

Note: This Work has been made available by the authority of the copyright owner solely for the purpose of private study and research and may not be copied or reproduced except as permitted by the copyright laws of Canada without the written authority from the copyright owner.

Daly, Keith James Patrick. "Introducing and Assessing the Spiritual Discipline of Morning and Evening Prayer to the Congregation at Christian Baptist Church, Newmarket." D. Min., Tyndale University College & Seminary, 2014.

Tyndale University College and Seminary

Introducing and Assessing the Spiritual Discipline
of Morning and Evening Prayer to the
Congregation at Christian Baptist Church, Newmarket

A Thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry
Tyndale Seminary

By

Keith James Patrick Daly

Toronto, Canada

October 2014

Copyright © 2014 by Keith James Patrick Daly
All rights reserved

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Annette. Annette you have been very patient and supportive of this phase of our journey together. Thank you for your wise counsel on many occasions.

I would also like to dedicate this to the people of Christian Baptist Church, Newmarket. May you continue to be faithful to the calling the Lord has placed on you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to my wife Annette, ever patient and supportive. Our wonderful children and their spouses Philip and Bonnie, Tim and Sara, Emily and Jeff, Fiona and Jeff, Claire and Ben for their encouraging words and pearls of wisdom.

Murray and Karin Stovell, you have been wonderful friends and supporters in ministry. Your friendship means so much to me. Murray, you are a true fisher of men.

Dr. Paul Bramer, Dr. Mark Chapman and Dr. David Russell, you have been very encouraging, mentors and teachers. Thank you for all the advice along the way.

ABSTRACT

A project was designed to introduce the spiritual discipline of morning and evening prayer to the congregation at Christian Baptist Church in Newmarket, Ontario to enhance the vitality of the congregation.

A prayer guide was used to guide the participants during the forty day exercise. Interviews and a questionnaire were used to capture and document the participants' prayer practices before and after the forty days. The analysis of the participants' responses provided the research with a before and after picture of the participant's prayer lives.

Eighteen of the participants who completed the forty days indicated an increase in the regularity of their prayers and a deeper engagement with God in their daily prayer practices.

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF TABLES	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Why Do a Project on Prayer?	2
The Assessment	4
Death or Re-Birth.....	5
New Priorities	7
A Place to Begin	10
Forty Days of Prayer.....	11
Summary.....	13
CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS	14
What is Prayer?.....	15
The Old Testament Record.....	16
Jesus and Prayer.....	18
The Intimacy of Prayer	19
Persistence in Prayer.....	20
Solitude in Prayer.....	21
The New Testament Church	23
The Apostle Paul’s Call to Prayer.....	24
Pray Without Ceasing	25
Obstacles to Prayer	26
The Importance of Prayer	28
Morning and Evening Prayer.....	28
Times of Prayer.....	31
Prayer Books.....	34
Morning Prayer Themes	35
Evening Prayer.....	37
Ignatian Prayer of Examen	37
The Nine Step Examen	39
Summary.....	41
CHAPTER THREE: PRECEDENT LITERATURE AND CASES	43
Personal Prayer	43
The Prayer Guide.....	44
Congregations that Chose to Pray.....	47
The New Testament Church and Prayer.....	48
Yiodo Full Gospel Church in South Korea.....	50
Brooklyn Tabernacle.....	51

First Baptist Church Buffalo, Missouri.....	52
Coventry Cathedral, England.....	54
St. Nicholas’s Anglican Church, Durham, England	56
Azusa Street, Los Angeles, California.....	58
Goshen Baptist Church, West Chester, Pennsylvania	59
International Methodist Church - Hong Kong.....	61
Summary.....	63
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS AND METHODOLOGY	65
The Project Purpose.....	65
The Project Plan.....	66
Phase 1: Preparation of Prayer Guide	67
Phase 2: Promotion and Recruitment.....	67
A False Start – Avoided.....	68
Criteria for Participation	69
Invitation to Participate.....	69
Phase 3: Orientation and Training	70
Phase 4: First Interviews and Questionnaire.....	72
Participant Interviews	73
Structure of Prayer Scale	75
Phase 5: Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer	77
Phase 6: Second Interviews and Questionnaire	78
Phase 7: Data Gathering and Analysis.....	78
Action Research.....	78
Analysis.....	81
Coding.....	82
Ethical Review	83
Summary	84
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	86
The Analysis	89
Before the Study Period.....	90
Analysis of Interviews	90
Prayer Life Before the Program.....	91
Categorization of Prayer Practice	92
Motives for Participating in the Prayer Study.....	94
What are you anticipating?	97
After the Study Period	100
What Changed for the Participants?	100
What Happens Going Forward?.....	103
Qualitative Summary	108
The Quantitative Analysis	108
Structure of Prayer Scale Responses.....	110

Evening Prayer	113
The Pastor-Researcher	115
Summary	116
CHAPTER SIX: OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS	119
An Appropriate Project	120
The Priority of Prayer	121
A Move of the Spirit	122
A Worthwhile Process	123
Considerations for Future Research	123
Discerning the Need	124
Narrow the Focus	126
Leave Room for the Holy Spirit	128
Challenges of the Dual Role	129
Summary	130
APPENDICES	132
Appendix A: The Prayer Guide	133
Appendix B: George Bullard’s Life Stages of a Congregation	190
Appendix C: Ethical Review and TCPS Certificate	191
Appendix D: Interview Questions	195
Appendix E: Structure of Prayer Scale	196
Appendix F: Participant Informed Consent	198
REFERENCE LIST	201

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. A model for congregational engagement	9
Figure 2. Action research cycles	79

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Structure of Prayer Scale – Prayer Categories.....	75
Table 2. Categories of prayer practice	93
Table 3. Reasons to participate aligned with current prayer discipline.	96
Table 4. Prayer practice following the study	101
Table 5. Comparison of prayer practice before and after the study	102
Table 6. Prayer practice going forward.....	104
Table 7. Prayer focus before the study.....	110
Table 8. Prayer focus after the study	111
Table 9. Prayer focus comparison before and after the study.....	112
Table 10. Responses to Evening Prayer.....	114

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Martin Luther said that God expected Christians to pray, “As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray.”

-- Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*

This thesis is about the experience of introducing the spiritual discipline of morning and evening prayer to a congregation that had experienced thirty years of steady decline in members. The congregation was Christian Baptist Church in Newmarket, Ontario where I had been the Pastor since 2009. The project engaged the members of the congregation in a season of focused prayer. The objective was to develop the discipline and practice of morning and evening prayer in the expectation that the participants' prayer lives would be enhanced. A longer term expectation is that this would positively impact the spiritual vibrancy of the congregation. The project participants were asked to set aside times for morning and evening prayer over a period of six weeks. The program was called *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer*.

This introduction outlines the context in which I was engaged in pastoral ministry. The demographics of the congregation and the community in which we reside and a view of the congregation's history are presented. Chapter two

explains the theological rationale for deciding why prayer was believed to be the appropriate starting point for this research and why forty days of morning and evening prayer was chosen as the means to engage the congregation.

Research shows that prayer precedes renewal and that prayer is essential to the spiritual life of a congregation. A selection of precedent literature and cases is presented in chapter three. Chapter four describes the research methods and methodologies. Both qualitative and quantitative data was included in the research. The findings and the analysis from the research is presented in chapter five and chapter six describes the outcomes and the conclusions drawn from this project.

Why Do a Project on Prayer?

Before launching the program which was called *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer*, I had tried several initiatives with the congregation. These were chosen because I had experienced them as effective in the ongoing development and maturing in my own spiritual growth and in the growth of others. I had expectations that these initiatives would bring a sense of unity and purpose to the congregation. These initiatives included Men's Breakfasts with guest speakers, Small Groups to provide a forum for bible study and fellowship, The Alpha Course, a clothing drive for the local Youth Shelter, and Sunday Morning Adults Sunday School Classes. People were asked to participate with readings and prayers in the Sunday morning worship service, Prayer Hours were started, in the daytime for seniors and in the evening for those who worked during the day. These initiatives received a modest level of response and enthusiastic

participation. I had come from a vibrant and growing congregation where my own spiritual growth and sense of calling developed into a call to full time Pastoral ministry. I discerned, through prayer, observation and discussion with a few members, a need to lead the congregation at Christian Baptist in Newmarket, at the individual level, into a deeper spiritual life. The Doctor of Ministry program gave me the opportunity to consider using the spiritual discipline of morning and evening prayer, also called fixed-hour prayer, the Divine Offices or The Divine Hours, to encourage the congregants in this way.

Richard Osmer, in his book, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, asks four fundamental questions. These are questions ministry leaders need to ask. These questions are, What is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? and “How might we respond?” (Osmer 2008). The earlier initiatives I tried began to answer Osmer’s first two questions, “What is going on?” and “Why is this going on?” My early research by observation and leading the congregation at Christian Baptist Church in a pastoral role led me to consider Osmer’s other questions, “What ought to be going on?” and “How might we respond?” Since prayer draws us to the heart of God (Foster 1992) and “daily prayer draws us daily to the table of the Lord...” (Campbell 2003, 95) prayer, then, was an appropriate place to start.

Ministry Context

Christian Baptist Church in Newmarket, Ontario celebrated its 191st anniversary as a congregation in November 2013. I was called to the pastoral ministry at Christian Baptist in December 2009. Having come from a forty year

career in Information Technology and, in recent years, Project Management, my natural tendency is to collect information about the task at hand to be fully appraised of the context and any outstanding issues. I did this at Christian Baptist by researching the congregation's Annual Reports going back thirty years and Statistics Canada census data for Newmarket for the same period. I also spoke with the congregation's leaders and former leaders to understand the history of the congregation.

From 1982 to 2012 the number of active members had steadily declined from 160 to approximately 60. During this same period of time the population of the community, Newmarket, more than doubled. In the same period baptisms at Christian Baptist averaged less than one a year. The congregation was very comfortable with each other and had various events throughout the year for their mutual fellowship. The mid-week prayer group was poorly attended and eventually ceased. There were no fellowship or study groups meeting during the week. There was one senior's group that met monthly for lunch. It seemed this congregation did not meet together much beyond Sunday morning. My Pastoral concern was to find out why in this congregation there seemed to be "...a dryness...a lack of excitement in the people's faith and worship..." (Illsley 2005, 143). An assessment of the congregation's spiritual condition was conducted.

The Assessment

In the fall of 2011, the church leaders, those on the Board, Deacons, Ministry and Administration Teams, met for a one-day retreat. At that retreat I

presented the Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development model developed by George Bullard (Bullard 2005) (Appendix B). This model identifies ten stages of congregational life from infancy to old-age using the human stages of life as descriptors: birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, maturity, empty-nesters, retirement, old-age and death (Bullard 2005, 79). Bullard has identified *four organizing principles* that he uses to assess where a congregation is in the Life Stages of development: vision, relationships, programs and management. Each congregational stage in the model has a unique profile. A congregation at “birth” would typically have a big vision but very little in the way of relationships, programs and management processes so they would have the profile “Vrpm,” strong in vision, weaker in relationships, programs and management, indicating their early stage of development. A congregation at maturity would be stronger in all four organizing principles hence they would have the profile “VRPM.”

Death or Re-Birth

The congregational leaders determined, through workshops and discussions at the one-day retreat, that Christian Baptist Church was at the “Old Age” stage of congregational life. They identified that vision was small, relationships beyond the congregation were minimal, programs were internally focused but management was strong. They gave themselves the profile “vprM.” On the Bullard Life Stages, this placed the congregation at Christian Baptist Church at “Old Age.” The stage following Old Age is Death. Bullard describes Old Age as follows:

Old Age is that period when *Management* is the only one of the four organizing principles that is dominant. *Vision, relationships* and *programs* are no longer dominant. *Management* is the only thing left to control the direction of the congregation. Old Age is that stage of a congregation's life cycle when it is functioning on fumes rather than being fueled by *Vision*. The habit or pattern of gathering for worship and fellowship is the primary factor keeping the congregation going. (Bullard 2005, 85)

Bullard further describes a congregation at old age as being at "subsistence level" (Bullard 2005, 85). He does offer hope. Even though the stage after Old Age is Death, Bullard declares, "Death is not inevitable for any congregation...and often not desirable" (Bullard 2005, 86-89). The observation is also made that "aging congregations are often dysfunctional" and if they wait too long into the Old Age stage "they are unlikely to experience a positive, successful future" (Bullard 2005, 89).

Christian Baptist, by their own assessment, was at the Old Age stage of congregational life. On Bullard's model the next stage is death and the church closes its doors. My Pastoral concern was what happens in a congregation at Old Age that causes them to continue the slide to death and is there something that could be done to change the direction at Christian Baptist.

Thom Rainer, in his book, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Rainer 2014), writes about what makes a church slowly decline past old age to death. Rainer notes that decline is usually slow, so slow that the congregation does not have any urgency to change (Rainer 2014, 13). Rainer identifies four types of churches and offers the following percentages: Healthy Churches (10%), Symptoms of Sickness (40%), Very Sick (40%) and Dying (10%).

Rainer's research shows there are many areas in a church's life that fall into decline before the church closes its doors. For some congregations it is the facilities. As the church building ages the focus becomes keeping the building in good repair. For other congregations the decline is seen in the once vibrant ministries and the outward focus of the church (Rainer 2014, 13). One area of decline that Rainer lists is prayer. He notes that it is not coincidental that prayer impacts the health of a church. "Not coincidentally, prayer and the health of the church went hand in hand. When the church is engaged in meaningful prayer, it becomes the cause and the result of greater church health" (Rainer 2014, 66). In the research for his book, Rainer interviewed members of fourteen congregations that had ceased to function as a congregation. A former congregation member of a church that had closed stated, "We stopped taking prayer seriously. And the church started dying" (Rainer 2014, 68). Rainer noted that the issue was not limited to congregational prayer times but also individual prayer, "The decline is in the prayer lives of the members who remain" (Rainer 2014, 13). Christian Baptist was at "Old Age" and the congregational prayer meetings had ceased what should a congregation do at this point?

New Priorities

Knowing we are at the Old Age stage of congregational life and preparing to do something about it are two different things. So, for Christian Baptist Church, the next question was, "Where do we go from here?" Bullard proposes that the first steps "revolve around raising the morale of the congregation" (Bullard 2005, 100). He states that the congregational leaders should, "Work on deepening

relationships with God with one another and with the context in which the congregation serves” (Bullard 2005, 100).

In preparation for the retreat the planning team had decided to use the Bullard Life Cycle as the method for the assessment of our Life Stage and to follow that assessment with workshops based on three questions: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Now? Where Are We Going? These questions were posed to the participants at the workshop so they could look back at the history of the congregation, look at the present state of the congregation and make some determination about their desired direction for the future. Workshops were facilitated by the Pastor and other leaders around these three questions encouraging the participants to discuss what they believed should be the congregational priorities going forward. Three priorities emerged from these workshops. These priorities were: Spiritual Life – to work together to develop a deeper sense of our spiritual lives as a congregation; Worship Life - to work on putting more variety and life into our times of worship together, and Missional Life – to reconnect with the community in new ways as we had done in the past. A model we called, *Gathering, Growing, Going*, (see figure 1), was developed to visualise the balance of these three important elements of congregational life: Spiritual Life; Worship Life; Missional Life.

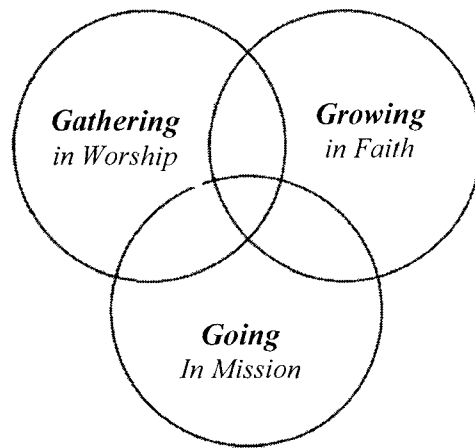


Figure 1. A model for congregational engagement

Gathering is the Worship Life of the congregation, *Growing* is the spiritual, faith life of individuals in the congregation and *Going* is the answer to the missional call to be witnesses of Christ's Kingdom to the world. This view of our priorities was affirmed at the congregation's Annual Meeting four months later. These three elements are in alignment with Bullard's proposed approach. He states that the congregational leaders should, "Work on deepening relationships with God [*Growing*], with one another [*Gathering*] and with the context in which the congregation serves [*Going*]" (Bullard 2005, 100). While all three elements need to be addressed I chose Spiritual Life [*Growing*] as my initial focus. This, I believed, had the potential for broader and longer lasting impact on my congregation. Bullard challenges congregation leaders with the question, "Now that I know where my congregation is on the life cycle, how do I provide positive, spiritually based change leadership?" (Bullard 2005, 87). Having come from a long career in the business world, including facilitating change management in

major corporations, I was tempted to begin with visioning exercises and similar business based initiatives. Bullard agrees that using business models for congregational formation is inappropriate (Bullard 2005, 115). I chose a spiritual approach. I chose prayer because it is "...our invitation to God to intervene in the affairs of earth, our agreement with His sovereign will, our request for Him to work His ways in the world" (Munroe 2002, 236). Since the leaders had identified the congregation at "Old Age" and identified spiritual growth as a priority I chose prayer as the focus of my project.

A Place to Begin

Jane Vennard, pastor and spiritual director writes, "I believe God is calling all of us into deeper prayer and is longing for our congregations to become places of prayer" (Vennard 2005, xix). Prayer is the personal, intimate communication language between God and humans. This is explored in detail in chapter two. I chose individual, private prayer as my starting point to begin with the personal individual spiritual life of the congregants. From this I anticipated that there might begin a spiritual renewal in the life of the congregation. I needed to create an opportunity to encourage the congregants into discovering their own spiritual condition. It was my hope that by beginning with individual prayer my congregation might "...discover that by praying we learn to pray" (Foster 1992, 13). This would lead to a deeper spiritual life, one of the three priorities the congregation leaders had identified, and possibly to greater involvement in congregational life. I invited the congregation into a season of prayer, to invite as many as desired to begin the personal transformation that might lead our

congregation out of “Old Age” and into a time of rejuvenation, even re-birth. I had to see if the desire to pray was there. Timothy Jones writes, “The desire to pray itself is all we need to start” (Jones 2005, 7). So I designed a program to introduce the congregation to pray for a period of forty days.

Forty Days of Prayer

The period of prayer needed to be long enough to establish the discipline but not so long that people would be reluctant to commit to the program. The period of forty days and even forty years is a common period in biblical stories. This number of days or years seems to represent a time of transition, a time lapse between the old and the new. Jesus fasted and prayed for forty days in the wilderness before beginning His public ministry (Matthew 4; Luke 4); the flood lasted forty days (Genesis 7:4), the Israelites wandered for forty years (Numbers 14:34). Jonah’s warning was “forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed” (Jonah 3:4); Jesus appeared to the disciples over a period of forty days after the resurrection (Acts 1:3). A season of forty days then, from a biblical perspective, is representative of a time of preparation and transition.

The next decision was what form or style of prayer would be suitable for the participants. My intention was to draw the participants into a season of prayer so that the discipline might become a habit. I had to choose a prayer form suitable for the participants and appropriate for the program that I called, *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer*.

My own background in prayer comes from the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions. Both these denominations have a tradition of set prayers,

prewritten prayers that are used by congregations and individuals. Such forms of set prayers are to be found in many books on fixed hour prayer. My research into the history and practice of the fixed-hour prayer prompted me to consider not just a daily devotional guide but to make the program include both morning and evening prayer. This would bring the participants to the practice of beginning and ending the day in focused prayer. Arthur Boers calls these the key times for spiritual growth and a “return to ancient wisdom” (Boers 2003, 12). This I believed would draw the participants into a deeper spiritual life leading to a stronger desire to be more engaged in the life and calling of the church. My congregation was a Baptist congregation. Baptists generally do not use prayer books and our congregational prayers are extemporaneous, not pre-written. So I decided to not select my prayers from any of the many prayer books that are available but instead to prepare a prayer guide that would bring focus to the participant’s prayers but avoid having them read prayers that someone else had written. This would be in keeping with the congregation’s practice of extemporaneous prayers. I decided to write a weekly devotional guide with one area of focus for each of the six weeks (forty days). The details of this devotional guide are included in chapter four.

The program was designed to engage the participants in prayer in such a way that they drew closer to God. It was anticipated that this renewed closeness to the Lord would result in a renewed engagement in the life of the congregation. The findings showed that most of the participants did indeed engage in prayer that drew them closer to God and into a fresh appreciation of the discipline of morning

and evening prayer. An additional result from the program is that many of the participants have reengaged in the life and ministry of the church in new ways. The much needed change has started and a new vibrancy in the congregation is emerging.

Summary

It is clear from the history of the church that congregations grow and decline. There are many reasons why a congregation eventually closes its doors and ceases to be a representation of the Body of Christ in a community. Rainer's book has documented several common reasons for this (Rainer 2014). As a new pastor I did not want my congregation to follow a path that leads to closing the church doors. Rather I understood my calling to Christian Baptist was to bring them into a new and revitalized understanding of God's call on them to reach the community.

The following chapters will outline the theological rationale for prayer and the precedent cases that suggest that a congregation in decline, of any denomination, might look at prayer as a starting point for renewal, rebirth, revival or whatever word is appropriate to the situation that will put fresh life and purpose into the congregation. The program of morning and evening prayer is explained in chapter four and the findings and conclusions in chapters five and six.

CHAPTER TWO:

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

...the greatest challenge facing the church of Jesus Christ today, and therefore every local congregation is motivating the people of God to engage in sincere, honest, fervent prayer.

-- Stanley Grenz, *Prayer: A Cry for the Kingdom*

This chapter addresses the theological foundations for engaging a congregation in a program of forty days of morning and evening prayer. God's people have been engaged in prayer since the early days of the biblical story (Genesis 4:26). Throughout scripture the people of God are seen praying, calling on their God. Men and women of faith have called upon God in many different ways and for many different reasons and causes. Since early in the biblical story people began setting times aside for prayer and the practice of regular hours of prayer began. The variety of prayers and the times and locations of those prayers provide us with the scriptural basis for all disciples of Jesus to do likewise and for pastors to encourage members of their congregations in the same manner. This chapter shows the theological basis for setting aside certain times in the day for prayer. Jesus' prayer life is presented as our primary example for developing the spiritual discipline of prayer. The chapter includes the Apostle Paul's call to

prayer in the congregations where he ministered. The New Testament church is explored as another example of the practice of prayer. The Prayer Guide I developed for morning prayer is introduced and the Ignatian Prayer of Examen is introduced as the framework for evening prayer. First I explore the various forms and practices of prayer from scripture and Christian authors. This will provide the framework for the discipline of morning and evening prayer.

What is Prayer?

C. Peter Wagner describes prayer as abiding with God. Prayer draws us into intimacy with the father, “It is a personal relationship” (Wagner 1993, 38). As we enter into prayer we enter into that most intimate of relationships, that between the Creator and the created. It is the will of God that we enter into this relationship through prayer. Donald S. Whitney writes that those who have brought themselves unto the authority of Christ and the scriptures, “know that the will of God is for us to pray” (Whitney 1991, 63). It is more than just God’s will that we be praying and conversing with Him. He is grieved when we do not. Richard Foster says that God “aches over our distance and preoccupation” (Foster 1992, 1). Foster further explores God’s view of our lack in prayer as God mourning and grieving and weeping, “He mourns that we do not draw near to him. He grieves that we have forgotten him. He weeps over our obsession with muchness and manyness. He longs for our presence” (Foster 1992, 1).

Prayer, then, is the intimate communication between the child of God and their loving heavenly Father. Prayer is a conversation between two persons, “Prayer is communication” (Spilka 2013, 11), “Prayer is direct communication

with God.” (Grenz 2005, 27). Prayer is also a relationship between two persons. Prayer is intimate. Prayer is personal. “At its barest definition, prayer is simply the language of relationship between us and God” (Jones 2005, 6). Prayer then is the personal, intimate communication language between God and humans. The people of God will want to be in relationship with God, they need to be in a relationship with God. This need for a relationship with God is met through daily prayer. “People of prayer say their prayers - every day” (Benson 2008, 97). Prayer is part of our spiritual life, not the only part, but a significant part. As Richard Foster says, “Prayer catapults us into the frontier of spiritual life” (Foster 1988, 33).

The Old Testament Record

The first record of dialogue between God and humans – between the Creator and the created – is found in Genesis 3. God had spoken to Adam in Genesis 2:16 and since it appears that God was in the habit of, “...walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8), then Adam and Eve had daily fellowship and communication with God. This close friendship would include dialogue of some kind but the need for prayer was not there – they were in each other’s company on a daily basis. Interestingly, there is no record of dialogue between God and Adam and Eve until after the fall.

This dialogue takes place in Genesis 3:8-24. While this was communication between God and humans it was more like a court of law than prayer. The disobedient man and his wife were being expelled from God’s intimate presence. No longer would they have close fellowship with their creator.

Their sin had brought separation and distance between those who were once in such close relationship. The first time scripture references prayer is much later.

It is not until a little later, when the third generation from Adam is born, we read in Genesis 4:26, "Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD." Very early in human history God's created creatures, made in His image, begin to call back to God. They had experienced the separation and now start to call on Him. It is part of our make up to want to be in communion with our Creator.

After the flood, Noah, recognizing his deliverance through the hand of God, is no sooner off the ark when he immediately sets about making an offering to his God, "Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it (Genesis 8:20). Later, in the Abraham story, we read, "Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called upon the name of the LORD, the Eternal God" (Genesis 21:33). Later again in the Old Testament we read that burnt offerings and sacrifices were to be offered at certain times and in designated places.

Only then would God's presence be revealed with His people. When we would deem to access God, when we set ourselves to prayer, we must come to this activity with a degree of humility, with a sense of priority and with purpose. Our primary purpose, our first calling, is to be Christ like. We must "...grow up into Christ (Ephesians 4:15)." If we are to be like Jesus then we must pray (Whitney 1991, 62). We will not be like Jesus if we do not pray (Whitney 1991, 65).

Since our race fell in Eden we have an innate need to be reconnected with God. And the life of prayer, that seeking of the Lord's presence, emerged in the life of humans. In times of difficulty people of God sought God's guidance and protection.

Nehemiah was faced with the prospect of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and so he set to prayer and fasting for three months waiting for God to move (Nehemiah 1). When God moved and Nehemiah was at work on the walls of the city he came up against fierce opposition. Nehemiah prayed. Again and again he sought God in prayer times of difficulty (Nehemiah 1:6, 11; 2:4; 4:9; 6:9; 11:17). Throughout the Psalms and the Prophets there is a repeated calling on God in prayer and exhorting the people of God to pray. Evening and Morning are often mentioned as times for sacrifice and prayer.

Jesus and Prayer

The New Testament shows us that prayer was a primary feature of Jesus' life and ministry. Jesus prayed and He prayed often. He prayed at His baptism (Luke 3:21). He prayed all night before choosing the disciples (Luke 6:12). When He was praying in private He questioned the disciples about His identity with the people (Luke 9:18). On one occasion Jesus took Peter, James and John, to a mountain to pray (Luke 9:28). In spite of others' protest He welcomed and He prayed for children (Matthew 19:13). He prayed for the disciples (John 17:9) and specifically for Peter prior to Peter's denial of Him (Luke 22:31-32). Even at the cross Jesus was in prayer for those who were killing Him (Luke 23:34) and His last words were a prayer of submission to His Father (Luke 23:46). Jesus prayed

for others and He prayed for us (John 17:20). Jesus' lived a life of prayer. This commitment to prayer did not go unnoticed by His disciples.

The disciples saw Jesus' commitment to prayer and they asked Jesus to teach them to pray. The disciples could have asked Jesus to teach them how to walk on water or how to change water into wine or how to raise the dead. They did not ask Him to teach them these things. The scripture records that the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). In the prayer Jesus taught His Disciples, the Lord's Prayer, we hear the words, "...give us this day our daily bread..." and "...deliver us from evil..." The clear message here is that we are to be in daily prayer because we are in daily need of God's provision and protection.

The writer of Hebrews confirms for us the focus Jesus had on prayer, "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission" (Hebrews 5:7). Prayer was important to Jesus. We, then, as disciples of Jesus, since we have taken up the call to follow Him (John 12:26) should follow Him in our prayer lives too. Prayer should be important to anyone who calls themselves a Disciple of Jesus. Jesus' life and ministry as revealed in the gospels shows us that Jesus prayed and He prayed frequently. Jesus' prayers also teach us about the intimacy of prayer.

The Intimacy of Prayer

Three times in the New Testament the Aramaic word "Abba" is used in addressing God in prayer. Jesus at a time of great distress in the garden of

Gethsemane pleaded, “Abba, Father...” (Mark 14:36). This word, Abba, is a particularly intimate form of address used by a small child to his or her father (Ladd 2001, 85). The use of this form of address in Jesus’ prayer to His Father shows us the closeness Jesus had with God in His prayers. We do not use such intimate forms of address with someone with whom we are not close. Paul says that through Jesus we do have access to the Father (Ephesians 2:8, Romans 5:2). Later Paul uses that intimate expression “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6) indicating that we too can have that level of intimacy with God. It means we can develop a close, intimate relationship with our creator God and Father. Jesus’ example show us that God is not distant, remote or impersonal. Rather, He draws us into a close intimate relationship with Him through prayer. W. Bingham Hunter writes, “In short, *abba* signifies the essence of what it means to have a personal relationship with God” (Hunter 1986, 98). J. I. Packer, in the forward to Timothy Jones’ book, *The Art of Prayer: A Simple Guide to Conversation with God*, writes, “...prayer is at heart children’s conversation with their heavenly Father” (Jones 2005, xi). There can be intimacy in prayer that models a small child speaking with their father. Our prayer life should reflect our ongoing, intimacy with God. To develop this level of intimacy with God we need to be persistent in our prayer life.

Persistence in Prayer

Jesus talked of being persistent in prayer. In Luke 18 Jesus tells a parable of the persistent widow who pestered the Judge for justice. Jesus used this parable to show how His Disciples should be persistent in prayer. The life of the Christian

then is to be persisting in prayer. Thomas Aquinas, the thirteenth century theologian, says, “So Christ as man and having a human will *needed* to pray” (Aquinas 1989, 505) (italics mine). If then the very Son of God needed to pray we then, who have a human will and are called by His name, must need to pray more. Since Jesus lived His life in frequent or even constant prayer, and He the very Son of God, then we who claim to be His disciples should also live lives of prayer. The practice of prayer should be central to the life of everyone who calls themselves a disciple of Jesus. From early in the morning and throughout the day we should be consciously aware of God’s presence and be able to be in conversation with Him. To be found often in prayer is the mark of a Christian life. Scripture points clearly to the need and practice of prayer. But how should we pray, where should we pray, when should we pray?

Solitude in Prayer

In the gospels we read of Jesus praying alone as the first part of the day, “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mark 1:35). Jesus often prayed alone, “...Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16). In Matthew 14:23 and Luke 6:12 we again see Jesus seeking out solitary places to pray, “After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone” (Matthew 14:23) and, “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God” (Luke 6:12). In the quiet of the early morning before the busyness of the day encroached, Jesus sought out a quiet and lonely place to be quite alone with

His Father. At the end of the busyness he again sought solitude for prayer. Jesus models for us the importance of alone time with God.

Jesus was a teacher and He taught by example. If we are followers of Jesus we will learn from His prayer life and practices how to develop our own Christ-like prayer lives. Jesus lived a life of prayer, in constant communication with His Heavenly Father. We can learn from Him. Indeed we may "...sit with Jesus in the school of prayer" (Morley 2007, 53). The way Jesus prayed can teach us important truths for our own prayer lives. Jesus modeled solitude in prayer. To develop a disciplined prayer life we have to get to a quiet place to be quite alone with God in prayer. The beginning and end of the day are mentioned often as the times when Jesus went away by Himself to pray alone. Jesus sought out quiet places for His prayer times. Phyllis Tickle, author of the series of Prayer Books called *The Divine Hours*, declares, "...prayer is always a place as well as an action" (Tickle 2007, viii). So we should be setting aside the time and place for prayer.

Jesus demonstrated the need to get away and be alone with God. He commanded this mode of prayer, "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father..." (Matthew 6:6). The image here is one of privacy, seclusion, being quite alone. This gives focus to the place of prayer; it is just God and the one who is praying in close communication, one on one. The room, or closet in some translations, is a metaphor for getting to a quiet place, alone, free from distractions and interruptions. To find a place and time where no one else can enter or disturb. This is a real challenge in our day when there are so

many distractions and interruptions in our daily lives but this is the way Jesus demonstrated and instructed us to pray, alone in a quiet space undisturbed. This is a most appropriate place to meet with our Father and abide in relationship with Him.

The New Testament Church

The early church leaders dedicated themselves to prayer and study of the word (Acts 6:4). When trouble came to the early church they gathered for prayer and God heard and answered (Acts 12:5). The people of God have always been people of prayer. We, too, in our day, must make every effort to return to the practice of prayer if we are to draw closer to God to hear His voice and join Him in His mission. Though a disciplined prayer life we learn that prayer can “...change the ingrained habit structures of our lives” (Foster 1992, 58). We will also find that taking the path of the disciplined spiritual life does not make the change but it places us where the change can take place (Foster 1998). If the people of Christian Baptist Church, and their pastor, become deliberate and intentional in their pursuit of God through the discipline of morning and evening prayer then “the presence of the divine (will be) personal and undeniable” (Posterski 1997, 67). Since we, like the first century believers, have been called to be witnesses of the Kingdom to the world we need to be people changed by a life of prayer. If the people of God are not changed, deeply changed, reformed and born again, then they will not be noticed or listened to by the world around them. “If their lives are unchanged (unconverted) how can they call others to conversion?” (Nussbaum 2005, 105). This project challenged the participants to

live lives of prayer, effective prayer (James 5:16). Prayer should be the one clear mark of the Christian's life. The Christian should be in constant prayer. If Jesus, the very God incarnate on earth put so much emphasis on His own prayer life – and He without sin (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22) then we who are sinful and in need of prayer should do so, even more so.

The Apostle Paul's Call to Prayer

Paul urged the faithful in Colossae to be "...devoted to prayer..." (Colossians 4:2). Other English translations use, "...continue steadfastly..." (ESV) and "continue in" (KJV). The Greek word προσκαρτερέω (*proskartereō*) means to adhere to, persist in, attach oneself to, to wait on, be faithful to, to busy oneself with, to be busily engaged in and to be devoted to. It also means to "spend much time with" (Bauer 1979, 715). Similarly, Paul encourages the believers in Thessalonica to "...pray unceasingly" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The Greek word he uses here, ἀδιαλείπτως (*adialeptos*) means *unceasing, constant*. It has additional meanings of *adhere to* and *persist in* and *hold fast to* (Bauer 1979, 17). These commands and encouragements from Paul compel us to consider the role prayer must play in our lives as people called by God into relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. We must be people of prayer. It is the lifeblood of the Christian's walk. Paul is not speaking of setting aside specific times for prayer. Paul, rather, is referring to the daily life of the Christian where prayer and thoughts and words entertained in our minds are heavenward throughout the day. This is not about ritual prayers it is about relationship with the one to whom we are praying. To be in constant prayer is to be aware of the very presence of the Almighty. To live

each moment under His watch-care, knowing that every thought we have He knows (Psalm 139:2), every action He sees (Genesis 16:13; Psalm 33:13) every word we speak He hears (Psalm 139:4) and He knows our hearts (Genesis 6:5). We are always within His sight and hearing (Psalm 139:8; Exodus 3:7). God demonstrates His desire to be close to us. Our response is to seek Him and remain close to Him and in day long, lifelong communication, speaking and listening. That is prayer.

This may sound like believers are being commanded to spend all day at prayer. This is an impossible ideal to our twenty-first century thinking. But as Joyce Ann Zimmerman states, "...there it is: bold, unadorned, unmitigated. Pray without ceasing" (Zimmerman 1993, 9). Clearly, Paul sees prayer as an ongoing, central part of the believer's daily life, an ongoing constant, a necessary element of faithful living.

Pray Without Ceasing

Thomas Aquinas, a thirteenth century theologian, suggests that constant prayer is not possible (Aquinas 404, 1989). Aquinas is saying the normal responsibilities of everyday life preclude spending *all day in prayer* unless the one who desires to pray in this way has determined to set aside such time out of his or her regular schedule. Brother Lawrence, however, experienced the opposite, "That with him the set times of prayer were not different from other times; that he retired to pray, according to the directions of the superior, but that he did not want such retirement, nor ask for it, because his greatest business did not divert him from God" (Lawrence 2008, 20). Brother Lawrence was at prayer doing even the

menial tasks of the day. The call to pray without ceasing is an invitation to experience the presence of God throughout the day; to be present with the Lord, to journey with Him in moment by moment communion. So, while being *at* prayer throughout the day may not be possible for most, being *in* prayer is possible. To wrap the day in prayer, to begin and end each day in prayer and be *in* prayer throughout the day is possible, “To pray at morning and evening is the natural, Christian thing to do” (Zimmerman 1993, 9). The conclusion is that the true disciple of Jesus has prayer as a major focus of their daily lives.

My pastoral concern was for my congregants’ prayer lives. Was prayer a significant part of their lives? Stanley Grenz writes, “Prayer is a relatively insignificant aspect of the structured life of the people of God” (Grenz 2005, 4). My intent was to encourage the congregants to make prayer a significant part of their lives.

Obstacles to Prayer

Richard Foster suggests that people may have been seduced into a weak prayer life that is self-deceiving. Foster declares,

We today yearn for prayer and hide from prayer. We are attracted to it and repelled by it. We believe prayer is something we should do, even something we want to do, but it seems like a chasm stands between us and actually praying. We experience the agony of prayerlessness. We are not sure what holds us back. (Foster 1992, 7)

So, could I bring the congregation to that place in their lives where they would say, “I must be in prayer”? Not from a sense of duty but *in the sense that they* developed a desire to pray. To get to that place there would need to be a

willingness in the participants to begin a new journey. I would need to provide a way for them to overcome the obstacles and develop the discipline. I knew from personal experience that developing a prayer life and sustaining it is challenging. We have an enemy who opposes the one who seeks to pray.

While prayer has been defined as communication it is also a weapon. Our enemy, Satan, will do anything to distract us from praying. For the individual Christian and for the Church, the body of Christ gathered together, prayer is the best weapon we have against a ferocious enemy who seeks only to kill and destroy (John 10:10). We also have distractions, busyness, tiredness and human priorities that deflect us in our pursuit of prayer. Hence our prayer lives are diminished and our effectiveness as Christ's Church is seriously reduced. We must be aware of this scheme of the devil (Ephesians 6:11) because "The devil is not terribly frightened of our human efforts and credentials. But he knows his kingdom will be damaged when we begin to lift up our hearts to God" (Cymbala 1997, 56). Stanley Grenz writes, "Few congregations devote more than a bare minimum of time and resources to the task of teaching the people of God how to pray" (Grenz 2005, 4). The Christian who desires to pray must be aware that this desire will be hindered. We must become a people who will devote enough time and effort into developing the practice of prayer. This project was intended to teach the participants the spiritual discipline of morning and evening prayer. The praying Christian when in humble prayer before God, has strength to overcome Satan and His schemes. Jesus cautioned His Disciples to, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak"

(Matthew 26:41). And, as Paul urges us, we must "...pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (Ephesians 6:18). While Foster has said, "We are not sure what holds us back [from prayer]" (Foster 1992, 7) we can begin to recognize the obstacles to prayer – distractions, busyness, tiredness, Satan's hindering, and our own lack of priority. To develop the discipline of prayer in our lives is therefore important.

The Importance of Prayer

The importance and significance of prayer in the life of the Christian and the life and function of the church cannot be overstated. Dallas Willard makes this clear, "Nowhere is it more important to be in a conversational relationship with God than in our prayer life" (Willard 1999, 105). Prayer should not be neglected. When a Christian neglects prayer it "...proves that the person has very little real love for God" (Duelwel 1990, 30). If we love God then we will be in prayer. Ole Hallesby writes, "...a child of God can grieve Jesus in no worse way than to neglect prayer...Many neglect prayer to such an extent that their spiritual life gradually dies out" (Hallesby 1931, 36-37).

Prayer then, or the prayer life, is to be one of daily, continual intimate communication with God. Walking with, talking with and listening to God throughout the day. Just as Jesus did and just as Paul encourages us. My challenge was to bring to my congregation the means to develop the prayer discipline.

Morning and Evening Prayer

Since prayer draws us to the heart of God (Foster 1992) and "daily prayer draws us daily to the table of the Lord..." (Campbell 2003, 95) prayer, then, is the

place to start. Prayer is the essential element of spiritual growth. My project, *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer*, was designed and initiated to guide the participants into a disciplined personal prayer life. I wanted to introduce them to the practice of morning and evening prayer as a personal discipline.

The Daily Office, the times of prayer ordered throughout the day, has many names including, the liturgy of the hours, fixed-hour prayer and the divine hours (Boers 2003). Morning and evening prayer, while originating in Jewish culture of the Old Testament, is a form or practice of prayer that is “firmly planted in the early church” (Benson 2008, 3). In the monastic traditions there are several periods of prayer through the day. It is the purpose of morning and evening prayer to “frame the day with two major periods of prayer” (Sutera 1997, 10). It was my desire to have my congregation become people who are devoted to prayer; to be seeking the Lord’s presence at the beginning of the day, remaining and abiding in His presence throughout the day and retiring at the end of the day by spending time with Him in reflection on the day now past. The example of Jesus tells us we should be setting aside times alone in the morning and evening for prayer.

Since we are redeemed people our lives should reflect what it means to be redeemed. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ should be living lives that are demonstrably different from the pagan culture in which we live (1 Peter 2:12). This life begins on the inside with a spiritual rebirth (John 3:3). It is the spiritual life that bears fruit (John 15:16). Prayer then, is central to the Christian life. Prayer “...is the primary vehicle of growth in the spiritual life” (McMinn 1996, 91). Jane Vennard believes, “...God is calling all of us into deeper prayer and is

longing for our congregations to become places of prayer” (Vennard 2005, xix). If we develop the discipline of morning and evening prayer our days will be wrapped in prayer, we will become a people of prayer.

As with any pursuit, diet, exercise, sports, music, it is in the practice of these things that we develop the right muscles to sustain the practice. And it is the regular, habitual practice that becomes life changing. So too, with the spiritual life, we must develop the “muscles,” the spiritual disciplines, to sustain and grow us throughout our lives. The development of the spiritual discipline of morning and evening prayer will develop new or underused spiritual muscles in those who embrace the discipline. The obstacles to prayer will be overcome and we will invest in time for meditation, prayer and study. Through the practice of the spiritual discipline of morning and evening prayer we will experience a renewal. We need to actively engage in our personal spiritual growth.

We are commanded to “grow up into Christ” (Ephesians 4:15), “work out our salvation” (Philippians 2:12), “labour and strive” (1 Timothy 4:10). All these expressions point to an active, not passive, pursuit of God through effort and discipline in the Christian life. This project, Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer, was designed to awaken in the participants a prayer life that draws them closer to the heart of God. Our prayer lives, once revitalized, will draw us closer to the heart of God. In that closeness we will see and hear what God is calling us to. We will become more active in personal and congregational bible study and discernment of spiritual truths and missional, kingdom living. We will grow spiritually and missionally through a renewed devotion to prayer.

Spiritual growth starts with individuals who have recommitted their lives and practices to deepening their walk of faith. My project invited the participants to engage in a journey of deepening their walk with God through the practice of disciplined daily prayer. The rationale being that we need to start with the basics. We need to go back to making prayer central to our lives, a disciplined and scheduled course for our daily lives. Prayer should mark the beginning and end of our day. Prayer should continue throughout the day as we walk in constant awareness of His presence. One participant in the program said, “It’s not about morning and evening it’s about a constant conversation with this person next to me...a conversation about everything...with this friend who is always there.”

The project participants were asked to examine their prayer life and commit to regaining a disciplined approach to being a praying Christian in the twenty-first century as it was in the first. The challenge was to draw the participants to this point of setting aside the time for prayer.

Times of Prayer

Scripture tells us that Jesus was frequently in prayer with specific references to Jesus getting alone in the early hours of the morning and even praying through the night. There are many other scriptures that point to prayer at different times of the day, particularly prayer in the morning and evening. The Old Testament records that Daniel was in the habit of praying three times a day (Daniel 6:10). This was not just Daniel’s personal habit it was part of the Jewish way of life. It was part of their “Jewish custom” (Boers 2003, 32). The timing of the daily prayers has long been attributed to the Patriarchs, Abraham,

Isaac and Jacob. Nissan Mindel, writing for the internet website Chabad.org, says, “Jewish Law makes it our duty to pray three times daily: in the morning, in the afternoon and at nightfall” (Mindel 2014). Mindel further asserts, “Our Sages tell us that the custom of praying three times a day was originally introduced by our Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Abraham introduced prayer in the morning, Isaac—in the afternoon, and Jacob added one at night” (Mindel 2014). The psalmists also repeat this theme of times for prayer throughout the day.

Throughout the Psalms there are references to particular times for prayer. This suggests that, although God is present at all times and we can approach Him with boldness at any time (Hebrews 4:16), there are times in the day, particularly morning and evening, when prayer seems to be more appropriate. As we begin our day knowing we face temptations and normal human challenges it is appropriate to seek our heavenly Father for His blessing of protection and direction. At the end of the day to be present with our Father to review the day and give thanks for His presence with us is appropriate.

The Psalmist writes, “But I cry to you for help, O LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you” (Psalm 88:13) and, in Psalm 55:17, “Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.” This repeated pattern of mentioning the times of the crying out to the Lord gives us a strong sense of the primacy of morning and evening prayer. The practice of the morning and evening prayer developed from the morning and evening sacrifices which were ordinances required by the Law of God (2 Kings 16:15; 1 Chronicles 16:40). Since God had ordained the morning and evening sacrifice the Psalmist indicates

that these are the times when God is waiting to hear. Psalm 5:3 says, “In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.” The psalmist understands that God is listening in the morning for his requests and he is expecting to hear from God at that time. It suggests that God has His attention towards those who pray in the morning. David too, seeks a word of comfort from God in the morning, “Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul” (Psalm 143:8). The psalmist also sees God using these times, the dawn and the sunset, morning and evening, as points on God’s daily timetable for listening to His people’s praise, “Those living far away fear your wonders; where morning dawns and evening fades you call forth songs of joy” (Psalm 65:8). These times are used by God to mark the beginning and end of the day with songs and expressions of joy and praise. The morning and evening are also times for beginning and ending the day with expressions of God’s love, “It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night...” (Psalm 92:1-2). Throughout the Psalms there is this repeated theme of marking the beginning and end of the day with prayers and praise to God. So the discipline of morning and evening prayer took root in Jewish custom and has been retained in Christian practice.

Based on these theological foundations I felt it was appropriate to encourage the congregants at Christian Baptist Church to engage these times of

the day for their personal devotions. My next decision was what form of prayers or devotions to use.

Prayer Books

There are many guides to prayer available. These prayer guides provide the user with forms of prayer and sequences of pre-written prayers for specific times of the day. Judith Sutura, in the foreword to her book, *Work of God: Benedictine Prayer* (Sutura 1997), states, that while the book was written for Oblates, her hope was that it would be a “rich sampler for beginners and a useful companion for those already praying this way” (Sutura 1997, v). The spiritual disciplines are not just for the priest and pastor or for those in abbeys, monasteries or convents. Richard Foster states that these disciplines and practices are “central to experiential Christianity” (Foster 1988, 1). Foster continues, “...God intends the disciplines of the spiritual life to be for ordinary human beings: people who have jobs, who care for children, who wash dishes and mow lawns” (Foster 1988, 1). Since my congregation is made up of ordinary people – who have jobs, care for children and mow lawns, I was not sure they were ready for the degree of prayer structure found in many of these prayer books. More specifically, because these prayer books tend to have pre-written prayers and Baptists are more acquainted with extemporaneous prayer, my sense for my congregation was that these fixed forms of prayer, pre-written prayers, may have proved to be too much of a challenge. Baptists are not given to reciting prewritten prayers. Matthew Brench, Vicar at Grace Anglican Church, Fitchburg, MA. writes in his blog:

Set prayers are more useful (and therefore should be more prominent) in common worship, that is, worship that is shared between different people in the unity of the Church. Extemporaneous prayers are more useful (and therefore should be more prominent) in personal devotions, that is, worship that is offered by an individual irrespective of other members of the Church. (Brench 2014)

Therefore, having reviewed several prayer books designed for fixed-hour prayer, and considering the nature of my Baptist congregation I did not think that such a form of prayer would be suitable for my project. I would have to find another approach. Joyce Ann Zimmerman writes, “There is a long-standing precedent for adapting the style and content of prayer at morning and evening to accommodate the needs of particular groups” (Zimmerman 1993, 10). This indicated that I need not use a pre-written prayer book for my project but rather that I had the freedom to develop a prayer guide and tailor it to suit what I understood my congregation’s needs to be. My program of *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer* was designed draw the participants to the discipline of beginning and ending the day in prayer. I realized that since I had found the published prayer books with pre-written prayers unsuitable for my congregation, I would have to write a prayer guide to guide the participants into their Morning and Evening Prayer times. The guide I developed consisted of six weekly themes for each day of the six weeks of the forty day period. I also adapted the Ignatian Prayer of Examen as the framework for the evening prayer.

Morning Prayer Themes

To create the forty days of morning and evening prayer I needed six weeks of prayer guides, one for each day. Since my objective was to draw the

participants into the discipline of daily prayer times I wanted to provide themes that would retain their interest and focus throughout each of the six weeks. I did not write specific prayers but rather provided devotional focus around one theme per week. The themes were: 1) The Presence of God, 2) Praising God, 3) Thankfulness, 4) Wisdom and Guidance, 5) Confession and Forgiveness and 6) Courage and Strength. These six themes were selected from various text on personal devotional prayer. Each week's focus was chosen and sequenced to draw the participants into prayer beyond the prayers of supplication that can dominate our prayer lives, the kind of prayer Foster calls "Simple Prayer" (Foster 1992, 9). As Foster writes, "...we are the focus of Simple Prayer" (Foster 1992, 9). My intention was to create in the participants in my prayer program a deeper sense of their intimate, personal relationship with God beyond Simple Prayer.

The first week of devotions titled, "The Presence of God," was written to keep the eyes and thoughts of the participants off themselves and onto God. The devotionals focused on acknowledging and perceiving the very real presence of God in the participant's daily, ordinary, life. The second week I called "Praising God," was designed and written to lead the participants into a daily practice of praising God for all His blessings and His presence with them. Week three brought focus to "Thankfulness," the participants being encouraged to recognize that all we have has come from God and to develop a heart attitude of thankfulness. "Wisdom and Guidance," the theme for the fourth week, was the first week where the participants were asking or seeking anything from God. The devotionals were focused on seeking divine wisdom and guidance from the God

whose presence they should by now be aware of. Week five introduced the theme of “Confession and Forgiveness” emphasizing the participants’ need to be open and honest in seeking forgiveness and also realizing that God forgives all who confess. The sixth week introduced the theme of seeking “Courage and Strength” to live each day in the Lord’s presence being bold witnesses to the world around them.

Evening Prayer

The Psalmist, David, in Psalm 139, begins with the cry to God that He has searched him and knows him. The Hebrew and Greek words have the meaning of to investigate and put to the test. David knows he is fully known by God as the rest of the psalm attests. The psalm ends with the call to God again to search and know and test David and see if there is any offensive way in him (Psalm 139:23-24). The prayer being offered here by David is one of needing to be examined by God for anything that is offensive to God. David calls upon God to examine and search him. Later in life, David cautioned his son Solomon with these words, “...for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts” (1Chronicles 28:9). Clearly David had grasped the concept of God examining people’s hearts and minds. The Prayer of Examen is a prayer that enables each one of us to enter into a personal time of self-examination before our God.

Ignatian Prayer of Examen

Praying self-examination begins in the Old Testament scriptures. To enter into a prayer of self-examination is an ancient practice of those who seek a closer

relationship with God. St. Ignatius of Loyola developed the Prayer of Examen as part of his spiritual exercises. Ignatius was born in Loyola Spain in 1491. His Spiritual Exercises which include the Prayer of Examen were developed during the time of Ignatius' conversion in Manresa in 1522 (Tetlow 1987). Ignatius developed the Prayer of Examen as a Five Point focus for use by one practicing his Spiritual Exercises to guard against the "particular sin or defect which he or she seeks to correct and amend" (Tetlow 1987, 13).

Ignatius' five points are: 1) Giving thanks for gifts received, 2) Asking for grace to know the sins and be released from them, 3) To provide an hour by hour account of the time since the last Examen, 4) To seek forgiveness, and 5) To resolve to amend (Tetlow 1987, 19). Richard Foster comments on the Prayer of Examen, stating that "it is possible today for people to go to church services week in and week out for years without having a single experience of spiritual examen," calling it a "tragedy and a loss" (Foster 1992, 27). I chose to use the Prayer of Examen as the basis for the evening prayer model to bring the participants to that point of self-examinations that would deepen their walk with the Lord and further encourage them in their prayer discipline.

With the precedent of adapting prayer forms for particular groups having been established (Zimmerman 1993, 10), I chose to expand on Ignatius' five steps in order to lead the participants into a deeper sense of self-examination so that their prayer lives could develop and mature. The result was a nine step process to bring the participants to God in a prayer of self-examination.

The Nine Step Examen

The nine step process I used for the evening prayer, was based on Ignatius' explanation but expanded to teach the participants a way of getting into the evening prayer and staying focused during their prayer time. The nine steps developed for the evening prayer were: Ready, Remember, Review, Recall, Remember, Repent, Resolve, Rejoice, Request and Retire.

The first step was "Ready." The participant was encouraged to set aside time and location for the evening prayer. As previously mentioned "...prayer is always a place as well as an action" (Tickle 2007, viii). The evening prayer was not to be a rushed last-minute event at the end of a busy day. Rather the participants were guided to ready themselves for this meeting with their God and to allocate sufficient time for it. "The commitment to prayer requires, in the first place, a commitment of time" (Maas et al 1990, 134). Jesus also encouraged the people, "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen" (Matthew 6:6). So there is a call to "Ready" oneself for this time with the Lord. It is a time of self-examination at the end of the day so time and location are important. The second step is to "Remember" who you are, to remember that God created you, He loves you and has a purpose for you. You are a very special creation indeed, "...*fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Psalm 139:14). When we approach God we need not approach in fear no matter what sin has marred our day, "The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion" (Numbers 14:18). Participants were reminded that they were coming into the presence of God. They were to remember that He, too, has been waiting for this time to meet with them. The third step is the "Review."

Since we were in a time of reflection and self-examination we were to look back over the day and bring to mind the events of the day, the experiences and opportunities of the day. This was to prepare for the next step which was the “Recall.” The participants were to recall the events of the day where they were challenged and ask themselves if there were actions or words that could have been managed differently. Was there a recurring attitude or behavior that needs to be purged through confession and forgiveness? They were to ask the Holy Spirit to bring these things to memory; ask Him to help you be truthful with yourself, “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). While this was happening they were to “Remember,” the fourth step, that we are all are a work-in-progress; God is not done with us yet. That the Holy Spirit will guide us to those areas of our day where a different attitude or response is called for. The participants were to remember that the Spirit does not condemn He only convicts. Then they were to pray the prayer offered by David in Psalm 139, “search me and know me...see if there is any offensive way in me” (Psalm 139:23-24). Then as the Spirit led, in step five, they were to “Repent,” to openly confess their sins before their God and ask for forgiveness of any sins of this day and ask for grace to resist and overcome tomorrow, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Step six asked the participants to “Resolve” to live the next day more aware of God presence and that they would come before Him the next evening. So the habitual sin or attitude would come to mind during the day and this awareness should bring a resolve to resist the temptation. Having

been open and honest with God during this prayer of Examen, the participants, as step seven, were asked to “Rejoice” in the Lord’s presence. They had confessed their sin and been forgiven. There is much to rejoice for. At this point the time of the evening prayer was coming to a close. The participants had been led through the steps of self-examination leading to confession and forgiveness. Now it was time for the prayer of supplication. Participants were now to make their “Requests” to their God, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6). The final step was to “Retire.” The day was done.

These nine steps, an expansion on the Ignatian model, were structured to lead the participants to be more fully aware that they live each day in the presence of God and that their life and conduct are to be examined daily before God. The Prayer of Examen is shown fully in Appendix A.

Summary

The need for prayer in the life of a disciple cannot be understated. Jesus led a life of prayer and we, His disciples, must follow Him in that practice. The introduction of morning and evening prayer to the congregation at Christian Baptist Church was intended to move the participants towards becoming a people of prayer; to becoming people who pray in a disciplined and mature way seeking the Lord’s will in all they are being called to be. This aim was in alignment with scripture and the ancient practices of the church. “It is important that we restore prayer at morning and evening as the prayer of the church and not continue our present malaise of allowing it to be the prayer of only a small segment of the

whole” (Zimmerman 1993, 10). Introducing the prayer program was in alignment with the priorities established at the leaders’ retreat in 2011. The Prayer Guide and the extended Prayer of Examen were developed as enablers to lead the participants into experiencing the spiritual discipline of morning and evening prayer. The overarching intent, to see a renewal in the vitality of the congregation and the spiritual lives of the participants, has already started.

Chapter three documents precedent cases of other congregations of different cultural, linguistic, denominational and theological positions that have experienced individual and congregational change and growth through the adoption of prayer disciplines.

CHAPTER THREE:

PRECEDENT LITERATURE AND CASES

Thus I urge churches to find more ways to meet people's need to pray, and to call and remind people to pray regularly everyday.

-- Arthur Boers, *The Rhythm of God's Grace*

My research has uncovered several congregations who when experiencing challenges in attendance and growth turned to different forms of prayer to seek the Lord's will and direction. This chapter addresses the need for developing a prayer life in members of a congregation, it references several Pastors and congregation leaders who encouraged their congregants to participate in seasons of disciplined prayer during times of challenge or decision making. I have also referenced several sources that address the nature of prayer, the need for a disciplined prayer life and why I chose to write my own devotional guide.

Personal Prayer

In Augustine's *Confessions*, we read, "Man is one of your creatures, Lord, and his instinct is to praise you....The thought of you stirs him so deeply that he cannot be content unless he praises you, because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you" (Augustine, *Confessions*, 21). Augustine speaks to the human being's deepest desire. That desire is to be connected with

our creator, God. It is in that connection with our God that our deepest needs are met. While we can experience God through many ways, it is in our prayer times that we meet with Him in person in a most intimate way. While Augustine understands prayer as our deepest need, Richard Foster acknowledges that because we come at prayer “with a tangled mass of motives” (Foster 1992, 8) we tend to avoid prayer. Foster also states, “We will never have pure enough motives, or be good enough, or know enough in order to pray rightly” (Foster 1922, 8). If prayer will help us toward meeting our deepest need and our human nature finds it so difficult, then we must learn how to enter with more confidence into the realm of prayer, “...the intimate ongoing interaction with God...” (Foster 1992, 8). Since my congregation was reluctant to gather for congregational prayer meetings I needed to create a program that would encourage participants to develop their own prayer discipline and discover their need for prayer. To draw the participants into this discovery of their need for prayer I focused my project on calling them to individual prayer at the beginning and end of the day. It is my hope that once this program is completed they will be willing to explore congregational prayer meetings.

The Prayer Guide

To call individuals from my congregation to the prayer project I needed a Prayer Guide. My first thought was to select a prayer guide from one of the many available. My research showed that the form and presentation of most of these prayer guides was very formal and quite structured. For example, Phyllis Tickle’s, *The Divine Hours*, has set, pre-written prayers to be read at specific times

throughout the day (Tickle 2007). Since the congregation was Baptist, a people who are given more to extemporaneous prayers rather than set prayers, I considered the form and model of “fixed-hour” prayer too formal and too structured for my context. Laura Larson, writing about fixed-hour prayer in the website stickyfaith.org, says “...it sounded like a terribly legalistic spiritual practice to me” (Larson 2014). These prayer forms reminded me of my own early training in prayer from the Roman Catholic tradition where prayers were pre-written and recited by rote. I was not intending to introduce rote prayers to my congregation.

The “fixed-hour” prayer model suggests that there are certain prayers that are said at certain hours of the day. I wanted to introduce the participants to the practice of beginning their day in prayer, at whatever hour was the beginning of their day, and at the end of the day before retiring, whatever time that might be. In his book, *The Rhythm of God’s Grace*, Arthur Boers discusses at length the value and discipline of fixed-hour prayer. Boers, when in a Pastoral role, was curious about implementing fixed-hour prayer. He introduced *the Companion to the Breviary* to his congregation (Boers 2005, 128). He acknowledges that “This kind of prayer was not suitable for everyone...so I do not suggest that it should be imposed as an obligation on all Christians” (Boers 2005, 134). My own context called for a prayer format that was suitable for my own congregation. So I was introducing the participants to the ancient practice of beginning and ending the day in prayer.

Other prayer guides, such as Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening*, and *Our Daily Bread* provide the user with a devotional for their morning and evening prayer time. Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening* has been used by the faithful for over one hundred years. Alistair Begg, who published a revised and updated edition of Spurgeon's work in 2003, writes, "Spurgeon's daily devotional readings have stood the test of time and are unrivaled as an example of deep theological insight and warm pastoral concern" (Spurgeon 2003, Introduction). While I have found the Spurgeon style of devotional useful at times for myself I did not believe this was what was needed in my context at this time. Spurgeon's format for morning and evening prayer moves the user to a different focus each morning and each evening. I was looking for a way to bring focus and discipline to the prayer lives of the participants in my project. I needed a prayer guide that was not a random collection of devotional topics but rather a guide that would lead the participants into a more focused prayer practice. Having one topic per week maintains the focus. What I needed for my congregation was a guide that would lead them to a deeper disciplined prayer practice. I wanted the participants to begin developing a powerful prayer life. R. A. Torrey identifies our lack of power in our prayer lives.

Much of our modern prayer lacks power because it lacks heart. We rush into God's presence, run through a string of petitions, jump up and go out. If someone asks us an hour later what we prayed for, often we cannot remember. If we put so little heart into our prayers, we cannot expect God to put much heart into answering them. (Torrey 1983, 26)

We have already identified some of the obstacles to prayer, busyness, distractions and priorities. Torrey says that even when we do pray our prayers lack power

because we put so little heart into them. My objective was to lead the participants in my prayer project into focused times of prayer to encourage them to put heart into their prayers. I wrote the prayer guide for the morning prayer as outlined in Chapter 2 and Appendix A. For the evening prayer I adapted the Ignatian Prayer of Examen. As outlined in Chapter 2, the Prayer of Examen is a suitable form of prayer to close the day. The Examen is suitable for a time of reflection. Richard Foster says, “In the examen of consciousness we prayerfully reflect on the thoughts, feelings and actions of our days to see how God has been at work among us and how we respond” (Foster 1992, 28).

Foster addressed three other “classical” forms of prayer, The Ignatian Spiritual Exercises; St. Benedict’s Twelve Steps and St. Therese of Lisieux’s “Little Way” (Foster 1992, 59-63). While many have found these useful I did not think this was the time to introduce these forms of prayer to my congregation.

Congregations that Chose to Pray

My thesis calls for a review of congregations that have experienced a significant renewal as a result of a serious and determined call to prayer. The research discovered that this call to prayer has occurred in many different denominational settings and in vastly different cultures. Congregations around the world who were experiencing a season of decline in their numbers and their participation in active ministry set themselves to prayer resulting in a significant sense of renewal in their congregational life. The style and forms of prayer are as varied as the congregations themselves. The congregations I researched had challenges similar to my own congregation – decline in numbers and reluctance to

participate in prayer meetings. The leaders and pastors of these congregations addressed their challenges in a variety of ways. They did not all choose “fixed-hour” prayer as their approach. But they did start with a call to prayer.

The New Testament Church and Prayer

The first disciples, after the crucifixion, found themselves without their beloved leader, Jesus. They had been with Him for three years and had seen and heard incredible things. They had observed His prayer life and His ministry. They had witnessed His death and resurrection. They were present when He ascended bodily into heaven. Finding themselves without their Rabbi they gathered together and prayed (Acts 1:14). Jesus had told them to wait in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4). So they waited and they prayed.

Here then is the first congregation of Christians, though not yet called by that name (Acts 11:26). These were the few who had remained loyal to Jesus. Their situation seemed dire. There may have been immediate persecution. They had reason to be in fear of the Jews after Jesus’ crucifixion (John 20:19) and this new religious movement may have seemed to be ending even as it had just begun. So they prayed. It was a characteristic of the early church to be at prayer. Though few in number, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42). The King James translation uses the phrase, “...they continued steadfastly...” One of the features of this first Christian assembly was their devotion to prayer. The first century church not only experienced growth but the growth was rapid. The impetus for

this rapid growth was their devotion to prayer. R.A Torrey writes, “It was a praying church. It was a church in which they prayed not merely occasionally, but where they all “continued steadfastly . . . in the prayers” (Torrey 1924, 15). The early church then, sets the first precedent for the people of God to become people of prayer. For without that key devotion to prayer the early church would not grow and today, without prayer, the local congregation will not grow.

The first congregation huddled together in Jerusalem was waiting for something to happen. The Holy Spirit came just fifty days after the crucifixion, at the Jewish feast of Pentecost, and their lives were changed and the world around them changed. The church today will not return to the world-changing entity it once was until it yearns again for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to revive them and fill them for the work of the Kingdom. What follows are the stories of what happens when congregations get serious about prayer and the Holy Spirit responds in their midst. The reality is this phenomena began in Jerusalem about 33 A.D. and has continued through the past two millennia. I have selected a few recent stories as precedent cases to inform my project and my context. My first two cases are congregations that were in decline and their leaders called them to prayer. Though the leaders in these two churches focused on congregational prayer meetings they record in their writings the necessity of congregations to be people of prayer and the impact of prayer on the renewal of the congregations. Since the prayer project has completed our small group ministries has restarted and a mid-week prayer group is meeting.

Yiodo Full Gospel Church in South Korea

Pastor Paul Y. Cho, founding pastor of Yiodo Full Gospel Church in South Korea, said, "...the church was born when the Holy Spirit descended during a time of concentrated prayer" (Cho 1984, 10). In his book, "Prayer: Key to Revival," Pastor Paul Y Cho states, "It has been historically true that prayer has been the key to every revival in the history of Christianity" (Cho 1984, 9).

Chow attributes the rapid growth of his congregations in Korea to the fact that the people prayed. Cho writes, "One of the most important aspects of our early church was that each morning the members gathered together for prayer" (Cho 1984, 14). Cho continues to say that this resulted in open confession of sin among the believers followed by conversions in all parts of the country (Cho 1984, 14). For a country to be converted the believers must be ready to enter into a life of prayer. In Korea the people gather for prayer as early as 5:00 a.m. and they stay at prayer for up to two hours. And, since prayer has become the most important thing in their lives, they retire early to be ready for prayer each morning. On Fridays their prayer meetings were all night long (Cho 1984, 15). Cho was also an advocate for early morning prayer. He writes, "Our day must begin in prayer for then, God responds. God loves to move in our hearts early" (Cho, 1984 95).

Our problem has been that we have thought about prayer, read about prayer and even received teaching regarding prayer, but we just have not prayed. Now is the time to understand that prayer is the source of power. Now is the time to allow the Holy Spirit to bring a new brokenness and surrender. Now is the time to learn how to use our spiritual authority in learning how to hinder the work of the devil. Now is the time to pray. (Cho 1984, 41)

Cho's congregation went on to grow into the hundreds of thousands throughout South Korea (Cho 1984). Since I could not get my congregation to attend prayer meetings, the meetings simply did not attract their attention, I started with individual prayer. First I needed to get them to pray and discover their own need for prayer. Jim Cymbala from the Brooklyn Tabernacles noted, "The more we pray, the more we sense our need to pray. And the more we sense our need to pray, the more we want to pray" (Cymbala 1997, 50).

Brooklyn Tabernacle

When Jim Cymbala first went to preach at the Brooklyn Tabernacle in 1972 it was a "woeful church...in a shabby two-story building" with just a fifteen people in attendance. Cymbala's early days as the pastor at the Brooklyn Tabernacle were depressing. So much so that one Sunday he could not finish the sermon, breaking down in tears the service came to a halt (Cymbala 1997, 18). Shortly after he became ill and took a leave to Florida. In a quiet time on a fishing boat Cymbala heard God speak to him deep within his Spirit,

If you and your wife will lead my people to pray and call upon my name, you will never lack for something fresh to preach. I will supply all the money that's needed, both for the church and for your family, and you will never have a building large enough to contain the crowds I will send in response. (Cymbala 1997, 25)

For Cymbala this was a turning point and he addressed his congregation on this matter of prayer. Cymbala told his congregation the root of the problem was prayer or lack of it. He declared, "If we call upon the Lord, he has promised in His Word to answer...if we don't call upon the Lord, He has promised nothing

at all. It's as simple as that" (Cymbala 1997, 27). Cymbala went on to call his people to prayer meetings. He notes that the format is not as important as the fact of gathering, "...what matters most is that we encounter the God of the universe, not just each other" (Cymbala 1997, 30). What I desired most for my congregation was that they would have an encounter with God. I preached and taught on renewal and on the life of prayer but as Cymbala states, "Teaching is good only where there is life to be channelled....spiritual life cannot be taught" (Cymbala 1997, 50). So, in the absence of prayer meetings I looked to individual prayer to bring about a spiritual renewal.

Other pastors have had the same challenge with congregations that have not embraced the weekly prayer meeting and have introduced programs of individual prayer to their congregations.

First Baptist Church Buffalo, Missouri

Bill Cox, Pastor of First Baptist Church in Buffalo, Missouri

experienced a lack of enthusiasm for prayer meetings in his congregation, "...as the church has been called to pray in recent times, her response to this call has indicated that prayer does not have the proper priority among her members" (Cox 2002, 7). A survey Cox conducted showed that, "...church members are lax in their practice of prayer" (Cox, 2002, 14). Pastor Cox had established a prayer room for use during the Sunday morning worship service. Only three people participated in this task. None of them participated a second time. They did not

want to miss the worship service nor did they desire to attend one worship service and pray during the second (Cox 2002, 7).

Pastor Cox established a corporate prayer time to occur on Sunday mornings prior to Sunday School. This was intended to provide spiritual support for the Sunday services but this too could not be sustained. Even though as many as seven people initially joined the prayer group, within two months no one attended (Cox 2007, 7-8). The Wednesday evening prayer service attracted just seventeen people and that was replaced each quarter by the church business meeting. The business meeting attracted more people than the prayer meeting (Cox 2002, 8). Following a Lay Renewal Revival event at the church three prayer groups were established. However, just over a year later there was only one group that remained active.

Pastor Cox was experiencing similar Pastoral issues as I was. I had a congregation that was reluctant to engage in corporate prayer meetings. Cox faced the same challenge. Cox wrote,

If a lack of prayer is a major problem in the church, then how can the members be motivated to pray? It does little good to train the people to pray unless they choose to incorporate the training into prayerful lifestyles. (Cox 2002, 85)

Pastor Cox chose to implement a project “to enhance the prayer life of fifteen to twenty selected members of the First Baptist Church, Buffalo, Missouri” (Cox 2002, 75). Cox further defines his project, “to increase prayer time, the understanding of prayer and provide tools to aid in prayer” (Cox 2002, 82). One of Cox’s goals, similar to my own project’s goals, was to evaluate, “The degree of

change in the participating members concerning their practice of and belief in prayer” (Cox 2002, 9). Cox sums up the results of his prayer project by saying, “A measurable change in the actions of participants was attained...” (Cox 2002, 82). Facing similar challenges as Cox, I embarked on a similar project to enhance the prayer lives of the project participants. My project achieved similar results.

Coventry Cathedral, England

The need to draw our congregations into prayer is not limited to Baptist congregations. The Anglican Church in Coventry, England faced a challenge when they were building a new Cathedral to replace the one destroyed during the Second World War. In Stephen Verney’s account of the building and dedication of the new Cathedral in the 1960s, he recalls the time when a group of pastors met for prayer and bible study prior to their planning work. Their group decided to meet weekly for prayer in spite of their busy schedules. In the early days of these meetings they sensed that “...what God wanted was not just a consecrated Cathedral, but a consecrated people living around it” (Verney 1964, 13). The pastors who were called to participate were initially shocked at the suggestion that they meet weekly for prayer (Verney 1964, 14). My own Pastoral experience has been quite different. As soon as I was installed as the pastor in my church in Newmarket I had an invitation to join the local pastors, from a variety of denominations, in their weekly prayer and bible reading group. It has since been a blessing to me. But in Coventry in the 1960s this was a new thing.

As the Coventry prayer experience continued to expand across many parishes and include laity as well as pastors, one group noted that they felt like the first Christians living between Easter and Pentecost (Verney 1964, 25). This is where I feel my congregation lives, between Easter and Pentecost. Quietly waiting for something to happen. They are believers, they know the Lord but they need an experience of God in the Spirit to light the fire within them.

In Coventry, in the 1960s, the prayer groups continued to meet in preparation for the opening of the new Cathedral, they were "...one by one, driven to prayer" (Verney 1964, 26). They began seeking God in prayer and God answered. After a sustained period of prayer meetings led by the Bishop many rededicated their lives to God, many accepted Jesus as Lord and many came forward to give their lives to Christian service of different kinds. Verney writes,

Two things became clear by the end of the mission. The more deeply people were [already] involved, the more clearly was God calling them to go deeper still, and to offer him the obedience of their whole lives. This was the first unmistakable answer to our prayers.

The second was this. During those ten days the diocese became a person, a body alive with a spirit. As we gathered in our thousands at one central point around our Bishop – as he spoke to us God's word, and convinced us of God's love – as he led us in prayer and the offering of our lives, an extraordinary happiness broke through. We became a loving family with a purpose. In a few weeks our Cathedral was to be consecrated, but something revolutionary had already happened. "Surely you know that you are God's temple, where the Spirit of God dwells" (1 Corinthians 3:16). (Verney 1964, 35-36)

Indeed, when the people of God, call on their God in unity of Spirit, God dwells in their midst. “My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people (Ezekiel 37:27).

Following the consecration of the Cathedral in May 1962 fellowship groups continued and prayer was central. One laywoman is quoted, “...we have become acutely aware of the power of prayer and of the need for every aspect of life, personal and parochial, to be rooted and grounded in prayer” (Verney 1964, 61-62). As these groups continued to meet they developed the daily discipline of praying for each other. Following these practices and continuing in prayer together they experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. By restoring the regular practice of prayer within this community the Spirit of God began to move.

The experience in Coventry brought individuals together and united many parishes through their recommitment to be people who prayed and prayed together. My project was designed to inspire and encourage my congregation into being a people for whom prayer would become a daily spiritual discipline and who would once again embrace corporate prayer meetings. My prayer is that my congregation will experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a renewal of our faith and walk. This is what I expected to happen in my own congregation. In some respects that has already started.

St. Nicholas’s Anglican Church, Durham, England

Another example of addressing a declining congregation’s challenges with prayer also comes from England. George Carey, best known for being the

103rd Archbishop of Canterbury from 1991 to 2002, was once the pastor of a small church in Durham in the north of England. Prior to Carey's appointment as the pastor of this congregation they had lost many members to a nearby charismatic church. Students attending the local university kept the numbers up during the academic year but they left at the end of the college term. When Carey arrived there were no small groups in the church and when they had been tried prior to his arrival they had not worked. This church had become a "petrol station" (Carey 1989, 13). People came to be "filled up" on Sunday to last them the week.

In one of his first conversations with the leaders of the church Carey made this statement, "The church is obviously situated in the best position in the town. But nothing will really change unless the church family is renewed. I would want to start with house groups and gradually build up the life of the fellowship." This statement closely matches my own congregational context. Christian Baptist is located in the very geographical centre of Newmarket. It is the oldest continuing congregation in the town and the church is located upon the highest hill in town right on the main street, "obviously situated in the best position in the town" (Carey 1989, 15). When I first arrived at Newmarket, I too realised that nothing will change unless the congregation is renewed. As Carey states, "Renewal begins with prayer" (Carey 1989, 15). Carey introduced prayer meetings but the low attendance at times left him, "very disgusted with a congregation which had little patience for God's work" (Carey 1989, 15). Yet this church was losing people and something had to be done. They started with prayer.

Carey noted that, “Our hearts had to be made ready and our lives shaped by the Holy Spirit” (Carey 1989, 15).

First we felt that a precondition of renewal was an openness to God and a willingness to accept all that he wanted to do among us. At the heart of this is prayer. Not our usual form of ‘lip service’ to prayer, ritualized and church based – but the kind of praying based upon the conviction that the God of the bible is active today. (Carey 1989, 15)

Carey and the leaders of this congregation realised that for a congregation to change, programs and events were not the way to bring about change. Prayer is at the heart of renewal and Holy Spirit led change. After a season of change that brought about a complete renovation of the old church building to accommodate service to the community, one of the leaders said, “Our experience has been a gradual opening of our eyes to a new dimension of spiritual experience – the Holy Spirit taking his true place in the Trinity and in our experience” (Carey 1989, 137).

This is my prayerful desire for the congregation at Christian Baptist. That they too will, through personal and corporate prayer, enter into a new and fresh experience of the Holy Spirit’s leading.

Azusa Street, Los Angeles, California

The desire for change and the reliance on prayer also impacted a small church on Los Angeles, California in the early twentieth century. Frank Bartleman tells the story of the revival that came to the congregation that met at 312 Azusa Street (Liardon 2006). This revival, considered the birth of the Pentecostal movement occurred from 1906 to 1915. Prior to the revival the people

had been in prayer. As Bartleman records it, "...we had been praying for a sweeping revival for Pasadena, and God was answering our prayers." (Liardon 2006, 16). It is in the humble practice of prayer that God answers His people. "God has always sought a humble people" (Liardon 2006, 17).

The intensity of the call to prayer at Azusa Street was such that there were prayer meetings held every day and every night. Bartleman spent two hours in the church praying every day before the evening prayer meetings (Liardon 2006, 17). Unfortunately, as Bartleman discovered, "...most Christians do not want to take on a burden of prayer. It [is] too hard on the flesh" (Liardon 2006, 21). It takes a move of the Spirit to move people to pray. As Jesus said to the disciples, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41).

From the beginning of the revival in Los Angeles the people of Azusa Street realised that they needed to create spiritual atmosphere that was conducive to their desire for prayer. This atmosphere would be created "through humility and prayer" a setting where Satan cannot abide (Liardon 2006, 86).

It is my desire that the people of Christian Baptist Church through a rededication to personal and corporate prayer will be led by the Holy Spirit into a renewal of their faith and witness to the community in which they serve.

Goshen Baptist Church, West Chester,
Pennsylvania

William Whiteman wrote his Doctor of Ministry thesis on congregational prayer. In his thesis he writes,

If a congregation is truly to follow the example and teaching of its Lord, if it is going to devote itself to what is indispensable, and if it is going to have a lasting and powerful ministry, then a congregation must be a people of prayer. Therefore, a strong, vibrant congregational prayer life is not secondary but primary, not peripheral but central, and not optional but essential. (Whiteman 1987, 4)

When Whiteman was pastor at Goshen Baptist he assessed the “weakest aspects of life at Goshen Baptist Church as prayer” (Whiteman 1987, 4). He had observed and experienced that his congregation had poor participation at congregational prayer meetings. In 1985 they had 330 in attendance at their weekly worship service yet only 15 at the weekly prayer meeting (Whiteman 1987, 5). Whiteman was not content with this situation and he wanted to create some discontent in the minds and hearts of his congregants. He writes, “It will be an objective of this project to cause people to become discontent with their present prayer life and desire to enrich their private and public prayer life” (Whiteman 1987, 8). My research, while not intended to create discontent in the hearts and minds of the participants, did show that some participants were in fact discontent with their prayer lives before the project. One of my concerns was my congregation’s reluctance to engage in small groups and prayer groups. Whiteman wanted his project to be practical and to engage the participants in actually praying. He writes of his project:

This project, therefore, will stress having people actually pray, for this is where they will really learn how to pray. They will be given time to reflect on their experience and report back what they learned. I believe that this focus will be one of the most helpful parts of the project. (Whiteman 1987, 85)

This was what I was aiming for in my project. To engage the participants in a season of prayer to begin and end their day in prayer. Whitman prepared his own devotional guide (Whitman 1987, 103) to enable the prayer project. He reports three outcomes of the project:

People consistently stated that the most helpful part of the program was the daily devotional guide written by the church staff. A number of people commented that they were no longer having a daily time with the Lord and using the guide got them back into the habit. We plan to write a devotional guide each fall to encourage our congregation in their quiet time. (Whitman 1987, 114)

The participants in my project, *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer*, uncovered three similar results. 1) People responded favourably to the daily devotional guide I provided, 2) A number reported that the guide was an enabler for them to develop the prayer discipline, and 3) I have been asked to continue writing the prayer devotionals. Whitman also reports that there was no significant change in the prayer lives of his congregation as a result of their participation. “This project did not change the actual prayer life of the vast majority of people in our congregation (Whitman 1987, 114). I did not get these results. Quite the opposite. The responses from the participants in my study show that all except one did benefit from their participation.

International Methodist Church - Hong Kong

John Illsley, a graduate of the Denver Seminary’s Doctor of Ministry program in 2005, wrote his thesis on the prayer disciplines of his congregation. Illsley’s congregation was the English speaking congregation in a Methodist Church in Hong Kong. Prior to the prayer program he developed Illsley had

noted, "...there was a dryness, an intellectualism, a lack of excitement in the people's faith and worship..." (Illsley 2005, 143).

Illsley's congregational context was very similar to my own. In his thesis introduction Illsley makes the following observation about this congregation,

Attendance at other church activities, whether for the whole congregation or in small groups, was poor. The researcher saw this lack of community as a sign of spiritual poverty, which this project sought to address. Spiritual formation and growth is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ. (Illsley 2005, 4)

This observation is aligned with my own experience in Pastoral Ministry. Since human effort will not move a person in their faith journey the Holy Spirit will through a person's engagement with their God through prayer. Illsley noted this, "Part of the power of prayer is spiritual growth. People grow in their relationship with God through prayer (Illsley 2005, 97)." Illsley's hypothesis was "...that a significant focus on prayer would change the people's relationship with God (Illsley 2005, 135). This was my own thinking in preparing a forty day prayer program for my congregation that the participants' prayer lives would be enhanced and their relationship with God and their sense of calling to ministry would grow. Illsley's participants gave similar responses to his interviews as my participants did to mine. One participant after Illsley's study stated, "I'm always aware that God is beside me, in the street, MTR [Mass Transit Railway], walking, sitting. I'm always aware of his presence" (Illsley 2005, 184). This is very similar to one of my participant's responses, "It's not about morning and evening it's about a constant conversation with this person next to me, in my head.

A conversation about everything. This ongoing 'telephone' conversation with this friend who is always there.” Illsley’s situation and project was very similar to my own. He and I had similar responses from our participants.

These examples of congregations that were changed or revitalized through their engagement with prayer in a disciplined manner gave me the precedents for developing a prayer initiative in my own congregation.

Summary

The situation I found at Christian Baptist Church in Newmarket, Ontario was not unique. Other congregations of different denominations, in different cultures and in different times have recognised the need to revitalize their prayer lives. All experienced the need to return to individual and corporate prayer. My congregation was aging, the attendance at worship services had declined over the years and church life activity beyond the Sunday morning worship was minimal. At a retreat with the leaders of the congregation in October 2011 they were able to discover that their congregation was at what George Bullard calls the “Old Age” stage of congregational life (Bullard 2005). The next stage after “Old Age” is “Death.” Other pastors have documented their own challenges with this common issue. I looked at my specific situation and knew something had to be done. Since the leaders had identified themselves as being at this stage of life I needed to address it. I decided to launch a program I called *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer* to provide a spiritual stimulus to the life of the congregation. This program was designed to draw people into a deeper relationship with God through the practice of regular daily prayer. I developed a Prayer Guide to guide the

participants into times of focused prayer and times for reflection with God.

Chapter 4 outlines the method and methodology I used to design and launch this project.

CHAPTER FOUR:

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

How does a church become filled to overflowing with the holy spirit of God? There is only one way, through prayer. The transforming, life giving work of the Holy Spirit only comes through powerful prayer. It comes through being a prayer saturated church.

-- Cheryl Sacks and Becky Harding, *The Prayer Saturated Church*

I decided to introduce a program of prayer to the congregation. The program was called *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer*. This chapter describes the purpose of the project, the method used to recruit participation in the project, the tools developed to engage the participants in the project and the methodology used to assess and understand the responses. I wanted to understand the nature of the prayer lives of the participants; their actual day to day experience with prayer.

The Project Purpose

The project was designed to draw the participants into forty days of morning and evening prayer. As outlined in Chapter 3, other congregational leaders, in various denominational and cultural settings, have engaged in prayer initiatives in order to seek the Lord's will and guidance when faced with critical challenges. Having researched other congregations facing critical times in their

history, and finding a common theme of calling the people to prayer, I started with prayer with the congregation at Christian Baptist. My research showed that other congregational leaders were able to gather their people for congregational prayer meetings. This approach had not worked well at Christian Baptist. I decided to approach the matter with a call to individual prayer to see if individual prayer would provide the catalyst for change and growth. Having decided on a forty day prayer initiative of morning and evening prayer the first task was to plan the execution of the project.

The Project Plan

In preparation for the project I researched various spiritual disciplines to select what seemed appropriate for my context. I chose the ancient discipline of morning and evening prayer (Boers 2005) because it is a “classical spiritual discipline...central to experiential Christianity” (Foster 1988, 1), a “lost treasure...a return to ancient wisdom” (Boers 2003, 12). This I believed would be a good place to start a spiritual renewal in the congregations. My time frame of forty days was chosen as it fits a biblical pattern of forty days as a transitional period or a time of preparation. Forty days is long enough to develop a discipline but not so long as to deter participation. I was expecting that this challenge to forty days of prayer would become the time of preparation and transition to a new season of spiritual and missional growth for the congregation. The project plan I developed had seven phases: Preparation of the Prayer Guide, Promotion and recruitment, Orientation and Training, First Interviews and Questionnaire, Forty

Days of Morning and Evening Prayer, Second Interviews and Questionnaire, Data Gathering and Analysis.

Phase 1: Preparation of Prayer Guide

As I have described in Chapter 3 there were many prayer guides to choose from. Many follow the “fixed-hour” prayer format with prewritten prayers to be said at certain times. My requirement was for a prayer guide that would encourage the participants into a disciplined prayer life but not one that dictated what they should be praying. I decided to develop a prayer guide that had six weeks of devotional topics, one for each week. These topics were described in Chapter 2.

The prayer guide had a one page introduction for each week. The introduction addressed the week’s topic and was intended to set the focus of the week’s prayers and guide the participant into that topic. The guide was written with a one page devotional for each day with the devotional on the left side of the page and a blank column on the right for the participant to take notes for themselves. The devotionals included relevant scripture passages for the participants to read while the devotional text was intended to keep the participant’s mind on the topic for the week. The prayer guide can be found in Appendix A.

Phase 2: Promotion and Recruitment

The recruitment of participants posed a potential problem for this research. I wanted as many of the congregation as possible to participate because, as their Pastor, I wanted them to be people of prayer and I believed this program would

assist them in their prayer lives. As I prepared to invite people to participate I faced a potential risk.

A False Start – Avoided

Initially I had considered inviting specific, selected, people to participate. I created a list of potential participants to invite. This list of selected invitees contained twelve names. Upon reflection I came to see this idea as flawed for three reasons.

The first potential flaw in selecting people from the congregation to participate in the project was that I may not yet have enough insight to the spiritual lives of the people to make such a list. Although I had met with and spoken with the entire congregation over time, except for a few, I really had no deep insight into their individual spiritual lives. Secondly, there was a risk of some individuals rejecting the invitation. This may have created two additional problems. The first problem selective invitations may have created would be the possible alienation between me, their pastor, and the person I invited. This possible alienation would come from the congregant having declined the invitation from their pastor. The second problem that could arise from a selected participant's decision to decline the invitation would be that the project would have fewer participants. The third possible flaw in selecting participants and inviting specific people was the risk of creating two groups in the congregation. These two groups would be those who were invited to be part of the pastor's prayer project and those who were not. This division would have occurred as a direct result of the pastor-researcher's decision to choose who could participate.

This division would surely hinder the unity in the congregation. These risks were too significant to me to move forward with personally selected participants. So I took another risk and invited everyone. The risk being that no one might respond the benefit being that no one was excluded.

Criteria for Participation

I did not want to alienate anyone or cause anyone to feel they were not included in the project. Therefore I made participation in the project available to anyone who was attending the church at the time of the announcements or anyone who had read the promotional bulletin inserts. I did not limit the participation to just members but included members and adherents and casual attendees. I made it open to anyone who wanted to participate.

Invitation to Participate

I provided information for potential participants through pulpit announcements, bulletin inserts and sermons. Anyone who heard the announcements was invited to participate. I asked no one individually, but allowed the Holy Spirit to move the heart and mind of any individual in the congregation to participate. The result of this approach to recruiting participants was that none of the participants had any sense of compulsion and no one should have felt excluded since everyone in the congregation was invited. No one felt coerced and no one found themselves in the position of refusing their Pastor's personal invitation. I provided the prayer guide and the before and after questions to the participants before they agreed to participate. This was to ensure that all

who participated understood the intent of the program was to go deeper in our prayer practices and develop the discipline of morning and evening prayer. While this had the potential to influence the outcome and findings it is in alignment with the intent of Action Research, “The foundational characteristics [of Action Research] reflect the intentionality of the researcher to change an organization...” (Coghlan 2010, 15). The very positive and affirming result is about one third of the active congregation, twenty-one people, agreed to participate.

Phase 3: Orientation and Training

The pulpit announcements about the prayer project to the congregation included an invitation to an orientation session that would take place after the worship service and fellowship time on Sunday September 22, 2013. This was an open invitation to anyone who was thinking about participating. It was not a requirement for participation. Five participants were unable to attend the orientation session so I met with them one-on-one. At the orientation session I explained the project in detail. Each attendee was given a copy of the prayer guide (Appendix A), the participant informed consent form (Appendix F) and the Structure of Prayer Scale (Appendix E). The decision to provide the prayer guide at the orientation session was to be sure the participants fully understood what the forty days were about. The participants were asked to complete and return the informed consent form and the Structure of Prayer Scale as an indication of their willingness to participate.

Within one week 15 people had returned their signed consent forms and within another week an additional 6 people had returned their signed consent

forms. In total twenty-one people agreed to engage in the project. This was a much better response than I had anticipated. It was confirmed in the research that this was an appropriate project to launch as it captured the interest of almost one third of the congregation. Of the twenty-one people who signed up to participate in the *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer*, nineteen completed and two did not. The two that did not complete the project withdrew for health reasons.

Upon receipt of the completed participant informed consent form and the completed Structure of Prayer Scale I registered each respondent as a participant in the project. The structure and content of the prayer guide is explained in Chapter 3.

I had written the prayer guide to bring focus to the daily morning prayer and to provide a framework for the evening prayer. The prayer guide is shown in Appendix A. The forty days were divided into six weeks of seven days. While this was in fact forty-two days the participants were aware that the project would take six weeks to complete. A prayer focus was chosen for each week. As detailed in Chapter 2 these weekly foci were: Week 1 - The Presence of God; Week 2 – Praising God; Week 3 – Thankfulness; Week 4 – Godly Wisdom; Week 5 – Confession and Forgiveness; Week 6 – Courage and Strength; Week 7 – God’s Guidance.

These prayer foci were chosen to guide the participants into their day with a specific mindset and to encourage them to meditate throughout the day on that particular focus. Each day of the week had a different devotional but always on the same focus for that week. Another reason for the focus was to intentionally

have the participants begin praying in the realm of spiritual growth rather than personal needs. Informal feedback from several participants indicated that this method of providing a weekly focus was very beneficial in that their week of prayer was immersed in a single focus. The prayer guide has a short devotional for each day of the six weeks of the prayer project. The devotional is for the morning prayer and to encourage meditation on that focus throughout the day. For the evening prayer I chose a different approach.

The evening prayer was based on the Prayer of Examen to lead the participants at the end of the day into a reflection on the day past. Chapter 2 details the format of the evening prayer based on the Ignatian Prayer of Examen. The intention of the program was that the participants would begin and end their day with prayer.

Phase 4: First Interviews and Questionnaire

The program was designed to encourage the participants into a disciplined prayer life. I wanted to research if an individual's prayer practice would change by having participated in forty days of morning and evening prayer. To create the data to assess this I needed to have "before and after" assessments. To accomplish this I used two kinds of data, qualitative data based on open questions in interviews with the participants and a quantitative questionnaire that the participants completed.

Participant Interviews

The nature of this project was personal and intimate for each participant. From the outset this research was intended to draw the participants into a deeper prayer life by giving them a guide that could help them develop the spiritual discipline of Morning and Evening prayer. It was the participant's personal experience of prayer both before and after the project that was being researched. The nature of the data collection then had to be appropriate to these considerations.

I chose to use interviews to capture the personal responses from each participant. Information received through personal interviews can be more accurate than other means (Miller 2002). The participants were afforded the opportunity to expand on their answers by not being limited to a more structured line of questioning. I also wanted to capture the participant's experience as well as to discern, through later analysis of the responses, any movement or change in their prayer life and experience. So the qualitative method was to interview each participant one-on-one. This project was focused on the individual experiences and the group as a whole.

The qualitative researcher acknowledges that people who have a direct life experience with a phenomenon know more about that than she does; that they rather than she are the experts. Instead of having to formulate hypotheses, develop survey instruments, or design experimental procedures that may or may not address the participants' experience, she can ask them directly about their experience, and learn from what they say. (Auerbach 2003, 24)

For the qualitative research one-on-one interviews with each participant were scheduled. One-on-one interviews were chosen rather than group interviews to give the participants the privacy and confidentiality to respond with openness. An

interview was conducted both before and after the forty days to provide qualitative data for the research. These questions, prepared after consultation with the Doctor of Ministry program advisors and leaders, were designed to assess, prior to the forty days, what was the pre-project state of the participant's prayer life. The questions used after the project were designed to assess if any change had taken place as a result of the project. The interview questions are found in Appendix D.

I developed five open questions to pose to the participants. Three of these questions were asked before the forty days began and two were asked after the forty days were completed. The questions posed before the Forty Days of Prayer were, 1) "What does prayer look like to you on a day to day basis?" 2) "Why have you agreed to participate in this study?" and 3) "What do you anticipate will happen for you?" Following the Forty Days of Prayer the following two questions were asked, 1) "What does Prayer look like to you on a day to basis now that you have participated in this study? and 2) "What has happened to your prayer life as a result of your participation?"

The two questions asked following the forty days are very close in intent. The first question, "What does prayer look like to you on a day to basis now that you have participated in this study?" Was intended to elicit responses regarding the participants' quality and depth of prayer. The second question, "What has happened to your prayer life as a result of your participation?" was intended to gain information about the participants' timing and frequency of prayer. The participants' answers to these two questions were sometimes merged and gave

less clarity than I was seeking in my research. In a future study I would clarify the intent of the questions more clearly to ascertain the quality of prayer life as one question and frequency and timing of prayer events as the second. There may also be additional information to be gained by separating the questions around morning and evening prayer as separate experiences. By allowing the participants to know in advance the questions they would be asked following the forty days I may have introduced a possibility of bias. Knowing what they were going to be asked before they completed the forty days could have influenced the degree of their participation and their answers. Researchers contemplating a similar study may want to consider what process would give the participants full disclosure as to the nature of the program while avoiding any potential for bias in their participants' answers.

Structure of Prayer Scale

The participants were also asked to complete a questionnaire before and after the forty days. I selected *The Structure of Prayer Scale* developed by A. Luckow et al. (Hill 1999, 70). *The Structure of Prayer Scale*, a quantitative data gathering tool, was developed to assess distinct categories of prayer. The developers of this prayer scale had six prayer categories they wanted to assess. Each category has a number of statements related to that prayer type. These prayer types and the number of statements related to each are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Structure of Prayer Scale – Prayer Categories

Prayer Category	Description and Example
Compassionate-Improvement (8)	Prayers for self and others for improvement in their situation. Sample: "I like to say prayers for people about whom I care very much."
Confession (5)	Telling God your faults. Sample: "When I feel guilty about something, it helps to tell God about it."
Habit (4)	The practice of the prayer discipline. Sample: "I always pray before I go to sleep."
Meditation-Improvement (5)	Prayers about the inner spiritual life. Sample: "Prayer is a way for me to connect with my inner spirit."
Petition (3)	Prayers for God's help or intervention. Sample: "Most of my prayers are for God to solve problems."
Ritual (3)	The rituals surrounding prayer. Sample: "When I pray alone, I have a ritual that I adhere to strictly."

This instrument was used to establish the participant's prayer focus before and after the forty days of prayer. This instrument was used, with the permission of the developers of the instrument, to set a base line for each participants' prayer practice. By using such an instrument as a "before and after" assessment tool I was able to measure any change in the participants' prayer focus as a result of their participation in the forty day prayer program.

The Structure of Prayer Scale was administered with written instructions before and after the forty days of prayer. None of the participants had questions regarding the instrument as most if not all were familiar with the Likert kind of questionnaire. The participants were asked to submit the first completed questionnaire along with their signed participant consent form. Each participant simply completed the instrument and forwarded the document to me. There was little dialogue necessary with the administration of this instrument. The dialogue was saved for the interviews. The questionnaire was used to establish the types of prayer and prayer focus, of the participants. By administering this instrument both

before and after the forty days of the study I was able to assess if there had been any change in the focus of the participants prayers.

The answers to *The Structure of Prayer Scale* were collected and entered into an Excel spreadsheet containing separate worksheets for each participant. Both the quantitative and qualitative answers are contained in one worksheet and all the data collected was contained in a single workbook. The workbook remains password protected and backup copies are securely maintained. *The Structure of Prayer Scale* is shown in Appendix E.

Phase 5: Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer

Following the individual interviews the participants were able to begin their forty days of prayer. The participants were free to start their forty days on a day that was appropriate for them. This gave the project a staggered start and a staggered finish. All the participants started within a few days of each other. This did not appear to have any impact on the program or the results. Each participant was able to start as soon as they wished after the first interview and I was able to begin the “after” interviews as each participant finished their forty days. The participants were asked to send an email to me each week indicating that they were still on board with the project. All the participants who completed the forty days complied with this request. The two who do not use email gave me their weekly update at church. The project proceeded without interruption.

Phase 6: Second Interviews and Questionnaire

As each participant finished their forty days of prayer we scheduled a time when we could conduct the second interview and administer the second questionnaire. The two questions scheduled for when the participant had finished the forty days of prayer were administered by phone, giving the participants the opportunity to express their answers freely and openly. All the participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in this initiative. There was a genuine affirming response that this was, as one participant stated, the “right thing to do.”

Phase 7: Data Gathering and Analysis

Before embarking on this project I was aware from my professional career in Project Management that I needed to put some planning and structure in place for the work ahead. There are many approaches to managing projects, but this was a research project and I needed to have a repeatable method so I could learn from the first project and approach any subsequent projects in the same or similar way. I chose to use Action Research as the method to execute the project as Action Research specifically models repeatability.

Action Research

In their book, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick define the Action Research method as a repeatable four step process. “Action research works through a cyclical four step process of consciously and deliberately planning, taking action, evaluating the action, leading to further planning and so on” (Coghlan and Brannick 2010, 5). Since I

was looking for a repeatable process, Action Research seemed like the best method to use. Coghlan and Brannick provide a diagram that illustrates this repeatable four step method.

The following diagram is based on Coghlan and Brannick's four step process.

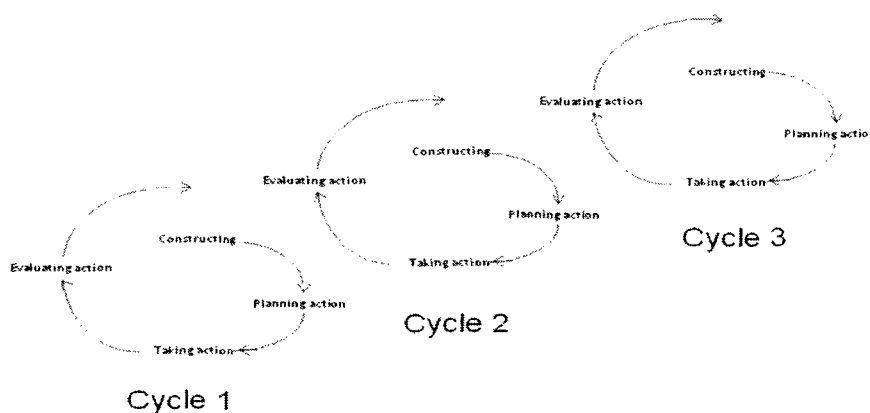


Figure 2. Action research cycles

Based on: David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick. 2010. *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

While my project included only one action research cycle my earlier attempts at discerning the spiritual health of the congregation provided me with the focus. These earlier attempts may not constitute Action Research in the formal sense yet they did include planning, taking action, evaluating the action leading to further action and planning. Having tried a number of event and program actions as outlined in Chapter 1, I was led to go back to basics and looked into starting with prayer as my project focus. I needed a practical first step or foundational action to lead my congregation to move where the Holy Spirit would lead us. It is my intention to reintroduce the forty day prayer initiative and hopefully engage more

of the congregation a second time. Later I will introduce other spiritual disciplines into the life of the congregation.

My Action Research cycle followed Coghlan and Brannick's four step process. The Constructing phase consisted of defining the forty days as the period of the prayer program; writing the prayer guide; preparing the interview questions, selecting *The Structure of Prayer Scale* as the quantitative research instrument; preparing the bulletin inserts for promoting the program and writing and delivering the announcements. The Planning Action phase included developing a timetable for the promotion and announcements; scheduling the orientation event and preparing copies of all materials. The third phase Coghlan and Brannick call Taking Action required the announcements to be made, executing the orientation session, collecting the first questionnaire (effecting the participants' commitment), conducting the first and second interviews and collecting and cataloguing the data. Following the collection of *The Structure of Prayer Scale* questionnaires and having completed the second interviews I began to gather the data from these research tools. This was the Evaluating Action phase and included data coding, preparation of the lists and charts to assess the data, developing and writing my conclusions and assessing the entire process.

The research was designed to capture both quantitative data, from *The Structure of Prayer Scale*, and qualitative data, from the interviews. Both these methods were effective but the interviews provided more depth of answers. In a future study of this type I would develop more interview questions for both the before and after interviews. I would also separate the research questions for

morning and evening prayer as my research shows that the participants had different responses to the two.

Analysis

This research was aimed at discovering if a prayer habit could be developed in a group of participants by encouraging them through a season of prayer. I chose the “grounded theory approach.” Grounded theory is a way of analyzing qualitative data when there is no established theory to work towards (Bell 2005). The theory that emerges is grounded in the data.

My approach to data analysis was *In Vivo* data coding. *In Vivo* coding, meaning literal or verbatim coding, allows the researcher to capture the actual words used by the participant; it “honors the participant’s voice” (Saldana 2013, 91). Since this research explored the personal intimate prayer life of the participants and the research required an understanding of each participant’s personal experience, it was important to capture their actual words. Qualitative data “...with their emphasis on ‘people’s lived experience’” (Miles and Huberman 1994, 10), allowed me to capture and code the actual words used by the participants in the study. The interviews were conducted at a time convenient for the participants. My goal was to capture as much as the participant wanted to say about their prayer life. I was aware that as their Pastor some may not want to divulge the details, particularly if their prayer life was non-existent. I was conscious of the ethical constraints in doing this kind of research. The interviews were conducted by telephone and I took notes and repeated the answers to ensure I had captured their exact words. After each interview I immediately typed the

participant's responses this left little room for transcription error as the information was current.

Coding

Since qualitative coding is a “cyclical act” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, 10) and an iterative process (Saldana 2013, 5) it can involve many iterations. The first cycle coding began after about one third of the responses to the second interview had been documented. Developing qualitative codes allows the researcher to capture the essence and the essential elements of the research (Saldana 2013, 8). Codes are able to assist the researcher in creating “summative, salient, essence-capturing...attributes of language...based data” (Saldana 2013, 3). Miles and Huberman see data analysis as three concurrent activities occurring during the data collection period. These three activities are: data reduction, data displays, and conclusion drawing/verification. It is in the data reduction process that data coding occurs allowing the researcher uncover themes and clusters within the data (Miles and Huberman 1994).

After the forty days and the interviews were completed and the questionnaires were handed in I recorded all the data on an Excel spreadsheet. I created one worksheet for each participant. Their responses to the interview questions and their responses to the questionnaire were entered into specific cells in their assigned worksheet. By using the features of Excel I was able to create a compilation of all the responses to each question and a summary worksheet for the questionnaire responses. I was then able to view all the responses to each

question and begin coding them and grouping them using Excel capabilities. My background in the information technology field was a great asset in this.

Ethical Review

This project required me to be sensitive to the very intimate nature of the research subject. Asking people to be open and honest about their prayer practices and discipline touches them at a very personal level. My ethical approach was to ensure that all participation was purely voluntary. To achieve this I did not ask any individual person to participate. Instead I made several announcements and published the opportunity to participate in the Sunday bulletins and allowed each person to decide their own response. I did not encourage or enquire if anyone was or was not going to attend the orientation session. After the orientation I waited for individuals to return their consent forms again with no enquiry to any potential participant. All through the process the decision to participate was left to the individual.

During the interviews I kept the conversation focused on the questions at hand, avoiding any overtly pastoral comments regarding the interviewees' prayer discipline. While collecting the data all my computer records were kept under password protection and the names of the individuals were not connected with their responses. Upon completion of the research and completion of the thesis all data was deleted and removed from my computer.

Since completing the *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer* I have not made any enquiry of any participant. Some have requested that I provide

additional prayer guides as they expressed their appreciation for the guidance they provided. The full ethical review is found in Appendix C.

Summary

In this chapter I have explained the details of the program I called *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer*. I developed this program to draw any willing congregation members into a season of morning and evening prayer. The primary objective being to have the congregation become people of prayer so that we might discern the Lord's leading in our congregational life. The project was planned and executed using the Coghlan and Brannick "Action Research" approach. A prayer guide was developed and a survey and questionnaire were administered. Twenty-one participants enrolled in the program with nineteen completing.

I had originally intended to conduct a group discussion session with all participants attending. Upon receiving all the feedback from the interviews and questionnaires I decided against such a discussion. The main reason was that the responses were so personal to the individual participants that there might have been a reluctance to be open with each other. Another reason was that I had received so much information from the interviews and questionnaires that the discussion session would not have added any new data to the research.

Following the completion of the forty days I gathered the data from the interviews with the participants and their completed "before" and "after" questionnaires. Using *In Vivo* Coding I discerned the prayer practices and

disciplines of the participants and drew conclusions. Chapter 5 details the analysis of the data collected from the project. Chapter six outlines my conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE:

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

A man or woman who does not spend much time in prayer cannot properly be called a follower of Jesus Christ.

-- R. A. Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*

This chapter describes the analysis and findings from the research. The answers to the interview questions are explored and the results from the questionnaire are displayed and explained. The research program, *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer*, was initiated to draw the participants from Christian Baptist Church into a season of disciplined prayer. As the pastor of this congregation I was looking for a way to encourage the congregation into a deeper prayer life. The result was that most of the participants did experience a renewal in their prayer lives. Many expressing that this was a good opportunity for them to reengage with their prayer lives. Several expressing a greater awareness of God's presence during their prayer times.

The structure of the project was the spiritual discipline of morning and evening prayer. A prayer guide for the forty days (six weeks) was written and provided to the participants. The prayer guide contained daily devotionals in six themes as described in Chapter 3. There was a theme or focus for each of the six

weeks and each day of each week had a devotional on that week's theme. The evening prayer, based on the Prayer of Examen, also outlined on Chapter 3, was designed to create the experience of being with God in the quiet of the evening to reflect on the day. The daily devotionals were well received. The participants had mixed feedback on the evening prayer.

The research questions were designed to establish the participant's prayer life before and after the forty days of prayer. The answers provided by the participants indicate that this program of intentional prayer did create a change in their prayer lives. The participant responses indicated that prayer times have increased, relationships with God have deepened and the daily prayer practice is now a discipline. One participant offered the following statement as her expectation in participating:

I am hoping that by enabling my day with all aspects of prayer my relationship with God will be strengthened. I hope I will fall in love again with my God and that I will get a better understanding of who He is and of who I am to be where He has placed me in His world. I am hoping to get a better understanding of who I am and of what He wants me to do. I want to become more ready to say, 'Here I am Lord for whatever you have in store for me'.

Following the program this participant gave the following response to the question: "What does Prayer look like to you on a day to basis now that you have participated in this study?"

I now spend more time at prayer and pray throughout the day - quite a bit of time. I am in less formal prayer than the guide proposes but I do that well, I didn't previously.

Another participant, a new believer, stated, “I am now a little more consistent in my prayers [and do it] morning and evening. It seems a little more personal too - I am talking *with* God not *to* God. I have a sense of connection with God.”

It was a primary goal of the project to enable the participants to develop a deeper relationship with God through the developing of a personal prayer discipline. Since the congregation had been experiencing an extended period of decline, as explained in Chapter 1, it was a secondary expectation that the renewed prayer lives of the participants would be reflected in their engagement with the life of the church. While this falls outside the scope of my research, many of the participants in the project have already increased their engagement in the ministry life of the church in new and different ways.

When initiating the prayer project I did not want to engage the participants in systematic prayer for duty’s sake. As discussed in Chapter 3 the forms of fixed-hour prayer did not fit with my Baptist congregation’s extemporaneous prayer style. Although it would be a valid follow up to this project to introduce those who are interested to other forms of prayer, including fixed-hour prayer or the Divine Office, I did not believe this was the time to do so. I wanted to avoid any rigidity or forms of prayer that would dissuade the congregants from participating. Richard Rhor states, “The Divine Office, as beautiful as it is, can still keep you largely in your head, your left brain, and your world of good ideas” (Rhor 2012, 59). I was looking to encourage the participants to develop not just the prayer discipline but to experience the blessings and benefits that come from a disciplined prayer life.

Prior to doing this prayer project I had no clear insight into the prayer lives of my congregation. I mentioned in the Theological Foundations in Chapter 2 that I had sensed the congregation's need for spiritual renewal. This sense came from my attempts to engage them in Small Group Studies and Congregational Prayer Meetings. My pastoral observations and conversations with the congregational leaders led me to understand the need for spiritual renewal in the congregation. As the results have shown, starting with prayer was a valid place to begin. The results have opened my Pastoral eyes to the need to be continually encouraging my congregation to be in prayer. I have been able to assess my own prayer life as a result of participating in this program. I too need to pay more attention to my own discipline in this area.

The Analysis

A person's prayer life is personal and private. It is between them and God. My objective in this project was to uncover the state or condition of the prayer lives of any who would participate but also to give the participants a framework for developing a prayer discipline that they could continue to use beyond the forty days. I developed the prayer guide as an enabler for them to establish their own prayer discipline. The prayer guide was provided for morning and evening prayer to provide the structure and discipline for the participants.

The data from my research interviews has enabled me to assess the current, "before" state of the participants' prayer lives and also provide a means to develop a prayer discipline that they could carry forward. I did not discern any hesitancy on the part of the participants to be less than candid in the interviews.

Some of the participants' responses clearly pointed to the need for this initiative. The words and phrases the participants used to describe their prayer practices before the forty days included, "sporadic," "unstructured" and, "when I pray my mind drifts" and, "...all too often, unfortunately, prayer is not happening on a daily basis." These statements were indicative of people who understood the need for prayer but had not developed the daily discipline and practice.

The research was conducted using five interview questions and a Likert Scale questionnaire. Three of the interview questions were administered prior to the forty days of prayer and two following. The initial three questions were designed to establish the condition or state of the participant's prayer life, why they agreed to participate in the study and what they expected to benefit or discover from their participation.

Before the Study Period

My first goal in this research was to establish the current state of the participant's prayer discipline before the forty days in order to assess if their participation in the forty days of prayer resulted in any change in their prayer practice.

Analysis of Interviews

At the beginning of the research each participant was interviewed and asked three questions. These questions were: 1) "What does prayer look like to you on a day to day basis?" 2) "Why have you agreed to participate in this study?" and 3) "What do you anticipate will happen for you?" While the second and third questions appear quite similar I was intending to discover what had

triggered in the participant the desire to participate and what benefit they were expecting from participating. The answers I received did provide the differentiation I was expecting. One participant, in answer to the second question, “Why have you agreed to participate in this study?” responded, “I know what I am doing is not right because I am not as close to God as I used to be, and I want to change this.” To the third question, “What do you anticipate will happen for you?” she responded, “I will get back to where I was 15-20 years ago when my prayer life was extremely exciting and something I looked forward to.”

Another participant also differentiated between the two questions. In fact his response indicated clearly the difference between the two questions. In answer to the question, “Why have you agreed to participate in this study?” his response was, “I need help! This is a great idea and I expect great things will happen as a result, which leads to question 3.” In response to question 3 he said,

[I am] Looking forward to an improved prayer life. The timing [of this initiative] is good for my life. I know it won't be easy but it will be beneficial. There will be an upside in participation. I expect I will carry on beyond the forty days.

So, while the second and third questions may seem to be close in meaning the participants understood the difference and were able to articulate meaningful responses.

Prayer Life Before the Program

The first question, “What does prayer look like to you on a day to day basis?” elicited a range of responses. These responses demonstrated that the participants’ prayer lives were spread across a wide spectrum. While no one said

“I do not pray at all,” most indicated that their prayer life was in need of some change. A few, however, indicated that they already have a well-developed prayer practice. The use of words and phrases like, “immediately upon waking [I am in prayer],” “daily,” “continually,” “... [I am] constantly aware of His presence,” “in constant prayer” and, “I live and walk in prayer” indicate that these participants had already developed some kind of prayer discipline. Based on the words the participants used to describe their prayer practice before the forty days I was able to identify four categories or groupings.

Categorization of Prayer Practice

The four categories or groupings were based on the words used by the participants to describe their own prayer life. The categories were: Constant, Daily/Consistent, Daily/Inconsistent and Inconsistent. The words they used reflect both the regularity and consistency of their prayer times. Three participants have already developed a prayer life that reflects the command in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “...pray continually.” I gave this group the descriptor “Constant” since they have described their day as being in constant prayer. All three participants used the word “constant” or “constantly” in their responses. The second group have a regular habit of prayer upon waking each day. All six participants in this groups specifically mentioned their morning prayer; “...always in the morning,” “...every morning,” “...first thing every morning.” I assigned the descriptor, “Daily/Consistent” to these participants since they have a regular prayer habit that is consistently practiced. The third group, with four participants, indicated that prayer is a daily practice for them but they are inconsistent in the practice. This

group does have the intention of praying daily but they have identified their prayers as inconsistent. These participants used the words, “Not as regular as it should be...,” “...when I am not busy.” This type of prayer practice I called “Daily/Inconsistent.” The fourth group, with six participants, used words to describe their prayer practice that can be categorized as irregular and inconsistent. These participants’ words included, “sporadic” and, “hit and miss.” One participant was very candid, “...I do not pray enough. Sometimes “spot” prayers...not structured.” This group I called “Inconsistent.” The categories I created were, “Constant,” “Daily/Consistent,” “Daily/Inconsistent” and “Inconsistent.” Table 2 shows the Prayer Categories, the number of participants in each category and the actual words used by the participants to describe their prayer practice and discipline before the forty days.

Table 2. Categories of prayer practice

Category	Number of Participants	Words Used
Constant	3	constantly, continually, constantly aware of His presence, conversation about everything; pray on the armor [all day]
Daily/Consistent	6	immediately [upon waking], connecting with God, first thing in the morning
Daily/Inconsistent	4	short sentences, lots of repetition, mind wanders, pray daily - I have a list, one sided; usually - during the day
Inconsistent	6	when I am not busy, no designated time, not happening daily, fragmented, not regular, "quickies," hit and miss, sometimes, inconsistent, not enough, "spot," not structured, sporadic, no set time, haphazard, unstructured, missed days

As can be seen from this chart ten participants confessed to not having a regular, disciplined approach to their prayer life. This confirms my concern about the possible “spiritual poverty” (Illsley 2005, 4) that I detected at Christian Baptist Church. Donald Whitney writes, "Why, then, do so many believers confess that they do not pray as they should? Sometimes the problem is primarily a lack of discipline: Prayer is never planned; time is never allocated just for praying” (Whitney 1991, 69). It was this possible lack of prayer discipline that I was researching. As these responses have shown, half of the participants have admitted a lack of discipline in prayer. So what would motivate them to participate in a prayer study?

Motives for Participating in the Prayer Study

The second question asked of each participant was, “Why have you agreed to participate in this study?” This question was asked to establish why each participant was drawn to accept the invitation to be in prayer for forty days. I was able to group the responses into five categories. These categories were again based on the actual words the participants used in their responses. I did not restrict the participants to only one answer, I was looking for any reason they chose to participate. The list of reasons for participation follows. The numbers add to more than the number of participants because they gave multiple reasons for their participation: “to get help, get discipline, get structure” (11 responses), “to listen, to learn, to grow” (7 responses), “to get close(r) to God” (7 responses), “to get focus, to enrich, improve the quality and restore” (6 responses) and, “to help the pastor” (6 responses). Eleven of the participants indicated that their participation

was partially driven by a need to get more discipline and structure into their prayer lives. One comment was simply, “My prayer life needs an overhaul.” That half the participants made statements of this type affirmed that this project was appropriate for this congregation. Another participant responded: “You put the ball on the tee and gave me the bat.” This indicated to me that the project was timely and that there are those who already realized that their prayer practice and discipline needed help.

The second category of responses, “To get focus, to enrich, improve the quality and restore [my prayer life],” speaks to the quality of the respondent’s prayer life rather than the structure or discipline. This shows these people are praying but they have a sense that their prayer life could be different – richer, improved, more focused.

Category 3 responses were more aligned with the individual’s spiritual growth. The key words, “listen” and “learn to pray” indicate the respondent has a desire to learn more about prayer and the spiritual discipline of prayer.

The fourth category, “To get close[r] to God,” was separated from Category 3 – Spiritual Growth – as these responses spoke of the participant’s desire to be not just better at praying (Category 1) or more focused in their prayer life (Category 2) but rather their relationship with God was in view. One participant responded, “So that I would get closer to the Lord. I have an expectation that this will draw me closer to the Lord.” Seven participants used the phrase “To get closer to God” as one of their reasons for participating in the project. That one third of the participants declared that they wanted this initiative

to help them get closer to God is an encouraging statistic for me as their Pastor because it speaks of a group of congregants who have a quest to know God more and live their lives closer to Him. As their Pastor it gives me some sense of what my priorities might be going forward in ministry and preaching.

The fifth response category, “To help the pastor,” was given as one of the reasons for participating by six participants. This may suggest the prayer was not the only reason to participate in the study but that supporting the Pastor with this project was just as valid a reason. Table 3 shows the five categories of responses to the second question, “Why have you agreed to participate in this study?” aligned with the four categories of answers to question 1, “What does prayer look like to you on a day to day basis.”

Table 3. Reasons to participate aligned with current prayer discipline.

<u>“What does prayer look like to you on a day to day basis?”</u>	<u>“Why have you agreed to participate in this study?”</u>				
	To get help with, to be more disciplined, and to develop a structure to my prayer life.	To get focus on, improve and enrich quality of, or to restore my prayer life.	To learn to listen and grow in my prayer life.	To get close to God.	To help my pastor.
Constant	1	1	2	3	1
Daily/Consistent	4	1	2	1	4
Daily/Inconsistent	1	0	1	1	1
Inconsistent	3	4	1	2	0
	9	6	6	7	6

Nine respondents, used words and phrases such as, “To get help with,” “to be more disciplined,” and “to develop a structure to my prayer life.” It was noted that participants who have “Consistent” or “Inconsistent” prayer practices both participated in the project to get help with their prayer lives. It indicates that those participants who have already developed a daily prayer regimen and those who

have not both still desire greater levels of prayer discipline – they needed help. This again informs my priority of focus in my ministry as their Pastor. Seven participants indicated that they desired to get closer to God by participating in the study. All three participants whose prayer life was categorized as “Constant,” are seeking to get closer to God, three participants in the “Inconsistent” category also expressed this as a goal. Stanley Grenz writes, “At its heart, prayer entails communion with God. It involves a sense of the presence of God” (Grenz 2005, 27). These participants have set their hearts in prayer to draw closer to, to seek the presence of God. The Apostle James writes, “Come near to God and he will come near to you (James 4:8). These responses have affirmed the appropriateness and timeliness of this initiative.

What are you anticipating?

The third question posed to the participants prior to the beginning of the study was, “What do you anticipate will happen for you?” This question was asked to establish a “before the study” reference point, a baseline, for assessing the results at the end of the study. This question gave me a view of what the participants were expecting to get from their participation. The participants again provided a variety of words and phrases to describe the results they anticipated from their participation. One participant’s response was, “Prayer will be more of a habit, discipline in my life. I will develop a richer, closer relationship with God. I will prioritize my day so I have time for that relationship with Him” Another responded, “I hope it will develop a deeper walk with God - a deeper intimacy. I hope it can help me develop a spiritual discipline...” Another responded, “I hope

it [prayer] will become a permanent part of my day.” All these responses point to the underlying, expressed desire of the participants to become people of prayer.

From the participants’ responses I was able to identify and create three categories of the words and phrases participants used to describe their anticipated outcome. These categories were: “discipline and structure” (16 responses), “presence and relationship” (14 responses) and, “restored and improved prayer life” (6 responses). The repeated use of the words, “discipline,” “structure,” “habit,” “intentional,” “focus” and “priority” in the responses indicates that these participants had the discipline of prayer on their minds. Sixteen times these words were used in the responses. Having a spiritual discipline of prayer was important to these participants. They anticipated that having participated in forty days of morning and evening prayer their prayer lives might become more disciplined and better structured. Their desire was for their prayer practice to become a disciplined habit.

The second category of responses, Restored and Improved Prayer Life, is also reflective of the second question, “Why have you agreed to participate in this study?” In six responses words were expressed that indicate the respondent was seeking an improved or restored prayer life. This speaks to the possible reality that their prayer lives needed some impetus to get it restarted. This tells me again that this project was very timely. One participant said,

I am looking forward to an improved prayer life. The timing [of this initiative] is good for my life. I know it won't be easy but it will be beneficial; there will be an upside in participation. I expect I will carry on beyond the forty days.

Several others in their general conversation about the project used the expression, “It’s about time.” By this they meant that they were ready for the invitation to get serious about their prayer lives.

The third category, Presence and Relationship, was based on the words, “presence,” “awareness,” “relationship” and “closer [to God]” occurring fourteen times in the responses. I interpreted this as a desire on the part of the participants to know God at a more intimate level, this prayer project providing the vehicle.

As previously noted, the second question, “Why have you agreed to participate in this study?,” and the third question, “What do you anticipate will happen for you?” appear to be very close in meaning. The participants’ answers indicate they understood the difference. That the participants’ reason for participating and their anticipated outcome are closely aligned should not be a surprise. The opportunity afforded to the participants through this project has met a need that was clearly there but not discovered until these two questions were asked. This again confirmed for me what I had discerned at Christian Baptist a need for the congregation to develop a deeper prayer life. From these participants’ responses I heard their desire to become people of prayer. These responses reaffirmed the need and timeliness of this project.

The results from the interviews following the forty days indicated there was a shift or move in the prayer lives of the participants. This change was in alignment with the participants’ anticipated outcome.

After the Study Period

Following the forty days of prayer, the goal of the research was to find out what, if any, changes the participants had experienced in their prayer practice. Two questions were designed to see if the participants had experienced any change in their prayer practice as a result of their participation. The answers to these questions were compared with the answers to the questions asked before the forty days. This gave the research a “before” and “after” picture. The two questions asked after the study period were, “What does Prayer look like to you on a day to basis now that you have participated in this study?” and “What has happened to your prayer life as a result of your participation?”

What Changed for the Participants?

The responses to the question, What does Prayer look like to you on a day to basis now that you have participated in this study? fell into three broad categories, 1) Quality of Prayer time – what the participant was experiencing during the prayer time; 2) Frequency – those responses that spoke of the timing and duration of their prayer times and 3) those responses that reflected the participants’ concerns with discipline and structure in their prayer practice. All of the responses pointed to the recognition that something more was needed in the participants’ prayer life. Table 4 shows the words and expressions used by the participants to describe their prayer practice after the study.

Table 4. Prayer practice following the study

Category	Number of Responses	Words Used in the Responses
Quality of prayer time	6	"Presence" (2); "talking and listening" / " <i>with God</i> not <i>to God</i> "; "aligning [myself] with God"; "hanging out with God"
Frequency of prayer	5	"...happens more throughout the day"; "...has increased...now a regular habit"; "...comes to mind more throughout the day"; "I am repeating the forty days"; "...more time at prayer...quite a bit of time"
Discipline of prayer	7	"desire to be more disciplined...a priority and focus change"; "looking for a more structured prayer guide"; "I need to put more effort in...less scattered approach"; "[this projects] has provided the discipline and structure ...I am more in the Word [now]"; "it is a habit now"; "made my prayer time easier...less random...previously [I had] no structure or schedule"; "I am [now] more committed to prayer"
No change	1	"Not a whole lot different...I want to do this again"

These responses indicate that the participants, all but one, have thought about the current state of their prayer lives and want to make changes. They have each identified their own area of focus but the common thread is “more” – more discipline, more often, more experiencing the presence of God. Perhaps they are beginning to experience that move of God that Foster calls the, “...ache in your heart...that will draw them...back to His loving presence” (Foster 1992, 141). The one participant who has not seen a “whole lot different” as a result of his

participation admits that he did not put enough into it. A family issue during the study took him out of town for several weeks. But he has indicated that he wants to do the program again.

Table 5 shows how the responses to the question, “What does Prayer look like to you on a day to basis now that you have participated in this study?” align with the four prayer categories developed from question 1. There are more than nineteen responses as some participants used several words and phrases which fit in more than one category.

Table 5. Comparison of prayer practice before and after the study

Descriptions of Prayer Practice	What does prayer look like to you on a day to day basis? (Before the Study)	What does Prayer look like to you on a day to basis now that you have participated in this study? (After the Study)			
		Quality of Prayer	Frequency of Prayer	Discipline and Structure	No Change
Constant	3	3		3	
Daily/Consistent	6	5	1	3	1
Daily/Inconsistent	4	2	2	1	
Inconsistent	6	2	3	3	

Using the words the participants provided and creating these categories for their responses gave me a view of the prayer discipline for each participant before and after the prayer program. Each participant’s response was aligned with their response to the “before the study” question. For example, in the chart we can see that five of the six participants in the category “Daily/Consistent” have responded that the quality of their prayer practice has changed, one has noted that their

prayer frequency has changed, three have noted a change in their discipline and structure and one has seen no change. This enabled me to determine an answer to the question I had, which is the central question in this research, “Can a Pastor lead a congregation into becoming a people of prayer through a study on their prayer habits?” The answer simply is, yes. People can be led into the discipline of prayer and the result will be a greater affinity and desire to for prayer. The participants in this project have indicated a greater awareness of their relationship with God through prayer. They have noted their prayer times have increased and they desire a greater discipline in their prayer lives.

What Happens Going Forward?

The second question asked after the forty days was, “What has happened to your prayer life as a result of your participation?” This question was to uncover any qualitative change in their understanding or approach to prayer and to discern any commitment to continue in a more disciplined prayer life. The first question addressed the pattern and mode of their prayer practice while the second question was asking for the spiritual results. This question was seeking a “looking forward” response. I was asking the participants now that they had completed the study how did they view their prayer practices going forward. The responses fall into two categories, the participants’ awareness of God which I called “Awareness of God” and their commitment to the discipline, which I called “Awareness of Discipline.” With all the interview questions I was looking for the actual words being used by the participants, (i.e., *In Vivo* coding). I was looking for the words that the participants used to describe their prayer practice after the forty days to

see if there was any indication of a change or a move in the participant's description of their prayer practice. The responses reflected two major themes for the participants. The first theme was the awareness of God while praying. Phrases such as, "relationship with God," "presence of God" and "closer to God" were frequently used. These words are indicative of the participants' renewed awareness of God's presence with them during their prayer times. These responses I grouped and listed in a category I labeled "Awareness of God." Other responses such as, "more disciplined," "more focused," and "more time in prayer" reflect an awareness of the participants' changed discipline of prayer. Table 6 shows the participant responses listed in the two categories.

Table 6. Prayer practice going forward

<u>Awareness of God</u>	<u>Awareness of Discipline</u>
"I am in God's presence"[when I am praying]";	"...when I do not pray I know I am missing something"
"I am developing a deliberate intentional relationship with God";	"I am more aware of what is going on in my prayers...my prayers were ritual (before the study)"
"I am more in tune with God";	"...more discipline (in my prayers)"
"I can see where God is working in my life"	"more conscious [in my prayers]"
"...closer to God"	"biggest challenge has been the reflection at the end of the day"
"I felt much closer to God";	"I pray more often"
"...just being with God"	"...I am better equipped";
"I feel in the presence of God"	"I [now] pray in a different way"
"I am now experiencing the presence of God"	"my prayer life is better than it was"
"...the Lord spoke to me [through the Prayer Guide]";	"my prayer life feels right"
"You need to do more of these [Prayer Guides]"	"...not improved...I did not put enough energy into it"
"...I have time for God"	"...the discipline has given me focus"
	"...more disciplined, definitely...more focused"

Table 6. continued

<u>Awareness of God</u>	<u>Awareness of Discipline</u>
"...feel the presence of God";	"my prayers will now remain regular...I will not give up"
"feel the spiritual battle because of this change in my prayer life"	"I am looking for a big change"
"...awakening [to] the presence of God...throughout the day"	"will do it [forty days] again"
"closer to God";	"I appreciated the Prayer Guide - the clarity...focus..devotional"
"I...understand who God wants me to be"	"[My prayer life] is more structured";
"I am now actually in fellowship with God rather than having a business meeting"	"enjoyed the [Prayer] guide - challenges and [weekly] focus points"
	"will continue with evening prayer"
	"will you give us more prayer guides?"
	"I am still carrying on with Morning and Evening Prayer"
	"..it makes my quiet time more personal"
	"I was already doing meditation...this [study] confirms what I was already doing"
	"My prayer life is more thorough, it is longer...I am spending more time in prayer"
	"I am more intentional about...evening prayer.";
	"This is huge for me I am more intentional"

As can be seen from these responses many participants have encountered God in new ways as a result of taking the opportunity to engage in *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer*. Several have indicated they will continue. Several have requested more prayer guides. Two have indicated that they will repeat the forty days. No participant indicated any negative experience; none thought their prayer lives had regressed. All the responses pointed to the study being worthwhile and beneficial to the participants' individual prayer lives

The following two responses indicate that the participants have engaged in a move of the Spirit to be more attentive and intentional in their approach to prayer. These quotes are representative examples of the shift in approach and understanding towards daily prayer. One participant said,

I feel more in tune with God. I am more aware of what is going on [in my prayers]. I knew that God's hand was on my life but this [study] has brought this to the forefront. I can see now where God is working in my life. Before my prayers we ritual now it is more thanksgiving rather than [prayers of] concern. I am now seeing different ways of prayer and becoming more aware of scriptures in my prayers.

Another stated, "My prayer life is more disciplined, definitely. Before I was all over the place, now I am more focused. Also, I enjoy praying more now ...I really feel the presence of God." These comments are representative of the responses I received following the study. They point to a change in the prayer lives of the participants brought on by the opportunity to approach daily prayer in a disciplined manner.

One Participant, before the forty days of prayer, described his prayer practice this way: "I pray in the morning in the shower. Sometimes I pray at mid-day or while walking the dog. I may spend a couple of minutes [in prayer] before bed. [I pray] when I am not busy. [I have] No set time [for prayer]." This response I categorized as "Daily/Inconsistent." This response was categorized "Daily" because the participant prays every day but "Inconsistent" because there is "no set time" and because prayer occurred "when I am not busy." Following the forty days of the study, in response to the question, "What does Prayer look like to you on a day to basis now that you have participated in this study?" this same participant said, "Prayer happens more throughout the day. I now have regular morning and evening prayer." The researcher placed this participant in the "Frequency of Prayer" category since the words *more* and *regular* have been used to describe the prayer practice and the participant is now engaged in both morning

and evening prayer and sees the need to do so. In response to the fifth question, “What has happened to your prayer life as a result of your participation?” this same participant replied, “Prayer is the only way I can feel I am in God's presence. I am developing a deliberate intentional relationship with God. Not constantly surface prayer (as before)...On a day now when I do not pray in the morning it does not feel right. I have a sense of missing something and I feel not [as] connected with God as I would like to be.” This participant has entered into a new prayer life. At the beginning his prayer life was, “...when I am not busy,” now he says, “I now have regular morning and evening prayer...” and “I am developing a deliberate intentional relationship with God.” This same participant has since accepted a key leadership role in the congregation. This is the result I was looking for. Changed prayer lives leading to a fuller engagement in the life of the church.

Another participant, prior to starting the forty days of prayer, had described their prayer practice as, “Sporadic, not a set day, may miss a day or two or even a week...” The discipline of the forty days of prayer prompted this response,

This [study] made my prayer times much easier - I previously had no structure or schedule. This way [using the Prayer Guide] was more precise, less random, it has focus and made it [my prayer times] much easier...The whole discipline has given me focus in my prayer life. I am able to be in the moment...have time for God. I now have quietness and solitude. This was something I had in my teens. But life got in the way and took over and my prayer times dwindled.

This participant has moved from “Sporadic, may miss a day or a week” to “...my prayer times are much easier...it has given me focus...I now have time for God.”

This participant, formerly engaged in an “Inconsistent” prayer practice has now recognized the need to maintain a “Frequency of Prayer” discipline and going forward this study has helped her to “...restart and rekindle my prayer life.” Her final comment was, “I have already noticed that when I miss a day [praying] I know something is missing in my day.” This project has moved many of the participants into or back to a more disciplined attention to their prayer lives. These were the results I was hoping for.

Qualitative Summary

The answers to the final two questions regarding the participant’s “new” prayer practice have provided the researcher with strong evidence that engaging in a season of disciplined prayer, even for a period as short as forty days can have a major impact on the prayer lives of those who participate. The research has shown that this initiative has made a lasting impact on those who participated. I will be encouraging the congregation to continue with their prayer discipline and will make it a regular event to invite the congregation to reengage in the discipline and practice of morning and evening prayer.

The Quantitative Analysis

A second component of this study was to determine what the participants prayed for – the focus of their prayers, and to determine if the focus of their prayers had changed after the study period. To gather this information I used an existing questionnaire developed by A. Luckow et al. This instrument is called *The Structure of Prayer Scale* (Appendix E) and is used to assess the categories of prayer people use. I was looking for an instrument to capture data on the prayer

focus of the participants. My intention was to discern if the focus of the participants' prayers had changed as a result of having participated in the study. *The Structure of Prayer Scale* has twenty-eight questions about the focus and way people pray. These questions are, unknown to the user of the instrument, focused on six categories or types of prayer. The six categories are shown in table 1 in Chapter 4. The participants were asked to read each statement about prayer in the questionnaire and to select one of the following responses: Strongly Disagree, Moderately Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Moderately Agree or Strongly Agree. I administered the questionnaire before the participants started their forty days of prayer and again when they had completed the project. This gave me the before and after view I was looking for. As I received each participant's response I entered their answers into a designated worksheet on the spreadsheet already mentioned. I created a table for each participant that contained both the before and after results. I also created charts to show the comparison between the before and after results.

Since I was working with a small number of participants, a large number of questions and the Likert scale had six measures, I realized I would be working with small numbers. I considered combining the six measures in pairs to create just three measures – disagree, neutral, agree. This combining of the results into three categories was discussed via email with Dr. Bernard Spilka one of the developers of the instrument. Dr Spilka indicated that this combining of the numbers was acceptable. However, Dr. Spilka did caution me that having such small sample size could possibly make the results unreliable. The caution was

noted. My intent was to discern if there had been *any* change in the participants' prayer practice as a result of a Pastor led study. The results did indicate that there was some change in the participants' prayer practice but the small sample size, as previously mentioned, makes any definitive finding unreliable.

Structure of Prayer Scale Responses

After receiving and coding the questionnaires I created three tables. The first table, Table 7, shows the number of responses to each category of prayer before the study. The second table, table 8, shows the responses after the forty days were completed. Table 9 shows the comparison between the before and after responses.

Table 7. Prayer focus before the study

Prayer Category	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Compassionate-Improvement	5	30	117
Confession	9	21	65
Habit	12	19	45
Meditation-Improvement	17	24	54
Petition	23	18	16
Ritual	27	22	8

The numbers represent the number of answers in each category. Since there were eight questions in the “Compassionate-Improvement” category and nineteen respondents there are a total of 152 responses in this category. Since there were only four questions in the “Habit” category there are a total of 76 responses in that category.

Before the study, the respondents agree that they are engaged in Compassionate-Improvement prayer, prayers of Confession, and Meditation-Improvement prayers. They are also in the *Habit* of prayer. Their responses indicate that petitionary prayer is not a priority nor do they see their prayers as *Ritual*. The statements in the instrument in the category Ritual are about the “orderly sequence” of prayers and “certain words and phrases that I repeat a number of times.” It comes as no surprise that the participants would register “disagree” regarding ‘ritual’ prayers, since, as I have mentioned earlier, the Baptist preference is for extemporaneous prayers. However, this study was intentional in its attempt to encourage the participants into a regular and disciplined practice of morning and evening prayer. And the results after the study show that the participants now assess their prayers differently.

Following the study some differences in the participants’ prayer practice were discernable. Table 8, below, shows the results after the study.

Table 8. Prayer focus after the study

Prayer Category	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Compassionate-Improvement	2	22	128
Confession	7	17	71
Habit	2	15	59
Meditation-Improvement	6	18	71
Petition	29	19	9
Ritual	28	18	11

It was noted that in the categories of Compassionate-Improvement, Confession, Habit and Meditation-Improvement and Ritual, the participants’ responses all

moved to higher “agree” responses. Petitionary prayer is the only category that has declined in the number of “agree” responses. Table 9 shows the difference between the before and after responses. The small sample size does impede making any definitive statements based on these numbers. However some inferences can be made. There has been a measureable movement in the Compassionate-Improvement, Habit and Meditation-Improvement categories. There has been a noticeable move away from Petitionary prayer too.

Table 9. Prayer focus comparison before and after the study

Prayer Category	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Compassionate-Improvement	-3	-8	+11
Confession	-2	-4	+6
Habit	-10	-4	+14
Meditation-Improvement	-11	-6	+17
Petition	+6	+1	-7
Ritual	+1	-4	+3

As these numbers show there has been a shift in the participants’ prayer foci after their participation in the study. There is a measurable move, an increase, in Compassionate-Improvement prayer, prayers of Confession, the Habit of prayer and Meditation-Improvement prayer. The participants have also moved away from Petitionary prayer and increased their practice of Ritual prayer. The move away from Petitionary prayer is compatible with the participants’ frequent references to their awareness of the presence of God presence and relationship with God in their responses to the interview questions. Their prayer times are now

more focused on their relationship with God rather than seeking something from Him.

Evening Prayer

The introduction of the evening prayer was intended to give the participants a model for daily self-examination. Specifically for self-examination before God; an inward journey to find our true selves. Richard Foster writing of this inward journey, says, "...it is not a journey *into* ourselves that we are undertaking but a journey *through* ourselves so that we can emerge from the deepest level of the self into God" (Foster's emphasis) (Foster 1992, 32). The model of Examen for the evening prayer that I prepared for the participants received mixed responses. Nine of the participants mentioned the evening prayer in their responses. Of these nine, six have embraced the practice of evening prayer in some measure having given responses using the words, "increased," "intentional" and "habit." Three indicated they were challenged by this practice. They used the words, "harder," "a little difficult." Ten participants made no mention of it.

I may have missed an opportunity to gather more information from the participants on their practice of evening prayer. Since this was a prayer of Examen I could have structured my interview questions to separate their experiences with evening prayer. Table 10 shows the responses to the evening prayer.

No one indicated that they did not or would not engage in evening prayer. It was either a part of their prayer life or it was not. The responses I received

indicated that for some it was a new practice and one they would continue with. Others were challenged and did not continue.

Table 10. Responses to Evening Prayer

Responses	Number of Participants	Words Used in Responses
Increased/Intentional/ Habit	6	"The Evening Prayer especially has increased...A good guide to go back over the day" "I have become more intentional about the Evening Prayer - this is a change." "I now have regular Morning and Evening Prayer." "At the end of the day I pray again to get in alignment with God." "I am still doing Morning and Evening Prayer. It is a habit now. This is a different model than previously so that has changed. I like the morning focus of looking forward into the day and the evening looking back." "...I am more consistent in my prayers [both] morning and evening."
Challenged	3	"...I found the evening one harder as I get tired." "...I have not stuck with the Evening Prayer..." "...Evening Prayer was a little difficult. I had to make a more conscious effort."
No Response	10	no mention of Evening Prayer

The introduction of the evening prayer, in a form based on the Ignatian Prayer of Examen was intended to introduce the discipline of intentionally closing the day in reflective prayer. With the day beginning in disciplined prayer and ending with the Examen I believed this would influence the participants towards that

prayerfulness that the Apostle Paul commanded, “praying continually” (I Thessalonians 5:17). For all participants, except one, there was a change in their prayer experience and their desire to continue becoming people of prayer. For some the evening prayer was a change that they embraced,

My prayer life has increased a little bit and I am more thoughtful about it. The evening prayer especially has increased. It is a good guide to go back over the day. There was an awareness that this was what I was already doing but now it is a regular habit. I now know that I was not so far off track.

Another participant indicated that Evening Prayer is now a regular practice, “Prayer happens more throughout the day. I now have regular morning and evening prayer.” Another stated, “I am still doing morning and evening prayer. It is a habit now.” For others the evening prayer was not something they could embrace or continue with. One who struggled with the evening practice said, “I found the evening one harder as I get tired.” This was understandable with some of the older participants, one of whom was well into her eighties. Another just did not continue with the evening prayer, “I have not stuck with the evening prayer to recap the day.”

The Pastor-Researcher

I am a Pastor-Researcher. This initiative was intended to be both research and pastoral in nature. My own priorities as their Pastor have been clarified and my own spiritual formation has been re-awakened. My Pastoral view is that I need to make a priority of the spiritual formation of my congregants and modeling this in my own life and ministry.

Future initiatives will include introducing other spiritual disciplines as appropriate times, developing additional prayer guides for use during Advent and Lent. Encouraging more participation in the Life Groups and mid-week prayer meetings. I will continue to research the vast resources on prayer. At some time I may introduce the rigor and discipline of fixed-hour prayer to my congregation – after I have experienced it myself.

Action Research “reflect(s) the intentionality of the researcher to change an organization” (Coghlan 2010, 15). This program of *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer* was intended to bring change to the prayer lives of the participants with the intent of bringing change to the spiritual life of the congregation. However, Coghlan and Brannick caution the researcher “...to keep in mind that everything you do is an intervention and that you need to be sensitive to the impact that asking questions and observing have on participants.” (Coghlan 2010, 77). I provide more detail on the matter of the Pastor-Researcher-Influencer in chapter six.

Summary

The one thing the Disciples asked Jesus to teach them was how to pray (Luke 11:1). As a Pastor I see it as one of my primary responsibilities to lead my congregation into a deeper relationship with God, their creator and redeemer. It is for this reason that I chose to initiate a prayer program at Christian Baptist Church in 2012 as part of my Doctor of Ministry Degree. As the findings have shown the participants in this study have been drawn into a deeper more meaningful practice and discipline of prayer. Many have reported that they now experience the

presence of God in their prayer times. Some indicating this awareness throughout the day. Several have indicated that they will repeat the process, others have requested that I write more guides. Some have embraced the evening prayer model others are looking for new, “more structured” prayer guides. One of the clear findings from this study was that people desire to pray. Once the participants had been drawn to the project they engaged with enthusiasm. They responded with candid answers to the questions I asked. Those who admitted their “sporadic” or “hit and miss” prayer lives did not hide this, it was openly stated.

The results from this study is that participants’ prayer lives have moved in some cases from irregular and inconsistent discipline to an everyday, scheduled practice. The result have shown that this program of *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer* was an appropriate initiative for the time and season of this congregation’s life. Chapter six details my conclusions.

For those who were already praying regularly this study has helped them refocus their approach to prayer. One participant said:

I was already praying on a regular basis. I liked the way the weekly themes were laid out. I now think back on them as I am praying. I now have a different approach vs. praying for people and situations. I am beginning my prayers in thanksgiving and praying the presence of God. It has [now] become a habit to focus on thanksgiving and to reflect on the Lord and His presence. It has helped me change the way I pray.

Another wants to go further, looking for another Prayer Guide:

It think this has renewed a desire to be more disciplined in my prayer life...I now want to look for another Prayer Guide. I want to pray differently now and get up early to do it. There has been a focus and priority change.

For those whose prayer lives were inconsistent, irregular and sporadic the study has helped them reengage their prayer lives:

My prayer times are more intimate now. I feel I am not repeating myself so much. I no longer feel obligated to pray. I am enjoying talking with God and I am listening more than before.

The study was to help the participants become people of prayer. It has accomplished that purpose.

CHAPTER SIX:

OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

The project, *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer*, was introduced at Christian Baptist Church in the fall of 2013. Nineteen members of the congregation completed the program. Each participant was given a prayer guide for their morning prayers and a model of the Prayer of Examen for the evening prayer. The research consisted of capturing the participant's prayer practices before and after the forty days. The methods used were interviews to capture qualitative data and a questionnaire to capture quantitative data.

Since the *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer* have finished twelve participants have indicated that they are continuing in the practice. Some have told me that they are now looking at different forms of prayer and searching out other prayer guides. Some have asked if I will write more guides for them. Other conversations indicated that a number of the participants were interested in doing the forty days again and that I should prepare the prayer guide for use during Lent, this was done during Lent 2014. While this was outside the timeline of the project the prayer guides were well received. I duplicated the six weeks of devotions in six separate packages, one for each week in lent. The first week I had thirty copies available. They were all taken and people asked me to provide

additional ones. The second week I made forty copies. They, too, were all taken. The thirds and subsequent weeks I made fifty copies and few remained unclaimed. It seems that a prayer guide written by their Pastor is no barrier for this congregation.

Having the prayer guide written by their Pastor was mentioned in the participants' responses. One said, "This [Prayer Guide] made my prayer times much easier. I previously had no structure or schedule. This way [Prayer Guide] was more precise, less random, it has focus, [it has made my prayer times] much easier." Another said, "I now want to look for another Prayer Guide. I want to pray differently now and get up early to do it....there has been a focus and priority change [in my prayer life]." The results of my research have shown that there has been a change in the prayer practices of the participants as a result of their participation in this study. The indications from ongoing conversations are that most of the participants have continued in the practice and others have restarted the forty days. The following are my key conclusions from this project:

An Appropriate Project

To introduce the discipline of Morning and Evening Prayer was an appropriate thing to do for my congregation at Christian Baptist Church at this time in their history. The congregation had been in decline for several decades. My attempts at various ministry initiatives - Prayer Meetings, Alpha, and Men's Ministry had all met with lukewarm support. My decision was to go back to the basics and encourage the congregant's to become people of prayer. This project, *Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer* was designed to encourage a renewal

of the prayer lives of any who would participate. Since the completion of the project the people who participated are more engaged in the life of the church. Participants who before were “in the background” are now engaging in ministry conversations with me and others. Eleven of the participants are currently engaged in the leadership teams at the church. Conversations about the future and direction of the church now occur on a regular basis. There are increasing conversations about outreach and ministry beyond the walls of the church building. Thom Rainer writes, “Vibrant and living churches look after the interests of others. They are concerned for their communities. They open the door for others” (Rainer 2014, 28). The prayer program, as well as drawing the participants to a more disciplined prayer life, has moved many of them to more active roles in the congregational life of the church and an emerging interest in reaching the community. Forty days of prayer has led to an increased involvement in the life of the church for many participants.

The Priority of Prayer

This project has given me a clearer picture of what my priority should be as I pastor this congregation. They need to be a people who pray. I need to be a Pastor who prays more. We all need to be people of prayer. Going forward my focus in my own leadership will be to demonstrate a prayerful life and engage and encourage all who speak to me to do likewise. Participants in the study have stepped forward to lead weekly Prayer Meetings and Life Groups for study and fellowship are starting to take shape. I believe that this new move from within the congregation has come about as a result of the prayer study.

A Move of the Spirit

I made an open invitation to the entire congregation to participate in this initiative. I avoided making personal invitations for various reasons as given in Chapter 3. By inviting all who felt the need or desire to participate I left room for the Holy Spirit to move all whom He would call. I believe the Holy Spirit has led the right people to participate because I have observed a number of changes in the participants since they have completed the project. Many still talk of their prayer practice. Several have explicitly stated they have continued. Two are actively looking for new prayer guides. While I am pleased that nearly a third of the congregation did participate and that those who did were blessed by the experience, I will have to try again to get more people to engage in the spiritual disciplines for their own spiritual growth. In addition, subsequent to the completion of this project, many of the participants have moved into leadership roles in the ministries of the congregation. I believe a Pastor needs to lead where the Spirit is going and allow the move of the Spirit to guide the direction of the congregation. The participants in this project have seen the move of the Spirit in their prayer times and this has resulted in an increased involvement in the life of the church. My prayer is that they continue to do so. From my experience and observations in this project I believe that a Pastor who is also the researcher needs to give room for the Holy Spirit to work both in him or herself, in the design and execution of the project and in the people who participate in the project.

A Worthwhile Process

The data collected from this project indicates that most of the participants have benefitted from their participation. Many spoke of their prayer lives having taken on a new vibrancy or intensity. The use of the words “more intentional now” and “every day” and “a new habit” all point to this prayer project being an appropriate and timely thing to do. It also suggests that it should be repeated since it has moved a number of people to disciplined prayer. I should find ways to do this or similar initiatives. Since many of the congregation did respond to the Pastor’s invitation, perhaps they will respond to another call to participate in other Spiritual Disciplines. The overall positive response and positive outcome suggests that a prayer project was the appropriate thing to do for my congregation at this time and the approach I used was appropriate. Overall this was a worthwhile process to attempt in my specific context. There are learnings that I identified from the experience that could influence future studies of this kind.

Considerations for Future Research

Researching the prayer practices of a small sample from a small congregation runs the risk of unreliable results if the research is intended as a scientific study. My research was not intended to be a rigorous, scientific study of prayer. Rather it was contextual to my own congregation and their discipline, or lack of it, in their prayer lives. Dr. Bernard Spilka and Dr. Kevin Ladd have identified that researching prayer and those who pray is a complex task. They have documented the complexity and shortcomings in research on prayer (Spilka 2013). However, since I have gained some insight into the prayer lives of my

congregation, even if a small sample, if I was repeating this initiative I would take a different approach in some areas.

A Pastor who is doing research in his or her own congregation must take care of the potential for influencing the results of the research. The congregation members who participate in research done by their Pastor may continue to view the researcher as their Pastor and not just as a researcher. This relationship, which is to be nurtured, may influence the answers being sought in the research.

Discerning the Need

Looking at the Coghlan and Brannick model of Action Research as outlined in Chapter 4, I would make the following changes to my research approach. The first Action Research cycle I would launch would be to establish the need for spiritual renewal. Notwithstanding my own observations as the Pastor of this congregation my own assessment of the congregation's spiritual vitality cannot be as insightful as their own. I would make the aim of the first Action Research Cycle to be to ascertain what the focus of the second Action Research Cycle should be. Using the four factors of action, *Constructing* formerly called diagnosis (Coghlan 2010, 9), *Planning Action*, *Taking Action* and *Evaluating Action* (Coghlan 2010) the first Action Research cycle would be executed as follows. The first cycle of the Action Research process would be to *Construct* the assessment method and methodology. The researcher would design or select from available resources an appropriate tool or assessment methodology to determine the priority for the congregation's spiritual formation or development. The second factor of action would be *Plan* the launch and execution of this exploratory study.

This would include the development of any instruments or questionnaires the researcher needs to implement the study, the recruitment of the participants and the timetable for the study. The *Take Action* factor would be to do the study and the *Evaluate* factor of action would be to assess from the results what the second Action Research Cycle might be. Upon completion of this first cycle the researcher would have sufficient information to determine the second Action Research Cycle. The research project may be the Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer or some other initiative that would enhance the spiritual disciplines of the participants. The third Action Research cycle might be to repeat the first Action Research cycle enhanced by the findings of the second cycle. This process could be repeated as the need and the stamina of the congregation allowed.

This approach would determine from the input of the congregants what the actual spiritual need is, it might be prayer it might be something else. There are a great many spiritual disciplines that we could experience as a congregation together. Richard Foster's work on the Spiritual Disciplines (Foster 1988) provides ample scope for a Pastor doing research in his or her own congregation. One of these might be what Foster calls the "classical" Spiritual Disciplines (Foster 1988), Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, Study, Simplicity, Solitude, Submission, Service, Confession, Worship, Guidance, celebration. As Foster says these are the "classical" disciplines that are "central to experiential Christianity" (Foster 1988, 1). Having decided on one of these or another area of focus the study program in the second Action Research cycle would possibly engage a

larger number of the congregation. Using this expanded approach would take a longer time than is available for a Doctor of Ministry Program but there is no barrier to a Pastor doing the first Action Research Cycle and the results of that being the development of the second cycle and that making a Thesis.

Prior to launching my project I did not enquire of the congregation what their spiritual development required. I decided on the Forty Days of Morning and Evening Prayer based on my Pastoral observations and discussions. While I am pleased with the outcome of the study and the changes that are beginning to take place in the congregation as a result, I recognize that I may have missed an opportunity to make greater insight into their spiritual needs and draw a larger number of my congregation into a time of spiritual self-awareness, development and renewal.

Narrow the Focus

The study was focused on discovering the participants' prayer disciplines and practices while at the same time encouraging them to become more disciplined in their prayer lives. This is the Action Research approach. When I designed the prayer study I was not sure what I was expecting to find. The design of the questions seeking qualitative data were very open ended and allowed for a range of answers. This provided the broad range of expressions, words and phrases I documented in Chapter 5. If I was to repeat this kind of study I would rethink the qualitative questions. I would be more intentional in the design of the questions. While it is a valid approach to ask open ended questions and deduce the findings using *In Vivo* coding I would prepare a more intentional set of

questions. For example, I would intentionally look for the time the participants spent at prayer. Specifically times set aside just for prayer not the prayers we utter throughout our busy days but specific consistent scheduled time at prayer. I would attempt to correlate time at prayer with the “quality” of the prayer experience. I would design the research to establish if time at prayer made any difference to the participants’ sense of God’s presence. The preparation of these questions could be more contained without being constraining on the participants and without exerting undue influence on their answers. If the questions were designed to explore a specific range of responses, as the researcher I would have certain “scales” in mind for assessing the range of responses. A simple example would be to ask how much time is spent in prayer each morning. The range of possible answers being none, less than five minutes, less than 10 minutes, less than half an hour, more than half an hour. This would create a “Time in Prayer Scale.” Another question might address the “closeness to God in prayer” question, eliciting another scale perhaps ranging from “not at all” to “somewhat” to “very much.” While there would need to be appropriate research on the phrasing of such questions and developing the scales, the two scales could be compared to assess if the longer one prayer has any relevance to the closeness to God one feels. While we may presuppose that there is a correlation the research would bear this out. The findings from this cycle would influence the second research cycle, perhaps encouraging the participants, by means of different prayer guides, into longer periods of prayer each day. The second Action Research Cycle may be an appropriate time to introduce the Divine Hours or fixed-hour prayer.

Another area of enquiry that I would consider would be to document the degree to which the quality of the participants' daily lives are being influenced by their prayer discipline. This would uncover any correlation between time at prayer and the way the day unfolds for the participant. This would highlight if those who spent more time in prayer in the morning felt any closer to God throughout the day. In my study the questions were posed to grasp the current state of the participants' prayer life in an unspecified open ended way. At the outset of this study I did not have these "scales" for analysis in mind. That some participants did respond with quality of prayer life statements such as, "I feel closer to God," "I feel I am in his presence," suggest that this might be an area for specific enquiry. Questions that elicit responses in this area would enhance the study. I would also look closer into the participants' prayer discipline before and after the study. In a general sense I think that more emphasis and time spent developing the qualitative questions would enhance the study.

Having said that I would approach the study with greater emphasis on the qualitative questions I would spend less time on a quantitative survey. I may even omit it altogether. As Dr. Spilka has indicated to me the small sample size inhibits the reliability of the results. The small sample does not provide enough data from which to draw reliable conclusions.

Leave Room for the Holy Spirit

We must remember whom we are serving, the living and active God of all creation. Our God has an enemy and that enemy will try to undermine any attempt at spiritual renewal in a congregation. There is a risk in any attempt at

encouraging spiritual growth in a congregation that powerful forces may seek to undermine the work. When a congregation sets out to seek the Lord in prayer there will be resistance and even conflict. I am prepared for that, having experienced spiritual warfare first hand in my current and past areas of ministry and during this prayer study. One participant indicated that she felt the “spiritual battle” while she was participating. This does not surprise me. In Roberts Liardon’s work on the Azusa Street revival we read,

Never, indeed, has there been a sowing of God on earth but it has been oversown by Satan; or a growth for Christ, which the plantings of the evil one did not mingle with and hinder. He who sets out to find a perfect church, in which there are no unworthy elements and no disfigurations proposes to himself a hopeless task. (Bartleman 2006, 46)

My caution to myself is to move forward with the spiritual regeneration of this congregation, drawing them to prayer on all occasions but being spiritually watchful for the enemy who sows tares among the wheat (Matthew 13:25).

Challenges of the Dual Role

As the Pastor-Researcher I should have been more aware of the potential for unintended influence in this project. The researcher, by virtue of the fact that he or she is an “insider action researcher” (Coghlan 2010, 16, 121), has the “strong desire to influence and to change the organization” (Coghlan 2010, 122) and has his or her “privately held, taken for granted assumptions” (Coghlan 2010, 25) therefore has the potential for “role conflict” (Coghlan 2010, 119). Coghlan and Brannik call this “role duality” (Coghlan 2010, 117). It might be more accurate to call my role in this project “Pastor-Researcher-Influencer” as that is perhaps a more accurate title. The role of Action Research is about “real time

change” (Coghlan 2010, 15). As the Pastor that is what I want eventually, a real change in the spirituality of the congregation. As a Pastor I come to the role as an “Anglo-Catholic-Baptist,” a mix of denominational and theological backgrounds and experience. I am who I am and I see the world, my role and my congregation through this particular lens. A congregation cannot but see the researcher as their Pastor. The potential in this kind of study might be that the participant may feel judged or critiqued. This might possibly result in a less than open response to the inquiries. Conversely a participant might not want to appear backslidden in their prayer life and so too give inaccurate responses. I recognize these potential risks but I do not think that my dual role had any undue influence on the results because of the participants’ candor in the interviews and the range of responses to the questions before and after the program. The range of responses indicated that some participants were not too shy about their lackluster prayer practices nor were others reticent to speak about their already well developed prayer practice. However, future research by a Pastor-Researcher should take this concern into the design and planning stage of the Action Research.

Summary

This project has provided me and my congregation with a sense of renewal and a desire to continue in the spiritual disciplines. I have learned from the experience to be more intentional in my ministry as a Pastor to encourage individual and corporate prayer. The areas of spiritual need are being identified and the prayer life of the congregation needs to be encouraged and supported. Three key learnings are, 1) Pastors need to encourage prayer as a discipline in

their congregations, 2) People do respond to the invitation to engage in a deeper spiritual walk, they do want to learn how to become better disciples of Jesus, 3) Prayer is fundamental and essential to the spiritual effectiveness and growth of a congregation.

APPENDICES

A - The Prayer Guide.....	133
B – George Bullard’s Life Stages of a Congregation.....	190
C - Ethical Review and TCPS Certificate.....	191
D – Interview Questions.....	195
E – Structure of Prayer Scale.....	196
F – Participant Informed Consent Form.....	198

Appendix A: The Prayer Guide

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Morning Prayer Guide
3. Evening Prayer Guide
4. Weekly Focus
 - 7.1 Week 1 – The Presence of God
 - 7.2 Week 2 – Praising God
 - 7.3 Week 3 – Thankfulness
 - 7.4 Week 4 – Godly Wisdom
 - 7.5 Week 5 – Confession and Forgiveness
 - 7.6 Week 6 – Courage and Strength
 - 7.7 Week 7 – God’s Guidance

1. Introduction

Morning & Evening Prayer

An Ancient Spiritual Discipline Rediscovered.

Prayer is an essential element in the Christian Life. Throughout scripture prayer is the constant companion of the people of God. Throughout the history of the Christian faith, prayer has been preeminent in the life of the faithful. The following verses point to the frequency and duration of prayer from both the Old and New Testament scriptures. From this we learn that regular and frequent prayer *must* be part of the believer's life. Prayer must be the priority for each of us throughout the day. Prayer for the believer is as essential for our spiritual life as breathing is for our physical life.

Throughout scripture we are reminded of the times, locations and frequency of prayer in the lives of the faithful. The following are indications of the variety of times and occasions of prayer:

Daniel 6:10 *Three times a day* he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Psalm 88:13 But I cry to you for help, O LORD;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.

Acts 10: 30 Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my *house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon.*

Psalm 55:17 *Evening, morning and noon* I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.

Ephesians 6:18 And *pray in the Spirit on all occasions* with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always *keep on praying* for all the saints.

1 Thessalonians 3:10 *Night and day we pray* most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 Be joyful always; *pray continually*;

These references are a clear indication that prayer is foundational and essential to the life of faith. And they also reflect the priority of time devoted to prayer in the believer's life. A significant part of human relationships is time devoted to the people or person with whom we have that relationship. For our most intimate human relationships we seek time alone and in private with that special person. Our relationship with God is the most intimate of all relationships. Not only should we set aside time alone for Him and to be with Him we should crave those times. We would schedule those times alone with the Lord if we truly loved God and wanted to be with Him.

This *Forty Days of Prayer* is intended to draw all who participate into a more consistent and meaningful prayer life leading to a deeper relationship with God. This season of prayer is to establish, or re-establish, the discipline of meeting with the Lord at the beginning and end of each day; and being continually aware of His presence throughout the day. It is my hope that each participant gains a deeper relationship with God through a disciplined prayer life. It is my prayer that the participants in this project will be blessed with a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit and will become throughout their lives, people of prayer.

As you begin this journey into a deeper prayer life you will likely meet with spiritual resistance. Our enemy does not want you to have a closer walk with the Lord. He will bring all kinds of distractions and traps to keep you from your time with the Lord. Resist him. Resist him and he will flee from you (James 4:7) because, "...*greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world...*" (1 John 4:4). As with starting any personal discipline, be it a new diet or exercise program, learning a new language or learning to play a musical instrument we must go beyond desire to the discipline of practice. Along the way there may be many reasons to stop or give up. But, unlike diets or exercise, which are beneficial for the body or learning a language or a musical instrument, which benefit the quality of life - this journey, this discipline of Morning and Evening Prayer is one that will benefit your Spiritual life. Determine to start and stay the course.

As a believer you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you. Draw on all the strength the Holy Spirit gives you and resist the devil's attempts to draw you away from this precious journey in prayer. Use all the strength that God gives you

to set aside your time slot each morning and evening. Guard that time. Let nothing take priority over it.

We will begin each day with a verse or two from scripture that will center us on our God. Our purpose is to begin the day with the Lord and spend the entire day – all our waking hours - in His presence and being aware of His presence throughout the day.

We must remember to not only ask in prayer but to thank, to praise, to give glory, and to listen. When we ask God in prayer – this kind of prayer is called supplication - let us ask more for wisdom and guidance than for things. Let us be like Solomon who, when God said “...*Ask for whatever you want me to give you,*” Solomon asked for wisdom. (2 Chronicles 1:7-10). Let us learn to be more in need of God Himself than in need of anything He might give us.

To guide us through these Forty Days of Prayer we will focus each week on a different focus of prayer:

Week 1 – The Presence of God

Week 2 – Praising God

Week 3 – Thankfulness

Week 4 – Wisdom & Guidance

Week 5 – Prayers of Confession and Forgiveness

Week 6 - Courage and Strength

2. Morning Prayer Guide

For Christians, the beginning of the day should not be burdened and oppressed with besetting concerns for the day's work. At the threshold of the new day stands the Lord who made it. All unrest, all impurity, all care and anxiety flee before him. Therefore, at the beginning of the day let all distraction and empty talk be silenced and let the first thought and the first word belong to him to whom our whole life belongs. Dietrich Bonhoeffer from "Life Together"

As you begin to pray, begin in silence...open your bible at the reading for today. Ask the Holy Spirit to be present and active while you read the Word. There is no hurry here, you have committed this time to the Lord, let Him have *all* of it. Keep a piece of paper and a pen beside you for any distracting thoughts, or concerns for the day. Write them down and return quickly to your prayer time. In time these distractions will diminish as your morning prayer time becomes a priority and the most significant part of your day. Always remember that the Lord is not in a hurry – he has all your days in His hands. Make this time a special time just to be alone with your Heavenly Father.

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your spiritual ears and eyes to what God wants you to hear and see. Let the first prayer of the day be, "*Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law*" (Psalm 119:18).

Read the text for the day slowly. Read it more than once. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you from the text. If you use a devotional, like Our Daily Bread, continue to use it, read the devotional but return to the scripture text. Ask yourself these questions:

What is the text teaching me?
What is God speaking to me in this text?
Pause and listen. Wait upon the Lord. He will answer.
What is in the text to give thanks for?

What is in the text that the Lord wants you to take with you throughout the day? Write this down on a card, a sticky note or a piece of paper. Carry it with you all day. Refer to it throughout the day.

Ask the Lord to go before you into the day. Lay out your day before Him. Ask Him what His agenda is for this day, ask Him what is *His* priority for the day for you. Ask Him to make His presence known to you throughout the day. Ask that there be opportunities during the day to see the hand of God at work, ask that there be opportunities for you to bless another just with your presence and the love of God that is in you to share.

Be settled in your heart and mind that this day belongs to the Lord. If this day has important or stressful appointments scheduled give these things completely to the Lord. Ask for His presence to go before you into the day. Remember He is always present, "*Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?*" (Psalm 139:7).

We usually end our prayers with the word, "Amen." Amen means "so be it." It is meant to be an affirmation of the prayer and concludes the time of prayer. But we do not want to end our time in prayer. Our goal is to be in constant prayer, to spend the day in close fellowship with Jesus to be walking and talking with Him throughout the day. Let us not "finish" our morning prayer at all. Rather, make this time at the beginning of the day be a time you enter into a day of prayer, let everything you do and say throughout the day be a prayer. Let everything be done in the conscious presence of God. We want to remain in prayer and in fellowship with the Lord each moment of the day. Rather than say "Amen" to *end* the conversation with God, say "Amen" to get started into the day. The day of prayer is just beginning; the prayer has not ended...it has just begun. Make your whole day a prayer. Be aware that the Lord is with you at all times.

God is with us even in the simplest, commonest of tasks – getting a cup of coffee, greeting people, driving, walking – be aware of God's presence throughout the day. You are not alone; He *is* present with you at all times. God is with you during the times of joy and blessing. God is also with us during the trying times. Your day may have interruptions and times of frustration. During these times pause and ask God what He desires of you in the moment. Seek His will in all things throughout the day. Make *this* day the Lord's day. Let the rest of this day be your prayer....

"My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

3. Evening Prayer Guide

We have come to the end of the day. It is time to reflect on the day past. Our prayer time in the evening will be a conversation with God on all that has transpired throughout the day. There will be confession, repentance and forgiveness. There will be thanksgiving for what God has done with you, through you and for you during the day. There will be praise and worship for what you have witnessed from God's hand during the day. There will be rejoicing for all that God has done and is doing in you and for you.

The framework for the Evening Prayer:

Ready: You have set aside this time to be alone with the Lord. Ready yourself. Be still. God has all eternity to accomplish His purposes so do not be rushed. This is the most important relationship you have so ready yourself to enter into it fully. Take time to be completely in God's presence. A set location is best as is a set time. A change in lighting to create the right atmosphere might help. Make sure that distractions are removed or limited. As much as possible be in a quiet place. Relax.

Remember: Become aware of who you are as a creation of God. Remember God created you, He loves you and has a purpose for you. You are a very special creation indeed, "...*fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Psalm 139:14) Remember you are in the presence of God. He has been waiting for this time too. He wants to meet with you, just you, one-on-one. God is present within you by His Holy Spirit. God is present all around you. He has an interest in all aspects of your life, even the smallest detail. Thank God for His presence.

Review: Now is the time to review your day. Look back over the day. Bring to mind the things that you enjoyed – that morning coffee; the food you ate; the humor shared with a friend; the kind words you received. Make a mental list of these experiences, thank God for these blessings.

Review the times in the day when you were a blessing – the kind word you spoke; the generous help you gave to someone in need; the "extra mile" you went for someone else. Thank God that He made you a blessing for someone today. As you review the day give thanks to God for each moment remembered and each contact you had with another. Praise God for His faithfulness to you this day.

Recall: Bring to mind the events of the day where you were challenged. Ask yourself honestly, were there times when a kind word was needed from you or a helping hand was called for and you provided neither? Were there times when the wrong word was spoken or the wrong attitude surfaced? This is not a time for self-depreciation or chastisement. This is just a review of opportunities that could have been handled better. You may struggle to identify these things. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring them to memory; ask Him to help you be truthful with yourself, *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth (John 16:13).”*

Remember you are a work-in-progress; God is not done with you yet. The Holy Spirit will guide you to those areas of your day where a different attitude or response was called for. He will bring to mind those areas of your life that need change and those attitudes and actions that mar your relationship with your Heavenly Father and with the people around you. The Spirit does not condemn He only convicts...and then He comforts...and then He corrects...and then He guides. He convicts us of our sin and our need of repentance. He comforts us while He corrects our way. Do not hold back, do not cover up, do not make excuses. The Holy Spirit allows us to look upon our own shortcomings without condemnation – this is where we grow in spiritual maturity. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you these things in your life. Now might be a good time to pray the prayer offered by David in Psalm 139, *“search me and know me...see if there is any offensive way in me...”* Be open and honest with the Lord now...

Repent: If you have been honest in the previous step you will have some sins that need to be confessed and some things that need to be repented of.

To confess means to agree with; to repent means to turn back or turn away from. When we talk of confession and repentance we mean we admit before God that we have sinned and we declare before God that we will turn away from that sin. We need the grace of God to make a full confession and we need the grace of God to turn away from sin. Ask for this grace – ask and you will receive.

If there is an habitual sin in your life this is the time for a complete confession. Habitual sins are traps set by the enemy of your soul to keep you from a free and fulfilling relationship with your Creator. We must confront these sins if we are to deepen our relationship with God.

You have arrived at the point of full disclosure before God. Confess your sin. Be open and complete in your confession. This is not a time for being coy with God. He knows. The enemy will be there suggesting that confession is not

necessary. You must resist this and bring your sins into the full light of God's holiness so He can remove them from you and fully forgive you and restore you..

So confess and repent, agree with God on each matter that stands between you and Him. Simply ask for forgiveness of any sins of this day and ask for grace to resist and overcome tomorrow.

Resolve: This day is now done. Hopefully, you have been honest with yourself and with the Lord. He has been with you through this private time of review of the day. Resolve now to live tomorrow in the Lord's presence. Resolve to be always looking for where God is working and to join Him in His work. Resolve to recognize that you are a work in progress and God is not finished with you yet – there is still a lot of polishing left to do. Ask God for grace for tomorrow.

Rejoice: You are a child of God. He loves you. He wants to refine you and make you like His son Jesus. Rejoice that He has chosen you for His Kingdom. Rejoice in His love, thank Him for all His blessings of the day past and the days and years ahead. Simply rejoice in the knowledge that He will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5); he has plans to prosper you (Jeremiah 29:11), he knows all your days (Psalm 139:16).

Request: Now you have been present and alone with your heavenly Father for some time now. It is just the two of you alone together; your Spirit is at rest in Him. Is there something you want to ask of Him? Make your requests openly and completely – He too has waited for this moment.

(Phi 4:6 NIV) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Retire: Your day with the Lord is over. Sleep!

4. Weekly Focus

Forty Days of Prayer

Week 1

The Presence of God

Humans were created by God for God's glory. As created beings creatures, we have a purpose. We were created for God's purpose. Because God has created us for Himself we have this persistent inner restlessness that cannot be satisfied until we are secure in the presence of our creator. This will never be fully realized until we reach our eternal home and find our eternal rest in Him.

What then shall we do while we live and wait in patient hope for that day? We can be in pursuit of God – seek Him while he may be found (Isaiah 55:6), we can enter His holy rest by trusting Him (Isaiah 30:15) for all our needs and in all our situations and we can practice His presence as we go about our daily lives.

During this week our morning readings will focus on the presence of God.

Day 1 – God Goes With You

Sometimes we may think we are all alone in this journey of faith. Certainly there are seasons where even the most devout believer will feel distant from God – or feel that God is distant from them. We are not alone in this.

We may cry out like David, *“Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.” (Psalm 15:11)*

Or we may be like Moses, who, when God was sending him on His mission with the Israelite people, demanded assurance of God’s presence. The Lord spoke to Moses:

“My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.” (Exodus 33:12-15)

Moses was willing to do what the Lord was commanding him to do. Moses had little self-confidence and wanted to be sure that God was with him not just sending him. God’s assurance to Moses was that He would go with him, that His very presence would be with Moses all the way.

After Moses had died God assured Joshua, Moses’ successor as the leader of the Israelite people that He would be with him too.

“No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Joshua 1:5)

What comfortable words these are the assurance that God is always with us.

As you go into this day, know that God is with you. Watch and listen throughout this day for the very presence of God being active in your day.

Day 2 – Rejoice in His Presence

There have been times in the history of the Christian faith when joy and merriment were frowned upon. People have at times taken a far too somber approach to God and the walk of faith. While we need to take God seriously, and make our Christian faith the priority in our lives, we need not be somber or solemn about it. We, of all people on earth, should reflect a deep inner joy because we have the living God indwelling us and walking with us. Therefore, let's be joyful.

In Deuteronomy 14:22-27 God is giving instructions to the His people regarding the tithes, God was calling the people to be obedient in their giving but He was also giving them instructions to be joyful in His presence. His instructions were:

“Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice.” Deuteronomy 14:26

Towards the end king David's life, the people were celebrating the anointing of Solomon as the king, scripture tells us the people ...

“... ate and drank with great joy in the presence of the LORD that day. Then they acknowledged Solomon son of David as king a second time, anointing him before the LORD to be ruler and Zadok to be priest.” 1 Chronicles 29:22

We too should live joyful lives in the presence of our God and King.

“You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.” (Psalm 16:11).

Today acknowledge before God all the things you have to be joyful about. Live today joyfully in the presence of God.

Day 3 – Be Humble in His presence

Eighteenth century pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards wrote what became his most famous work titled, *“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”* Edwards was known for preaching stern messages of repentance. While we have mostly lost the “fire and brimstone” style of preaching during the latter part of the 20th century, what we must not lose sight of is that God is rightfully angry with unrepentant sinners. God does not “play” with holiness. Each one of us, while we are “sinners saved by grace” must remember we are living in the very presence of a Holy God. God has made humility one of the conditions for our prayers to be heard...

“...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

The prophet Micah also called upon the people of God to live humbly in the presence of God.

“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

Today as you enter into the day with God, in the presence of God, walk humbly. Be aware of any pride of self or status or achievements. Remember all we have is a gift from God and be humble in His presence.

“Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being? declares the LORD. This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.” (Isaiah 66:2).

“The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong.” (Psalm 5:5 NIV)

Enter this day with a humble heart – acknowledge that God is all you need for the day.

Day 4 – There is Glory in His Presence

Perhaps the saddest texts in scripture are those that tell of the Lord's departure from among His people. The prophet Ezekiel writes:

"Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple..."
(Ezekiel 10:18)

In 1 Samuel 4 the Israelite army was defeated by the Philistines and the Ark of the Covenant was taken. Eli's grandson was born at that time and his mother named him Ichabod.

"She named the boy Ichabod, saying, 'The glory has departed from Israel'-- because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. She said, 'The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured'" (Samuel 4:21-22).

To lose the presence of God is to lose the presence of His glory. Paul wrote to the believers at Thessalonica:

"For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy." (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20)

Can we practice the presence of God's glory today? Can we see His glory in all that He has created? The beauty that surrounds us gives us a glimpse of the Glory of God that will be ours in eternity.

"David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all." (1 Chronicles 29:10-11).

Glory in the presence of God today – see Him at work in you and around you.

Day 5 – Our Access to God’s Presence is Jesus

In Genesis we are told that God made humans in His image. When Jesus was born God made Himself in human image. He stepped out of the glory of heaven to become a human man living and walking on earth. But being no mere mortal man He showed us that we had access to the father through Him. It is by faith in Jesus Christ that we have moment by moment access to the throne of heaven.

For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. (Hebrews 9:24)

Jesus has full access to our heavenly Father and invites us into that presence through him; He is there “for us.” Jesus said, “...no one comes to the Father except through me...” (John 14:6). So as we walk through this new day we walk with Jesus as our guide – in full knowledge that we are in the presence of the Son of Heaven. No matter what transpires today you remain in the presence of God – no one can pluck you out of His hand

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:27-30)

No matter what lies ahead for you today you have access to the very throne of God through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit within you will guide and direct your path today...follow Jesus, fear nothing, for God is on your side.

Day 6 – Let His Presence Shine from You

If there is one thing the world needs it is to see the reality of God in our midst. We Christians are that reality. No one else has the privilege of carrying the very Spirit of God inside them, no one!

Those who call themselves Christian are ambassadors from the Kingdom of God sent into this hurting world. We have been called out from this world and its lures, deceptions and attachments and now we have been sent back in to spread the good news of Christ's Kingdom.

We are the carriers of the greatest message the world has ever received, "God loves you!" Surely this message will brighten up anyone's day.

This why Jesus said,

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."
(Matthew 5:14-16)

Have you hidden your lamp under a bowl? Do the people around you sense the very presence of God in their midst when you are around them. Does your light shine before them?

Make this day a day when you will practice the presence of God in your own heart and let that light of His presence shine out from you. Shine a little of that light into someone's day today.

Forty Days of Prayer

Week 2

Praising God

Even a cursory read of scripture will show that the writers were always calling on the people to “Praise the Lord.” This refrain has become something of a mantra in evangelical circles. Perhaps it has become too trite a saying and its value and force has been lost.

But we are called upon to praise the Lord. Expressions of praise to God occur hundreds of times in the scriptures. When something has been written with such frequency we should take note and ask ourselves where are we in our praising?

This week we will focus on “Praising the Lord” – not that we do not regularly give praise to God, but let’s go a little deeper - let’s make each day this week a day for praising our God and redeemer.

Day 1 – Praise God for His Holiness

Our God dwells in holiness and nothing unholy can enter His presence. We, even though unholy sinners, have been redeemed for holiness, called to the throne of grace for forgiveness and reconciliation with our Holy God. We are called to be holy. What is our response? Shall we praise Him today for His holiness, for the purity of His being, for the magnitude of His grace towards us that he welcomes us just as we are into His holy presence?

*“After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: ‘Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.’”
(2 Chronicles 20:21)*

Can we enter this day in expectation of experiencing the Holiness of God. Can we search out our own holiness as the Holy Spirit continues His role of sanctification (meaning to make holy) in our lives. Is there any un-holiness in your life that separates you from God?

It is God’s purpose that we be holy, perfected, matured as believers. God is creating a holy nation – that has always been His intention.

*“He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honor high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.”
(Deuteronomy 26:19)*

“As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:4-5)

Yes, God is holy and He calls us into His holiness. Make this day a day to be holy before the Lord.

*“Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.”
(Psalm 103:1)*

Day 2- Praising God, an Antidote for Sorrow?

Some days we just do not feel like praying or praising God. The day is dull the issues have piled up and our troubles and woes conspire to keep us from our times of prayer. Perhaps these are the very times when we should launch into vibrant praise and draw closer to our holy God and abide in his presence and holiness. Is praise the antidote for a down day?

The writer of Psalm 42 understood those kinds of days. He asked of his own soul why are you downcast? It can read like a rebuke of himself followed quickly by the cure. Downcast? Then put your hope in the Lord and start praising Him!

“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”
(Psalm 42:5)

If there is any shadow over this day for you, resolve to use praise as the remedy. If God is for you who or what can possibly come against you? (Romans 8:31).

Let's just praise the Lord!

Day 3 – All Creation Praises Him

One of the remarkable things in scripture is the call on all creation to give praise to God – who created all. The call to praise is not just for humans.

“Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and all that move in them.” (Psalm 69:34)

So all the sea creatures are called to praise God...so too are the angels in heaven, the sun, moon and stars....creatures of the earth, the elements, mountains...everything is summoned to give praise to God.

*“Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created. He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away. Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, young men and maidens, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.”
(Psalm 148:2-13)*

“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music... Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy.” (Psalm 98:4-8)

Is this just a metaphor?

Rivers clapping their hands? Mountains singing for joy? What a day that will be – when all creation is praising their creator.

Can you make today a day of praise and join the chorus of all creation and Praise the Lord!

Day 4 – Praise Him in Music

Of all the ways we could give praise to God, music is the repeated refrain in scripture. There is something about the singing voice and the playing of worship music that moves us to worship. Even if we are not musical, music stirs the heart to worship. Scripture reminds us, even command us, to Praise the Lord with Music.

*“Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD. “
(Psalm 150:1-6)*

If possible take some worship music with you today. Sometime during the day, stop, take a pause, go to a quiet place alone and listen to the music. If singing out loud is not an option, sing in your heart. Praise the Lord just by yourself. Give Him, from your heart, the praise He deserves.

Day 5 – Praise - Lest We Forget

As our days go by we can get caught in a rut of a busy schedule. For many the days go by one after the other with hardly a thought of God who is watching over us all. For us who desire a deeper relationship with our heavenly Father this should not be the case. Each day the Lord gives us should be spent in praise of all He has done and all He is doing in our lives.

God has blessed many of us with wonderful families, homes and material possessions and loving relationships. These too can distract us and make us forgetful of the Hand that provided them to us. When we develop the praise habit we will not forget the Lord and His love for us and all His blessings upon us.

“When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” (Deuteronomy 8:10-14)

It was by the hand of God that we were brought out of bondage to sin. Jesus paid it all for us and we are very blessed.

Today start counting...count all the blessing you have received from the Lord...praise Him today for each one...your day will be full of praise!

Day 6 – Praise God for the Generations that Passed On the Faith

Do we ever stop to think about how we came to faith? Do we even know of all the people who came across our path influencing us towards Christ?

By God's design the faith is passed down from generation to generation. It has been said, "We stand on the shoulders of those who went before." Likewise each one of us had another who led us to Christ. Let us praise God for this way in which the word of faith has been handed down and spread to every nation, tribe and language. Let us resolve to be the generation that continues in this holy calling.

"Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the LORD: 'The LORD looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death.'"

(Psalm 102:18-20)

Yes, it was God's idea all along that humans would reach humans with the word of truth. He decreed that the name of Jesus would be exalted from generation to generation.

Thank God today for the ones who reached out to you and for the ones who stand with you in your journey with the Lord. Give Him Praise for the generations that have gone before and passed down the gospel to us. Resolve to be part of the passing on of the message.

Is there someone in your circle of contacts today who needs to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Day 7 – Praise God - His Love Endures forever

Days and weeks, go by and we get tired and frustrated with some aspects of life and work, let us not forget that God's love for us endures. Even on those days when God seems far away, His love never fails, His presence is always near and His love endures forever.

"Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever." (Psalm 106:1)

This refrain occurs over 40 times in scripture. Why repeat something so many times? Is it because we will not believe it? Is it because we will not understand it? Or is it because we are prone to forget it? When something is repeated that many times it indicates a truth that needs to be remembered...and so it is repeated.

God knows our lives can be difficult and challenging at times and He wants us to know of His never ending, enduring love for us. This is praiseworthy, that God's love endures forever.

Savor it.

Dwell in it.

Abide in it.

Today be aware of God's love for you as you go about your business. Be ever aware that no matter what is going on today in your life God is there with you.

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer" (2 Peter 3:12)

Forty Days of Prayer

Week 3

Thankfulness

Most of us have all witnessed ungratefulness. Perhaps a small child takes what is given and walks away without saying, "Thank-you." Or you hold the door for someone and they just walk through without even an acknowledgement of your kindness. Ungratefulness is ugly. How then can we go through life and not be giving thanks for all that God has done for us.

To be truly thankful for all God has done and is doing and will accomplish in our lives is the mark of the believer who is walking with the Lord and drawing closer to God each day. It is a joyful walk to walk in thankfulness.

A psalm for giving thanks:

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. (Psalm 100:1-5)

What a joyful Psalm! True thankfulness will show as joy in our lives. Let this week be filled with prayers of praise and thanks to our Lord God – our Creator, Redeemer, King and friend.

Day 1 – Be Thankful - You Have Been Saved

There is so much we should give thanks for. Of all that we might give thanks for, the reality of our own salvation should top the list.

We were dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1); made alive in Christ (Colossians 2:13); freed from our sins (Revelation 1:5); Jesus is preparing our eternal home (John 14:2) and will return to take us home to be with Him (John 14:3). So be thankful today for your salvation and your eternal destiny – a free gift from God.

Let us live today as freed men and women – living joyful lives filled with thanksgiving and gratefulness.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. (Colossians 2:6-7)

As you go through the day make note of all that you are thankful for – praise God for all you have and all you have become – a sinner saved by grace. Overflow with thankfulness. Let others see the joy you have because God loves you so much.

“the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7).

Is there someone you will be in contact with today who needs to experience the same thankfulness? Be attentive and watchful today, listen to the Holy Spirit prompting you to speak about what you are thankful for.

Day 2 – Be Thankful - God Loves You

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. (1 Chronicles 16:34)

In our close relationships, family, children, marriage, we often share those special three words, “I love you.” They are special when spoken and even more special when heard.

Listen today as God repeatedly speaks to you, those treasured, precious words, “I love you.” Allow yourself to be embraced by His love, to be filled with that knowledge that no matter what this day may bring – God loves me!

For this alone we have need to be thankful and to express this thanks to God in the way we show His love for us to others. Can you speak a kind word to someone today? Maybe the words, “I love you” would be inappropriate but it can be said in other words and actions and attitudes.

Give thanks to day for God’s enduring love for you and all humankind.

Share His love with all you meet. Bless those around you by being God’s love to them and His presence with them today.

Read Psalm 136 today – why do we give thanks? *Because His love endures for ever!*

Day 3 – Be Thankful – Live Accordingly

In a world that imposes its morality and its ways with such force and conviction how does a Christian live a pure life? How do we combat the pressures of the world? We may ask the question, “What can I do to stay pure?” The answer is surprising...

Ephesians 5:3-4 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

The Christian cannot help but be immersed in the coarseness of this world. This world is a fallen place, full of sin, depravity and hopelessness. But into this world God has placed you, a believer in Christ, one saved by grace, a holy person, being sanctified daily by the grace of God. In the midst of all the ugliness of sin in the world you are His shining jewel, brilliant, resplendent reflecting the purity and holiness of God to the people and situations you find yourself.

So Paul, fully aware of the depravity of the city of Ephesus, encourages the new believers in Ephesus by showing them how to stand against the world that surrounds them – be thankful he says. Paul’s encouragement to these Ephesian believers is, you be different, do not engage in coarse joking, bad language, and silliness. Instead by being thankful you will avoid these sins.

How are we going to avoid these same temptations that are all around us today? With thankfulness! Living today with words of thankfulness on your lips and thoughts of thankfulness in your heart will repel any temptation to slip into the world’s way.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ

Day 4 – Be Thankful – Be Generous

Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. (1 Chronicles 29:13-14)

As an act of thankfulness the people of Israel gave back to the Lord a portion of what He had given them. Do we look upon all our possessions as gifts from God? Do we demonstrate our thankfulness towards God by our generous giving? Do we hold back in fear of lack while praising the God who has given us everything we have?

From the beginning of this day to the end as you look at and touch anything that “belongs” to you – remember it came to you from the hand of God. Your home, your vehicle, your job, your family - everything is a gift from God.

He who created the universe and everything in it – all comes from God

*"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it."
(1 Corinthians 10:26).*

Can you show your thankfulness to God today by one generous act towards another – done in secret?

"...that your giving may be [done] in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:4).

Day 5 - Be Thankful – Lift Someone's Burden

No matter what situation we find ourselves there will always be someone whose situation is worse. Sometimes we encounter a person in such dire situation that they are unable to help themselves. This is particularly true of the poor in our midst.

Jesus said, *"you will always have the poor with you"* (John 12:8). Yes indeed there will always be those worse off than us. We too often look at those who have more than us and we spend less time looking at those who have less.

As Christians we are to have our eyes open for those in need. We should not be neglecting the ones around us who need help. This is particularly true of those who are of our own Christian fellowship. Are you aware of the needs of those we worship with Sunday by Sunday?

Paul directed the Galatian believers to *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2).

Is there someone who needs a little help in your circle of influence? Have you been attentive and responsive? It is an act of thanksgiving to God to return generosity and help to those in need around us.

James wrote, *"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."* (James 1:27).

Be thankful today – help someone in need.

Day 6 - Be Thankful – No Matter What

Some days giving thanks and praise are very difficult. Our circumstances can overwhelm us to the point even of despair. But we are not alone in this. This is not new. Throughout the history of the church believers have encountered difficult situations and have found themselves battling against insurmountable difficulties.

But the heart that is fixed on Jesus has a model of endurance as an example:

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

With Jesus as our example of a life lived totally surrendered to the will of God – no matter what the circumstances or situation – we too can endure whatever comes our way.

The apostle Paul had a very difficult life as an evangelist and church planter. He suffered indeed: ... in prison, flogged, exposed to death; five times received thirty-nine lashes; three times beaten with rods, once stoned, three times shipwrecked, in danger from rivers, bandits, his own countrymen, Gentiles; the city, the country, at sea; and from false brothers. (2 Corinthians 11). And your circumstances are?

Paul did learn contentment in whatever circumstances (Philippians 4:12).

Can we today just be content? Can we give thanks to God, be content in our situation and trust He will lead us through whatever we are experiencing.

“...give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Today is a day for trusting God in all your trials and circumstances and being thankful.

Day 7 - Be Thankful – The Kingdom is Yours

Of all we have to be thankful for today the reality of our status as children of the Kingdom of God should be uppermost. We are called the “children of God”

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1:12)

This week we have been giving thanks for different things and showing that thanks and gratefulness in various ways. How do we express our thanksgiving for this great honour of being called children of God?

In our families we expect our children to behave in a certain way because badly behaved children bring a “bad name” on the family and reflects poorly on the parents. We all want well behaved children who bring honour to the family name.

Likewise, the, we as children in God’s family, need to behave in such a way that brings honour and glory to God - our Father.

He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honour of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. (John 7:18)

Let us resolve to live in such a way that brings honour to the name of Christ and lifts up the family of God.

Forty Days of Prayer

Week 4

Wisdom and Guidance

How often have we said to ourselves, “I should not have done that” or “I wish I had not said that?” How many of us have a memory of a phase of our lives that we would prefer was erased or remember a past action that brings back pain or regret. We all have such memories. These events in our lives cannot be erased but they have been forgiven – and God remembers them no more.*

But how do we move forward? How do we put the past behind us and move into this day and this week living wise and holy lives before our God? We can live holy lives by drawing on Godly wisdom and seeking God’s guidance through the Holy Spirit.

As we enter this week of morning and evening prayer we will be seeking the Lord’s wisdom in all aspects of our daily lives. We want to make wise decisions and wise choices. We want to speak with holy mouths, we want all our speech to be gracious, our thoughts to be pure, and all our actions to be God honouring. We want to live as wise men and women of God.

*Words from a wise man's mouth are gracious, but a fool is consumed by his own lips
(Ecclesiastes 10:12).*

Where do we start? The book of Proverbs is a book of Wisdom.

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young--let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance--for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Proverbs 1:1-7)

*For a study on what God does with our sins check out these verses:
Jeremiah 31:34; Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 38:17; Isaiah 43:25; Isaiah 44:22; Psalm 51:1, 9; Micah 7:19

Day 1 – Beware of Human Wisdom

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it (Genesis 3:6).

This very first sin was the sin of disobedience. The woman (and let's not have Eve take all the blame – Adam was right there with her) “saw” that it was “good for food” and pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom.

How easy we can be deceived. The eye, the body and the mind can all deceive us. Scripture tells us to be careful of what we “think” is right because we can deceive ourselves.

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time (Genesis 6:5).

Every inclination? All the time? We should take this accusation seriously. If, in our human state, our hearts are inclined to evil all the time, then what hope do we have? Our only hope is to know God's will by being students of scripture, by being in the word, learning of God's ways. Only then will our minds be renewed (Romans 12:2 and every thought brought under Christ's dominion (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Beware when you start a sentence with the words, “*Well, what I think is....*” Really? Is what you think in line with what God's word says? It is best that we consider that human thought is flawed (look at the state of the world today!) and consider what human thinking has brought to our lives.

Rather, let us be people who seek wisdom, God's wisdom, and live our lives accordingly.

Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding (Proverbs 3:13).

Give thought to your thoughts today and ask yourself if they are God honouring.

Day 2 – God’s Wisdom is Supreme

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight (1Co 3:19).

When it comes to wisdom we are faced with the so called wisdom of the world – which is foolishness – or the wisdom of God which is perfect.

King Solomon is often called the wisest man who ever lived. Yet even his wisdom was not his own. He recognized that his own wisdom would not suffice to be king over the nation of Israel. So Solomon petitioned God:

Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?" (2 Chronicles 1:10).

God’s response to this humble prayer was to grant Solomon all the wisdom he needed and much more (2 Chronicles 1:11-12).

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore (2 Kings 4:29)

Can any of us claim that we have wisdom enough to go through our lives making wise choices and decisions? No, we need Godly wisdom – that is freely available just for the asking:

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him (James 1:5).

Have you ever prayed simply for wisdom? Do people come to you for advice and counsel because you have Godly wisdom? Solomon did!

The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart (1 Kings 10:24).

Do people seek you for your wisdom? It’s worth thinking about. Pray that God will invest His wisdom into your life. So you can share it with others, today.

Day 3 – The Righteous Have Wisdom

The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just. (Psalm 37:30)

Just as Solomon called upon God to give him wisdom for the task at hand so we too need to ask the same. We need to be wise to the world. No, not smart, wise. We need to be heard using discerning words, speaking grace into each conversation.

The people of God should be able to speak into a situation, particularly tense situations or conflict, with pearls of wisdom that come from a righteous life lived openly and prayerfully before God.

In our lives we have to use wisdom to make decisions. From choosing a spouse to deciding on a career, deciding where to live and a host of other key life changing decisions, all require wisdom. For when we make unwise decisions we pay the price for a long time.

What does it look like to the unsaved to see the Christian talking foolishly or living unwisely, or making ungracious conversation, engaging in gossip or foolish talk? It reflects badly on the Name we claim. Instead, the righteous should exercise wisdom to speak and act with grace in all situations.

Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:15-20)

The fear of the Lord--that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding. (Job 28:28)

Take a wisdom check today – am I thinking, acting and speaking with wisdom or foolishness?

Day 4 – Wisdom is Foundational

We are surrounded by a world of falsehood. Who can we trust to tell us the truth about anything? Does industry tell the truth about the products they sell? Do governments speak truth into the nations they lead? Who can be trusted?

It starts with you and me. We who call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ should be the most trustworthy people on earth.

Do those around you know you to be a person who will always speak the truth? Can you be relied upon for truth in all you say?

This is a serious matter. If we are to be the ambassadors of the gospel to the world, the people we speak to must already hold us in a high regard for our consistent truthfulness. For someone to hear from us the message of God's love and how they too can be saved by faith in Jesus Christ, then we must have already established ourselves as people who can be trusted.

This truthfulness begins in the inner person. The wisdom to be truthful in every aspect of life is foundational to a life lived in the presence of a Holy God. To be truthful with ourselves about who we are in God's sight is to begin developing a character that speaks the truth into every situation.

Consider who you are as a creature of God – created in His image. Be truthful about yourself and you will be able to speak wisdom and truth into the lives of those around you.

*Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.
(Psalm 51:6)*

Check yourself today – am I speaking truth in all situations?

Day 5 – Start with Wisdom and Stay with It

*King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.
(1Kings 10:23-24 NIV)*

Solomon who wrote many wise words as recorded in scripture. He has renown as being the wisest man who ever lived. Certainly he was a great and wealthy king and people sought an audience with him. But having wisdom and using it are not the same.

Even though Solomon wrote some of the wisest words and sayings ever recorded he failed to keep his own advice later in life.

Having urged and exhorted his readers to seek the Lord, follow His precepts and live justly and wisely, Solomon turned aside later in life.

Solomon had many foreign wives and his love for them caused him to turn away from God and turn to idols. This great man of God lived well and bountifully for many years but towards the end his own life words of wisdom failed him in the most critical area, the focus of his worship.

May we take heed of this. That even a man so great and so wise as Solomon, who left us great passages of wisdom in scripture, lost that wisdom when he needed it most and lost it in an area that has eternal consequences.

Let us all remember to walk humbly before our God (Micah 6:8) to be wise and not foolish in our ways.

Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. (Proverbs 4:7)

Day 6 – Wisdom is More Valuable Than....

*Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.
(Proverbs 4:6)*

*Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
(Proverbs 4:7)*

*...for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.
(Proverbs 8:11)*

What do we learn from these three verses? The writer, Solomon, wants us to understand that wisdom is precious, supreme, worth more than valuable gems – and is worth spending all our wealth to get it. Wisdom is even more valuable than gold or silver (Proverbs 3:14).

Why such accolades for wisdom? Why the urgency to gain wisdom above all else? Because from a life lived with wisdom we can handle any circumstance or situation.

So many people pursue wealth and riches and are drawn into schemes and scams and they lose it all. Lives are ruined through the pursuit of money, fame or material possessions.

People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. (1Timothy 6:9)

The child of God is aware of these traps, these schemes of Satan to deceive the world with riches. He even tried it with Jesus (Luke 4:5-7). But the wise one, the child of God who pursues righteousness is wise to this deception.

Are you wise today? Are your plans wise before God? Are you involved in any foolish scheme or idea that will bring ruin or hardship? Be wise.

*"I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion.
(Proverbs 8:12)*

Day 7 – Divine Guidance is Yours

All of us at some time have been lost and needed directions. All of us have had life decisions to make and sought out advice from a friend or a trusted colleague. Life is full of times of decisions. Hardly a day goes by when we do not have to make decisions. Where do we go to for life's most important decisions? Who is your most trusted advisor? Who or what guides your life?

While friends and family have our best interest at heart when they give us guidance no one knows you like your Creator does. He knows you intimately and He is always with you – you cannot escape His presence

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. (Psalm 139:7-10)

No matter where you are, even if you have been away from the Lord, running your own life your way, He has not abandoned you.

The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. (Isaiah 58:11)

Do you really want to do life your way or fall into the perfect guidance of your Father who loves you and has the best intentions for you?

I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. (Proverbs 4:11)

Today, ask yourself am I seeking the Lord's wisdom and guidance or am I running on my own agenda and schedule... which is the wiser?

Forty Days of Prayer

Week 5

Confession and Forgiveness

The central theme of the Christian faith is we are sinners saved by God's grace. The central verse for so many people is John 3:16,

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The key message of the Gospels is that Jesus came to save the world. We were dead in our sins and yet God still loved us enough to forgive us:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (Ephesians 2:1-2).

Yes indeed, before God acted upon our lives, we were dead to Him. We did not know Him. But the nature of God is love. God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). God wants to deal with our sin, remove it far from us and from Him. God's purpose in Christ is to restore the relationship that was lost through the sin of unbelief and disobedience. Our participation in this is to recognize our sinful nature and come to repentance. Sinners, by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, come to the realization of their need to repent, turn away from sin and turn back to God.

This week our focus will be on our need and our willingness to repent and receive forgiveness. We will also learn that we have an obligation to others to ask for their forgiveness and to forgive them when necessary.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (John 3:17).

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you (Colossians 3:13).

Day 1 - He is Faithful to Forgive

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

(1 John 1:9)

As you first entered into a relationship with God, when you first believed, you, like many others, were confronted with your own sense of sinfulness as compared with God's holiness. The sense of having been lost and now being found would have brought you to confront the sin in your life and to lead you to repentance.

As you grew in faith you were able to acknowledge those areas in your life that needed divine intervention. Maybe you thought some of your sins would be unforgiveable. Some sins you may have tried to hide from God. This is all the work of your enemy the devil. He wants to keep you from a relationship with God. He shames you by telling you your sins are unforgiveable. Don't believe the lie.

When you believe that your sins cannot be forgiven and you hide from God, or you mask your guilt with excuses. You are saying you cannot trust God with this sin. You believe this particular sin is too big or too bad for God to ever forgive you.

How sad is that. God loves you. God wants to work with you to bring you to holiness. God wants to forgive all your sins and redeem you from them all.

Confess all your sins to Him:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

(1 John 1:9)

There is no sin that God has not seen or heard of. Yes, even all of yours He knows. So be open, truthful and honest with God. Confess and repent.

*"I, even I, am he who *blots out your transgressions*, for my own sake, and *remembers your sins no more.**

Isaiah 43:25

God is faithful...what have you been hiding from Him? Confess it all to God and He will blot it out and remember it no more.

Throughout today reflect on the fact that God chooses not to remember any of your sins!

Day 2 – Forgive Others as You Have Been Forgiven

How grateful are you that God has completely forgiven all your sins, every one of them? How does this reflect in you forgiving others? Do you remember the wrongs done to you? Do you harbour a longtime grudge or resentment against someone for some offence? All this is unforgiveness, something the Christian must work to correct.

In the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4) the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. In that prayer we read the words, "*forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.*" Do you? Do you forgive easily? It is something we all need to work on.

You owe God a debt of gratitude for His forgiveness towards you. You then need to be forgiving others freely and quickly. And more than once if necessary.

The disciples asked Jesus how often a person should be forgiven.

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times (Matthew 18:21-22).

Jesus says, in effect, our forgiving of others should be unlimited. The debt we owe to God for His forgiveness should be paid back in kind. As God has forgiven you, you forgive others.

Is there someone in your life or memory who has not been forgiven from your heart? Even if it is no longer possible to speak to that person, go before God today and offer Him your forgiveness of them.

Throughout the day today be ready to forgive and move on. Don't burden yourself with the unnecessary weight of unforgiveness in your heart.

Ask God today if there is any unforgiveness in your heart? Repent of that and release yourself by releasing the other with forgiveness.

Day 3 – Why Did Jesus Come to Earth?

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32).

In a single statement Jesus outlines His purpose on earth. He came to call you, a sinner, to repentance. Why?

Your sin creates a separation between you and God. God is holy, God is purity, no unholiness can enter into God's holy presence. Unless we have been cleansed from our sin and unrighteousness we cannot enter God presence. Sin creates a barrier. And we are powerless to lift the barrier. But God, in His infinite goodness and love for all His creation, especially you, has lifted the barrier, removed the block, opened the way for you to re-enter His holy presence.

As you consider this this morning abide a few minutes and dwell on this thought...God has removed all the barriers, removed all my sins, shown His love for me by coming to die for my sins and opened the gates of heaven to allow me to enter. God has already given me eternal life. I can begin living the Kingdom life right now. Freed from guilt and all my sins paid for by Jesus. I am free indeed! Dwell on this truth.

Today, go out with a bounce in your step! Feel the freedom you have in Christ. Live life joyfully today. If you have repented of your sins then Jesus' work has been completed in you.

If you have repented of your sins and turned your life over to Christ's control then you are free, indeed.

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36)

Remember what God has done with your sins:

*The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust (Psalm 103:8-14).*

Day 4 – All Heaven Rejoices

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Luke 15:10

When you have confessed your sins to God and have received full forgiveness and are reconciled with God – heaven celebrates.

Jesus told the story of the Prodigal son to illustrate the point (Luke 15). The father was waiting for his wayward son to return. And in time he did. The son had wandered a long way from the family relationship and had brought disgrace on the family name and on himself.

In the parable Jesus illustrates the forgiving nature of the father. As soon as the father sees the son approaching “*from a long way off*” (Luke 15:20), the father runs to him. Jesus was telling us that as soon as we come to our senses and turn back to God with a repentant heart He too runs to receive us. This is just God’s nature to welcome back any sinner who repents and wants to come back into relationship with Him.

Just as in the parable the father throws a party to celebrate the sons return so too, Jesus says, there was a celebration in heaven when you repented and turned back to God. Imagine what the celebration will be like when you finally reach home!

Rejoice today that your sins have been forgiven. Rejoice that your name is written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Luke 15:7

God has forgiven your sins through Christ’s atonement on your behalf. He will not remember your sins.

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. ‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”
(Jeremiah 31:33-34)

Day 5 – The Fruit of Repentance

*Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.
Matthew 3:8*

Before Jesus entered the scene in first century Palestine, John the Baptist was preaching a message of repentance. John was calling all who would listen to come to repentance and be baptized.

John expected the people who came forward to be the kinds of people who really understood what they were doing. He was expecting people with sincere hearts who wanted to be right with God. He found that the Pharisees also came forward.

The Pharisees were hypocrites. They placed burdens of laws upon the ordinary people. They hindered them in their search for truth (Luke 11). John rebuked them, calling them a “brood of vipers”! Jesus, too, rebuked them often.

People who come forward with a show of repentance but whose hearts are far from God are fooling themselves. God wants all to repent but repentance must be sincere.

*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
2 Peter 3:9*

If our repentance is sincere it will be reflected in our lives. We will live lives that show we are repentant and forgiven.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, Acts 3:19

Be sincere in your repentance today. Do not take this lightly. We are repenting to a Holy God who knows our hearts.

Day 6 – Need Help?

Sin is a trap. Sometimes a person can be so trapped in an habitual sin that there seems no way out. This where our Christian fellowship is supposed to help. We are not alone in this struggle against the world the flesh and the devil. All three conspire against our spirit to keep us in sin and out of relationship with our loving heavenly father.

The prodigal's story tells it (Luke 15). The young man stayed in his sin until he had nowhere else to go. Then he "came to his senses" and returned to his father. Have you come to your senses but still cannot free yourself?

You are not alone. The Christian fellowship is there for you to draw upon for help. Ask someone you trust to pray for you. You do not need to give all the details – we all have the same kinds of struggles. But ask a trusted brother or sister in the Lord to come alongside you in prayer to overcome the sin you struggle with. The Holy Spirit is with you in the struggle – draw on His presence in your heart to confess and repent. Each day can be a struggle against some sins. This is where the battle is being fought in all our lives.

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:16).

We are all subject to the same temptations. None is unique.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

We have to brace ourselves daily to overcome the temptations that surround us. But God is faithful He is with you in the battle.

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-
-yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:15-16).*

As you enter this day, pray to be strong in the face of temptation.

Day 7 – How Does God Deal With Sin?

The sin of the world has been dealt with once for all at Calvary. All sin, once confessed with a sincere, truly repentant heart, is taken to the cross and eliminated.

Here are some texts to focus on today. If you remain burdened by past sin or if you have yet to repent of a particular sin, these verses should prompt you to be open and honest with God.

*“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD.
“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool (Isaiah 1:18)*

*Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish.
In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction;
you have put all my sins behind your back.
(Isaiah 38:17)*

*I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist.
Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”
(Isaiah 44:22)*

*Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.*

*....
9 Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.
(Psalm 51:1,9)*

You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and
hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.
Micah 7:19

Meditate on these verses, God has taken away your sin and buried them. He does not remember them – nor should you.

Forty Days of Prayer

Week 6

Courage and Strength

To achieve success at anything takes determination, focus and a sense of purpose or calling. From the Olympic athlete to the professional musician to a business owner, success comes from focus and hard work. This is true in all facets of life. Marriage, raising a family, education, work and career all take effort and endurance to succeed. In all of life's endeavours we have to overcome obstacles. We have to pick ourselves up after a failure, defeat or a loss and carry on. We have to overcome opposition and manage our fears if we desire success.

In the Christian life, the life of faith, we face many challenges – the world the flesh and the devil conspire to keep us from a faithful walk with the Lord. It takes courage and strength to face each day with the determination to do the Lord's will. When we desire to do the Lord's will we find we have opposition...our sinful nature competes with our spirit:

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out (Romans 7:18).

When we step out in faith and take up the cause of the Kingdom of God we will face opposition. Our friends and families may oppose our new found faith. Ridicule and rejection are common accompaniments to a declaration of faith in Jesus Christ. Many new believers have found themselves ostracized from family and friends because of *that* Name. But of this we should be aware:

But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn " 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law--a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Matthew 10:33-39).

This week our focus is on courage and strength. We need these two as our companions on this journey of faith. As we carry the Name of Jesus and proclaim His Kingdom has come, we need strength for the journey and courage in the face of opposition and persecution.

Day 1 – Be Strong and Courageous

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them--to the Israelites (Joshua 1:1-2).

When God calls someone to a particular calling there is usually little dialogue between them*. God issues a command and the expectation is that the one receiving the command will immediately obey. The reality is many of us, when called to serve in a certain capacity, respond by identifying why we are NOT the one for this job. We immediately list our innermost fears. Like Moses, *"I'm not eloquent enough..." (Exodus 4:10)*. Be honest here, now. How many times have you been asked to do something in the church but have declined because, "I can't do that because *<enter your excuse here>*."

We all have a certain comfort zone where we spend most of our lives, rarely stepping into situations that would make us uncomfortable. But God does not call us to serve Him from our comfort zones – lest we become proud or boastful of our own abilities or achievements. No, rather, He calls us out of our comfort zones so we have to rely on Him. It is in our weakness and inability that God's strength and ability shine.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Corinthians 1:27).

God has called each of us in our weakness to give Him honour as He works in us and through us. In His call to Joshua to lead the nation of Israel, God says three times ...*be strong and courageous*. Why? Because Kingdom work comes with opposition and persecution. And we have to be prepared for that.

What has God called you to in His service? Take on your Kingdom mantle as Joshua did. God goes with you – how can you possibly fail?

Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:5-9)

Be strong and courageous today and every day. You have been called into Kingdom service alongside others who have the same weaknesses and challenges.

Be strong! Be courageous!

* with the possible exception of Moses who got into an argument with God about being the one to go bring the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 3 and 4).

Day 2 – Human Strength and Ability?

The world gives its praise and honour to human achievement. Stars are made, athletes are crowned, and accolades are poured out on successful business leaders. This is the way of the kingdoms of the world. The human is praised for their human, worldly achievements.

Not so in the Kingdom of Heaven. Success is not from human achievement and humans do not get the honour. In the economy of the Kingdom of Heaven – all Glory Praise and Honour is given to the King. God will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 42:8).

All the achievements and success in the Kingdom of God are accomplished by His power and His might.

God commanded Moses to tell Pharaoh, “...*I have raised you [Pharaoh] up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth (Exodus 9:16).*” It’s all about God’s power and God’s glory.

When we enter into Kingdom service, we enter because we are called not because we are equipped. Leave all notions of self behind when you enter His service. Let go of all your ambitions and abilities. God will use you in whatever capacity He desires – if you will submit to be used by Him.

What human skill or ability did Mary have when God chose her to bear the savior of the world? Mary’s only contribution was her willingness, “*I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me as you have said.*” (Luke 1:38). The purpose was achieved by God mighty power, not Mary’s ability.

‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty (Zechariah 4:6).

What is God going to do through you today? Do you want God to check in with you first to see if you agree with Him? Or are you willing to witness the awesome power of God working through you because you submit to His call?

Can you say today with all humility and great confidence, “*Here I am Lord, send me!*” (Isaiah 6:8).

Watch what happens when God works through you.

Day 3 – God Chooses the Weak.

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

There is a connection between our spiritual strength and our closeness to Jesus. The Apostles had been with Jesus for three years. They had witnessed astonishing miracles and great teaching. They had seen Jesus thwart the “wisdom” of the religious leaders. The crowds also noted, that Jesus, “... *taught with authority, not as the teacher of the law*” (Matthew 7:29).

Being in the presence of Jesus gave these men the background they needed to be preachers of the Kingdom message. They had the Holy Spirit just as we do. We too need to be spending time with Jesus, reading the word, and meditating upon it. Then we too, when the opportunity arises, can speak boldly and with power and authority and with great courage.

Do not rely today on your own strength. Let God use you in your weakness. Whatever your circumstances God can and will use you to advance the Kingdom. Your speech will be gracious and uplifting when you give your voice over to be used by the Spirit of God. In your human weakness and inability let there be less of you and more of Him.

John the Baptist summed it up, “*He must become greater; I must become less (John 3:30).*” So let it be with you, let the power of God’s Holy Spirit reign in you.

When Jesus was warning the disciple about the future – they would all be arrested – He gave these comforting words, “*At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you*” (Matthew 10:19-20).

If you face challenging conversations about your faith – trust that the Holy Spirit will take control and give you the right words for every situation.

Feeling weak? Now let Jesus be strong!

Day 4 – Too Young? Don't Know Enough?

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

A common concern in the church is people who feel they do not know enough or are too young to be of any use. There are even, unfortunately, some in the church who dismiss the young and those who are new to the faith. Instead of being encouraged, these new believers or young believers are discouraged.

In the early church this must have been a problem too as Paul needed to encourage Timothy, a young pastor. It must have been a source of concern for Timothy and Paul that Timothy was young yet called to the preaching ministry. Paul's encouragement to Timothy was to keep going and don't let anyone put you down because you are young. Likewise those among us who are new to the faith or feel their young age disqualifies them should take heart. God can call anyone at any age. Samuel was a very young boy when he was serving in the temple (1 Samuel).

So age is not a deterrent to service. But your example may be. In Paul's charge to Timothy he dismissed the age factor but emphasized the need for a good example of speech, life, love, faith and purity. These are the characteristics that we all need to exemplify in Kingdom service.

Regardless of how young you are or how new to the faith, if God has called you to service, rejoice, He will equip you for whatever He has called you to.

Paul's final encouragement and charge to Timothy was, *"But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry (2 Timothy 4:5).*

Young? New? Inexperienced? Join the team! Be encouraged, get engaged in the Kingdom work learn as you go. The Holy Spirit will guide you and strengthen you as He leads you to those who will support and encourage you.

Day 5 – So, You’ve had a Failure?

There are many in the church who have experienced some kind of failure in their ministry. It could be a moral failure, a crippling disagreement or conflict. But whatever the circumstances or context a failure need not disqualify anyone from turning back to the Lord and once again being part of the Kingdom work. There can be repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation – indeed the church is the place where these things should be commonplace.

The early church had its difficulties and challenges and interpersonal conflict. The book of Acts is a chronicle of travels and travails of the apostles. Barnabas and Paul had a major conflict that resulted in their parting company. Their conflict was over a man named John-Mark. John-Mark, a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10) had been working with Paul but had abandoned the ministry...

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord (Acts 15:36-40).

How sad it is when the joy of Kingdom work is spoiled by disagreement among the Lord’s servants. But here in Acts 15 we see that John-Mark had left Paul in Pamphylia and now Paul was reluctant to take him back on another mission. Barnabas, however, could see something different in this man and took John-Mark with him. Whatever happened to John-Mark? It was this man, John-Mark who wrote the second Gospel!

There are many bumps and falls along the way as we enter into Kingdom work but never give up. No matter how you have failed or fallen back – the God of Heaven welcomes you back to the family, restores you and will reassign you once more to His missional work in the world. Do not let a past failure keep you from your calling. Courage and strength can be yours once again.

Day 6 – Are You a Follower or Just a Fan?

To be a follower of Jesus and not expect opposition it to be woefully unfamiliar with the real story of Jesus and the early church. Jesus stood in opposition to the religious leaders of his day. They killed Him. The apostles risked and lost their lives to tell the message to all who would hear. For two thousand years believers in Jesus have died for being called by His name. Nothing has changed.

Why then should we expect, in a world that has persecuted Christians for two millennia, that our profession of faith will not attract opposition?

To read the gospel accounts and the other books of the New Testament opens our eyes to the reality of the birth of the church and the struggles against the world that ensue. We are not living in a world that honours God in any way at all. We Christians, are living in enemy territory. We are like soldiers behind enemy lines. If we declare who we are we will come under attack. There is a cost to being a follower and not just a fan.

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:57-62).

Jesus told anyone who desired to follow Him to count the cost before making the commitment. Was Jesus being unnecessarily harsh? Why can it not be easy to be a follower? Because service in the Kingdom requires sacrifice. Just an hour together on Sunday is not being a follower of Jesus. True faith in Jesus as Lord and savior will call for a changed life, a reprioritized life...sacrifice.

What have you sacrificed for the sake of the Kingdom? Where have you experienced opposition for your faith? Can you stand with Paul, Barnabas, John-Mark, the disciples and Jesus and say I am one of them, I am one with them?

Be strong and courageous. Take your stand with those who have endured fierce opposition.

Day 7 – Courage and Strength

This may have been a difficult week of prayer as we engaged with the subject of being strong and courageous.

Throughout the history of God's people the faithful have come up against opposition. The battle is engaged on planet earth. Until the Lord returns we are engaged in battle with an already defeated enemy. Take courage in that Christ has defeated the enemy of God's people at Calvary. We serve a resurrected Lord of Lords and Kings of Kings.

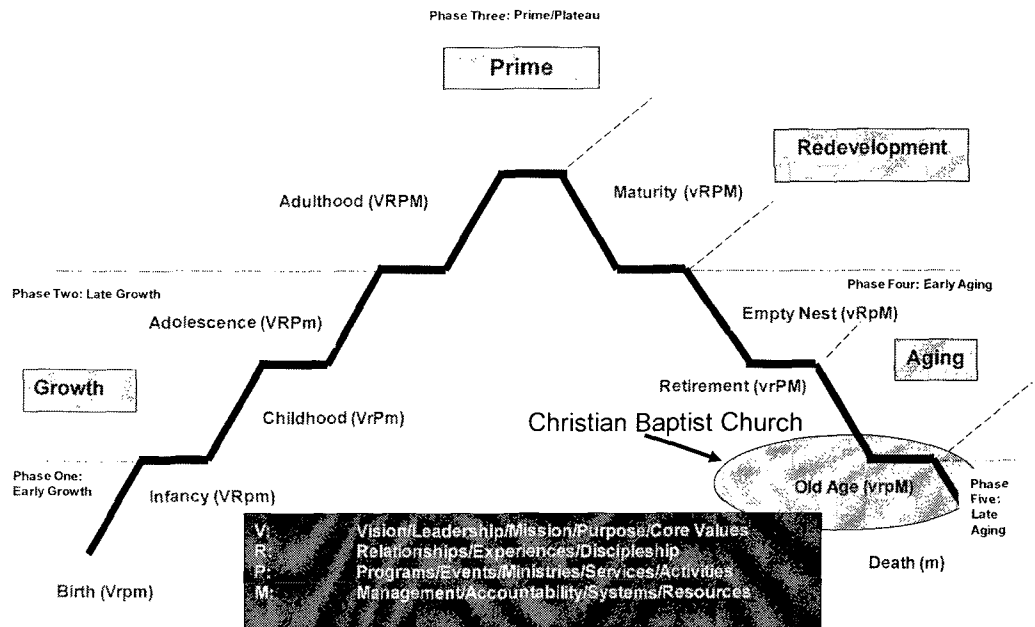
Why do we need to be strong and courageous? Because we stand against the enemy of our souls. God has chosen the weak to stand strong against this enemy. God chooses to use weak, fallen and oftentimes sinful people to move His kingdom forward. We sin. We fall away from our calling. We fail. Sometimes we fail big time. But our God forgives quickly so we can get back on the team, proclaiming the gospel of God's love for all the world through Jesus Christ.

We need to take our courage and strength from the fact that the Kingdom of God has come. We are its citizens and our destiny is secure. Our purpose is clear. We will stand tall. We will be strong in the Lord. We will be encouraged and we will encourage each other. We are weak but He is strong.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Appendix B: George Bullard's Life Stages of a Congregation

The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development



Copyright 2009, Rev. George Bullard, D. Min. Provided by the Columbia Partnership

The Four Organizing Principles (Bullard 2005, 76-77):

VISION: The current understanding of God's strategic direction for a local congregation that is cast by the leadership and owned by the membership.

RELATIONSHIPS: The relational processes by which people are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ; become connected to a local New Testament church; are assimilated into the fellowship, life and care ministry of the church; have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development; and utilize their gifts and skills through Kingdom development.

PROGRAMS: The functional attempts to provide ministries, services, activities, and training for people connected to the congregation by membership, attendance, fellowship, or through relationship experiences

MANAGEMENT: The administration of the resources of the congregation, the decision making structure of the congregation, and the openness of the congregation to change and grow.

Appendix C: Ethical Review and TCPS Certificate

The nature of this project requires sensitive ethical discipline. The participants will be asked to share their prayer life as they engage in understanding and practicing a morning and evening prayer. Individuals may be reticent to share too much or too openly as the prayer life is deeply personal and intimate. I will confirm with each participant that their comments and responses are confidential and that their name will not be associated with any specific comment.

The people in the congregation of Christian Baptist Church, Newmarket, will be asked to participate in this project. The project, *Becoming a People of Prayer*, will engage the participants in a journey of discovery as they engage in learning and practicing the Daily Office or morning and evening prayer. This will be a new experience for many and sensitivity and confidentiality will be critical aspects of the research.

During the research individuals may uncover some personal and potentially upsetting discoveries. As they engage in a deeper prayer life there will likely be some spiritual opposition or even strongholds. This will need to be recognized and handled thoughtfully and confidentially. Each person invited to participate will be asked to sign a consent form. This consent form will outline the timetable and scope of the research and show clearly that all responses are confidential and individuals will not be identifiable in any papers or reports produced in the project. Other than maybe reporting on age related trends in the

research findings there is no anticipated need to identify any individual responses. Since no identifying information is essential for this research project, none will be captured. All responses will be recorded for later reporting but the source will be coded so that no document will contain the identity of any respondent. All comments and statements captured in the research will be stored electronically under appropriate password protection and backed up in a different location.

Having completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) 2: Core Course, I am aware of and will implement such protections as are required to ensure each person's privacy and dignity are protected. This will include protection of all written notes, password protection of all computer documents, appropriate back-ups and secure storage of all documents and computer files. The focus of the project is the participants' personal prayer life and each participant will come to this research project with a different sense of their own spiritual maturity. Some will be keen and enthusiastic. Others, though willing, may have some trepidation. As I engage with and discuss and record their responses I will ensure their individual confidentiality and expressly ensure that they know of it. This will be accomplished through verbally repeating the confidentiality aspects of the initiative and asking for their continued support and engagement I will ensure that each participant knows their participation is confidential and they may withdraw at any time.

The nature of the project does not require collecting detailed information specifically about the individual participants. I will collect and record only that information that will lead to an assessment of the research and will enhance any future projects of the same type. As the researcher and the pastor, I will ensure that the participants from the congregation are in no way coerced to participate and any who decide to not participate will not feel they are less for it. As the pastor I can only encourage engagement in the project. I am aware of my multiple role as researcher, pastor and participant. I will recruit other leaders who will also engage and recruit participants. These other leaders will also be instructed to protect the dignity and confidentiality of all participants.

Ethics Certificate



Appendix D: Interview Questions

Each participant was asked five questions for the Qualitative Research. Three questions were asked prior to the Forty Days of Prayer and two were asked following.

What follows is the document each participant was given.

As a participant in this research project you will be asked to complete a questionnaire before and after the Forty Days of Prayer. You will also be asked the following questions as a way of determining the impact the Forty Days of Prayer have on the participant's prayer life. As stated in the Participant's Consent form all information collected during this project will remain confidential and participants will not be identified in any written documents.

Questions before the Forty Days of Prayer:

“What does prayer look like to you on a day to day basis?”

“Why have you agreed to participate in this study?”

“What do you anticipate will happen for you?”

Questions after the Forty Days of Prayer

“What does Prayer look like to you on a day to basis now that you have participated in this study?”

“What has happened to your prayer life as a result of your participation?”

Appendix E: Structure of Prayer Scale

Each participant was given the following Structure of Prayer Scale as my Quantitative Research Instrument. The questionnaire was administered before and after the Forty Days of prayer to establish of any changes had taken place in the participants' prayer focus.

On the following page is the Structure of Prayer Scale each participant was given.

Structure of Prayer Scale

Instrument

Prayer or meditation is approached in a wide variety of fashions. For the purposes of this study, please think of “pray” and “meditation” as the same sort of practice. We would like you to indicate for each of the following statements the position that most accurately reflects your personal practices. Please use this code for your answers.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = moderately disagree

3 = slightly disagree

4 = slightly agree

5 = moderately agree

6 = strongly agree

#	Question	CODE
1	When I pray alone, I have a ritual that I adhere to strictly.	
2	Through deep prayer I am able to know God better.	
3	It is important to me to tell God about my sins or faults.	
4	When I pray, I want to share my life with God.	
5	I usually pray for God to make me a better person.	
6	I pray to give thanks for all God has done for me	
7	When I feel guilty about something, it helps to tell God about it.	
8	When God has answered my prayers, I usually give thanks.	
9	My prayers are like rituals; they have a regular, orderly sequence.	
10	I usually say a prayer before each meal.	
11	I like to say prayers for people about whom I care very much.	
12	I always pray before I go to sleep.	
13	I must admit that I usually pray to get something.	
14	Confession is important to me because it helps me lead a more respectable life.	
15	When I pray, I ask God for special favours.	
16	Prayer helps me keep my life balanced and happy.	
17	When I pray I confess to God the things I should not have done.	
18	Usually when I feel unable to help my loved ones, I ask God for help.	
19	I ask God to help others when I am unable to.	
20	When I pray, I have certain words or phrases that I repeat a number of times.	
21	In my prayers I like to express my recognition for what God grants me.	
22	Most of my prayers are for God to solve problems.	
23	When I finish praying, I feel like a better person.	
24	I pray for other people.	
25	A morning prayer helps me cope with the world during the day.	
26	Prayer is a way for me to connect with my inner spirit.	
27	When I pray, I feel secure	
28	I pray daily.	

Appendix F: Participant Informed Consent

From: Pastor Keith Daly

Doctor of Ministry – Project Participant Informed Consent

I am inviting you to be a participant in my research project for my Doctor of Ministry program at Tyndale Seminary. I am researching the adoption of morning and evening prayer as a spiritual discipline as an encouragement towards a consistent, meaningful prayer life for the participants.

In this research you are being asked to participate for forty days and, based on the outcome, to make morning and evening prayer a key discipline in your Christian life. Your time commitment will be 15 -20 minutes at the beginning and end of each day for forty days; participation in an Orientation Session at the start of the project and the Feedback Session at the end. The research project will proceed as follows:

1. If you agree to participate; return, signed, the attached Participant Informed Consent form.
2. You will agree to participate in the Orientation Session to receive the Prayer Guide and schedule. Any questions you have may be asked at this session or at any time during the research.
3. I will be asking you to complete a questionnaire before you begin and again at the end of the Forty Days of Prayer.
4. I will be asking each participant, individually, the following questions:

Before the study begins:

1. *“What does prayer look like to you on a day to day basis?”*
2. *“Why have you agreed to participate in this study?”*
3. *“What do you anticipate will happen for you?”*

Following completion of the study:

4. *“What does Prayer look like to you on a day to basis now that you have participated in this study?”*

5. *“What has happened to your prayer life as a result of your participation?”*

4. You will be asked to email me weekly feedback on your participation. This will be a simple acknowledgement that you have continued with the prayer discipline throughout the week I will not ask for details.
5. At the end of the Forty Days of Prayer you will participate in a feedback session with other participants to discuss the experience and share your responses. One on one discussions may be requested if necessary.
6. Depending on the feedback I may adjust the Morning and Evening Prayer guide and invite you to participate on a possible second forty day session. Alternatively you can return to your previous prayer patterns and go forward with whatever you have learned from this research.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during the project. You do not have to give any reason for withdrawing and you are not waiving any legal rights. There are no identifiable risks in this research but there may be benefits related to the ongoing development of your prayer life. Any information I receive from you will be held in strict confidence and not be disclosed to anyone. Participant names will not be used in my thesis. If you wish to have a personal discussion at any time during this study I will meet with you at your convenience.

By signing this consent form you acknowledge that you have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and you freely consent to participate.

If you have any questions or concerns related to this research you may contact:

Dr. Mark Chapman, Assistant Professor of Research Methods
Tyndale Seminary, 25 Ballyconnor Court, Toronto M2M 4B3
(416) 226-6620 ext. 2208 email: mchapman@tyndale.ca

or

Dr. David Russell, Toronto Baptist Ministries - Church Network Coordinator

Thank you for your participation.

Pastor Keith Daly

Your name:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

REFERENCE LIST

- Aquinas, Thomas. 1989. *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation*. Trans. Timothy McDermott. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press.
- Auerbach, Carl F., and Louise B. Silverstein. 2003. *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Augustine, Saint. 1961. *Confessions*. Trans R. S. Pine-Coffin. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.
- Bartleman, Frank. 2006. *Frank Bartleman's Azusa Street: First Hand Accounts of the Revival—includes Feature Articles from the Apostolic Faith Newspaper*. Shipensburg, PA: Destiny Image.
- Bauer, Walter. 1979. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Trans. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Benson, Robert. 2008. *In Constant Prayer*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Bernard, H. Russell. 2000. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Boers, Arthur Paul. 1999. *Never Call Them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute.
- Brench, Matthew. 2014. *Set Prayers*.
<http://leorningniht.wordpress.com/2011/07/13/set-prayers/> [Accessed July 1st 2014.].
- Bullard, George W. Jr. 2005. *Pursuing the Full Kingdom Potential of Your Congregation*. St. Louis, MI: Lake Hickory Resources
- Campbell, Wesley and Stacey. 2003. *Praying the Bible: The Pathway to Spirituality*. New York, NY: Regal.

- Cho, Paul Y. with R. Whitney Manzano. 1984. *Prayer: Key to Revival*. Waco, TX: W Pub Group.
- Coghlan, David and Teresa Brannick. 2010. *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cymbala, Jim. 1997. *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire: What Happens When God's Spirit Invades the Heart of His People*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Duewel, Wesley L. 1990. *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*. London, UK: Zondervan.
- Foster, Richard J. 1988. *Celebration of Discipline*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
- _____. 1992. *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco
- Foster, Richard J. and James Bryan Smith. 1993. *Devotional Classics: Selected Readings For Individuals and Groups*. San Francisco, CA: HarperColins
- Grenz, Stanley J. 2005. *Prayer: The Cry For the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Erdmans Pub. Co.
- Hallesby, O. 1931. *Prayer*. Trans. Clarence J. Carlsen. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House
- Hill, Peter C., and Ralph W. Hood Jr. 1999. *Measures of Religiosity*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press.
- Hunter, W. Bingham. 1986. *The God Who Hears*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.
- Illsley, John. 2005. *The Effect of Emphasising Prayer on the Spiritual Lives of Members of the International Congregation at Methodist Church (English Speaking) in Wan Chai, Hong Kong*. D.Min. thesis, Denver Seminary. In Theological Research Exchange Network.
- Jones, Timothy. 2005. *The Art of Prayer: A Simple Guide to Conversation with God*. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterman Press.
- Ladd, George Eldon. 1974. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Larson, Laura. *Fixed Hour Prayer*. Fuller Youth Institute.
<http://stickyfaith.org/articles/fixed-hour-prayer>. [Accessed July 2014].

- Lawrence, Brother. 1967. *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Reprinted ed. Fort Wayne, TX: Revell.
- Liardon, Roberts and Frank Bartleman. 2006. *Frank Bartlemen's Azusa Street Revival*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image.
- Maas, Robin and Gabriel O'Donnell. 1990. *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- McMinn, Mark R. 1996. *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers
- Miles, Matthew B., and A. Michael Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis: an Expanded Sourcebook*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Miller, Delbert C., and Neil J. Salkind. 2002. *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Mindel, Nissan. 2014. Chabad.org. The Three Daily Prayers. http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/682091/jewish/the-Three-Daily-Prayers [Accessed July 1st 2014].
- Morley, Patrick. 2007. *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines: 12 Habits to Strengthen Your Walk with Christ*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.
- Munroe, Myles. 2002. *Understanding the Purpose and Power of Prayer*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House.
- Nussbaum, Stan. 2005. *A Reader's Guide to Transforming Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Osmer, Richard R. 2008. *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co.
- Posterroski, Don, and Gary Nelson. 1997. *Future Faith Churches: Reconnecting with the Power of the Gospel For the 21st Century*. Maryknoll, NY: WoodLake.
- Rainer, Thom, S. 2014. *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive*. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group.
- Rohr, Richard. 2003. *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*. Rev. ed. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company.

- _____. 2012. *A Lever and a Place to Stand: The Contemplative Stance, The Active Prayer*. New York, NY: Hidden Spring.
- Sacks, Cheryl and Becky Harding. 2007. *The Prayer-Saturated Church: A Comprehensive Handbook for Prayer Leaders*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.
- Saldana, Johnny. 2013. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Spilka, Bernard, and Kevin L. Ladd. 2013. *The Psychology of Prayer: A Scientific Approach*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Spurgeon, Charles H. 2003. *Morning and Evening: A New Edition of the Classic Devotional Based On the Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. Rev. ed. Ed. Alistair Begg. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.
- Sutera, Judith. 1997. *Work of God: Benedictine Prayer*. Collegeville, MA: The Liturgical Press.
- Tetlow, Elizabeth. 1987. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America
- Tickle, Phyllis. 2007. *The Divine Hours*. Pocket ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Torrey, R. A. 1924. *The Power of Prayer*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Vennard, Jane E. 2005. *A Praying Congregation: the Art of Teaching Spiritual Practice*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute.
- Verney, Stephen. 1964. *Fire in Coventry*. Old Tappan, NJ.: Fleming H. Revell Company.
- Wagner, Peter C. 1993. *Churches that Pray: How Prayer Can Help You Revitalize Your Church and Break Down the Walls Between You and Your Community*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- Whiteman, William L. 1987. *Strengthening the Congregational Prayer Life of a Suburban American Baptist Church Through Five Weeks of Emphasis of Prayer*. D.Min. Thesis, University of South Florida. In Theological Research Exchange Network,

Whitney, Donald S. 1991. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress.

Zimmerman, Joyce Ann, and Kathleen Harmon. 1993. *Pray Without Ceasing: Prayer for Morning & Evening*. Collegeville, MN: Spring Arbor Distributors.