed. Though they had been suddenly converted; though they were suddenly admitted to the church; though they were exposed to much persecution and contempt, and to many trials, yet the record is that they adhered to the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion. The word rendered

“continued stedfastly” - προσκατεροῦντες proskarterountes - means “attending one, remaining by his side, not leaving or forsaking him. (Barnes)

Doctrine. Doctrine, according to the Greek is *didache*, and stands for teaching (Roberts Word Picture). Although doctrine now describes a litany of different beliefs of various denominations, the apostles’ doctrine meant the teaching that they had received:

The apostles’ doctrine - This does not mean that they held or believed the doctrines of the apostles, though that was true; but it means that they adhered to, or attended on, their teaching or instruction. The word doctrine has now a technical sense, and means a collection and arrangement of abstract views supposed to be contained in the Bible. In the Scriptures the word means simply “teaching”; and the expression here denotes that they continued to attend on their instructions. One evidence of conversion is a desire to be instructed in the doctrines and duties of religion, and a willingness to attend on the preaching of the gospel. (Barnes)

Clark writes on Acts 2.42 that, “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine - They received it, retained it, and acted on its principles” (Clark).

Fellowship. The concept of fellowship played a significant role in laying the foundation for the New Testament church when believer’s lives were strengthened by the act of fellowship. In the Blue Letter Bible, the word for fellowship in the original Greek translates from the word, “Koinonia” (Blue Letter Bible). The closest English equivalent word translates as “contribution.” The word is correctly understood as an intimate sharing

of one's self with another. Koinonia, mentioned in verse 42, states "that they which believed were together had all things in common." The word for common in the Greek is *koinos* and has the same origin as *koinonia* (Chuck Smith, Blue Letter Bible). "The primitive Christians were fully sensible of this, and therefore we find them continually keeping up communion with each other: for what says the scripture? They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, Acts 2:42" (Whitefield, Blue Letter Bible).

This earliest Christian practice of daily meals (less practicable in later New Testament settings) is thus noteworthy. Table fellowship denoted intimacy and trust. Music or other entertainment, but also discussions and even lectures, were frequent at common meals in antiquity; the topic of discussion recommended by Jewish pietists was Scripture. Given such background and especially what this text says about teaching and prayer, early Christian fellowship undoubtedly centered more on intimate worship, sharing and learning the Scriptures and the apostolic message than its modern Western counterpart often does. (Keener 325).

Prayer. Prayer was one effect of the influence of the Spirit of God on the lives of those in the early church and an evidence of their changed lives. Prayer served as an essential discipline in the lives of the believers in the early church as seen here in the book of Acts. "Prayer according to the Greek is *proseuchē* meaning (to God)." This biblical spiritual practice of prayer continues to be vital to the spiritual well-being of the believer today. (Roberts Word Picture).

And in prayers - In supplications to God for an increase of grace and life in their own souls; for establishment in the truth which they had received, and for the extension of the kingdom of Christ in the salvation of men. Behold the employment of the primitive and apostolic Church. (1) They were built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the corner stone, (2) They continued steadfastly in that doctrine which they had so evidently received from God, (3) They were separated from the world, and lived in a holy Christian fellowship, strengthening and building up each other in their most holy faith, (4) They were frequent in breaking bread; in remembrance that Jesus Christ died for them, (5) They continued in prayers; knowing that they could be no longer faithful than while they were upheld by their God; and knowing also that they could not expect his grace to support them, unless they humbly and earnestly prayed for its continuance. (Clark)

The early church, according to the book of Acts, developed believers who were fully engaged in building up their faith. The examples in Acts 4.42 detail the specifics of how the church trained the believer by engaging them in various disciplines of Christian discipleship that brought about spiritual growth and well-being. The biblical text identifies the significance of the goal of this project and lays a clear path to move the believer to engage in spiritual well-being in three specific areas: worship, a personal walk with Christ, and the work of the ministry in a journey of faith.

The concept of engaging the believer in the journey of faith is contained throughout both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Themes are seen that include

engaging the believer in spiritual practices such as their work in the ministry, their daily walk with the Lord that may include yet are not limited to the following: reading the Bible and or a devotional, prayer, fasting, fellowship of the believers, discipline, and serving the Lord as well engaging the believer in their worship. Throughout this literature review, attention has been given to current and past insight on facilitating spiritual well-being in the believer.

The experience of discipleship comes through following Jesus and training in Christlikeness. The project director defines a disciple as both a learner and a follower, as a person who learns by following Jesus. Defining a disciple as such means viewing all believers as disciples, regardless of maturity level (Snellings 15).

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Theological Foundations

Theology is a term which could cause some feelings of fear and confusion to the general population due to lofty terms and difficult concepts. Theology, simply put, is the study of God which provides a clear foundation for the Christian believer's doctrines of faith grounded on the Word of God. "Theology, of course, by the very nature of its task, defines, organizes, relegates, and affirms. To be a Christian, theology limits it most decisively" (Wynkoop, Loc. 851).

Obviously, scripture is held as the primary foundation for Wesleyan theology (Thorsen 72). For John Wesley, the Word of God was the primary source of truth as he founded the Methodist movement. Thorsen also specified that Wesley held the belief that scripture was founded on belief in God (Thorsen 130). Wesley was also responsible for what is known today as Wesleyan Theology. Theological underpinnings for this study centered around the Wesleyan quadrilateral. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral focuses on four areas of thought—namely scripture, tradition, reason, and experience—as the model of Evangelical Theology (Oden and Longden 2)

In founding a movement that has lasted from the 1700's to present, Wesley was somewhat successful in teaching believers what it meant to put spiritual disciplines into

practice. Wesley was very concerned for the spiritual well-being of the people who under his direction and ministry came to be called Methodists (Thorsen 201). “Every serious man who peruses these sermons will, therefore, see in the clearest manner what those doctrines are which I embrace and teach, as the essentials of true religion” (“Preface” to *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 1746; Oden and Longden 139).

The concept of the essentials of true religion provide the focus of this project. “Scripture and tradition would not suffice without the good offices (positive and negative) of critical reason. Thus, he [Wesley] insisted on logical coherence and as an authorized referee in any contest between contrary propositions or arguments” (Thorsen 203). Wesley affirmed the reasonable content of Christian beliefs and the general trustworthiness of its sources. Throughout the research, Wesleyan theology laid the groundwork for the theological basis of this dissertation project.

Theological understanding for this review was based on the relationship of four different sources of religious authority: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. They work together as “sources of truth that shape the quality of our faith” (Thorsen 70-71). Thorsen claimed that Wesley held to the belief in scripture that came as a result of belief in God (Thorsen 130).

Scripture

Wesley held reading the Bible as a foundational practice in the spiritual development of the life of the believer. The believer’s spiritual growth is tied to Scripture and according to Wesley was the primary source for religious authority (Thorsen 71-

72). As a basis for all Christian belief and experience, a believer assumes a position of submission under the authority of scripture.

Tradition

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral has been utilized in this literature review to bring the various aspects of spiritual practices together. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral focuses the project around the collective use of disciplines that when practiced in conjunction, provide strength that assists a believer toward the development of spiritual well-being. Wesley also placed considerable emphasis on the contribution of tradition and historical scholars of Church history (Oden and Longden 31-32). “Wesley was orthodox in the traditional sense, yet he called himself a man of one Book—the Bible. Here are creed and Scripture, two authorities for Christian faith, neither yielding its autonomy to the other” (Wynkoop, Loc. 1270).

Reason

The believer must give thought to their walk with God in order to continue to strengthen and go in their spiritual well-being via a “relationship with Jesus Christ” (Oden & Longden 74).

“Reason facilitates the whole reflective and formative process of theological endeavors while attention to experience serve as a creative means by which to capture the dynamic reality of faith in a personal, ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ” (Oden and Longden 74). “This commitment is reasonable. And reasonable meant to Paul, not

simply an acceptable idea, but the conclusion to which all right thinking drives one” (Wynkoop, Loc. 5705).

Experience

The theological basis for this project placed an emphasis on the believer’s experience as being significant in the process of faith and practice. According to Wesley, reason and experience play an equally important role in the believers walk with the Lord (Oden and Longden 74). Second only to the Bible, Wesley also emphasized the importance of personal experience as it relates to the believer’s religion. “Wesley believed that the truths of scripture are confirmed in experience” (Thorsen 202).

“This should give practical meaning to the strange wording of Paul, “Put off the old man with his deeds,” and, “Put on the new man” (Col. 3.9; Eph. 4.21-25). “This act of total renunciation of the loyalties and dedication to a life as characterized by Adam and the total new alignment with Christ the New Man constitute a vivid commentary on the meaning of both sin and holiness. It also puts the new responsibility for serving under the Kingdom of one’s choice, squarely on the individual person who comes to Christ” (Wynkoop, Loc 2758).

Worship

This project was developed to take believers to the next vertical level by engaging them in three distinct areas for the development of spiritual growth and the establishment of spiritual well-being. The initial focus of the project was to engage believers in worship, allowing them to fully express and experience public worship in the presence of

the Lord. Charles Stanley lifts up worship and Christian fellowship as being, “One of the most important spiritual disciplines you can develop in your life” (Stanley, “Practicing” 77).

Practice of Worship

Richard Foster shares his own spiritual experience and process of learning in engaging in his own expression of worship. Of his prioritization of worship, Foster points out that, “Worship is the way in which we respond to God drawing to man. According to Foster, Christians should embrace the freedom to utilize forms of worship that will enrich their worship of the Lord and states that our lives must be filled with praise, thanksgiving, and adoration. In order to be able to serve the Lord effectively, the priority of the believer’s life must be worship (Foster 158-163).

After lifting up the priority of worship, Foster points out the need for preparation for worship as he unpacked the concept of “holy expectancy.” Telling of how he took an entire year to learn to live in perpetual oneness with Jesus which gave him a great sense of expectancy in worship. This author goes on to assert that, “When more than one or two come into worship with a holy expectancy, it can change the atmosphere of a room.” Drawing insight from both the Old and New Testament, this author clearly communicates the importance of the presence of the Lord in the lives of His followers. And that the need to live throughout the week as an heir of the kingdom, listening for His voice, obeying His word. “Since you have heard his voice throughout the week, you know that you will hear his voice as you gather for public worship.” (Foster 158-63)

Foster also relates the concept of gathering as a community to gathering in worship. Initially, the community of early believers physically met in a group together. Then, after meeting physically together, they not only met together in body but were joined together spiritually in unity. Wesley writes of Acts 2.42, “Ye different sects, who all declare, Lo here is Christ, and Christ is there; Your stronger proofs divinely give, And show me where the Christians live!” (Foster 163)

Martin Luther illustrates this point by his view of the church as a place where the people of God meet together and then are gathered in unity, “At home, in my own house, there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through”(as cited by Foster 164). Here the concept of “gathering” or “fellowship” is intertwined with worship.

Practice of Fellowship

The theme of fellowship was examined as it relates to establishing effective spiritual practices in the life of the believer that builds and maintains spiritual well-being. Throughout the literature review, the practice of Christian fellowship was examined as it pertained to discipleship and spiritual well-being. The topic of fellowship in the life of the believer is a vast subject, with multiple avenues of potentially contributory topics yet one that merited some consideration during this literature review.

The discipline of fellowship plays a role of paramount importance in the spiritual well-being of the believer. The practice of fellowship also advances the blessing of unity within the life of the believer. The beauty of experiencing the Kingdom of God together

represents opportunities of mutual growth and discipleship (Hunsinger 346). The significance that fellowship plays in the life of the church is that fellowship opens the door for intense unity in connection between the believers.

For fellowship to achieve its full purpose in the spiritual life and to create the most meaningful bonds of spirit, fellowship should be seen as a routine gathering. Sharing together in the ministry of the Lord allows believers to express the love of the Lord corporately together (Hunsinger 346-47). The practice of fellowship has an important influence on the spiritual life of the believer to the degree that even specific values and inclinations are exchanged from believer to believer (Adams 273).

The discipline of fellowship also meets the need for accountability to a group of individuals who have an emotional connection to the believer. The investment of a Christian brother or sister that provides support and encouragement provides an essential element in discipleship which not only offers a spiritual challenge but lifts up the realities of the practice of faith. Fellowship in the Lord also offers a needed consciousness of culpability that is imperative in a believer's walk with the Lord. "A true soul friend will not hesitate to hold you accountable for commitments that you make together, especially as they concern your use of the disciplines of grace " (Moore 157).

Rather than an optional practice that will benefit the spiritual life of the believer, this literature review highlighted the benefits of fellowship as being of necessity in the practice of other spiritual disciplines. Johnson, for example, observes that the necessity of fellowship is a discipline for the believer. He also points out that fellowship requires effort, intentionality, and commitment on the part of the believer. However, he contends

that simply attending a fellowship of believers does not automatically ensure that the believer is receiving the benefits of community but could assist the believer in beginning the process of the practice of spiritual disciplines. The commitment of engaging in community and fellowship then reinforces the personal bonds between individuals as the practice of other disciplines such as prayer and service are employed (Jan Johnson 151). The practice of fellowship not only provides an outlet of reciprocal culpability but a conduit of engaging the believer's story and creating new ones (Branson; Martinez, Loc 922-23).

The discipline of regular fellowship also propels the believer into service and impacts the congregation. Small group fellowship plays an essential role of encouraging and empowering the believer for serving the Lord within the larger congregation as a whole (Faig 82). God also has kingdom purposes in the believer's life as they are integrated into the community of believers within a local body of believers through the spiritual practice of fellowship (Vanier 10-11). The believer, through the practice of fellowship, may engage in discipleship of others and promote growth of the body of believers. This model may have been seen in the early church which had the commitment to meet in each other's homes to grow (Sibley 36). The practice of fellowship links the believers together physically and spiritually by mutually praying to the Lord for each other (Moltmann, Loc. 1748-49). Fellowship according to these authors plays an integral role in engaging the believer in their daily walk with the Lord.

Walk

The next area of this project discussed the process of moving believers from a state of inertia to that of engagement in a daily walk with the Lord. This process entails the need to train believers to utilize spiritual disciplines in their daily lives. Throughout this section of this dissertation, several key concepts emerge as the topic impacts the spiritual well-being of the believer. A healthy, intentional, daily walk with God utilizes disciplines (regular worship, Bible reading, prayer, fasting, etc.) which allow the believer to be intentional and focused in the daily pursuit of God.

Practice of Discipline

The term practice, for this literature review, denotes the concept of training. David Wilson equates the need for spiritual exercise to that of physical exercise. He writes:

Spiritual disciplines are needed for spiritual fitness in the same way that physical disciplines are needed for physical fitness. A runner will not develop excellence by periodic workouts or by overworking a few times a year. A regimen is needed, one that can be followed on a daily basis. Similarly, a daily regimen is needed if one is going to be spiritually fit. (David Wilson 30)

A believer needs to work out their spiritual muscles daily to build and to maintain strength in the struggle to walk with God. “To train means arranging our life around those practices that enable us to do what we cannot now do by direct effort. The point of training is to receive power, so we arrange our lives around practices through which we

get power” (Willard 140). Typified by Christ himself, through the practices of discipline in reading, meditation, and prayer, Christ received the spiritual power, preparation, and structure to his day that then led him to an openness to the promptings of the Spirit.

As Jesus fasted, he entered into a battle for his will. He was a human being like you and me; as the fast went on, there must have been times when he felt like giving up and stopping. He would have felt weak, and his emotions probably went up and down. But he triumphed, with the help of the Spirit. Having won the battle for the will in the desert before he began his public ministry, his life during his ministry was founded on a disciplined will. We know that during his ministry he would pray regularly, often getting up early, that he would be disciplined about investing time in training disciples and, no doubt, he would be regularly reading and meditating on the Jewish Scriptures. I expect that this battle for the will significantly prepared him for all this. His disciplined will, and resultant disciplined lifestyle, provided a structure to his day that then resourced him to lead a life flexible to the promptings of the Spirit and the circumstances presented to him. (Porter 8)

Rather than having a vague idea or concept of the direction one is headed, a believer should develop a clear, concerted goal of disciplining the spirit. Willard stated that, “Discipleship is not something we can accidentally drift towards or into. It is something we must give our full intention to. Intentionally determining to make ourselves Jesus’ apprentices, no matter what the cost” (Vos 100).

The discipline of engagement against selfish inclinations necessitates the goal of seeking the will and heart of God. “The spiritual hands which actually apprehend and maintain a life lived according to God’s will are self-denial and obedience” (Helm 78). As an outcome, rather than a goal, the “practice of spiritual disciplines will make us holier, healthier, happier and better connected to the rest of the body of Christ” (Harper, “Spiritual Disciplines” 20).

The impact of the practice of discipline is clearly evidenced through many individuals who could be considered as world changers, who, due to their lives of discipline, were able to make a significant impression as well as influence the world in a positive way. One such individual was the great revivalist John Wesley. Wesley, as he birthed the Methodist church, emphasized the importance that discipline plays in the life of the believer. According to Thorsen, Wesley learned the practice of discipline from his mother. “From his mother, John learned the rigors of a disciplined spiritual life” (Thorsen 50).

If the believer’s struggle is against the major forces of self and outside influences, the constant struggle necessitates the paramount mandate of a disciplined approach to the believer’s life of faith that reaches far beyond where the church in America is today. John Wigger pointed out in his writings that, for the preacher as a matter of requirement, a focus on self-discipline was a way of life in the early days of the Methodist. The preacher rose at four or five in the morning and spent an hour in prayer, meditation, and reading the Bible with fasting on Fridays in addition to regular preaching (Wigger 40).

Either a believer is maintaining homeostasis, or the believer's spiritual life is decaying and declining. The natural progression, according to Moore, apart from the practice of discipline would be spiritual decline and decay (Moore 14). Discipline also prepares the believer for the future (Porter 8). As a systematic function of daily life, spiritual disciplines enable the believer to, "maintain a certain level of existence that helps us to keep all our systems functioning normally" (Moore 14). An even stronger argument is purported by Ortberg who stressed that, "getting clear on what spiritual life looks like is no casual affair. This is life or death to the soul" (Ortberg 35).

Practice of the Word

Taking in a regular diet of the word of God is vital nourishment in the believer's spiritual life as taking in food is vital to the individual's physical growth and well-being. Deuteronomy 8.3 states that, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." The significance of the practice of reading the Word of God has been correlated with the spiritual well-being of the believer.

While the believer is not commanded to follow a set pattern of devotional activity, nor to follow a set of specific procedures; it is clear that time with God and his Word have always been an essential element for experiencing a deep and enduring relationship with God. A study of the Bible and the lives of those who walked most closely with God offers strong reasons to develop the discipline of daily devotions. (Ewing 43)

Hendricks also directly correlates the ingestion of the Word of God and spiritual growth. "So the first reason for studying Scripture is that it is a means of spiritual growth. There

is none apart from the Word. It is God's primary tool to develop you as an individual" (Hendricks 20).

The continuation of an increase in faith through the reading of the Word should be every believer's daily goal. "The goal is not for us to get through the Scriptures. The goal is to get the Scriptures through us" (Ortberg 187). Scripture conforms a believer by changing thought processes and values with the believer, perhaps unconsciously, developing into the image of Christ. "The Scripture opens us, changes us, causes us to inhabit the world differently, approaching the creation with a heart being molded into that of the Creator. We return to the image of that path; we return to the care of measurement, mixing. Scripture must read us more than we read it, we must come to know it" (Yancey 54). A believer is either being conformed to the image of secular values or conformed to the image of Christ. "In fact, you are either in the Word and the Word is conforming you to the image of Jesus Christ, or you are in the world and the world is squeezing you into its mold (Hendricks 9).

Engulfing the spirit with the scripture requires consistency and routine. Cho describes his regular prioritization to the scripture and to spiritual disciplines when he states that, "No matter what my plans are for the day, I like to spend one hour dedicated to Him. All my needs, I first request of the Holy Spirit. 'Please conduct this upcoming meeting together with me. Please read this Bible together with me'" (Cho 161). Dr. Cho placed significance on the need to be disciplined and intentional in a daily routine by illustrating his own walk with God.

The development of the believer then multiplies and extends to the growth of those the believer disciples. The Word of God is overpowering, dynamic, and living,

creating and then replicating the evolution of a nonbeliever to a thriving, faithful believer. “The Word is an unstoppable force. Wherever the Word goes, people far from God are saved, disciples are made and new churches are formed” (Addison 32). When an individual reads the words of scripture, the scripture as a living epistle breathes life into the individual. The individual then embodies the Spirit of Christ and transmits the word of God to others. “As disciples of Jesus, we are the compass carriers. We carry, in ourselves, in the words of scripture and in the Body of Christ the spirit of Jesus himself,” (Breen, 3DM).

In a sense, a believer may embody the life of Christ as the Scripture is incorporated into the human psyche and spirit. “Through the inspiration of the Spirit, of the breathed-in power of God, the living word of the living God continues to speak to us, breathing life into us, and thereby transforming us and re-creating us into the image of Christ. We may even say that this creative and saving word now gives birth to Christ in us (Gal 4:19)” (Thelander 287).

The practice of time with the Lord and His Word is not only fundamental to the life of the believer but to the establishment of faith in the home. “Read God’s Word together. Another way to instill passionate faith into our homes is to place high value on the Word of God. Openly studying and sharing the Bible at home not only gives us God’s perspective on life and direction for the journey together, it also indicates our reliance on it for daily decisions” (Mullins 77).

The reading of the Word is the conduit of God’s truth in the daily life of the believer. The Word, then, is an essential practice by which the believer is able to identify and conceptualize truth in a world where deception is utilized by the arch enemy of truth

and righteousness, the devil, who works to deceive the very elect of God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer states that “To deviate from the truth for the sake of some prospect of hope of our own can never be wise, however slight that deviation may be. It is not our judgment of the situation, which can show us what is wise, but only the truth of the Word of God” (Peterson 32).

As a believer practices faith in a daily walk with God, the power of the Word of God is a weapon for the Christian during warfare in the pursuit of spiritual well-being. “As the sword was a weapon for the Roman soldier, so also is the word of God a weapon for the Christian. You cannot conquer without a sword. Read your Bible, study it and use it in your spiritual warfare” (Schultze 28).

The practice of using the Word of God to refute the lies of temptation was established by the example of Christ in the gospel of Matthew who, after fasting for forty days and nights, was tempted of Satan. For every lie thrown by Satan, Christ refuted each lie by purporting a scriptural response. Rather than quoting scripture as “proof text, but to quote the Scripture as an exercise in active engagement with Scripture itself. Jesus does not only know the text in passing, but also speaks with authority and discernment” (Yancey 52).

Another outcome of the spiritual discipline of reading the Word is the expansion of other spiritual disciplines. Mulholland states that, “The classical spiritual discipline of spiritual reading is one of the most vital in our growth toward wholeness in the image of Christ for others. Out of the discipline of spiritual reading come many of the highly individualized and personal disciplines which God calls us to offer as means of transforming grace.” (Mulholland, Loc 1040-42). Through the practice of the discipline

of reading the Word, a believer may even employ other disciplines such as prayer. “The word of God in Scripture is an important source for Christian prayer” (Afabegee 60).

The literature review asserts that the discipline of prayer remains an indispensable practice in the believer’s walk with the Lord. Prayer is to be considered the “primary work of the moral and religious life” (Beck 281). Prayer exists as an avenue of entering the throne room of the Father, by His invitation, to bring requests, find grace, and intercede through the spirit of God. Wesley regarded prayer as the primary means of communication with God. Prioritized by Wesley as first in importance, he perceived prayer as the means of drawing the believer close to God (“Telford Letters 4:90” qtd.). In fact, he regarded the benefit of relationship with other believers to be beneficial as they “are mixed with or prepare us for this (prayer)” (Waugh 65). This view expresses Wesley's strong salvific sentiment of the living and dynamic relationship between God and humankind and prayer as a primary means of this communication” (Waugh 65).

The importance of prayer in the daily walk of the believer was established in the early church. Prayer continues to be an integral discipline in the believer’s daily walk with the Lord. Clark describes several points of significance, explaining how the church used prayer in the lives of the first believers. He states that prayer was used in supplication to God for an increase of grace and life in their own souls, for establishment in the truth which they had received, and for the extension of the kingdom of Christ in the salvation of men.

1. They were built up on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the corner stone.
2. They continued steadfastly in that doctrine which they had so evidently received from God.
3. They were separated from the

world, and lived in a holy Christian fellowship, strengthening and building up each other in their most holy faith. 4. They were frequent in breaking bread; in remembrance that Jesus Christ died for them. 5. They continued in prayers; knowing that they could be no longer faithful than while they were upheld by their God; and knowing also that they could not expect his grace to support them, unless they humbly and earnestly prayed for its continuance (Clark).

Practice of Prayer

Moore points out the great benefit of prayer in the believer's spiritual well-being of intentional pursuits of the Lord and describes the privilege of a conscious engagement with the persons of the Godhead (Moore 82). Although seen as a habit and discipline, prayer develops the spiritual life personally and corporately (Bibile 86). Prayer should be an ongoing, consistent dialogue with God and should reflect concerns of the heart which pour from the lips of the believer (Harper, "Spiritual Disciplines" 31). Through entering into communion with the Almighty, the believer takes on the characteristics of Christ being filled with supernatural wisdom and discernment (Foster 30). The believer can then experience and embrace the abundance of God and "a life lived to its fulness which mirrors God's superabundant life" (Blondeau 54).

Without prayer, the believer cannot enter into the presence of God. In essence, the converse can also be true. Sibley describes prayer as, "Prayer, bringing our lives into God's presence" (Sibley 18). The discipline of prayer should not be evaluated as an end in and of itself but as a means of experiencing the presence of God (Meyer 450). Prayer should continually enrich the vitality of the spiritual life of the believer (Greuter 86). The great reformer, Martin Luther, warns believers of the dangers of allowing prayer to

become “cool or listless” as he attributes the lack of prayer to subsequent self-indulgent sin and attack of Satan (Concordia Journal 7). The attitude of prayer as sincere and passionate is attained through the regard of prayer as the development of a relationship with a heavenly Father, a vital relationship that can be compared to an earthly parent-child relationship (Jee 325).

As an adjunct to the discipline of fellowship, the act of praying for another builds relationships within the church. Exhortations to pray for one another (Jas. 5.16), to pray for the Church (Eph. 6.18), to pray for leaders (Col. 4.3-4), to pray for the sick (Jas. 5.14) and to pray for those in sin (I John 5.16-17) incite believers to the practice of prayer as a daily, faithful discipline. (Embree 135). In addition, not only are believers exhorted to pray but Christ exemplified how a believer requires prayer to be able to continually give to relationships and in service to God.

Prayer takes a prominent place in Jesus’ routine spirituality. Practicing the discipline of prayer in the morning (Mark 1.35-37), and in the evening (Mark 6.45-46), Jesus illustrates the routine discipline of prayer in the daily life of the believer (Hardin 221). The communion between Christ and the Father demonstrates the depth of relationship that must exist between the believer and God to enhance the work of ministry to others. Prayer not only binds one in a deep way to God but knits the life of the believer to the lives and concerns of others. Prayer allows participation in the lives of others, prohibiting separation between the fellowship the believer shares with God and extends to others (Christie 603).

Closely and even intrinsically linked to the discipline and practice of prayer is the complement of meditation in the believer’s walk with the Lord. Meditation develops an

aspect of prayer that allows God to quiet the mind and thoughts and to direct the thoughts of the believer while teaching the believer about God Himself (Schultze 31). Meditation has been used for centuries by the Eastern world to apply concerted attention to the world, to life, and to God, opening and expanding thought and consciousness beyond that of previous experience and training. The discipline of meditation and prayer, when used in a Judeo-Christian relationship with God, enlightens the mind and opens the mind to God in the “depths of consciousness” (Massey 37). Rather than giving God a list of requests and moving to the next item on the list, meditation involves the pursuit of quietness and contemplation. Despite the clamor, chaos, and busyness of modern culture, the methods of God remain the same (Swindoll 83).

For a believer to be taught of the Holy Spirit and to be able to listen to the still, small voice of God, times of quietness and contemplation should be observed (Schultze 31). Potentially rooted in apprehension of quietness, an individual may fear slowing down enough to experience self-realization. “Spiritual inattentiveness, I believe, comes in large part from our fear of being known for who we really are. Often, we keep ourselves busy and distracted because we fear that if we slow down and are still, we may look inside and find nothing there” (Ford 12).

As a result of meditation, a believer may experience greater responsiveness to the Lord. Ice draws this together by comparing, “the disciplined application of inward meditation...resulting in the gift of sensitivity” (Ice 181). These “quieting practices” attune the believer to the presence of Christ and “position believers to hear his heart, the listening practices break into the silence and connect believers to the voice of God” (Gardner 30).

The records of the early church describe the spiritual discipline of listening. The book of Acts portrays how the believers listened to and followed the Apostles teaching and how they listened to the Holy Spirit and obeyed his promptings. The book of Acts also provides many accounts of the church listening to the believer. One such story is described by the account of the church addressing the needs of the Grecian widows who were being overlooked. To address this problem, the apostles called the church together and presented the need to appoint deacons in Acts 6.1-7:

1. And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. **2.** Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. **3.** Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. **4.** But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. **5.** And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: **6.** Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them. **7.** And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6.1-7)

Meditation is yet another example of spiritual practices in the daily life that engage believers in their walk with the Lord. This discipline may not be a daily practice,

depending on each believer. However, a routine application of spiritual disciplines promotes continuity of practice and will continue to engage the believer.

Practice of Fasting

The literature review underscored the value that fasting adds to the daily practices that build the believer up in a personal walk with the Lord. Apart from the craze today within the health and fitness community to fast for health benefits, the Bible as well as current literature provides insight on the importance fasting plays in the spiritual growth and well-being in the life of the church and the believer. Described as “the hunger that satisfies,” fasting involves abstinence from food and/or drink for a specific period of time (Sibley 22). The practice of fasting corresponds with the believer’s response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Motivation for fasting should come as a result of the believer’s intimate relationship with the Lord. According to Richard Foster, “Fasting must forever be center on God. It must be God-initiated and God-Ordained.” (Foster 54) “We hear that call of God because we have been connecting with God and we long to connect even more” (Jan Johnson 248).

Established for a millennia as part of the Judeo-Christian tradition, scripture provides multiple examples of Old Testament saints that fasted at times of mourning, times of national repentance, when they needed strength or mercy, and when they wanted God to speak (I Sam. 7.6, Neh. 1.4, Esth. 4.16). The discipline of fasting was also displayed by Christ when he fasted for forty-one days, fasted before healings, and fasted to subdue temptation (Matt. 4.2, Mark 2.18-19, Luke 5.33). Likewise, the New Testament

church fasted when seeking God's will, for strength to continue the work, and for worship (Acts 13.2-3; Calhoun 219).

Scripture also depicts specific challenges of ministry that would not be accomplished without the discipline of fasting. The New Testament story of Cornelius, who received a vision from the Lord about the apostle Peter highlights the fact that fasting prepared Cornelius for the vision from the Lord. "And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing" (Acts 10.30). Christ also taught that demons would not be cast out without prayer and fasting. "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17.21). These examples demonstrate the practice of fasting that aids the believer in a daily walk with the Lord in a variety of ways which assist in spiritual well-being.

Porter writes that the Bible challenges the people of God to utilize the practice of fasting as a regular source of strength to build their spiritual lives and suggests several ways in which the practice aids in the life of the believer.

The Bible does not give us a tidy list entitled 'six good reasons to fast,' but it does assume that God's people will, from time to time, fast. For example, in Matthew 6:16 and 9:15, Jesus seems to mark out our time as one in which we should fast. But why should we fast? Examples in the Bible show that fasting was normally done for a clear purpose:

As a Mark of Humility "Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting" (Psalm 35.13). **As Part of Worship** Anna never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying' (Luke 2.37). Augustine

of Hippo taught that believers should fast before they take Holy Communion and, of course, many attenders at early morning Communion services do not have breakfast until after their worship. 8. **As a Mark of Repentance** “Even now” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning” (Joel 2.12); fasting is here a sign of wanting to change. **When Choosing and Commissioning Leaders** “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13.2-3). **For Deliverance from Satanic Oppression** Jesus replied, “This kind can only come out by prayer and fasting” (Mark 9.29). For Healing “Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting” (Psalm 35.13). **Simply Out of Obedience** “When you fast . . .” (Matthew 6.3). (Porter 7).

The rationale for fasting in the scripture was provoked by diverse, often negative, life circumstances. Yancey states that although the scriptural accounts of fasting had different motivating forces, an overall unified motivation of seeking an answer from God was present. “Fasting as repentance is seeking an answer from God that forgiveness has come; fasting as calling upon God for help and healing is a similar gesture of petition; likewise, fasting as discernment over a difficult decision or fasting as renewed focus upon God fundamentally are invitations for God to bring awareness, answer” (Yancey 126). Fasting sharpens spiritual focus to a specific area of need or awareness allowing the believer to unify their heart and mind with that of God’s will and purposes. Engaging the believer in a daily walk with the Lord may be pursued through a number of spiritual

practices that the believer can customize to their own personal regimen for daily spiritual well-being and strength.

Work

The last area of this project involved encouraging believers to engage in their work of the ministry of the Lord. Throughout this section, the concept of serving the Lord will be discussed as it impacts the spiritual well-being of the believer and relates to engaging in a personal work of the ministry of the Lord. The Bible clearly teaches in Ephesians 4:11-12 that the role of a spiritual leader, such as the pastor, is to equip the church for service. Service allows the believer to identify the special abilities that God has personally gifted and equipped each individual with and to use these abilities for Christ.

Practice of Serving

The literature review reflected the practice of service for the benefit of the ministry of Christ as it relates to the believer's pursuit of work in the ministry with the end result being spiritual growth. The book of Acts also records accounts of the early church advancing the ministry of Christ and using their gifts in the church. There is a continual need within the life of the believer to pursue a personal calling to fulfill the will of God. Johnson, for example, writes about the residual effect on the spiritual lives as we are serving others:

Service, as a spiritual discipline, is doing good for others with no thought of ourselves. Although we are commanded to serve others, service also acts as a spiritual discipline as it trains us to be selfless, to get our spirituality beyond our

heads and into our hands, to connect with God in everything we do. We connect with God, for example, when as we serve we encounter exasperating situations in which we pray and plead with God for help: How can I love an annoying fellow volunteer? How can I be compassionate toward people who don't deserve it?

Service can force us to the edge so our prayer life grows. (Jan Johnson 47)

Johnson continues his discussion on service by pointing out the personal benefit to character and personality that comes from serving others. He states that the practice of these disciplines and the dependence on God that comes as a result of the troubles and trials as a routine practice of the discipline of service will ultimately result in passionate service and a compassionate, patient character (Jan Johnson 49). While aspects of service, such as positive results or consequences, may not be immediately seen, the ultimate outcome can be seen as an increased awareness of the work of God. "Seeking God's Kingdom first means that at times circumstances won't turn out as we had hoped they would. Yet, the more we offer ourselves to God's greater purpose, the more we see His hand at work, and consequently the more confident we will become in His plans for us and for the world" (Mullins 17).

As with the other spiritual disciplines, service must also be performed for the right motives. With obedience to the commands of Christ being the primary concern, identification with Christ who obeyed the will of His Father should be modeled by the believer. Peter Scazzero describes what the believer goes through to ultimately obey God. He writes that, "All true obedience is a learned, struggled-for, and prayed-for obedience. If it took falling with his face to the ground and great struggle for the Son of God to submit himself to the will of the Father, how can we expect that it will require any less of

us?” (195) Beginning from the appropriate motive enables a believer to identify the values that God places on a particular act of service. “God is not merely concerned with what we do but why we do it. A right act may be robbed of all its value in the sight of God if it is done with a wrong motive” (Jan Johnson 249).

Though centering attention on the practice of service with regard to our spiritual well-being may appear less spiritual, the literature review esteems service rendered for the sake of Christ of value to the growth of one’s spiritual life and well-being. Engaging believers in service that moves them toward their work of the ministry plays an important role in the development of spiritual well-being.

Research Design Literature

This research utilized the method of intervention to understand the participants’ knowledge, attitude, and behavior regarding engagement of the believer in all three areas of worship, walk, and work. The research had the potential to demonstrate transformation in the lives of the participants from First Baptist Church in a reproducible pattern for other churches. Mixed methods were utilized with methods of research being qualitative and quantitative (Creswell 74). As a result, qualitative research will be effective in the setting which is natural to the respondents (Creswell 185).

Informal interviews were conducted at First Baptist Church. A focus group was conducted that was made up of those serving at the time of the study as leaders of First Baptist Church in order to summarize the overall impact of this project. The research included a pre and post-test, an online daily devotional with journaling, and a targeted sermon series over a period of six weeks to identify those practices that motivate or engage believers in their worship of the Lord, their daily walk with the Lord, and their

work in the ministry of the Lord— all of which leads to a state of spiritual wellbeing. Creswell illustrates effective use of this projects’ single group interrupted time-series design (172). “Decisions about design, measurement, analysis, and reporting all flow from purpose” (Sensing 51).

Research utilized in the study assisted the researcher in measuring the spiritual well-being of the believer, the motivators that stimulated the believer toward spiritual practices, and the effectiveness of the project in assisting the believer to demonstrate personal commitment to spiritual growth. The intervention for this project was designed to take the believer to the next level in their engagement with the Lord which produced spiritual well-being in believers as defined by the participant’s ability to faithfully put into practice the daily disciplines of faith (Sensing 63).

Summary of Literature

The literature was reviewed from the basis of Biblical foundations for the purpose of researching the concept of the spiritual well-being of the believer for this dissertation project. Secondly, chapter two reviewed various authors and their insight as it pertained to the spiritual well-being and strength in the life of the Christian believer. “The various spiritual practices employed in our formational journey cultivate the soil of the soul to receive the seed, which is the life of Christ, and to see it sprout and grow, ultimately reproducing the same life from which it sprang. The harvest is the peace and character of Jesus Christ in the life of believers” (Gardner 23). Finally, this literature review delved into the theological foundation of the project.

The primary consideration for this literature review was developed from Wesley’s basic doctrine as it relates to the relationship of the believer to Jesus Christ. The

theological focus of this chapter fell largely on the work of two authors that wrote commentaries on Wesleyan theology. The model of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral was designed by Albert Outler from Wesley's doctrine within this literature review and reviewed in his work, "The Wesleyan Theological Heritage." Additionally, Donald Thorsen's commentary on Wesleyan theology was also consulted to comprise this literature review. Thorsen's compilation entitled, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral," was an invaluable resource in applying Wesleyan theology with regard to spiritual well-being in the life of the believer. The primary intent of Wesley's framework is that theology has its starting point in Scripture.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter addresses the research methodology utilized during the research project. The nature and purpose of the project will be restated. The research questions will be discussed underscoring the connection to the direction of the project toward its intended purpose of taking the believers of First Baptist Church Evansville to the next level in their individual journey of faith in three specific areas: in their worship, in their walk with the Lord, and in their work of the ministry.

An analysis method for participant selection will be detailed. The ministry context will be evaluated in light of the research tools and methodology. Project reliability and validity will be underscored to provide the criteria of the data collection and analysis. The chapter will summarize the research design as well as the methodology of the three research questions, the analysis of the participants, and how they were selected. The chapter also includes a detailed description of the participants. Then the chapter closes with validity and reliability of the project with data collection and analysis in expanded detail.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The goal of this project was to propel the believer upwards in a personal walk with the Lord in three specific areas of the individual faith journey. The focus of the project was to encourage and promote the participants' progress in their practice of worship of the Lord, their daily walk with the Lord (according to 1 John 1.7), and their

work in the ministry of the Lord according to Ephesians 4.11-12. The purpose of this project was to measure the changes in knowledge, attitude and behavior among the volunteer participants who took part in a six week bible study with online journaling and a preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work).

Research Questions

Research Question #1

What were the levels of knowledge, attitude, and behavior among the volunteer participants who took part in a six week Internet bible study with online journaling and a preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work) prior to the experience?

- Research Method/Instrument: One-on-One Interviews with First Baptist Church leaders.
- Research Method/Instrument: Questionnaire pre-test with participants of both the project sermon series and the Bible study.

Research Question #2

What were the levels of knowledge, attitude, and behavior among the volunteer participants who took part in a six week Internet bible study with online journaling and a preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work) following the experience?

- Research Method/Instrument: One-on-One Interviews with church small group leaders.
- Research Method/Instrument: Web-based questionnaire post-test with participants of both the project sermon series and the Bible study.

Research Question #3

What aspects of the six week Internet bible study with online journaling and preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work) had the greatest impact on observed changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavior among the participants?

- Research Method/Instrument: Focus Group of those serving in leadership capacities at First Baptist Church.
- Research Method/Instrument: One-on-One Interviews with members of the First Baptist Church.
- Research Method/Instrument: Online Journaling.

Ministry Context

My ministry context is an inner-city church situated in Evansville, Indiana. The population demographics traverse socio-economic status from upper middle class to below poverty level with the church body largely consisting of Caucasian middle-class individuals with a small African American population. Average attendance on Sunday morning is ninety-four according the report given to Indiana/Kentucky area churches (American Baptist Annual Report).

Until recently, the worship style at First Baptist church has remained constant without adjustment of the music and style to that of the surrounding religious culture. The surrounding religious culture has been in a constant state of change since the early 1990's when a new contemporary radio station moved in to the greater Evansville area. The church is known to be a friendly church that truly reaches out to the community in very tangible ways. Volunteers from the church spend time in the local schools. The church also provides

free rides to the grocery store once a week to residents of several low-income housing units. Various other ministry opportunities are supplied by the people of First Baptist Church.

Participants

Criteria for Selection

The primary consideration for participant inclusion in the study was based on a personal connection to the ministry of First Baptist Church Evansville, IN. The entire church adult population was invited to participate in the project, including any who were connected at any level to the ministry in the church. Secondly, no one was required or coerced to participate, with individual willingness being criteria of inclusion in the study. The third consideration was based on being an adult of at least eighteen years of age. Participants who were not a member of First Baptist Church were required to be involved in the ministry of First Baptist Church.

Description of Participants

The participants were both men and women; however, there were more women than men based on the fact that there is a higher ratio of women to men who participate in our church's ongoing ministry. Project participants were at least eighteen years old, and the ethnicity of the participants were largely Caucasian. A few individuals were of African-American decent, and one individual was of Asian descent.

Those who participated in the study demonstrated various levels of involvement in the church ranging from those who have faithfully served the church for years in an official capacity, such as leadership teams, to those who are new members and attendees. The participants included individuals that are professing Christians for a few years to a number of years. The participants were both singles and married.

The socio-economic range of the respondents were from below the poverty level through upper middle class. The educational level of the participants ranged from high school to college graduate. The project was open to any individual that met the criteria regardless of age (other than being a legal adult), gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status or educational level.

Ethical Considerations

Each person who engaged in study was given a copy of a consent form. The First Baptist church attendees were given opportunities to sign up at the close of three church meetings following an announcement that was made by our church moderator who oversees the churches public announcements for our regular worship service to ensure no pressure was given to the attendees of the church to participate in the project. The project pre- and post-test was conducted only for those who voluntarily signed up as participants. All printed responses to any of the Three Ws project tools were kept in a lock file cabinet behind a locked door in order to insure the privacy of each participant.

Instrumentation

The multiple instruments used in the Three Ws Project were researcher-designed assessment tools. The three tools for the project were designed specifically for this project and were reviewed and approved by an expert panel of educators of Christian higher learning. The first, a pre-test survey, was utilized to assess the participants' overall spiritual well-being before and after the Bible study and preaching series. The second, the focus group assessment tool, was designed especially for working with a small group of the participants during this research project and was approved for use by a panel of experts. The third, an interview tool, was designed especially for use on this project to

ascertain input from leaders of First Baptist Church following the six week Bible study and preaching series that was approved by the expert panel.

Expert Review

The expert review enabled the researcher to design questions that were focused on the participants' knowledge, attitude, and behavior regarding the Three Ws. The review also assisted in making sure that adequate questions were asked in each of the three areas of engagement of the believer (Worship, Walk, and Work), and that the questions provided accurate and sufficient assessment data. Finally, the expert review provided insight on the appropriateness of the questions as they related to the survey, interviews, and focus group.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

The research instruments for the Three Ws Project were researcher-designed and reviewed by a panel of four experts to warrant reliability. The use of multiple instruments, consisting of three different tools, allowed for greater reliability of the research. The researcher designed questions focused on the participants' knowledge, attitude, and behavior regarding the Three Ws. Methods of research for the Three Ws obtained both qualitative and quantitative data for the purpose of greater reliability and validity of the research. The interviews and focus group allowed the participants the ability to articulate their impression of the impact of the study on First Baptist Church.

For the pre-test and post-test, the identical instrument was given to all the participants in order to assess the overall changes in attitude, knowledge, and behavior as well as to increase reliability and validity of the research. The questions for the survey instrument were designed to assess quantitative research data and were focused on the

participants' knowledge, attitude, and behavior toward the Three Ws. Multiple questions regarding the participants' knowledge, attitude, and behavior were designed to guarantee the reliability and validity of the research.

Data Collection

In order to follow what Creswell suggests by mixing both quantitative as well as qualitative data collection, the Three Ws project was able to provide a boarder observation of the project (Creswell 245). "Denzin has identified four basic types of triangulation that augments our ability to see varying perspectives on complex issues and events."(Sensing 73) The fourth, methodological triangulation, utilizes more than one method to study a problem or program, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents (Sensing 73). The Three Ws project found this type of data collection provided a multifaceted look at the data for interpretation.

In the case of the Three Ws project, quantitative data was collected using a pre- and post-test working survey through Survey Monkey. Data was also collected using qualitative methods for the Three Ws project. There were three different aspects of qualitative data collection including interviews, a focus group, and online journaling. Nine participants of the project took part in the online journaling. The participants were given several opportunities to engage in online journaling throughout the project.

Seven participants were interviewed as another step in the qualitative data collection. The interviewees were given the same eight questions. "Patton states, 'We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. . . . We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions'" (Sensing 104). Throughout the

interview process, the researcher discovered valuable insight as each participant took part in the process.

The step that completed the project data collection was a focus group. Eight participants of the project were also randomly selected to participate in a focus group. The focus group was conducted in a private room in the church and the participants worked together through seven focus group questions. The focus group lasted approximately two hours.

Data Analysis

Participants of the project took a pre-and post-test and the data was entered manually into Survey Monkey by the researcher and the research assistant. Survey Monkey was then utilized for the computation of the quantitative data for this project. The quantitative data was graphed and illustrated for presentation using Excel. The data comparing the pre- and post-test identified the variables in the attitude, knowledge, and behavior of the participants found characteristics of growth evident throughout the participant group during the data analysis of the project (Creswell 250). In the analysis, data was descriptive and narrative in form and included both numbers and percentages as well as the participants perspective through the collection of qualitative data analysis of the Three Ws project (Creswell 211). The results from the pre- and post-test indicated changes in the participants' attitudes, knowledge, and behavior discovered.

The qualitative data was gathered with the use of two researcher designed tools as well as online journaling. The results from the researcher designed tools were analyzed following the interviews and focus group. These were recorded, and later notes on the participant responses were transcribed.

Analysis was conducted through going back and hearing the recorded interviews and focus group multiple times for accuracy as well as reading through the transcribed notes of both the interviews and the focus group by the researcher. Further exploratory analysis was done by reading over the participants' online journaling and notes that were taken. The qualitative data was closely analyzed in order to ascertain changes in attitude, knowledge, and behavior by the participants. Additionally, a qualitative analysis was conducted of the interviews, focus group, and online journaling in order to calculate the most impactful aspects of the Three Ws project for the participants.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter covers the problem being address by the research of this study which is lack of spiritual well-being and stagnation in the spiritual life of the believer. Engaging the believer in specific aspects of their journey of faith based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work), the project was to address the need of the believer to engage in daily expressions of faith in Christ which resemble those of New Testament Christianity. The Three Ws Project is a vision for engaging the believer in the next level in their Work, Walk, and Worship. The purpose of this project was to evaluate changes in attitude, knowledge, and behavior following a six week daily devotional and six week sermon series. The goal of the devotional and sermon series was to engage the believers of First Baptist Church to climb to the next level in a journey of faith in the work of their ministry, their daily walk with the Lord, and their worship of the Lord.

This chapter depicts those who participated in the research project including demographics from the participants. The research questions led the intervention and the discussion of the data. The chapter communicates the quantitative data that was collected from both the pre- and post-test. The chapter also details the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews, the focus group, and the online journaling. The chapter closes with the four major findings.

Participants

The participants of this dissertation project consisted of attendees of First Baptist church Evansville, Indiana. Forty-two participants experienced all aspects of the study, a

six week daily devotional and/or the six week sermon series. The church has approximately 125 adults and children that attend on a regular basis, and forty-two adults participated in the pre- and post-test of this research. Seven individuals participated in the interviews as a part of the qualitative data collection for this dissertation project. Eight participants also took part in a focus group for the gathering of additional qualitative data. Finally, nine participants in the six week devotional and six week sermon series of the research project also shared their online journaling with the researcher.

Table 4.1 Demographics of the Three Ws Project Participants:

<u>Gender</u>	<u># of Participants</u>	<u>% Based on Gender</u>
Male	16	38%
Female	26	62%
	42	100%

* Based on the above data, over half the participants were female.

<u>Age Range</u>	<u># of Participants</u>	<u>% Based on Age Range</u>
18 to 29	3	7%
30 to 49	5	12%
50 to 59	7	17%
60 to 69	12	29%
Over 70	15	36%
	42	100%

* Based on the above data, 93% of the participants were over the age of 30, 7% were under the age of 30.

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

What were the levels of knowledge, attitude, and behavior among the volunteer participants who took part in a six week Internet bible study with online journaling and a

preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work) prior to the experience?

The pre-test survey initially addressed questions connecting the participants' attitudes toward the believer's work in the ministry, daily walk with the Lord, and worship of the Lord before the project began. The attitude-based questions were question 1-9. The participants' responses can be viewed in Figures 4.1 RQ1a1 and Figure 4.2 RQ1a2.

Figure 4.1 RQ1a1

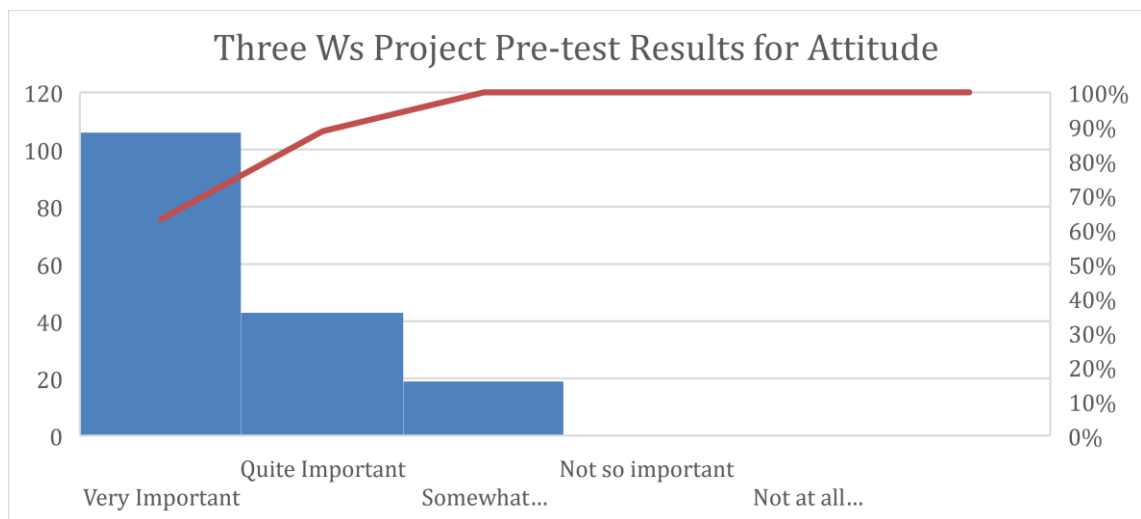
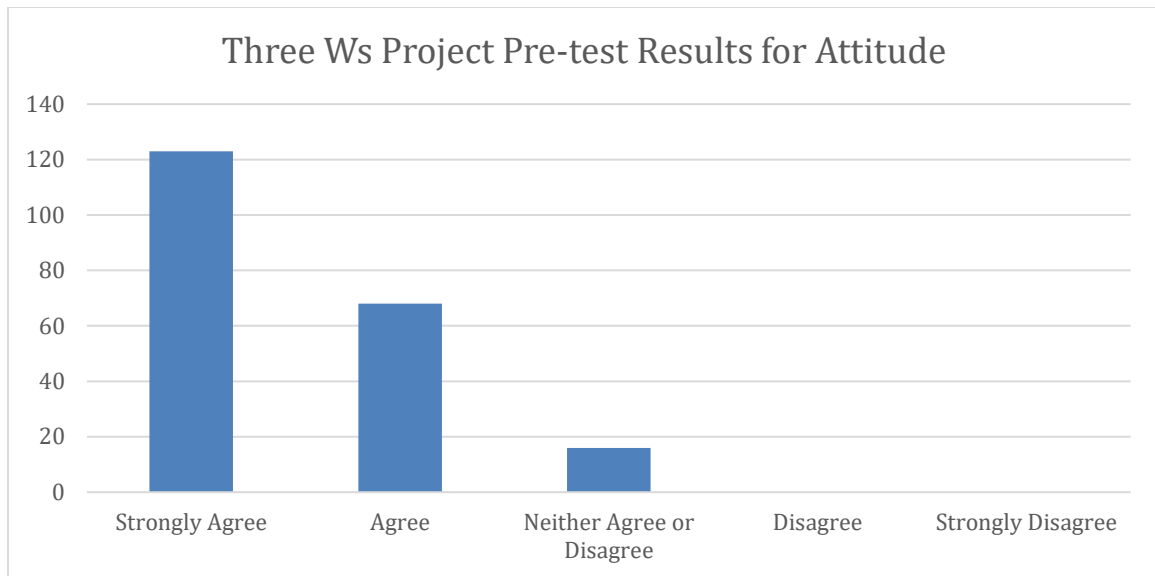
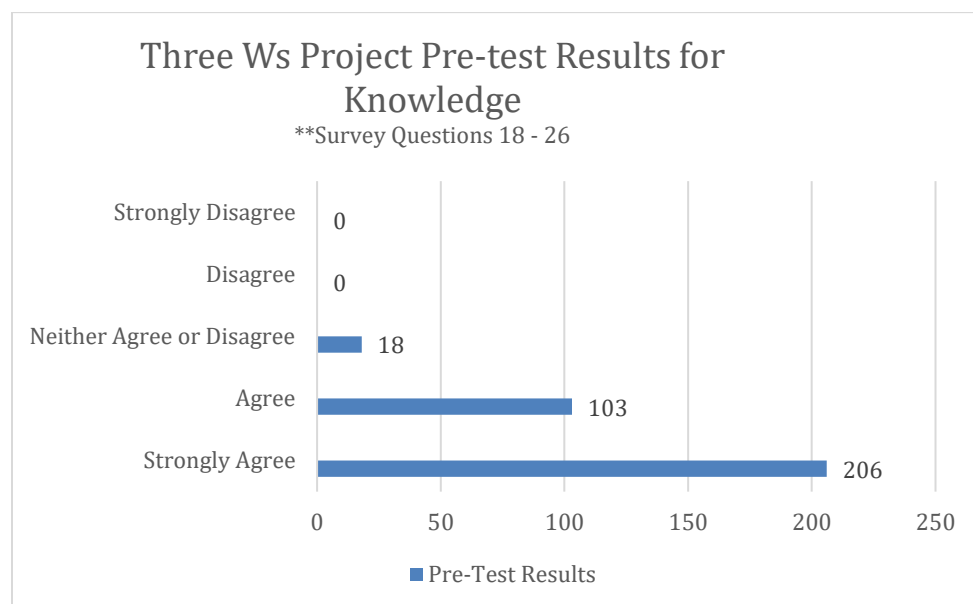


Figure 4.2 RQ1a2



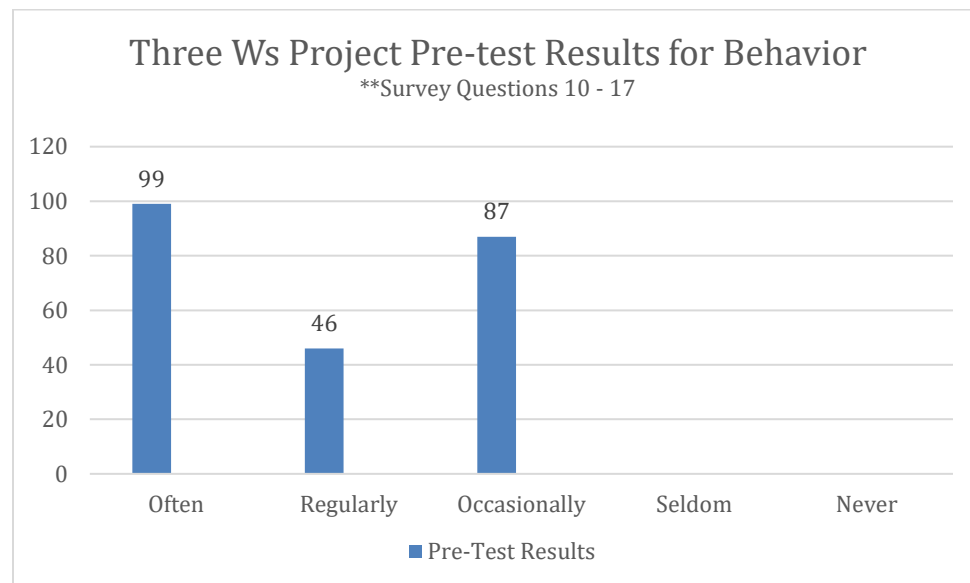
The second section of questions on the pre-test measured the participants' knowledge of the work in the ministry, the believer's daily walk with Christ, and the believer's worship of the Lord before the project began. The participants' pre-test answers regarding their knowledge of the Three Ws can be seen in Figure 4.3 RQ1b. The knowledge-based questions of the pre-test were questions 10-17.

Figure 4.3 RQ1b



The third set of questions on the pre-test measured the participants' behavior as it related to their practices of the Three Ws before the project began. The participants' responses to the survey questions on their behavior regarding work in the ministry, their daily walk with the Lord, and their worship of the Lord can be seen in Figure 4.4 RQ1c. The behavior-based questions of the pre-test were questions 18-26.

Figure 4.4 RQ1c



Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

What were the levels of attitude, knowledge, and behavior among the volunteer participants who took part in a six week Internet Bible study with online journaling and a

preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work) following the experience?

The first set of questions in the post-test survey questions connected the participants' attitude toward the believer's work in the ministry, daily walk with the Lord, and worship of the Lord before the project began. The survey questions based on the participants' attitude with the data can be viewed in Figure 4.5 RQ2a1. The question that demonstrated the greatest change in the participants' responses comparing the pre-test to post-test was question 4 with a 21.33 percent increase in participants choosing 'strongly agree.' The majority of the twenty-six questions demonstrated small incremental changes toward the first column, 'strongly agree/very important,' of the participants' responses when comparing and contrasting the pre-and post-test.

Figure 4.5 RQ2a1

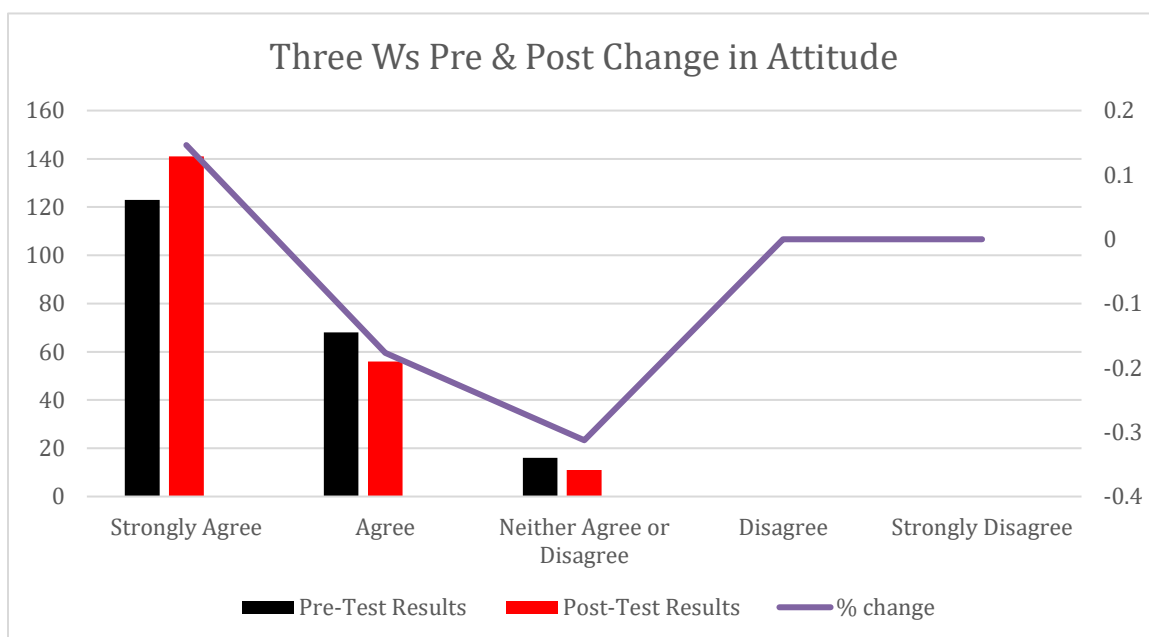
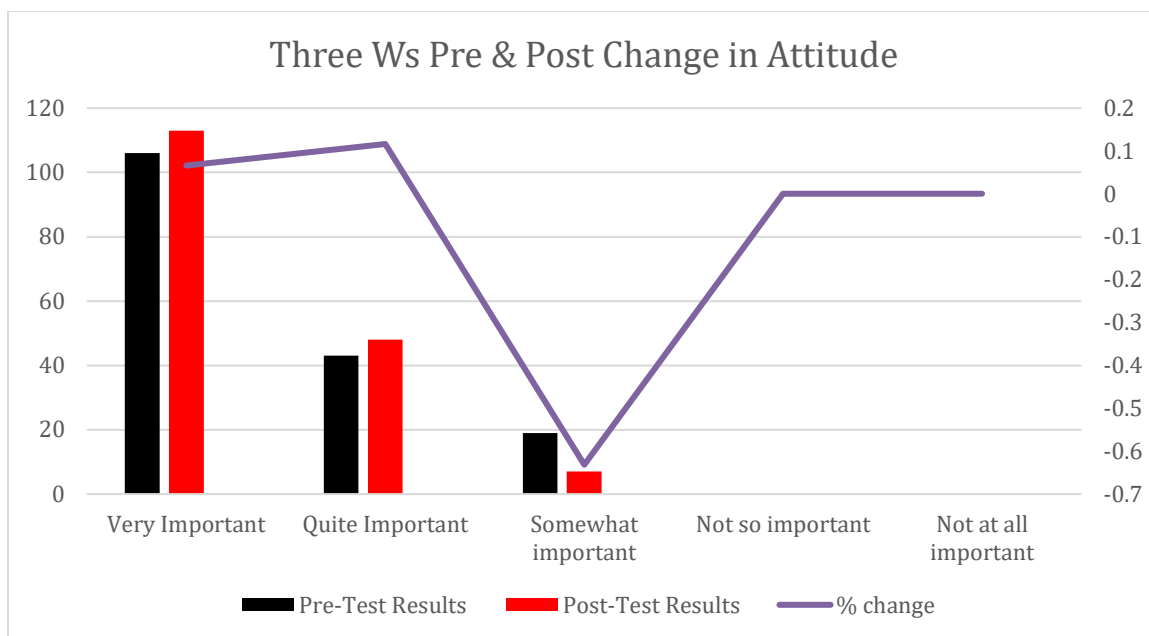
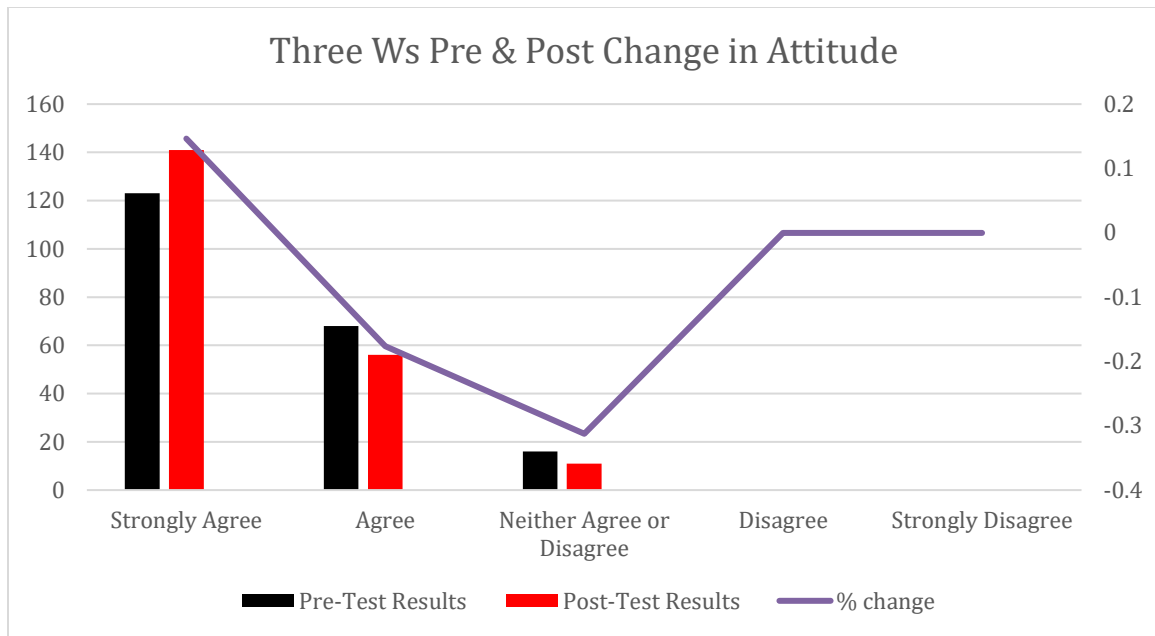
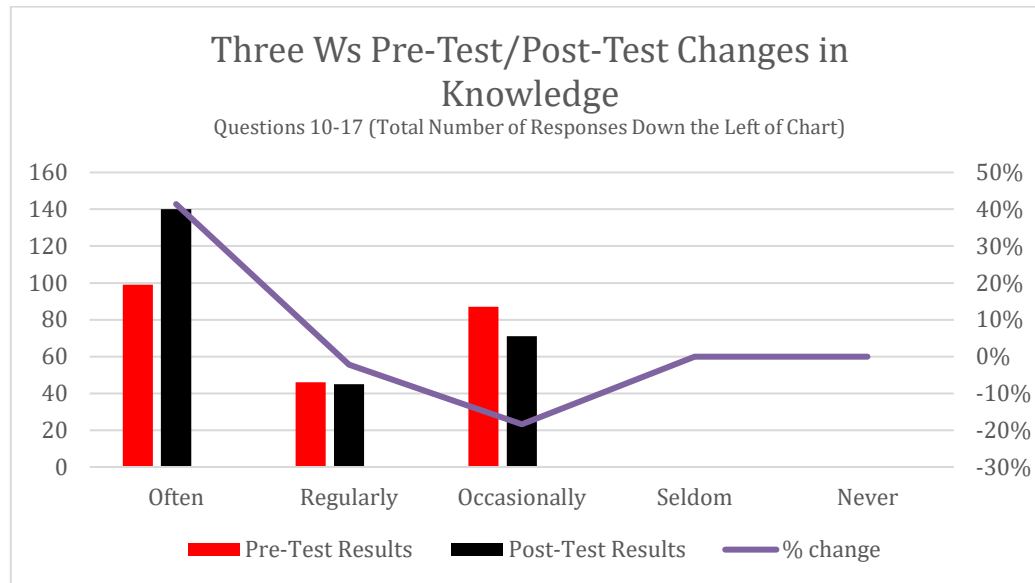


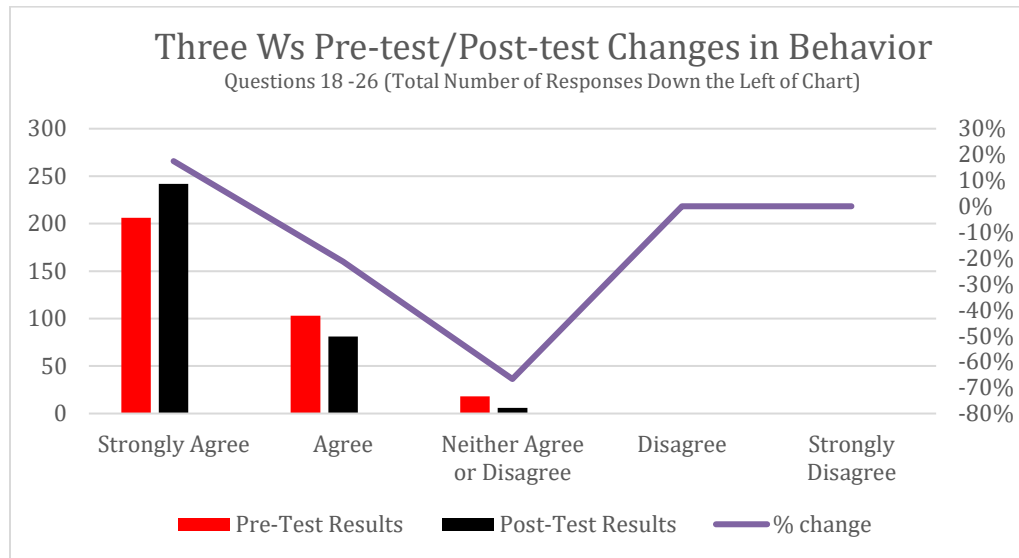
Figure 4.6 RQ2a2



The participants' observed changes in attitude, knowledge, and behavior can be viewed in Figure 4.5 RQ2a1, Figure 4.6 RQ2a2, Figure 4.7 RQ2b, and Figure 4.8 RQ2c. All three pre and post-test comparison graphs identifies changes between the participants' responses to pre and post-test surveys. The both of the graphs for question 1-9 summarize the quantitative data of the participants' responses in Figure RQ2a. The graphs for questions 10-17 summarize the quantitative data of the participants' responses in Figure RQ2b. The graphs for question 18-26 summarize the quantitative data of the participants' responses in Figure 4.8 RQ2c.

Figure 4.7 RQ2b

Quantitatively, there were noticeable changes in the participants' attitudes, knowledge, and behavior following the Three Ws project. The quantitative changes in the participants' attitude, knowledge, and behavior have been graphed and can be viewed in Figures 4.5 RQ2a1, 4.6 RQ2a2, 4.7 RQ2b, and 4.8 RQ2c. The pre- and post-test comparison graphs RQ2a and RQ2a2 identify an average of a 10 percent increase in 'strongly agree/very important' responses in the surveys on the attitude questions compared to those of the pre-test. The pre- and post-test comparison (Figure 4.7 RQ2b) demonstrates a change in the participants' knowledge based on post-test surveys as measured by an increase of approximately 8 percent in 'strongly agree/very important' responses on the knowledge-based questions when comparing the pre- and post-tests. Finally, the largest observed change in the participants' behavior based on the pre- and post-test comparison (Figure 4.8 RQ2c) with respondents choosing 'strongly agree/very important response' was on behavior based questions with a 41 percent increase of those surveyed.

Figure 4.8 RQ2c

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews, focus group, and online journaling following the Three Ws Project. Each interview was conducted privately allowing the respondent the freedom to share openly. Following the project, the participants of the project who were interviewed identified some changes in attitude, knowledge, and behavior regarding the Three Ws.

Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured interview questions that were used to assess the participants' attitude toward Work, Walk, and Worship can be seen below and are labeled attitude-based questions. The interview questions that were used to assess the participants' knowledge following the project can be seen below labeled as knowledge-based questions. The interview questions used to assess the participants' behavior following the Three Ws project can be seen below labeled as behavior-based questions.

Interviews: Attitude-based Questions:

- 1.What were your initial inspirations and motivations to become a Christian?
 - 2.Reflecting on your entire experience as a believer, remember a time you felt most alive, motivated, excited about your faith.
 - 3.Following the Three Ws project, have you noticed any changes in your attitude toward your practices of faith? Please describe.
-

Interviews: Knowledge based Questions:

- 5.What was the most impactful throughout this project in your understanding of your walk with the Lord?
 - 6.What have been the most important experiences, lessons in belief, or steps of faith that have occurred for you in your walk with God following this project of the Three Ws?
-

Interviews: Behavior based Questions:

4. Following the Three Ws project, have you altered your practice of daily disciplines?
 - 7.What three goals do you have for your future walk with God following this project?
-

Highlights from the interview questions are as follows.

Semi-Structured Interview Notes

4. Following the Three Ws project, have you altered your practice of daily disciplines?

- My walking with the Lord, need to be more connected to my faith.
- Worship is not about what we get.
- I realize it is not hard to have devotional, more intended.

- Encouraged/challenged to read Bible more

5. What was most impactful throughout this project in your understanding of your walk with the Lord?

- Go deeper in study of Bible, Bible study
- More aware the need for daily devotional missing
- Like devotional, personal walk, made more time
- Reading bible more daily

6. What have been the most important experiences, lessons in belief, or steps of faith that have occurred for you in your walk with God following this project of the Three Ws?

- The three areas, wide areas, not impossible ...Work, Walk, Worship. A great thing we are together.
- Prayer life, stronger, being thankful for unanswered prayer
- Sit down, realize it's not so hard to make time
- The need to be regular

7. What three goals do you have for your future walk with God following this project?

- Seeing connection and visible in real life, Three Ws
- Be clear about the voice of God
- It is easier to set aside time
- Awareness increased

8. What three goals do you have for your future walk with God following this project?

- Attention to others, what is going on. Prayer. The devotional real personal
- Meet with him daily, be salt and light
- Continue to take divine opportunity. Grow in my faith
- Make devotions a daily practice
- Read Bible more faithfully. Pray, wait on the Lord. More regular basis

Focus Group

Eight randomly selected participants of the project sat together for a two-hour focus group following the project to discuss the Three Ws project and the project's impact on First Baptist Church. The participants seemed to be excited to come together for the purpose of discussing the Three Ws Project. The focus group was conducted after the six week sermon series and Bible study at the church concluded and after sharing a meal together. A full list of the focus group questions is located in Appendix B. The focus group questions that were used to assess the participants' attitudes toward Work, Walk, and Worship were question 2 and 5. Focus group questions 3, 4, and 7 were used to assess the participants' knowledge following the project. Focus group questions 1 and 6 were used to assess the participants' behavior following the Three Ws project.

The overall response was one of a desire to move forward in unity. The focus group's individual response to the seven questions in the survey moved the group toward some collective goals to work on together as a group. Following the project, the members of the focus group identified some needed changes in attitude, knowledge, and behavior

regarding the Three Ws for First Baptist Church. Highlights of the participants' responses are as follows.

Focus Group Notes

1. If you had to classify our church, what would it be? What do you believe are the contributing aspects to moving in the direction of the Three Ws?

- Worshipful, small but mighty, faithful, uses resources well, prayer
- Small congregation, loves each other, areas of outreach
- A small body of mostly mature in age but loyal members
- Recruit more workers, Get more current people working, Facebook (free and reaches many) Time and space to explain who we are and what we do
- Close harmony, a few very hard workers
- Keep on working together, the church support projects & give room to do the outreach in God's house
- Amazing, Fellowship, Small congregation, More workers, Day of Fasting

2. Following the project, what does our church need in moving to the next level in the Three Ws?

- Planning, Calendar, People, Resources
- Recruiting workers from within and outside congregation
- To encourage participation in mixed group activities and exchange of ideas and thoughts concerning our church
- Finding their place
- Numbers/members, workers, places to plug in
- Invitation Program

- Advertise, let people know what we can do
- Find my ??? place, new workers

3. Describe the situation of our church, both environment and the people. Now, what are the perceptions of the surrounding community—think of how people talk about the church?

- Snobby, old fashioned, unfriendly, I used to go there
- Small congregation, family oriented, old building
- We may be losing influence because of increasing commercial surroundings as well as a transient population
- Involved & active in community, small in membership, but very active
- Baptist, Strict, Conservative
- Continue to do project, food pantry, and outreach

4. What do feel is God's heart for you in the vision of the Three Ws?

- Program
- Walking in His path, seeing his will
- I don't know but I am praying about it
- Looking for opportunities
- Some type of visiting program(training), praying people
- To do the best, even though it is just a little

5. What do you believe is the church's next step in growing in the Three Ws?

- Planning, FB
- Recruiting more workers from outside the congregations, share responsibilities

- Of course continued prayer for direction, communication, perhaps a Q&A 5-minute session Sunday mornings occasionally; a drop box for ideas/ questions
- Find time to get involved
- Youth/Children Ministries
- Soul winning, Facebook sharing
- Getting the word out
- Person

6. What barriers do you face in leadership and organization in mobilizing our congregation into the vision of the Three Ws?

- Health, buy-in, clear cut plan
- Advance notice, planning, low number of workers
- I do not like to think of age being a limitation, but I am realistic
- Lack of people and resources
- No eldership

7. Based on your understanding of the Three Ws, make three goals for the future.

- Carry beyond the walls of church, More outreach programs, needing more people, pre-planning so schedules are set. FB, Instagram, Opportunities
- Small group discipleship, Work interest/talent Survey, Equipping workers, Training children, Quality programming, God focus, Work, Walk, Worship
- Unite the Three Ws with mindfulness into everyday living, Involvement of all age groups in open environment activities
- Listening to God, Continuing looking for work, Advance notice, Streamline, Congregational Involvement, Inspiring Involvement, Calendar

- Grow membership/weekly attendance, Provide areas where individuals can plug in, Youth, Gift/talent survey, List in pews with list of places to plug in
- Grow in numbers, Increase mission to community, Increase giving, Worship, Walk, Work
- Regular updates about goals, Small Groups
- Work from church project, like send cards and others, Walk helping others, Worship-study Bible and pray
- List of work, Schedule calendar, Small group, Training children.

Online Journaling

Nine participants of the project took part in the online journaling. The participants were given several opportunities to engage in the online journaling. Reminders to journal were shared by the researcher throughout the six week sermon series and daily devotional project. The participants of the online journaling shared about what impacted them from the intervention. The participants that took part in the online journaling piece of the intervention reported the following:

Participant #1

- I set aside time each morning for prayer, Bible reading and meditation. Lately, I have become aware that this time is becoming an increased influence on the rest of my day. Hopefully I will become a better servant to Him.
- Re: Your devotions...Since the death of my husband and son, I sometimes feel quite empty. I have found if I whisper or just think, I'm here,

God. Please use me! After reading your devotionals, I have been reminded that He's always here with me and waiting to be used!

Participant #2

- The Three Ws project very much made me think about my work, walk, and worship at First Baptist.
- I enjoyed the stories in the devotionals.
- The pastor took time to hear about our walk with the Lord and our stories which will take our relationship to a deeper level.
- Being able to sit down and tell my story was the best part.
- I think every pastor should take time to hear their people's story.

Participant #3

- I think that this Three Ws project is a help to any pastor in getting to know the work/walk/worship of the people in his congregation. The one-on-one conversation regarding one's personal relationship with the Lord is invaluable in addressing the needs of his congregation both individually and collectively. With this knowledge, he can better address the needs of the congregation. I truly enjoyed our one-on-one talk. Thanks.

Participant #4

- The Three Ws Program influence reminds me of the importance of prayer, Bible reading, faithfully reading from a devotional and walking with God in shoe leather. It has reminded me to work, sharing our personal ministry, and work as a volunteer at church. We never know who or where we can, might, influence.

Participant #5

- I think the Three Ws is great way to sum up and teach a few key things in the journey of a Christian. I don't believe I was present for all of the sermon series but felt the topics pertained well to all of the Christian community. I never compared my pretest and posttest but feel that they were pretty much the same. I'm currently very firm in my faith and knew how I felt on the topic contained in the survey before hearing the sermons. Sadly, it's been a long time since I have done a daily devotion and this series was no different. I completed very few of the devotionals so I can't speak to them, however, but heard from others that they liked them. This may have been why the sermons alone did not make much of a difference in my response to the surveys.

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What aspects of the six week Internet Bible study with online journaling and preaching series experience based on the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work) had the greatest impact on observed changes in attitude, knowledge, and behavior among the participants?

Semi-Structured Interviews

Following the project, the participants that participated in the semi-structured interviews identified some of the most impactful changes the participants had regarding the intervention. Highlights from those interviews are as follows:

Work. Interviewees shared stories of their joy in serving in their work in the ministry. The interviewees indicated that they feel a strong connection with Christ as they work, serving the Lord in their perspective ministries. One of the interviewees, (J), “had

the goal to continue to take divine opportunities, and grow in my faith.” Another interviewee, (D), told of how she was positively impacted in her personal walk with the Lord while serving in her area of ministry (the kitchen, the Saturday shoppers, etc).

Walk. The area of consistently practicing the daily disciplines of faith was reported by the interviewees to be the most challenging to be faithful with on a daily basis. However, one interviewee reported, (S), that the six week daily Bible study impacted his ability to be more faithful to do devotions and to be more faithful each day. Another interviewee, (D), indicated that the project impacted her by allowing her to realize setting aside time every day for devotional time is not hard. One interviewee, (S), reported the impact on his walk with the Lord by stating that, “My walking with the Lord, I need to be more connected to my faith.”

Worship. The interviewees of the Three Ws project are also be faithful worshipers of First Baptist Church who had some moments of inspiration regarding their worship during the project. One interviewee for example, (J), shared, “that I was impacted greatly during the one of the sermons in the series with an awareness gained that worship is not about us as the worshippers, but that worship is about the Lord.” This same interviewee went on to describe the impact of the sermon series on her private worship life. She stated that she was impacted by the sermon series during her daily prayer time with the Lord, and she realized she should be more careful to not come to prayer with just with her request list but that her prayer time should be about spending time with the Lord to worship him.

Online Journaling

Additional qualitative data was gathered utilizing online journaling. All forty-two participants were encouraged to take part in the journaling throughout the six week intervention; however, only nine individuals chose to take part in the online journaling. Six of the nine participants reported what of the Three Ws had the greatest impact on them.

Participant #2

- The pastor took time to hear about our walk with the Lord and our stories which will take our relationship to a deeper level.
- Being able to sit down and tell my story was the best part.
- I think every pastor should take time to hear their people's story.

Participant #3

- The one-on-one conversation regarding one's personal relationship with the Lord is invaluable in addressing the needs of his congregation both individually and collectively. With this knowledge, he can better address the needs of the congregation.
- I truly enjoyed our one-on-one talk.

Participant #6 Two thoughts come to mind in reference to the Three Ws series.

- I enjoyed the devotions as they showed a real/personal example of how God works in our lives.
- One of the sermons in the series reminded me that our worship times are not about us, but are only about worshiping God. Sometimes people get bogged down with what the church is doing for them and it should be the other way around.

Participant #7 Reading the devotionals was very encouraging to me in my personal walk with God.

Participant #8 The devotions caused me to reflect on my own life experiences since coming to Christ and appreciate, and in some cases celebrate, what Christ has done and continues to do in my life, including, but not limited to, my walk, witness, and worship.

Participant #9 It has been difficult for me to set time aside each day for devotionals but with this past six weeks of writings (devotionals) I actually found it much easier; perhaps because you brought a lot of it home and shared things of our own congregations (personal stories).

The final aspect of the impact on the intervention was negative for some of the participants. Following both the pre and post-test, participants dialogued with the researcher regarding the survey test itself. A few of the participants indicated that the pre- and post-test survey had too many questions, was lengthy, and was cumbersome to fill out. A few respondents also indicated that some of the questions were difficult to understand at times.

Summary of Major Findings

The data analysis identifies multiple areas of major findings. The major findings in the following list will also be developed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

1. Individuals need fellowship as it relates to their walk with the Lord.
2. People still respond to the preached word.
3. There is a basic need in the life of the believer to be reminded/challenged in the disciplines of our faith.

4. People indicated a real connection with the use of personal story in the assigned daily devotionals that assisted them in seeing and experiencing the truth of the gospel.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The Three Ws project's intended purpose was to engage the believers of First Baptist Church Evansville, Indiana as they proceed to the next level in their individual journey of faith in three specific areas: in their worship, in their walk with the Lord, and in their work of the ministry. This chapter discusses the overall project, constructing the links between the researcher's personal observations, the literature review, and the biblical as well as theological framework of the project. The chapter will continue by discussing the impact on the practice of ministry, the limitations of the project, and unexpected findings throughout the Three Ws project. The findings will be extrapolated so that the Three Ws project can potentially be used in other churches. Finally, a personal reflection by the researcher will be given about the journey of the Three Ws project.

Major Findings

First Finding—The Power of Fellowship

Observations. The findings of this intervention indicated that believers found strength in connection with the body of Christ as a local unit working together to engage in the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work) project. The quantitative data showed an increase of 14 percent that chose 'strongly agree' from the pre-test to the post-test for survey question: "Q6- I experience the presence of the Lord as I worship collectively with other believers as a local body of Christ."

Fellowship is an important practice in the church that assists the believer in sustaining a vital and victorious Christian experience in their daily lives. The findings of

this intervention draw attention to a greater need within the life of the believer for small group fellowship. The findings further point to the benefit that community provides in the physical as well as spiritual lives of believers in that fellowship can raise the bar of accountability for engaging in spiritual practices of faith such as the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work).

Literature Review. Through the study of leading authors respected for their work in discipleship and spiritual wellbeing, the literature review addressed the topic of fellowship as it relates to the believer's growth in Christ. These authors stress the importance that the practice of fellowship plays in building community and in promoting physical and spiritual wellbeing (Hunsinger, Jan Johnson, Moore). Keener identified the table of fellowship as an important practice in the early church and in the modern church (325). The findings point to the need to be linked together in small group fellowship in the life of the believer both individually as well as in the body of believers as a whole (Moltmann 1748-49). Additionally, the focus group participants were specific in describing the value of fellowship in their individual lives as well as their collective lives as a church. According to Schley, Vanier, Faig, and others, concepts of community life for the individual opens up opportunities of engagement in the believer's daily walk which act as a stimulus of strength and growth.

Biblical Foundations. The biblical text demonstrates the significance of the practice of fellowship in the life of the believer. The New Testament, especially the book of Acts, provided the basis for life as believers in community with each other. The book of Acts also provided direction for the Biblical foundations of this project. The practice of fellowship is interwoven throughout the book of Acts. Chapter 2 of Acts exemplifies

the dire necessity of fellowship that laid the foundational understanding of what a local body of believers are to be for each other. The practice of fellowship came from the biblical understanding of the New Testament Church's practice of fellowship found in Acts 2.42. This example within the Bible contains many accounts of the early church's shared life which provides a clear example for us to follow today in the Church in order to underpin the believer with the kind of strength and support that engages them toward spiritual wellbeing and strength.

Second Finding—The Power of the Word of God

Observations. As I observed the quantitative as well as qualitative data of this intervention, I realized that the Word of God has quantifiable power to change lives. First, the project indicated that the participants responded to the preached word by engaging to a greater degree based on both the quantitative as well as qualitative data. Second, positive changes were noted when considering the spiritual practices of reading the Word as reported by the respondents. An increase was seen in the number of participants' choice of 'strongly agree/ very important' on the Likert scale on the post-test when compared to the pre-test on the quantitative data. Third, the qualitative data participants reported that they were positively impacted by the preached Word in their collective worship of the Lord as well as their daily practice of personal worship.

The participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews also reported various positive changes that occurred following the Three Ws Project. Questions 4 and 5 of the semi-structured interviews revealed that during the sermon series and six week Bible study, several respondents were reminded of the need to be faithful to take time for devotions and reading the Word. One participant shared that it was during the sermon

series that she was moved by the realization that our worship is not about us but the Lord. Another participant reported in the data that it was easier than expected to set aside time for reading the Bible. One participant reported that she found herself more faithful in reading and studying the Bible following the project. Another participant felt (after the project) more aware of the need for daily devotions.

Literature Review. The literature review underscores the importance that the Word of God plays in the spiritual vitality of the life of the believer. The authors from the literature review portrayed the power that the Word of God has to bring as well as the power that the Word has to keep the believer conformed to the image of Christ, especially living in the secular world (Breen, Cho, Hendricks, Schultze). The literature review definitively suggests that the Word of God is an integral regiment in the life of a believer desiring spiritual growth and wellbeing.

Biblical Foundations. The Biblical foundations of this intervention framed the Word of God to be primary in the life of a believer. The concepts of engaging the believer in their journey of faith toward spiritual wellbeing is found in both the Old and New Testament. The stories in Scripture itself provide many examples of individuals engaging in their walks with the Lord that become

s the basis of spiritual wellbeing in the life of the believer. The Word of God lays the foundation for all of the Three Ws in that it directs the believer in a personal engagement of Worship, Walk, and Work.

Wesley held the practice of reading the Bible to be foundational in the spiritual development of the life of the believer. The believer's spiritual growth is tied to Scripture and according to Wesley was the primary source for religious authority (Thorsen 71-72).

Third Finding—The Power of being Reminded/Challenged in the Disciplines of our Faith.

Observations. Both the quantitative and qualitative data identifies value in believers being corporately reminded of the significance of covenanting as a group to focus on the need to seek the Lord in the disciplines of faith. I observed in the findings that the quantitative data clearly indicated a significant change from the pre- to post-test data in attitude, knowledge, and behavior in the forty-two participants. Changes were also evident in the qualitative data reported in the interviews, the focus group, and online journaling the changes identified point to the importance of the practice of being reminded of the need and significance of being faithful daily for the believer in their walk with God. The changes also illustrates the importance of providing a corporate covenant to work together, engaging with each other to grow toward spiritual wellbeing. As I worked with those who participated in the qualitative aspect of the intervention, I found many individuals reported that working together as a church on the Three Ws project helped the participants in their personal faithfulness to the Lord. I was surprised by the reported changes in attitude and knowledge. However, the largest changes identified by the data both in quantitative and qualitative was noted in this area of practice.

Literature Review. The literature review delineates the value of the corporate expression of spiritual practices such as spiritual disciplines in the life of the believer. To engage in greater connectedness to the Lord and each other allows the believer to find God's will and reflect Christ's character (Harper, Helm, Vos). Throughout the literature review, concepts of spiritual disciplines, such as worship, fellowship, reading the Word of God, prayer, fasting, and serving, represents disciplines of faith that were discussed

regarding engaging the believer in the Three Ws (Worship, Walk, and Work). Foster lifts up this concept of corporate experience in seeking the Lord with the idea of, “gathered community” (163).

Biblical Foundations. The Biblical foundations of this intervention points to the importance of corporately focusing on engaging in spiritual wellbeing and growth. Throughout the Old and New Testament, numerous stories reflect the value of corporately seeking the Lord together. From the children of Israel in the desert to the New Testament church seeking the Holy Spirit in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, the scripture details the faithfulness of God to any gathered group of God’s people who take the need seriously to engage in seeking him corporately (Exod. 4.31; Act 2.1).

Fourth Finding—The Power of Personal Story

Observations. I observed several important truths regarding the use of personal story in communicating truth of the gospel. During the project, the participants made multiple comments about the use of personal story in the devotional and how it drew them into the devotional. The participants reported various benefits they found in their time of sharing their personal stories throughout the Three Ws project. First, through the conduit of personal story, the attendees of First Baptist Church become more open about their journeys of faith. Second, participants become connected to me as researcher/pastor in a deeper way and seemed to become more ready to hear my feedback about their practices of the disciplines of faith. Thirdly, participants expressed such appreciation for their story being heard. Through the findings of this intervention, research found that participants indicated that hearing as well as sharing their own story in the interview aspect of the project was encouraging to them.

Literature Review. The literature review places considerable value on the power of story. Throughout the literature review, the concept of the corporate body of Christ engaging with the believer toward spiritual wellbeing and growth is solidly addressed. The authors suggest an indispensable importance in the stories contained not only in scripture but in personal lives, the story within the pages of a devotional, and the verbal story discovered through the fellowship of believers. Additionally, fellowship provides a conduit for reciprocal culpability and engaging the believer's story (Branson, Martinez, Hunsinger, Jan Johnson, Keener, Moore).

Biblical Foundations. The revelation of God in the Scriptures places such emphasis on personal story in the unfolding of God's journey with mankind. The biblical text points to the use of personal story as the conduit of the evidence of God working in a life. Stories of individuals like Abraham and Sarah in the Old Testament to Elisabeth and Zacharias in the New Testament span the movement of God from the first book of the Bible through the personal lives of his people up to the inception of the New Testament church where God continues to use personal stories to encourage and convey the kingdom of God (Gen. 17; Luke 1).

Ministry Implications of the Findings

The Three Ws project can potentially be used in churches to provide a tool for those in ministry to assist believers in engaging in worship, their walk with the Lord, and to take their work of the ministry to the next level. The project has the potential to open a conduit of communication between pastor and laity or ministry leader/spiritual formation director and attendees of any ministry. The project not only has the potential to open dialogue but also to provide opportunities for discipleship, coaching, and accountability.

The final aspect of this project in ministry is encouragement to those in ministry to take time to hear the stories of the lives of those to whom they minister.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study included such factors as scheduling, lack of participants' comfort levels in filling out surveys and written tests, and the number of questions on surveys. One limitation of the study was difficulty in coordinating with other church staff and with the church's calendar in order to schedule the project. Another limitation to the project was the fact that not every one of the participants had access to a computer which meant that the online devotional had to be printed and in some cases even delivered in order for individuals to participate.

Additionally, some of the attendees of First Baptist church were not able to participate as they felt uncomfortable with taking surveys and written tests. The length of the pre- and post-test posed a limitation in that some participants reported that they felt somewhat overwhelmed by the number of questions on both the pre- and post-surveys. Other participants mentioned that some survey questions were somewhat unclear.

The final limitation to the intervention was that the focus group questions did not address questions connected to Research Question 3. As a result, Research Question 3 had limited qualitative data. Additional questions needed to be asked in the focus group, or additional focus groups should have been conducted that address each question.

Unexpected Observations

The overall outcome of the Three Ws project was quite unanticipated in a variety of ways. First, participants were brutally honest with the responses to the pre- and post-test questions as well as in the interview and focus group. The fact that their response did

not always reflect well on themselves or even at times on the researcher/pastor was unanticipated by this researcher. However, on a positive note, the level of honesty in the participants' responses indicated that the participants' level of trust was high enough for them to be real in their responses on each of the three researcher designed tools. This, of course, does not indicate that all participants had the same level of trust or that all participants were honest in their responses. Secondly, the researcher found participants truly like to share their stories. Thirdly, the researcher was also surprised at the high percentage of change in the participants' levels of attitude, knowledge, and behavior identified by the data, especially comparing the pre- and post-survey tools.

Recommendations

There are a few recommendations for future research that came from this project. The first of which is the implementation of a shorter survey to prevent participants from being overwhelmed with the length and to potentially increase participation. I would write fewer, more simplistic survey questions to promote greater comfort and clarity for the participant. The second recommendation would be to look for ways to hear the participants' stories as much as possible. A third recommendation would be to allow the project to continue naturally as it moves throughout the process. Additionally, the researcher should encourage more people to participate in all aspects of the intervention which would potentially enhance the results of the project on the individual believer.

Postscript

Through-out the Three Ws project, the researcher listened to the stories of the faith journeys of the participants. Although the implications of this experience on the participants have been discussed, this experience also profoundly impacted the researcher

in a variety of ways. First, the researcher was made aware of the power of telling a personal story. Second, the researcher found that participants have a great need to be heard by others, particularly by those with whom they are sharing an experience. Last, the practice of corporately pursuing spiritual growth as a church enabled First Baptist Church to move as a congregation toward the goal of greater engagement around the Three Ws of Worship, Walk, and Work.

The final note about the intervention is that the momentum that First Baptist Church experienced as a result of this intervention assisted the church in a variety of ways. First, the project gave the congregation a united goal of engaging around the Three Ws. Second, the project increased the desire for the study of God's word and prayer. Third, the project turned the focus of the congregation to topics that engage the believer in the Three Ws of Worship, Walk, and Work. Finally, the focus group which met once as a part of the intervention desired to continue meeting monthly for the purpose of moving our church to the next level regarding the Three Ws. The eight participants of the focus group have also covenanted to fast together in seeking the Lord's guidance and blessing as we continue to move in the direction of the next level.

APPENDIX A

Congregational Survey Pre and Post Tool

3Ws Project Pre- and Post-Test SurveyMonkey

Q1 I feel the presence of the Lord by the Holy Spirit as I daily practice my faith.

☐ Very Important ☐ Quite Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

Q2 I sense God's presence close daily in times of serving to fulfill my ministry.

☐ Very Important ☐ Quite Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

Q3 I feel most connected to God when I'm serving the Lord.

☐ Very Important ☐ Quite Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

Q4 Worship should bring the believer into the presence of the Lord along with the body of Christ.

☐ Very Important ☐ Quite Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

Q5 I feel connected to God as I engage in fulfilling my mission for the work of the ministry into the world.

☐ Very Important ☐ Quite Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

Q6 I experience the presence of the Lord as I worship collectively with other believers as a local body of Christ.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q7 I am growing in my walk with God daily, as I set aside time to get alone with the Lord.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q8 Worship is a meaningful time that impacts my attitude, behavior, and response to God.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q9 I would describe myself as experiencing fulfillment through serving in my personal ministry.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q10 The church is a community of the people God, through Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, living life with one another locally, connected to one another in order to grow in faith, joined with all other Christians through the world and history.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q11 The purpose for each believer is to carry on the reconciling work of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Gospel and being a light to the world.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q12 Each believer has a specific calling from God to be the practical example of the gospel in their daily life in Christ.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q13 Worship is a corporate opportunity for the people of God, through Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, to seek the Lord.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q14 Worship is where believers are gathered to bring the sacrifice of praise to the Lord.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q15 The organizational structure of the church should be to build up the internal body of Christ to equip the saints for external ministry.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q16 Church is the assembled or gathered disciples of Jesus Christ to worship the Lord.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q17 God has called the believer to be used in ministry to the world in fulfillment of the Great Commission.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Q18 Served at/with/through the church in ministry to the world.

☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Q19 Been present for worship with/through my local church to nurture my faith.

☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Q20 Built genuine relationships with people who are growing in their faith so as to grow in my own faith (small group fellowship).

☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Q21 Spend time with the awareness and intentionality of living out my faith as a witness of Jesus Christ.

☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Q22 Spend time in prayer alone with the Lord for the purpose of cultivating my faith.

☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Q23 Spend time reading the Bible for the purpose of cultivating my faith.

☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

3Ws Project Pre-Post-Test SurveyMonkey

Q24 Spend time in personal time reading a devotional for the purpose of cultivating my faith

☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Q25 Engage in serving the Lord at/with/through the ministry God has called me to fulfill.

☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Q26 Attend worship in and through my local church to nurture my faith.

☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Questions

1. If you had to classify our church, what would it be? What do you believe are the contributing aspects to moving in the direction of the 3w's? **Behavior**
2. Following the project, what does our church need in moving to the next level in the 3 w's? **Attitude**
3. Describe the situation of our church, both environment and the people. Now, what are the perceptions of the surrounding community—think of how people talk about the church. **Knowledge**
4. What do you feel is God's heart is for you in the vision of the 3w's? (Biblical themes?) **Attitude**
5. What do you believe is the church's next step in growing in the 3w's?
6. What barriers do you face in leadership and organization in mobilizing our congregation into the vision of the 3w's? **Behavior**
7. Based on your understanding of the 3 w's, make three goals for the future. **Knowledge**

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

1. What were your initial inspirations and motivations to become a Christian? **Attitude**
2. Reflecting on your entire experience as a believer, remember a time you felt most alive, motivated, excited about your faith. **Attitude**
3. Describe circumstances and your journey with Christ at that point.
Attitude/Behavior
4. Following the 3w's project, have you noticed any changes in your attitude toward your practices of faith? Please describe. **Attitude**
5. Following the 3 w's project, have you altered your practice of daily disciplines?
Behavior
6. What was the most impactful throughout this project in your understanding of your walk with the Lord? **Knowledge**
7. What have been the most important experiences, lessons in belief, or steps of faith that have occurred for you in your walk with God following this project of the 3W's? **Knowledge**
8. What three goals do you have for your future walk with God following this project?
Behavior

APPENDIX D

Ministry Intervention

The 3W's Project-Sermon #1

A Profitable Work

Matthew 25

The 3W's Project-Sermon #2

A personal Work

Ephesians 4:12

The 3W's Project-Sermon #3

A Purposeful Walk

Proverbs 8:32-35

The 3 W's Project-Sermon #4

A Powerful Walk

1 John 4:12-19

The 3W's Project Sermon series #5

A Positively Glorifying Worship

Isaiah 40 Part 1

The 3W's Project-Sermon #6

Worship

Isaiah 40 Part 2

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

The 3 W's Project

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Steven Claspell from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you have participated in the ministry of First Baptist Church.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in a six week Bible study, or the six week sermon series or both. The project will be conducted at First Baptist Church, 320 Cherry Street in Evansville, Indiana. All participants are on a volunteer basis only which means participants will not receive any payment for being involved in the 3 W's Project.

If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

You will be asked to complete a pre and post-test, some participants may be asked to take part in a small focus group, or an interview. Any paper documents for this study will be kept in a locked file cabinet behind locked doors during the project which will include the data collection and analysis then all documents will be properly destroyed. My personal I-phone may be used for the purpose of recording the focus group as well as the interviews, which is password protected and the recordings will be kept confidential except for the purpose of data collection and analysis.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Steven Claspell who can be reached at steven.claspell@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. When participating in focus groups, although confidentiality will be encouraged it cannot be guaranteed due to the presence of other participants.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Steven Claspell at steven.claspell@asburyseminary.edu.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

APPENDIX F

Confidentiality Agreement

The 3 W's Project
Confidentiality Agreement

This form may be used for individuals who will be assisting the researcher with a variety of research tasks (e.g., audio or video recording, transcribing data, etc.)

1. Vada Chrockrem will be assisting the researcher by Transcriptionist (specific job description, e.g., being an interpreter/translator)

I agree to abide by the following guidelines regarding confidentiality:

1. Hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual(s) that may be revealed during the course of performing research tasks throughout the research process and after it is complete.
2. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher(s)*.
3. Keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession (e.g., using a password-protected computer).
4. Return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher(s)* when I have completed the research tasks.
5. After consulting with the *Researcher(s)*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher(s)* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive) upon completion of the research tasks.

VADA CHROCKREM
(Print Name)

Vada Chrockrem 10-3-2019
(Signature) (Date)

Researcher(s)

STEVEN Claspell
(Print Name)

[Signature] 10-3-19
(Signature) (Date)

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