

Designing, Writing and Testing a Book and Study Guide for Formational Discipleship

by

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Abstract

Jesus' commission to make disciples has raised the issue of discipleship with every generation. This dissertation reports on the process of designing, planning, writing and testing a book and study guide, using action research, which has sought to provide readers and participants with an occasion to progress in spiritual formation toward authentic discipleship informed by a Biblical theology. Two groups of participants took part in two cycles of action research in which they provided insight and feedback into the curriculum as it was being written. A Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) was developed to measure thirty-eight categories of spiritual formation and was administered prior to and after the course of study. Feedback questionnaires and interviews were also employed. The results indicated a statistically significant increase in the level of theological grounding, of discipleship practices and improvements in the quality of the participants' soul life with God. Participants reported a significant increase in their motivation to draw near to God, live for God, and to reach out to others as ones who have been sent. The data suggests that the use of the action research methodology has resulted in a much better product and process than had this methodology not been used. The actual book and study guide *Love's Greatest Joy – A Closer Walk With God* is an appendix (Appendix J) to this dissertation.

Key words: Christian living, discipleship, spiritual formation, writing, spiritual self-assessment.

Contents

Abstract.....	vii
Contents.....	1
Tables.....	3
Illustrations	3
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	4
1.1 Rationale	5
1.2 Target Audience.....	7
1.3 Objectives.....	7
1.4 Strategy	8
Chapter 2: Precedent Literature and Background	10
2.1 Historical Discipleship Streams.....	11
2.2 Researcher Background	17
2.2.1 Transformation Through Quality.....	18
2.2.2 Pastoral Studies.....	19
2.2.3 Spiritual Formation	20
2.2.4 Teaching Systematic Theology.....	23
2.2.5 ACTS Institute - India.....	25
2.2.6 The Church at My Place (C.A.M.P.).....	26
2.2.7 The Theology of Transformation.....	27
2.3 The Idea for this Book	30
2.4 Contemporary Research	35
2.5 Adult Learning.....	36
2.6 Summary	39
Chapter 3: Theological Rationale.....	40
3.1 Discipleship	40
3.1.1. Paul.....	41
3.1.2 What is a Disciple?	42
3.1.3 Discipleship as Walking	43
3.2 Eight Aspects of Discipleship	44
3.2.1 God’s Amazing Love	45
3.2.2 Transformation – The Purpose of Love	48
3.2.3 The Battle Within – The Victory of Love	51
3.2.4 The Presence of God – The Peace of Love	56
3.2.5 Prayer and Worship – The Breath of Love.....	60
3.2.6 God’s Word – The Nourishment of Love	65
3.2.7 Love’s Rule – The Convictions of Love	69
3.2.8 Mission and Community – The Expressions of Love.....	71
3.3 Summary	74
Chapter 4: Project and Methodology.....	77
4.1 Introduction/Overview	77
4.2 The Writing Process.....	79
4.3 Data Gathering.....	82
4.3.1 The Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)	82
4.3.2 Questionnaire Summary	84
4.3.3 Post Session Feedback	86

4.3.4 Post Session Interview	88
4.4 Participant Recruitment.....	89
4.5 Action Research Cycles	90
4.6 Adjustment and Refinement.....	92
4.7 Ethical Considerations	92
Chapter 5 – Outcomes & Analysis	96
5.1 Participants’ Learning Cycle.....	96
5.1.1 What was the Impact?	97
5.1.2 How Did This Impact Occur?.....	116
5.1.3 Participants’ Response to the Research Process	120
5.2 Core Research Cycle.....	122
5.3 Thesis Cycle	131
Section 6: Conclusions	138
APPENDICIES	
APPENDIX A - The Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire.....	A1
APPENDIX B - Research Group Feedback Questionnaire.....	B1
APPENDIX C - Invitation to Participate Letter.....	C1
APPENDIX D - Post Session Interview Form.....	D1
APPENDIX E - Informed Consent Form.....	E1
APPENDIX F - SAQ Statistical Charts and Participants’ Impact Statements.....	F1
APPENDIX G - Participants’ Impact Statements.....	G1
APPENDIX H - Participants’ Ratings of the Impact of the Study	H1
APPENDIX I - Participants’ Comments on the Research Process.....	I1
APPENDIX J - Love’s Greatest Joy – A Closer Walk with God.....	J1
Reference List	

Tables

Table		
1.	The Three Action Research Cycles	79
2.	Average Ratings on a Scale of One to Ten of the Difference that Participating in the Study Made to the following:	101
3.	SAQ Statistical Test Summary	105

Illustrations

Figure		
1	Background Impetus for the Book	11
2	A Disciple of Jesus Christ	31
3	Chapter Schematic for <i>Love's Greatest Joy</i>	34
4	The Core Research Cycle	78
5	Instances of Significant Increase to SAQ Scores	106
6	Instances of Significant Decrease to SAQ Scores	107
7	Ratio of Significant Increases to Decreases	107
8	One Participant's Change in SAQ Scores	113
9	One Participant's Change in SAQ Summary Category Scores	115

Abbreviations

ESV English Standard Version

SAQ Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Jesus Christ's final commission to his disciples was to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them everything that He had commanded (Matt. 28:19). Since that commission, followers of Jesus have been engaged in the process of making disciples. Every generation of believers has wrestled with what it means to be a disciple of Christ. This question has led to the development of discipleship literature over the centuries, which has sought to stimulate believers to live out their calling. The writers of such literature have wrestled with the great theological truths of the gospel and their application. Discipleship literature has sought to address the needs of believers in the context of their situation and of the faith handed down by the prophetic and apostolic witness to Jesus Christ. Authentic discipleship, as Jesus modelled and commanded, has been the goal of most of such material.

The purpose of this project is to engage in, reflect and report on the process of developing and refining, through action research, a book and integrated study guide that will stimulate people into a more active pursuit of authentic discipleship embodied by what Jesus Christ taught and modelled.

It is posited that using the action research process through two cycles with two groups of participants has produced a better product than simply writing a monograph independent of such process. This process has incorporated specific objectives and data collection strategies including an assessment tool to measure the extent to which those objectives have been met. It has also provided the researcher with a learning experience in the process of writing a book using this methodology. The end product *Love's Greatest Joy – A Closer Walk with God* is a monograph in the genre of

discipleship literature designed to provide an intense learning experience, through reading and spiritual exercises to be done individually and in small groups. It has been designed to be theologically rich, yet readable and stimulating so as to provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to transform participants and readers into more authentic, passionate disciples of Jesus Christ that impact their world. The completed book and integral study guide is an appendix to this report (Appendix J).

1.1 Rationale

The rationale for this book comes from Jesus Himself, whose ministry sought to move people into a full awareness of the true nature of God and His call on them to participate in that Kingdom where God reigns. Jesus entered into the spiritual life of Israel in a way that sought to correct distorted views of God. He personally embodied what God was like for He was God (John 14:9b). Since Jesus' day, every generation of God's people have struggled to maintain a correct and balanced view of God and their own responsibilities as citizens of His Kingdom.

Jesus challenged the status quo thinking about God and His people. He called people into a new way of discipleship that would ultimately have the cross as its locus. There was no going half way in following Him. The one who would not renounce all, could not be His disciple (Luke 14:33). This renouncing required a death to self and a spiritual resurrection in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). In every society where Christ has a following, believers have sought to die to self and live as Jesus taught and modelled. However, every society has cultural and societal norms of life and behaviour that have made authentic discipleship challenging. It has been the researcher's experience as one who has taught discipleship courses (as a pastor in both a large and small church

settings) that people struggle to live out the Christian life. The nature of this struggle is determined in part by the cultural and societal situation in which they live. In a world where belief often means simply giving assent to something, many profess faith in Jesus Christ, yet have not experienced the profound inner transformation that calls them to renounce all, die to self and follow Him. Others do not understand the nature of their own sinful predisposition, which the Apostle Paul calls the “old self” (Eph. 4:22). Some believe that the Christian life should be filled with happiness and prosperity. Others have never been taught how to pray, worship or simply spend time with God. Still others have no idea how to approach the scriptures, but believe that they should take every command at face value. Still others believe that Christian community is itself that Kingdom and wish to rest quietly until Christ comes again. Others gravitate to charismatic leaders and follow them.

As a pastor who has also taught systematic theology, the researcher is of the conviction that many of these misunderstandings are theologically grounded. If one’s understanding of theological truth is incomplete, then that person’s understanding of discipleship will likely be as well. Herein is the rationale for this book. The goal has been to construct a discipleship book which seeks to ground discipleship on sound Biblical theology. As the Word of God is living and active and pierces into the innermost being (Heb. 4:12), it operates as a plough to break up hard and fallow ground. Another goal has been to set the plough deep and to aim it at patches of spiritual ground, which experience has shown are hard spots in many people’s understanding of discipleship. In chapter 2, the researcher traces out his background, the influences that shaped his thinking and how he came to an understanding of the current state of discipleship among Christians in Canada, the United States and parts of India. He has

not sought to correct every deficit encountered, but has sought to create a book that will lead people, through reading and spiritual exercises, into the “must knows” of Christian discipleship. In a book that is limited to eight chapters, the objective has been to move people into an authentic experience of what the road of discipleship feels like.

1.2 Target Audience

The target audience for the book is both new believers and believers who are seeking to aspire to greater heights in living the genuine life that Christ models and desires. Hence the book and the study guide aim to stimulate *individual interaction* with the material as well as *one-on-one* interaction with a *small group* of co-participants, and individually and collectively with God. The learning experience has involved much more than just reading the material. It has required individual and group interaction through use of questions, exercises and activities. The project has used participant feedback, individually and in groups, to drive iterative adjustments to the written material in order to maximize its effectiveness.

The convictions as to the theology and content of the chapters are developed in *Chapter 2: Precedent Literature and Experiences*, and *Chapter 3: Theological Rationale*.

1.3 Objectives

As a preliminary step in the development of this project a number of desirable objectives for those reading and participating in the study were identified. These were based on the researcher's past experience in discipleship training.

1. *Motivation*: To stimulate readers to greater love for God, to delight in His goodness and to pursue a life devoted to doing His will.

2. *Grounding*. To provide a solid grounding in understanding the character of God, the purposes of God and the plan of God, not only for creation but for each individual, especially with respect to discipleship. (i.e., What does God require of me?)
3. *Transformation*. To ask provoking questions that will stimulate conviction in the reader, thus providing an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to change the person more and more into the likeness of Christ.
4. *Comfort*. To provide insights related to the many paradoxes of the Christian life without embracing extremes. To enable people to live amidst these tensions and draw comfort from the promises of God in the midst of affliction.
5. *Discipline*. To equip the reader/participant with spiritual disciplines that will become a habitual part of their daily life.
6. *Delight*: To help the reader/participant to truly delight in God, the people of God and the purposes of God, so as to live a life filled with joy.
7. *Action*. To move the readers/participants out into his world to actively engage others in love, by making disciples, being a blessing to the world and bringing glory to God.

These objectives have guided the writing and the evaluation of the book and study guide. They have also superintended the participant's learning cycle and provided a means of assessment.

1.4 Strategy

This project consisted of planning and designing the content of the book and study guide, designing a data collection plan which included a Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ), recruiting a group of participants to field test the material, refining and rewriting the material using their input and recycling with a second group. The two groups provided feedback and reflective insights that were incorporated into the material in two development cycles. The participants engaged in an action learning

cycle each week as they read the next chapter, answered questions and engaged in spiritual exercises individually and in a large group. They also interacted with others who had read the same material and were given an opportunity to provide feedback and insights into the material in a detailed way. As researcher and author, this project has provided an opportunity to write this book in a collaborative way, testing and refining the material through three editions. It has included assessing changes in self-perceptions with regard to the spiritual maturity and discipleship practices of the participants. It has also resulted in learning that will be a benefit to others who may wish use such a process to write, field-test and refine material in a collaborative environment with research participants. It has also resulted in a book, *Love's Greatest Joy – A Closer Walk with God*, which has had a significant impact on the spiritual lives of the participants. The project methodology and assessment process is described in detail in *Chapter 4, Project and Methodology*. Outcomes and analysis are described in chapter five and conclusions in chapter six.

Chapter 2: Precedent Literature and Background

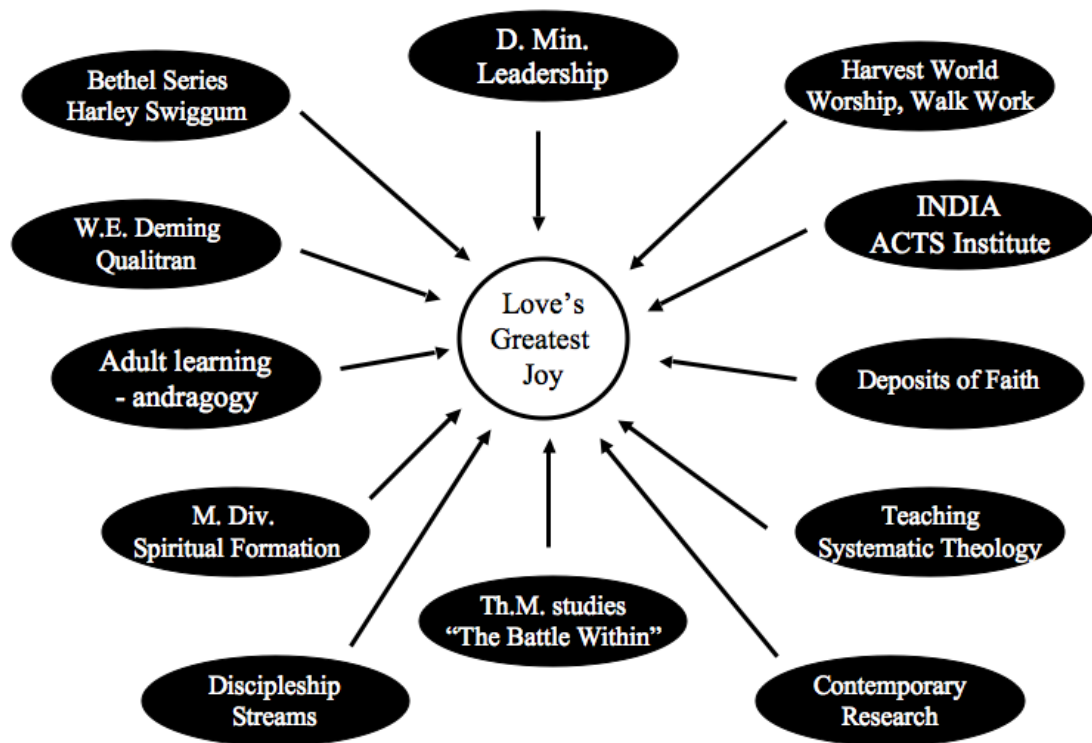
This chapter begins with a survey of approaches to discipleship in the church over the centuries. Identifying how the Holy Spirit has moved among believers provides an important backdrop to both the historical and theological context of the issues surrounding discipleship. The chapter then proceeds with a description of the researcher's own life journey in developing a passion for discipleship training and development. This is essential for the impetus for this book comes from the personal convictions that have developed about key elements of discipleship in the context of the church today as it has been experienced. The approach in this sub-section will be to describe how the researcher has come to write this book and study guide by examining the elements of his faith journey and focusing in on those experiences, individuals, and literary works that have given him a passion for discipleship training. This book and study guide is not meant to be an academic treatise on discipleship. Rather it is a documented learning experience in which discipleship literature plays a part, and of which this book is a product of convictions about what every believer must understand, experience and continually practice as they grow to maturity.

The final sub-sections of this chapter focus on issues related to adult learning and recent research conducted in the North American context on how disciples grow into maturity.

Thus, the input into the development of the book has not been linear but rather is a consummation of various influences over thirty years of ministry, which have led to certain convictions about discipleship. In this chapter, these will be described as

spokes of a wheel joined at the hub, interrelated through the rim of the wheel, through which all the influences flow into each other. This is diagrammed in figure 1.

Figure 1: Background - Impetus for "the book"



2.1 Historical Discipleship Streams

To provide a framework for the content of *Love's Greatest Joy*, a number of works have been examined in which the authors have sought to identify the streams of Christian Spirituality and discipleship methods that have existed over the centuries. *Protestant Spiritual Traditions* (1986), *Thirsty for God* (Holt 1993) and *Streams of Living Water* (Foster 1998b) are three major sources.

Holt in *Thirsty for God*, provides an excellent historical sketch identifying the various threads and streams that have developed in each stage of the church's history. In the early stage, three initial streams began to emerge, Judaistic Palestinian spirituality, which focused on the Jerusalem temple, Judaistic Diaspora spirituality, which centred on the Synagogue and Gentile spirituality that centred on local house churches. Christian life in this early stage focused on communal worship, prayer and sacraments (including baptism and love feasts), which took on Syrac, Hellenistic, Roman and Judaistic diversity. The expression of Spiritual gifts (charisms) made meetings participatory, with the Apostles providing guidelines and leadership. Communal life in Jerusalem, a center of worship, was characterized by personal sacrifice and support for widows, the poor and travelling prophets. Early insight into discipleship training is provided with documents such as the Didache (Milavec 2003). Martyrdom became the highest call of the disciple with celebrated martyrs such as Ignatious and Perpetua setting the standard for the cost of discipleship. Disciplines such as prayer, fasting, celibacy, virginity and separation began to emerge, leading into practices of ascetism, monasticism and mysticism. The Desert Fathers typified by Antony around 300 AD set the tone for disciplines of solitude, spiritual combat, tenderness and service in a life of withdrawal, contemplation and spiritual engagement. Other centers of spirituality developed, centered around personalities such as Basil of Ceasarea, the Cappadocian fathers in the East, Benedict in the west, Patrick in Ireland and Frumentis in Ethipoia. In the Monastic tradition, withdrawal, consecration, poverty, chastity, obedience, daily rhythms of worship, prayer, penance, meditation, soul friendships and work defined a way of life that was to endure for centuries and had come to be seen as the highest calling of a Christian. The monasteries became centers of study and scholastics, which

left behind a rich legacy of teaching, example and testimony. The mystics augmented monasticism with an emphasis on union/communion with the Divine. They identified purgative, illuminative and unitive practices designed to strip away carnality and embrace not only Divine darkness (God's withdrawal) but the grace of Divine light.

The European era, which Holt identifies as spanning the period from 400 to 1400 AD, was divided into Eastern and Western streams, by virtue of geography and the rule of Islam in the East after the seventh century. Eastern spirituality was strongly Trinitarian, and saw death as the enemy and resurrection as the victory that overcomes it. The emphasis was on *Theosis*, or union with God. Continual breath prayers like the Jesus prayer¹ emerged as examples of the *Apophatic* approach to spirituality. Icons, images and art became an important part of Eastern spirituality and were seen as windows through which one could see into heaven. This *Kataphatic* approach to spirituality led to the Iconoclastic controversy, which was settled in 787 AD as the seventh ecumenical council approved the use of icons. Today, such controversy still exists as individuals respond in different ways to the use of stained glass windows, statues, art, film and drama in worship. Western spirituality developed along Christocentric lines with focus on Christ as the Lamb of God. Sin was the enemy and the atonement symbolized by the cross was the solution. Worship was highly sacramental and ritualistic in both east and west. This led to augmentation of spirituality through the development of monastic orders and networks of monasteries. Mysticism also began to flourish in two different streams, the affective stream focusing on the romantic bride/bridegroom metaphor and the intellectual stream, which focused on contemplation, study and interior life.

¹ "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner"

The Protestant Reformation reshaped both Protestant and Catholic spirituality and led to a number of streams of spiritualities with diverse theological emphases. Luther's theology of the cross was bedrock for Protestantism for it demolished the foundation of Catholic emphasis on the sacraments as the means of grace, which alone could lead to ultimate justification. Luther's refutation of "the law" and "works" as a path to righteousness in the Heidelberg disputation (Forde 1997, 23) was a frontal attack on Roman Catholic theology. Luther divided theologians into two camps, Theologians of Glory, and Theologians of the Cross. Luther's spirituality required a following of Jesus by dying to self, the exercise of self-denial and the embracing of suffering rather than a triumphant, glorious ascent into the Divine. God was to be seen as just and the justifier of all who abase themselves at the foot of the cross. Those who did so were clothed with an "alien righteousness" (Luther 1989, p.157) that was Christ's righteousness imputed through faith. Daily lifelong repentance and faith alone were to be the loci of the Christian life. The implications of the theology of the cross were cataclysmically paradigm shifting. No element of religious life was immune.

As the reformation spread, diverse threads of the same theme were spun far and wide. Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland focused on an emphasis on the written Word, abandoning the lectionary and simplifying worship. John Calvin, escaping from France and settling in Geneva, focused on the mystical union between Christ and the believer through faith. Justification and Sanctification were seen as dual benefits imputed to the believer through faith that caused the Christian life to be one of daily dying to self, bearing one's cross and being regenerated by the Holy Spirit (mortification and vivification). Believers were free to live life in the fullest assurance that they were eternally secure, predestined by God for eternal life in Christ. While Luther, Zwingli

and Calvin were magisterial reformers, relying on the protection of political rulers to sustain and maintain the church, more radical elements of the reformation pulled away from the state and the world completely. The radical reformers, the Anabaptists, called for a radical discipleship initiated by believer's baptism and separation from the established state church and the world. Anabaptist spirituality led to the Mennonite, Evangelical, and Pentecostal streams and focused on "close community, pacifism, simple lifestyle and direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit." (Holt 1993, 75)

In England, Anglicans found unity in the *Book of Common Prayer* and developed a spirituality that was protestant in theology but sacramental in form. The nonconformist movement in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries took issue with the sacramental form and pomp of the Anglicans and founded the Puritan movement, which focused on simplicity in worship, the Word of God, prayer, self examination, personal holiness, evangelism and a desire to transform society along the lines of Kingdom ethics.

John Wesley's conversion led him to explore a spirituality of the heart that focused heavily on evangelism and lifestyle changes that sought to make a quantum leap in personal holiness. His emphasis on personal accountability in class meetings and the abandonment of habitual sin led him to seek to make practical changes in the lives of those who were converted. Wesley's spirituality touched on Christian perfectionism and together with Anabaptist influences spawned the holiness movements in the early 1900's. His passion was to hold out hope for change for those who had come from a lifetime of sin and addiction.

Roman Catholic spirituality during and after the reformation focused on missionary orders that sought to put faith into action. While most protestant pastors

were preoccupied with theology, catholic priests were being sent into the far corners of the world to spread the gospel and make disciples in areas where the gospel was facing virgin territory. Despite excesses, Jesuit and Dominican orders sought to evangelize the far corners of the globe and often did so at the cost of their lives.

All of these streams of spirituality feature rich resources in the testimonies and writings of those who developed and embraced them. Several authors have attempted to summarize and describe the strengths and weaknesses of these streams. Richard Foster's classic *Streams of Living Water* (Foster 1998b) identifies six streams that he traces back through history, all of which continue to have influence over Christian spirituality. These are The Contemplative Tradition (the prayer filled life), The Holiness Tradition (the virtuous life), The Charismatic Tradition (the Spirit empowered life), The Social Justice Tradition (the compassionate life), The Evangelical Tradition (the Word centered life) and the Incarnational Tradition (the sacramental life).

A number of other works have also identified various streams of Protestant spirituality and categorized them. *Protestant Spiritual Traditions* (1986) featured chapters by several authors identifying elements of Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican, Puritan, Pietistic and Methodist Spirituality. Each stream has its particular contribution to Christian spirituality. These contributions have shaped some of the theology and content of the book chapters and the study guide exercises.

In the two subsections that follow, the influences that developed the researcher's own understanding and experience of discipleship are described as inputs into the idea for the book, its contents and underlying theology. Due to the experiential nature of this material, it is presented as a first person narrative.

2.2 Researcher Background

My first experience with discipleship began shortly after coming to faith in my early thirties. I knew very little of the Bible, but God gave me an extraordinary passion for the scriptures. During an illness when I was confined to bed for many weeks, I was moved to read the New Testament through three times and was overwhelmed by the immensity of the gospel and the call of God on my life. During that time, our pastor suggested that my wife and I enrol in the Bethel Series intensive classes (Swiggum & Adult Christian Education Foundation 1960), which were about to begin at our church. These classes consisted of forty weekly sessions, which covered a complete thematic survey of both Testaments over the course of two years. The intensive course was preparation for those who were to teach a congregational version of this program. Taking these classes required memorization of biblical concepts, written tests and a week's training with the author. Through it students achieved an understanding of the grand narrative of scripture, which has come to be known recently as the Mission of God (Wright 2006). Since that time, I have understood the overarching purpose of God as a passion to form a redeemed people in whom Christ lives, through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God. God's people are called to be a witness to that Kingdom that God is continuing to build all over the world. To understand one's role in that Kingdom, one must understand not only the triune God, but also His action throughout history, particularly in Israel as a called people and all nations as beneficiaries of God's promises to Abraham through faith in Jesus Christ.

As one who has been drawn to the ministry of teaching, my early conviction was that following Christ must entail an understanding of the grand narrative of

scripture and basic principles of interpretation so that any believer who picked up a Bible and began to read would be able to place what they were reading into the context of the meta narrative. In addition, while such understanding was important, I came to the conviction that true illumination from scripture was given by the Holy Spirit. Hence a vital part of discipleship training was to equip people with knowledge of the scriptures in their historical and linguistic contexts and in light of God's overarching purpose.

2.2.1 Transformation Through Quality

During this time, I was engaged in management consulting with my company, Qualitran Professional Services Inc., helping organizations transform their operations by focusing on quality. I was first drawn to the Quality movement while working as a Quality Control Manager at Canadian General Electric in 1978. Japanese management had been heavily influenced by the teachings of an American consultant Dr. W. Edwards Deming. Deming had launched a quality revolution in Japan with his fourteen points for management (Deming 1982, 18). In his teachings, Deming was highly critical of American management, which was more interested in productivity and numbers than in quality. Deming saw that continuous improvement in the quality of all processes was the key to economic and societal success. His famous chain reaction of quality predicted that as process quality was improved, productivity would also improve, allowing companies to capture the market with better quality and lower costs, thus allowing them to thrive in business and provide more and more employment (Deming 1986, 3). The key to this was a management that was committed to participation in the continual improvement of all work processes. This would also result in innovations and enhanced quality of life for employees.

In my work at Qualitran, I became an evangelist for quality. *Transformation Through Quality* became our corporate trademark. On both a corporate and personal level, transformation was becoming a major theme. In each sphere, disciplines and training were required. In the corporate field, Deming's fourteen points became a roadmap for corporate transformation. Other authors such as William Scherkenbach and Bill Ouchi began to contribute to the conversation (Scherkenbach 1986, Ouchi 1981). In *Theory Z*, Bill Ouchi studied Japanese management and discovered that American managers hired by Japanese companies were baffled by their bosses' hesitancy to assign them specific objectives. The Japanese owners sought rather to cultivate an appreciation for the underlying values that they brought to their work. If only American managers would learn how these Japanese owners felt about their company's mission, calling, values, and place in society, then they themselves would be able to determine the objectives that would be appropriate for any given scenario. For me this had profound spiritual significance. If only we would truly know and experience God most profoundly, then we too would know what to do in any given situation. I was learning to appreciate that discipleship was rooted in knowing God. I was also developing an awareness of the need for spiritual disciplines and practices that would lead to the maturity to which the apostles called their spiritual children.

2.2.2 Pastoral Studies

In 1996, I sensed the Spirit of God calling me to enrol in seminary and shift my life's work towards helping others seek Him. I enrolled at Tyndale (then Ontario Theological) Seminary and began a steady six year journey towards a Master of Divinity degree. At Tyndale, I was exposed to Spiritual Formation as a discipline. In

preparation for a pastoral career, I began to experience the affective component of life in the Spirit. Works such as *Space for God* (Postema 1985), *The Genesee Diary* (Nouwen 1981), *Working the Angles* (Peterson 1987), *The Celebration of Discipline* (Foster 2008), *The Practice of the Presence of God* (Lawrence 1996) and many others (Foster 1998a; Nouwen 1979; Piper 2003; McGrath 2000; Bonhoeffer 1995; Augustine & Hippo 1999; Bonhoeffer 2001; Okholm 2007) began to show me how to have a personal devotional life that was not driven primarily by the intellect. I began to set aside significant time for solitude and time alone with God, allowing Him to form me inwardly. I began to experience a renewed Spiritual growth as I developed the discipline of reading the scriptures in a formational way. My relationship with God was becoming more intimate and more balanced including both mind and heart. I was falling more and more in love with God.

2.2.3 Spiritual Formation

During this same time, I was involved in a church plant in Barrie, Ontario. *Harvest Bible Chapel* was the first Canadian plant of a church with the same name in Rolling Meadows, IL. The mother church had grown very quickly under the leadership of James MacDonald, a Canadian who settled in the Chicago area. The Elders there had been called to plant ten churches in ten years. The Barrie church was the third plant and the first in Canada. The church grew quickly and in 2004, I was appointed Pastor of Spiritual Formation, with a mandate to establish a discipleship training program modelled after the program being used in the mother church. (MacDonald 2000; MacDonald 2001; MacDonald 2002). Building upon the material developed by them

known as *Peak Performance* (Harvest Bible Chapel 2000), I developed a set of three discipleship classes, which ranged from three to seven hours of classroom time in two to four sittings. These classes were named *Encounter Classes* (Galicinski & Harvest Bible Chapel, Barrie 2004; Galicinski & Harvest Bible Chapel, Barrie 2005a; Galicinski & Harvest Bible Chapel, Barrie 2005b). These classes were designed for all people who would become members of Harvest Bible Chapel and who would serve in positions of leadership. It was our goal to have all our regular congregants take these classes. As such, the objectives were to expose the congregation to not only the distinctives of Harvest Bible Chapel as a fellowship but also to provide specific training in developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, learning spiritual disciplines and discovering one's spiritual giftedness, talents and abilities. As I worked in developing this material and subsequently in leading these classes, I made it my personal goal to infuse the participants with a passion for the great truths of the faith, as well as the knowledge of how to engage God in devotional times and how to study the scriptures privately and be involved in the community life of the church, particularly in small groups. As I taught these classes, I frequently found it necessary to digress from the curriculum and focus on essential theology related to doctrines such as the nature of sin, the inner battle in the heart of the believer, dying to self, the finished work of Christ, expectations of the Christian life and the nature of suffering. I realized that sound theology must ground discipleship. I also developed a training program for Small Group Leaders (Galicinski & Harvest Bible Chapel, Barrie 2006), synthesizing material from several sources (MacDonald 2000; MacDonald 2001; Mahaney 1996; Mahaney 2005; Donahue 2002; Donahue & R. Robinson 2001; Cloud 2003; Gorman 2002; Myers 2003; Hunter 1986; Stowell 1996; Stott 1998). This led me to appreciate the importance of mutual ministry

and accountability in spiritual growth. In our small group ministry at Harvest, we emphasized the leader's role as facilitator-coach, and the members' role in allowing the Holy Spirit to use them in the lives of others through men and women breakout sessions and through one-on-one accountability partnerships.

My experience at Harvest was that people needed to be taught specifically how to have devotional times consisting of worship, centering, silence, prayer and formational reading of scripture. Many people who participated in our sessions commented that although they had been Christians for many years, no one had ever taught them how to spend time with God. The disciplines, which I had come to appreciate in my time at Tyndale, appeared to be little known in the Evangelical world, which stressed intellectual knowledge and belief accompanied by an underlying mistrust of anything that bordered on mysticism. Particularly helpful in our continuing small group leadership training was the classic *Life Together* (Bonhoeffer 1993). In it, Bonhoeffer developed a roadmap for a Community to experience life together through daily worship, work, meditation on scripture, times of prayer, communion, and fellowship. In addition, Bonhoeffer provided a key to using the Psalter as a prayer guide, using solitude and silence to center one's soul on Christ. His emphasis on mutual confession as a discipline invited a renewal of this ancient discipline. As our small group leaders at Harvest studied this book together, its message began to work its way into our small group ministry with amazing results. The spiritual temperature of the groups began to increase and people were moved to new levels of experiencing the grace of God.

2.2.4 Teaching Systematic Theology

Gerhard Forde's book *On Being a Theologian of the Cross* (Forde 1997), transformed my understanding of theology and the church. This work is a treatise on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation and described in detail the contrast between being a theologian of glory and a theologian of the cross. Reading Luther's twenty-eight theses and their amplification by Forde was a profound experience for it gave substance to what I was seeing and feeling in the church. I was becoming aware of the human tendency to want to take pride in something religious, whether it be "making a decision for Christ", keeping a moral code or simply good works. I found that even in preaching and teaching, the temptation to pride is ever present. Luther's treatise put the cross at the center of my life as The Holy Spirit began to humble me with a renewed fear of God. In order to live properly in Christ, one has to see oneself and the church as it really is. The role of the teacher in Christendom is to ensure that everything taught and experienced is done in the light of the theology of the cross. The cross as the great inversion began to have an enormous impact in my thinking.

During this time, I was also developing a passion for systematic theology. At Harvest, we had launched a Bible school called *Veritas Bible Institute*. Through this venue, I began teaching three courses on Systematic Theology which consisted of a total of sixty classroom hours. The text I used was *Systematic Theology* (Grudem 1994). In addition, several other resources were of great use especially the recorded lectures of Victor Shepherd. (Shepherd 2002a; Shepherd 2002b; Shepherd 2002c; Shepherd 2004; Shepherd 2005). I was beginning to recognize that crucial in the Christian walk was the need to rearticulate in each generation the great doctrines of the faith in light of the theology of the cross. As my students engaged the readings, worked on assignments and

wrote essays, I began to see a new dawning of love for God and a renewed commitment to discipleship among them. Over several years, I taught the Systematic Theology course through three complete cycles. In addition, I had developed other courses such as a complete Bible survey in twenty-four lessons called *The Scarlet Thread of Redemption* (Galicinski 2005). This course was designed for new believers as well as those just interested in an overview of the Bible. A regular component of the weekly meetings was sharing of life experiences and answering of faith questions. The first time that I taught through this material, there were fifteen participants of which five were unbelievers. By the end of the sessions, all five had been baptized. These teaching experiences whet my appetite for even deeper study and reflection. I was particularly interested in deepening my understanding of reformation theology and of the spirituality of giants such as Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, John Owen and John Wesley.

In the fall of 2007, I enrolled in the Th. M. degree program at Tyndale under the direction of Dr. Dennis Ngien. My focus was reformation theology with an emphasis on the doctrines of mortification and vivification in Jean Calvin and John Owen (Calvin 1960; Calvin 1979; Calvin 2009; Gleason 1995; Ferguson 1987; Winecoff 1987; Forde 1997; Ngien 2007; Owen 1965; Owen 1958; Owen 1991). In developing my thesis proposal (Galicinski 2007), I came to appreciate the insights that Puritan theologians had into the human psyche, especially with respect to the remainders of indwelling sin in the life of the believer. Martin Luther addressed this in his doctrine of *simul iustus, simul peccator* (simultaneously justified and sinner) (Luther 1896a; Pelikan & Lehmann 2001; Mshanga 2010). This theme became a mainstay of reformation theology over against the Papists who disputed it. For John Owen, the recognition of the presence of indwelling sin and the practice of mortification was *the*

hinge (Owen 1965, 168) upon which the whole course of a believer's life turned. Owen believed that those who failed to acknowledge indwelling sin and diligently practice mortification were deceived as to the true nature of the peril they faced calling into question their own salvation. Owen saw that this inner battle between the old self and the new creation in Christ must exist in everyone who was truly in Christ. Yet, I found that the teaching in many Harvest churches put little emphasis on this inner battle. As a result many believers saw themselves as already perfected in Christ, which gave rise to a subtle form of spiritual pride. As I began to address this and teach in our Encounter classes, I began to see a growing sense of humility and a new spiritual awareness of the depravity of the human heart growing among our people. Consequently this theme became a critical concept in chapter three of *the book*, which is entitled *The Battle Within – The Victory of Love*.

2.2.5 ACTS Institute - India

During my tenure at Harvest Bible Chapel, I also had the opportunity to visit India on two mission trips where I taught theology and discipleship at the ACTS Institute in Bangalore. ACTS was founded by Ken Gnanakan, a ministry entrepreneur, prolific writer and proponent of Indians' taking responsibility for holistic missions in India. (Gnanakan 1989; Gnanakan 1991; Gnanakan 2007). In *Kingdom Concerns*, he made a case for a uniquely Indian missiology (Gnanakan 1989). He evaluated world missions in light of the world missionary councils of the past hundred years. Whereas at the beginning of the twenty-first century there was a great missionary zeal to reach the world with the gospel, within fifty years, the situation had changed so that the World Council of Churches had redefined missions in light of the pluralism of the day, seeing

all religions and faiths as valid paths towards God. Gnanakan argued that it was time to recapture the notion that mission is fundamental to the great commission in which Christians are charged to go and make disciples of all nations. This is to be done by living out faith in the context of community where worship, work and witness were to be one.

The philosophy of the ACTS Institute is to equip students with agricultural, craft and technological skills as well as Biblical studies to enable them to serve the people of India in a holistic way, integrating all aspects of Christian life. This theme has also been articulated by more recent writers (Hirsch 2006a; Addison 2009; Sweet 2010; Viola 2008) who believe that the mission of God includes a sending impulse, which should be primary among believers. Hirsch states that “the church does not have the mission, but the mission has a church” (Hirsch 2006a, 21). This missiology and the theology behind it make up a large part of the final chapter of the book

2.2.6 The Church at My Place (C.A.M.P.)

During trips to India in 2006 and 2009, I had gone as a pastor representing Harvest Bible Chapel. By 2010, my involvement with Harvest had come to an end. As I began to reflect on my experience at Harvest, I began to see some of the ways in which the church that I had been a part of had adopted a distinct North American psyche, which was characterized by a corporate structure and a consumerist approach to providing religious services that appeal to congregants (Hirsch 2006a, 42). In December 2009, I attended a seminar with Allan Hirsch in which he expounded on aspects of the New Testament church, which he identified in *The Forgotten Ways* (Hirsch 2006a). I began to rethink some of my assumptions about church as I had practiced it. I began to

appreciate mission as the primary task and the Church itself as a gathered group of worshippers who are continually being sent into the world. While both are important and complementary, Christ's command was not to go and build churches, but to go and make disciples. Believers are a sent people. Hence, mission is a primary task of every follower of Christ. This was counter to what I had observed in most churches, where gathering as community was primary (Frost & Hirsch 2003, p.225). I began to become frustrated with this emphasis.

In August 2009, I resigned my position as Pastor of Spiritual Formation at Harvest Bible Chapel. I felt God's leading to take some time out to reflect on the true nature of the church and my own calling. With a few like-minded people we began to meet together as a house church. We called our gathering *The Church at My Place* abbreviated as C.A.M.P. Before long, we had two house churches meeting, one at my home and another in a residential rooming house on North Street in Barrie (see www.thechurchatmyplace.org). I was experiencing church planting at its simplest, in the case of North Street, bringing a group of people together where there had been nothing and creating a community of faith who live in the same building. In this environment, the need for basic discipleship training was acute, giving even more impetus to this project.

2.2.7 The Theology of Transformation

During this same period of time, I had begun my Doctoral studies and studied a vast array of literature and teaching on the leadership in the church (Keel 2007; Clinton 1988; Osmer 2008; Quinn 1996; Creps 2006; Crabb 1988). These studies forced me to examine my own presuppositions about leadership and discipleship on both a

personal and a communal level, all of which has contributed to the development of this project. Of specific interest in the field of discipleship was *Off Road Spiritual Disciplines* (Creps & Leadership Network 2006). Creps suggests practices which are particularly applicable in a post modern world, where disciplines like reverse mentoring, spiritual friendship, making room and surrendering preferences provide avenues to relate to and interact with those in different generations. These practices have been useful in the development of the study guide exercises and questions (i.e. finding a spiritual friend to share learning with).

In January of 2010, I embarked on a ten-week trip to India to teach at the ACTS Institute. I had been asked to design and teach a course on the *Theology of Transformation* which explored the mission of God in the context of Christ's great commission as well as focusing on how God's Spirit brings people to faith. My main resources for this class were James Loder's *The Transforming Moment* (Loder 1981), *The Forgotten Ways* (Hirsch 2006a; Hirsch 2009) and *Kingdom Concerns* (Gnanakan 1989). I used the transformational logic developed by Loder to help students explore the mystery of how people came to faith in Christ. This allowed the students to enter into the theology of missions in a fresh way, forcing them to examine their presuppositions and requiring them to rely primarily on God in their weekly outreach work. At the same time that God had brought this teaching experience to me, I was developing the outline for *Love's Greatest Joy* and reflecting on the need to include transformational logic into the second chapter, "Transformation - the Purpose of Love".

Another avenue for development had emerged in 2009, as my time at Harvest Bible Chapel was coming to an end. I had often made use of our sailboat, a thirty-foot sloop, for personal spiritual retreats during the summer months. The regular retreats

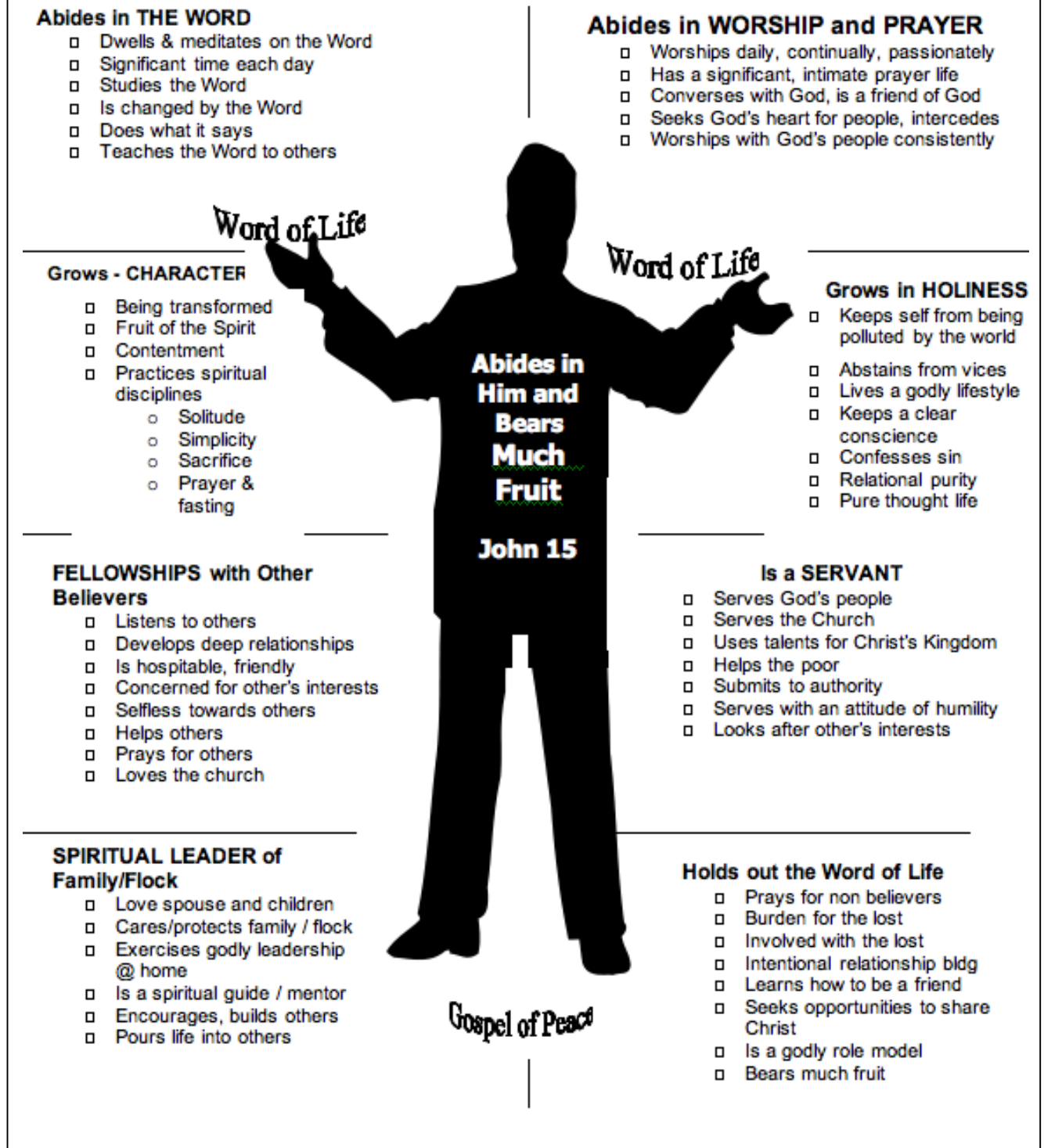
were a great opportunity to draw near to God in prayer and reflection. I began to realize that many pastors and Christian leaders also needed opportunities such as this to withdraw and pray. Jesus often took his disciples off in a boat onto the Sea of Galilee to get away from the crowds. This led to the start up of *Deposits of Faith*, a new branch of my consulting practice, through which I would organize and lead spiritual retreat excursions on lake Simcoe for several days. I had developed a list of “spiritual deposits” that would be used as meditations and exercises in this context. These “deposits” were essentially bullet points of theology intersecting faith and action that would be presented in an informal teaching session that would lead into further reading and reflection assignments. During each excursion, I structured times of worship, scripture reading, reflection, solitude and “deposits” with the duties of sailing, cooking and cleaning up. We also put into a port each evening at several harbors or anchorages around the Lake and interacted with local residents. That summer, I organized three excursions that piloted this approach, one all male excursion, one team excursion of staff from one church and one couple excursion. The feedback was extremely positive as people left spiritually refreshed and reenergized. Through this experience, I was also left with the desire to hone the “deposits” into reading material and exercises focused on specific aspects of discipleship. These “deposits” would be another source of input for the chapters of *Love’s Greatest Joy*. During the next summer, I was able to use chapters from the book as assigned reading material during several excursions. I began to receive feedback that strengthened my convictions about the content.

2.3 The Idea for this Book

While the mandate of making disciples is well accepted, the issue of making disciples brings to mind a series of questions: What is a disciple? What does a disciple look like? What should a disciple be doing? How does one come to be a disciple? How does a disciple grow into maturity? How does a disciple reproduce other disciples?

In developing discipleship classes for our church, I wrestled with these questions over several years. As part of this process, I created a diagram, which is a pictograph of characteristics that a disciple of Jesus Christ should possess. This diagram identified the core being of a disciple as one who abides in Christ (John 15:4). A disciple must also abide in God's Word, which is one's spiritual nourishment. A disciple ought also to abide in worship and prayer, which is like spiritual breath. If a disciple abides in Christ, eats and breathes spiritually, he or she ought to grow in character and in holiness. Such growth will manifest itself in fellowship with other believers, in leadership, in service and in witness. These attributes and related aspects are summarized in this one diagram reproduced as figure 2. I used it extensively to communicate what a disciple looks like and what a disciple does. As I used it, I found myself expounding on a theology of discipleship, which was informed by the elements of the diagram.

Figure 2: A Disciple of Jesus Christ



This diagram reflected, in part, my understanding of the essential elements of discipleship, and began the conceptualization of the chapter titles and content of *Love's Greatest Joy*. In addition, as I was teaching discipleship classes and Systematic Theology, I became aware of several deficits of understanding in people's beliefs, which appeared to be barriers to living the life of an authentic disciple. These deficits were related to issues such as dying daily to self, the continual putting to death of indwelling sin, unrealistic expectations about the Christian life and lack of conviction and discipline in daily living. Addressing these deficits systematically became the focus of the some of the chapters of the book (chapters 2,3, 4 & 7). In identifying the chapter titles and content, I also correlated these concepts with an awareness of the various streams of discipleship that had emerged over the centuries (see sub section 2.1 Historical Discipleship Streams).

In this way, the chapter titles and content began to emerge. Chapters one and two focus on the love of God and the transformation wrought by an apprehension of the cross. The theology is thoroughly Lutheran. Chapter three on the inner battle is decidedly Puritan in flavor, drawing heavily on John Owen and Thomas Watson and focusing on the soul's inner battle against sin and temptation. Chapter four looks at the importance of personal knowing, vulnerability, abiding in Christ, forgiveness and the principle of release drawing from contemplative spirituality. Chapter five is on prayer and worship as spiritual life-breath, in the Anabaptist and Contemplative tradition. Chapter six is on the Word of God as our Spiritual nourishment and is evangelical and reformed in its approach to scripture and Spiritual formation. Chapter seven is on the convictions of love focusing on lifestyle and is Wesleyan in its approach to

accountability and sacred living. Chapter eight focuses on mission, social justice, action and evangelism, drawing from the evangelical missionary tradition and current movements towards a more missional and incarnational church. These various themes and traditions of the chapters are summarized in figure 3, which is a derivative of figure 2. Figure 3 represents a disciple of Christ, who in order to be complete grows in each of these areas of discipleship in his or her life. The figure also serves as a schematic to the chapters of the book.

The following subsection on contemporary research provides insight into the approaches that are effective in influencing people towards authentic discipleship.

Love's Greatest Joy

Chapter Schematic

God's Word – The Nourishment of Love

- Evangelical Stream
- Meaning & Action of "the Word of God"
- Approaching the Scriptures - Interpretation
- The Interpretive Journey
- Identifying "the Main Idea"
- Application & Formation
- Chapter six

Prayer & Worship – The Breath of Love

- Contemplative/Anabaptist Stream
- Prayer in Israel, Jesus & disciples
- Praying God's Will
- Three Patterns of Prayer
- Worship as Lifestyle
- The Psalms – Prayer & Praise
- Chapter five

The Battle Within The Victory of Love

- Holiness Stream
- Justification & Sanctification
- Sin & Temptation
- Mortification & Vivification
- Spiritual Resources
- How to win the Battle
- Chapter three

God's Amazing Love

Chapter one

Transformation - The Purpose of Love (Lutheran Stream)

Chapter two

The Presence of God The Peace of Love

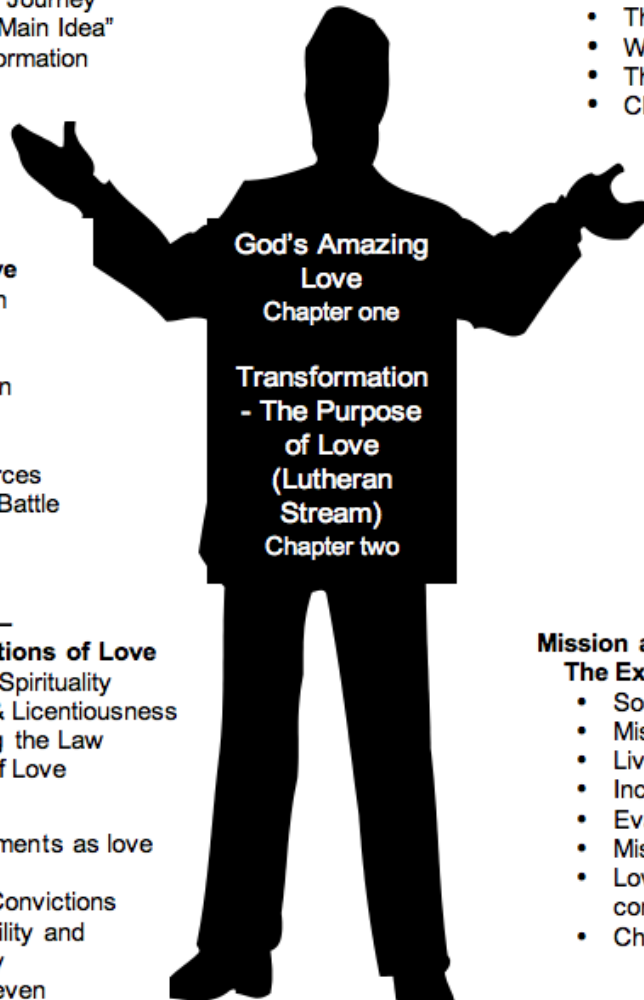
- Sacramental Stream
- Knowing & Vulnerability
- Inner Longings & Expectations
- The discipline of release - forgiveness
- Releasing Circumstances & Time
- Fasting & Self Denial
- Simplicity
- Chapter four

Love's Rule – The Convictions of Love

- Wesleyan Spirituality
- Legalism & Licentiousness
- Interpreting the Law
- The Law of Love
- The Ten Commandments as love disciplines
- Personal Convictions
- Accountability and Community
- Chapter seven

Mission and Community – The Expressions of Love

- Social Justice Spirituality
- Missional Incarnational Stream
- Living as one sent
- Incarnating the Faith
- Evangelism – sharing the Faith
- Mission creating Community
- Loving one another in community
- Chapter eight



2.4 Contemporary Research

Willow Creek Church in 2004, 2006 and 2007 conducted a series of studies regarding factors that produced spiritual growth and published results in their *Reveal* and *Follow* series (Hawkins 2007; Hawkins 2008). This initial study involved over 200 churches. In the initial work, they conducted 4,943 surveys with 1.4 million data points and interviewed sixty-eight congregants (Hawkins 2007, 93). A major finding was that involvement in church activities was not a good predictor of long-term spiritual growth (Hawkins 2007, 33). The researchers also discovered a four-stage spiritual growth continuum, as well as three movements that described how people move along that continuum. They named the four stages “Exploring Christ”, “Growing in Christ”, “Close to Christ” and “Christ Centered”. They also identified a number of factors that were significant in each movement as well as four categories of spiritual catalysts, which drove these factors. In the early stage of Christian growth, they found that “spiritual beliefs and attitudes” and “involvement in weekend services” were major catalysts in moving people along. However, involvement in weekend services was not a major factor in later stages in the continuum, rather “personal spiritual practices” including reading, reflecting on scripture, prayer and evangelism were major factors in later stages. “Spiritual activities with others” was a major factor across all categories and provided an “on ramp” for spiritual growth. In addition, in later stages, serving, encouragement and opportunities for ministry were major factors in growth. These studies indicate that fundamental beliefs, theology and church attendance are critical in early stages, while spiritual practices and ministry involvement take on greater

importance in later stages. Involvement with spiritual friends, mentors and accountability partners also increased in importance in later stages. Most important in later stages was active involvement in ministry and evangelism.

It would seem then, that in early stages of spiritual growth, people need the fundamentals of how to read and interpret the scriptures together with instruction in basic doctrine. They need to be taught how to engage in spiritual practices which sets the stage for growth in later stages. They also require involvement with others, spiritual activities and opportunities to serve and participate according to their individual gifts and passion. Hence the role of the church needs to be to train, equip, encourage, provide opportunities and release for service.

With respect to this project, one of the major goals is grounding readers/participants in the essential doctrines of the church. Hence the early chapters of the book focus on basic theology regarding creation, sin, man, Jesus Christ, justification and sanctification. Later chapters look at spiritual practices, disciplines, the interpretation of scripture and the relationship between gospel and law. Developing spiritual convictions and putting faith into action (evangelism and mission) are the emphasis of later chapters. In addition, the methods of the study guide facilitate spiritual friendships, group interaction and collective spiritual activities, all important factors in spiritual growth. Hence the objectives and content outlines are consistent with the findings of the Willow Creek study.

2.5 Adult Learning

In the community of faith, people participate in learning ventures because they believe that they will be impacted positively and come to a fuller apprehension and

experience of the Truth. As God is Truth, people expect that discipleship books will help them experience God in new ways and that they will be led to new attitudes and beliefs about God. They might also expect to learn new approaches that will enhance intimacy with the Holy One. The goals of the curriculum are to teach in such a way that the readers/participants are exposed to truths about God and themselves that will allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to them ways that they can change patterns of thought, affections of the heart and resolutions of the will so that they become disciples with whom God is well pleased.

Sara Little (Little 1983, 35) points out that all teaching is based on the belief that intentionality is necessary for learning and change to occur. Specific intentionality determines which approach to teaching is to be used. Little identifies “cognitive, affective, psychomotor, volitional and conative domains” in which knowledge is developed. Knowledge implies not only empirical knowledge but also personal knowledge gained through experience. In the domain of the spiritual, both aspects of knowledge are critical. Knowledge and experience develop beliefs by engaging the mind, affect, will, and desire. These beliefs and experiences provide avenues for faith to come to fruition. Faith is a gift of God and has as its object the Person of God. The Greek word for placing one’s faith is *pisteuo* for which no suitable English word exists. It has the connotation of entrusting oneself to another with complete confidence and trust (Bauer 2000, 816). Biblical faith always has an object, whereas belief can be purely propositional. Because it is not possible to force a person to be known by someone, it can only be hoped that such inter personal engagement will occur. The role of any spiritual curriculum is to attempt to *facilitate* such engagement. To do so one proclaims the Word of God, incarnate as the object of faith and the word written as a

means of faith. One must also rely on the interpersonal engagement of participants and the curriculum's author to be agents of engagement.

Little identifies five models for teaching, which can be used to facilitate learning. These are information processing, group interaction, indirect communication, personal development and action/reflection (Little 1983, 41). I have sought to use all five models in the development of the curriculum. Participants were asked to read one chapter of the book each week and do individual exercises in the study guide on their own before coming together for a weekly group session. Information processing was to be the primary model in the reading, however, indirect communication occurred as participants engaged in self-examination and encounters with scripture. Stories, testimonies and scripture were interspersed throughout the reading to provide opportunities for engagement, response and self-development. In the weekly sessions, participants engaged in large group interaction (9 or 10), small group interaction (3-4) and one on one interaction. This provided avenues for sharing and clarifying ideas, testing perceptions with others and created opportunities for mutual ministry and the engagement of spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, together. The objective was to integrate learning with everyday life (Gnanakan 2007, 129). Participants were also assigned "homework" which requires spiritual exercises done privately. They were also asked to share their learning with a spiritual friend outside of the study group. Hence action/reflection was to be a major component of the experience. In addition, participants were asked to provide written and verbal feedback on these exercises.

Many of the exercises were structured such that the participants were asked to integrate what they were learning and experiencing into their daily life. The purpose of the curriculum has been to present theological truths in a compelling way and then to

move people into new and related actions of spiritual disciplines, allowing the Holy Spirit to engage them. In addition, participants were involved in both the action learning and action research cycles and were active partners in the development of the curriculum.

2.6 Summary

This chapter began with a survey of historical approaches to discipleship and Christian living over the centuries. The literature identifying these approaches provided input into the spiritual exercises and the chapter content of the book. In addition, the personal life journey of the researcher has been described including the influences that have brought about this monograph. The idea behind the book was born of experiences in pastoral work and in teaching discipleship and systematic theology. The idea for the book and the chapters and study guide themes has been described with reference to contemporary research and principles of adult learning. The following chapter explores the theology of discipleship in general and specifically in relation to each of the themes, which make up the eight chapters of the book.

Chapter 3: Theological Rationale

This chapter presents the theological rationale for discipleship and provides a detailed description of the theology behind the content of each of the chapters of the book as well as a rationale for the approach taken in the study guides.

3.1 Discipleship

The theological rationale for this project comes directly from the great commission:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Matt. 28:19-20)

This statement by Jesus recorded by Matthew is an imperative to make disciples (μαθητεύσατε), modified by three syntactically subordinate participles of going, baptizing and teaching, which also take on an imperative sense (1999, Vol 33b, 19). The main command is to make disciples. It could be translated, “Going, baptizing and teaching, make disciples...”. The command to make disciples has the connotation of making a pupil or learner of someone with a strong implication of being an adherent of the one of whom one is a disciple (Bauer 2000, 609). The imperative is linked by the word “therefore” which refers back to Jesus’ statement in verse 18 in which He states, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me”. Jesus is the One who has been given divine authority to commission the making of disciples and He does so here. A disciple is one who follows after, learns from, and imitates his teacher, calling others to do the same. The disciples are to go to “all the nations”, a universal sending excluding none. Making disciples is to include baptizing and teaching. This teaching is to focus on obedience to everything that He has commanded. This is a fitting end to Matthew’s

gospel, which, of all the gospels, includes the lengthiest sections on Jesus' teaching. As these are among Jesus' last words to his disciples, it is clear that this is an essential, if not the essential, task of the church.

3.1.1. Paul

The Apostle Paul is the master disciple maker of the New Testament. We have more details on his approach to discipleship than any other apostle, simply by virtue of the volume of his writing. Paul understood making disciples as consisting of evangelizing and then teaching those who had been converted. In the book of Acts, we see his practice of going to synagogues on the Sabbath and proclaiming the gospel (Acts 13:15-17). Alternatively, he would find a place of worship where people gathered and proclaimed the gospel there (Acts 16:13). He also spoke in public places and markets. The objective was to find those that God had appointed to eternal life (Acts 13:48) and begin the task of teaching them to observe what Jesus had commanded. As people came to faith, the Holy Spirit formed them into a community, which would gather together regularly for worship. The Apostle would stay with them, for a season, until God called him elsewhere. He appointed elders among them and then moved on to other cities as he was called (Titus 1:5). He continued to stay in touch with the churches he had established by writing letters that spoke of his love and concern for them, offering encouragement, chastisement and instruction as appropriate. He would encourage people to imitate his example and that of other godly disciples (Phil 3:17). Paul had a passion for not only proclaiming Christ but for labouring to help those in Christ reach maturity. He asserts in one of his epistles:

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I

toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (Col. 1:28-29)

His focus was on proclamation (with warning) and teaching (with wisdom) for the purpose of making disciples mature in Christ. This was his life's call, in which he struggled and toiled as God worked in and through him.

3.1.2 What is a Disciple?

The New Testament as a whole projects a theology for discipleship that should allow us to answer questions such as “What should a disciple of Jesus Christ look like?” and “What should a disciple of Jesus Christ be doing?” If the goal is to produce disciples, we must have an understanding of what the end product should look like. The Apostles' correctives in their letters were based on information that they had received on how people in the churches were behaving. When such behaviour did not match their understanding of what a disciple should be, they did not hesitate to use strong language to rebuke and admonish them (eg. 1 Cor. 6:1). They clearly had a mental picture of what a disciple should be in terms of belief, attitude, and behavior. The apostle James in his epistle is particularly critical of a faith that is primarily intellectual assent and devoid of action (“Even the demons believe and shudder” Ja. 2:19). James has in view discipleship characterized by single mindedness, sacrifice, holiness, perseverance and acts of mercy. In reading his letter, one can easily draw a mental portrait of his expectations of a disciple. His main point is clear. Mere intellectual assent with propositional truth does not make one a disciple. A disciple is what a disciple does.

Jesus himself was highly critical of those who heard his message, but did not *do* what he said (Matt. 7:26). We understand that God Himself always acts consistently with who He is (i.e I AM WHO I AM, (Ex. 3:14)). God is what He does and does what He is. People too are revealed by what they do. The final judgment will hold all accountable for what they have done (Rev. 20:13). Those, who are redeemed through Jesus Christ, have been called to follow Him. They are exhorted to walk as He walked (1 John 2:6).

3.1.3 Discipleship as Walking

Discipleship as walking is a prevailing metaphor in scripture (Micah 6:8, Rom. 6:4, 13:13, 2 Cor 5:7, Gal. 5:16, Eph. 4:1, 5:2, Phil 3:17). Hence, the title for this book is taken from 2 John 1:4, “I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father”. John identifies with God, who is Love, rejoicing in his children walking with Him in truth. So the book title *Love’s Greatest Joy - A Closer Walk with God* sees God rejoicing in His followers walking with Him in truth and discovering that *Love’s Greatest Joy* is Christ Himself as the Truth walking with them. The concept of walking with God or before God occurs over fifty times in scripture. Enoch is described simply as walking with God, and startlingly it says “and God took him for he was not” (Gen. 5:24) . Noah walked with God (Gen. 6:9). Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses are all described as walking with God. God’s people are continually exhorted to walk with God or walk in his ways (Lev. 26:12, Deut. 5:33, 19:9, 30:16, 1 Ki 2:3, Ps. 56:13, Eze. 20:19, Eph. 2:10,5:2, Col. 1:10, 1 Thess 2:12). Walking is simply a metaphor for living, for the course of a person’s life normally requires them to walk. But walking also brings to mind fellowship with

another of like mind through the course of life. To walk with someone else, implies a fellowship and an understanding that both are headed in the same direction. Walking with God implies that one is united in purpose and desiring to move toward the same destination.

3.2 Eight Aspects of Discipleship

Karl Barth states that “the call to discipleship binds a person to the One who calls him” (Barth 2003, 12). Discipleship is not the fulfillment of a program, or a system but rather is characterized by union with and obedience to the One who calls. Jesus put this plainly when he told his disciples “to abide in me” (John 15:4). The metaphor of the vine and the branches illustrates the critical truth that the disciple must be united to, and obtain nourishment from, Jesus himself. There is a mutuality of abiding (“you abide in me, my words abide in you” John 15:7) that requires continuous union. To be separated from Christ is to wither up and be burned up as dry branches. For this reason a major objective of this book is to provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to bring about a transformation in the reader/participant that will facilitate or strengthen a union between Christ and each person.

Such union can only occur when a person is regenerated by the Holy Spirit and born from above (John 3:5). Such new birth requires a dying to self (Col. 3:3) and a divine union with the Saviour. This dying is not a one-time dying, but a continuous dying (1 Cor. 15:31). The nature of such dying is the theme of the second chapter of the book, *Transformation - The Purpose of Love*. Likewise, each chapter of the book is designed to address a critical element of discipleship as outlined in figure 2. These aspects are described in the subsections that follow.

3.2.1 God's Amazing Love

Chapter one of the book is designed to introduce God, His character and His love. It is made clear that the God presented is the one true creator God, YHWH, who acts in history and reveals to a particular people the significance of what He has done. "God is love" (1 John 4:8,16) and so every action of His is characterized by love. The God who is love is revealed by three of His great acts: creation, redemption and bestowal. The decision by God to create, the act of creation itself and the nature of creation all display the love of God. This love is *agape*, that love characterized by a conscious commitment to the well being of another, but which also includes a deep affection for the beloved. It is also characterized by self-sacrifice and a willingness to suffer with and for the beloved. Such love is manifest as God creates human beings *in His image* lavishing on them a unique relationship with God.

The first chapter proceeds with a description of how a good creation is spoiled through the fall. An understanding of the fall and the consequences of humankind's rebellion together with the doctrine of *Total Depravity* are critical to discipleship. The human condition is described as one of enmity between God and sinful humanity, which results in expulsion from the garden and a broken relationship. Humans, in their natural state, are now slaves to sin, estranged from God, self-contradicted, at enmity with one another in a cursed environment (Swiggum & Adult Christian Education Foundation 1960, p.21). The *protevangelium* of Gen 3:15 is introduced as a new promise is given. God covers the nakedness of Adam and Eve with animal skins. This action initiates the sacrifice of animals and illustrates that death is a consequence of sin. An animal dies to cover human sin. God's action sets the stage for

the practice of blood atonement for sin. Christ's self-sacrifice as the Lamb of God is the ultimate sacrifice, which atones for all sin (Heb. 9:11-12).

Because God is love, God does not abandon sinful humanity but sets in motion a plan to redeem the world. The act of redemption through the cross of Christ is *the* definitive and supreme act of love. Jesus becomes "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) and the superb manifestation of God's amazing love.

The final act of God that is examined is bestowal. God's amazing love is highlighted by the fact that, not only does He redeem, but He *bestows* a number of things on those He redeems. First, He bestows Himself. The Holy Spirit dwells in and empowers the believer bringing a peace that passes all understanding. Because God eternally preserves the believer, she no longer needs to preserve herself and is freed to live for Him. Secondly, God bestows an eternal inheritance that is kept in heaven for the faithful. The blessings of this heavenly inheritance are beyond description (1 Cor. 2:9) and their apprehension by faith lifts the believer into living in light of eternity.

Moreover, God has adopted each believer into His family giving every one the full right of sons and daughters. Finally, God has betrothed His Spiritual body, the church, as an eternal bride to His only Son. As Frank Viola (Viola 2009) points out, God's ultimate passion is to provide a bride worthy of His son. That bride is the universal body of Christ of which believers are a part. The entire Bible is a love story beginning with a wedding (Adam and Eve) and ending with a wedding, the marriage supper of the Lamb. Believers make up the church, and as such have been betrothed to Christ, yet the wedding has not yet been consummated (2 Cor. 11:2, Eph. 5:31-32, Rev. 19:7, 21:9).

As such every believer is called to respond to the one who initiates the union. As our

Bridegroom looks intently into each eye and says, “I am yours”, so we must look to Him and declare: “And I am Yours”. We are to devote ourselves to Him until He returns.

Chapter one sets the foundation for union with Christ in a passionate proclamation of the love of God expressed in God’s acts of creation, redemption and self-bestowal. It seeks to accomplish the objective of grounding the reader in an understanding of the gospel and the nature of God. It seeks to lead the reader into a wondrous amazement at the love of God and elicit in the reader a deep personal commitment to the God that loves and seeks from the reader a covenantal commitment to the King of Kings.

The spiritual exercises at the end of this chapter focus on God’s love through formational reading of certain psalms, (i.e. Psalm 104) in which the psalmist rejoices in creation and redemption. The exercises introduce a format for a devotional quiet time that consists of relaxation, meditation, breath prayers, and the practice of Holy Reading (Bonhoeffer 1993, 44; Sherbino 2008, 18; Foster 2008, 31). They also introduce the practice of solitude and the four-part movement of Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio and Comtemplatio. Participants are invited to share their experiences and reflections on God’s love. They are invited to reflect on God’s love in their own lives as a therapeutic exercise. Participants are also asked to seek out one person who could serve as a spiritual friend throughout the course of the sessions. They are encouraged to share what they are learning and pray for one another.

3.2.2 Transformation – The Purpose of Love

Chapter Two of *Loves's Greatest Joy* introduces a theological dilemma, God is holy and humankind is sinful. So how can human beings be united to a holy God? A brief overview of human life after the expulsion from the garden shows how wickedness increases on the earth to the point where God regrets making humankind and destroys all life on earth except those saved through the waters with Noah in the ark (Gen.6:6). Even after this cleansing, humankind is in bondage to sin and there is no way out unless God acts. God does indeed act with a plan to redeem the world. That plan involves a people, Israel, who are chosen to bear the seed of the Messiah. These people are perfected through affliction in Egypt where they are enslaved. Israel's slavery to the Egyptians mirrors the human predicament. Unless God acts, Israel is doomed and so too is humankind. As in the Passover experience, where a lamb becomes the means of salvation, so too Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Those who are covered by "the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14), are supernaturally delivered from slavery. Such application is by faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9). The theology here is decidedly Martin Luther's, and embraces the theology of the cross whereby the sinner is called to die to self and renounce any effort at self-justification. It is God alone who initiates salvation, which is entirely undeserved. Nevertheless, there is a decidedly human response required, for faith is not real unless it is exercised. The Israelites must themselves apply the blood of the lamb to their doorposts in order to escape the angel of death (Ex. 12:23). In the same way, believers must apply the blood of Christ to the doorposts of their hearts through faith (Heb. 9:14).

In order to help the reader understand the way of the cross, the chapter proceeds with an investigation of transformation logic (Loder 1981). Loder's *Transforming Moments* is a treatise on how transformation occurs. It is of interest because any transformation from sinner to saint requires the negation of the cross. Beginning with two-dimensional transformation, which is evident in scientific problem solving, therapeutic breakthroughs and even good poetry, Loder examines how contradiction, conflict or turmoil between *the self* and *the world* is resolved and conquered. Loder then moves to the ultimate self-contradiction, which is the human condition that he labels *The Void*. *The Void* is that negation of existence that culminates in death. Because humans are self-contradicted through original sin, they intuitively sense the vanity of life, especially as they become aware of the antithesis of *The Void*, which Loder calls *the Holy*. *The Holy* may be known hypothetically as something that might exist, but is not experienced. The absolute negation, *The Void*, causes one to despair of life itself and colors the world a dark place. Like Israel in slavery in Egypt, there is no way out. But, in God's intervention through the cross of Christ, *the Holy* manifests itself as a divine Person, the Son, who dies in order to release *The Void's* hold on the self. In the cross, God says NO to *The Void's* hold on the self, transforming slavery into release and creating a mystical union with the Holy. In this great negation of the negation of *The Void*, the Holy One descends into *The Void* to redeem the self and unite the self to Himself. Such a grand and unexpected release transforms the self and ushers in a transformed world. Suddenly, the world becomes real for the first time, as if what was known before was only a shadow of reality. There is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Such transformation occurs in conversion as one dies to self and is born from above. In Western culture, we are inundated with messages that speak of lifting ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We are told that we ourselves are the makers of ourselves. Yet this is a great deception. People are no more able to save themselves than they are able to escape death. As Bonhoeffer writes “When Christ calls a man, he bids him to come and die” (Bonhoeffer 1995, 89). The surrender of the self to Christ symbolized by death is a prerequisite to discipleship. There can be no following Jesus without a renouncing of all that one has. Christ tolerates no other lords. This chapter ends with my own testimony, whereby I caused an accident that resulted in the death of my best friend. That crisis provoked a descent into a personal void, where I surrendered my life to God and died to myself. From that point, God began to reconstruct my life with a new life focused on Him. This testimony invites readers to reflect on their own conversion story, or presents an opportunity for God to initiate one.

The exercises at the end of chapter two focus on transformation logic and the theology of dying. Participants are asked write and reflect upon their own conversion story. They are invited to apply transformation logic to a number of biblical events such as Jacob crossing the Jobbok river (Gen. 32), Hannah’s despair (1 Sam. 1) and the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). As sinners who are thrust out of the garden, participants are invited to identify with the loss of paradise and the sentence of death. They are invited in an exercise to reflect upon their own death and also scriptures related to the call to die to self (Gal. 2:20, Col. 3:3-4) (Nouwen 2010, 89).

3.2.3 The Battle Within – The Victory of Love

The intent of chapter three is to ground the participant in the essential doctrine of sanctification as a two-part movement of the soul, mortification and vivification. This movement is presented as an inner battle between the flesh (our identification with Adam) and the Spirit that every true believer experiences. This is a tenet of Reformation theology beginning with Luther's *simul iustus et peccator* (Luther 1896b). The believer is simultaneously wholly justified and wholly sinful. Luther also states, in the first of his 95 theses, that the whole life of believers should be repentance, evidenced by mortification of the flesh (Luther 1896a). Calvin articulates this doctrine in book three of *The Institutes* (Calvin 1960, 3.3.8), where he sees progressive sanctification as self-denial, bearing one's cross and continuous meditation on the life to come. But it is John Owen, of the Puritan era, who articulates it most profoundly and fully (Owen 1958, 168). Indeed, it is the Puritans who show themselves to be the most skilful diagnosticians of the human condition in this regard (Shepherd 2002). For John Owen, the recognition of the presence of indwelling sin and the practice of mortification is "the hinge" (Owen 1958, vol. 6 168) upon which the whole course of a believer's life turns. Those who fail to acknowledge indwelling sin and diligently practice mortification of the flesh deceive themselves as to the true nature of the peril that they face and call into question their own salvation. The Puritans understood the contrary nature of the principle of sin and death in the old man and the principle of Spirit and life in the new man and saw that this battle must exist in all who are truly in Christ.

Hence, saving faith is a gift of God appropriated by dying to self, characterized by daily repentance and trust in the object of faith, Jesus Christ. The believer is united to Christ through faith. The bond, which unites the believer to Christ, is the Holy Spirit, that “secret energy” personified (Calvin 1960, 3.1.1) that establishes and maintains this union. Through it, the believer is beneficiary of the dual benefits of union with Christ, justification and sanctification (Calvin 1960, 3.1.1). And so, salvation is not an event, it is a Person (1 Cor. 1:30). Through union with Christ by faith, the believer is declared righteous as Christ’s righteousness is imputed to him. This righteousness is an alien righteousness (Luther 1989, p.157) in that it is not the believer’s own but is imputed from without, from Christ. It results in a new standing with God, which strips away the legal requirements of the law that stands against the believer. It includes both propitiation, whereby the wrath of God against the sinner is diverted onto the Son, and expiation, whereby the sin itself is removed and borne away. In effect, the Day of Judgment has been brought forward and the believer stands acquitted. The believer is seen as the son or daughter with whom the Father is well pleased and adopted into the family of God.

Sanctification implies being set apart and made holy. It is the work of the Holy Spirit whereby the believer is sanctified and given a new nature from God. It has both a definitive and a progressive dimension. In one sense the believer has already been made holy (1 Cor. 6:11) by virtue of union with Christ through faith. In another sense, it is a progressive work (2 Cor. 3:18) of the Spirit in which the believer participates, becoming progressively and increasingly free from sin, holy and molded into the likeness of Christ. The believer participates in sanctification by working out in his or her life what God works in (Phil 2:12-13). Hence there is a responsibility on

behalf of the believer to put to death (mortification) whatever is of the old sin nature and walk by the Spirit (vivification), bearing appropriate fruit (Gal 5:22-23). In addition, there is an express command to continual repentance, to the forsaking of oneself and living expressly for the Holy One who died to secure such liberation (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

A proper understanding of the nature of progressive sanctification requires insight into the three different ways the word “sin” is used in scripture (Burchett 1980, 132). The first use is sin as actual guilt in the legal sense resulting in just condemnation for the violation of law. In Romans 3:9 and Galatians 3:22, Paul states that humankind is counted legally under guilt. Jesus is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1 John 1:29). In this context, sin means *imputed or actual guilt*, a forensic term whereby the entire world is under sin. Jesus takes away the actual guilt of the world by taking the condemnation and punishment for sin upon himself, bearing it away and satisfying the justice of God. The second use of the word sin means *inner corruption*, that defiled inner nature of humankind that is our inheritance from Adam. The “*sin that dwells in me*” of Romans 7:17 is referring to that corrupted nature. The third use of sin is *transgressions*, that is commandments violated or commanded actions left undone (James 4:17, 1 John 3:4). All three uses imply that sin is ultimately a defective relationship with God (Shepherd 2005). While saving faith in Christ results in instantaneous justification, whereby the legal guilt of sin is removed, saving faith does not change the sin nature, that inner corruption that is tied to the “old self” (Eph. 4:22). Paul’s description of his struggle with “sin” in Romans 7 makes it clear that the believer is not perfected in this life. The repeated admonitions to “put to death” the old self indicate that there is effort required on the part of the believer to slay the old self (Eph.

4:22, Rom 8:13, Col. 3:5). This is only possible because the old self has already been crucified with Christ through union with him by faith (Rom. 6:6). Thus the power of the sin nature is broken in that it no longer has dominion over the believer, however it does still have influence (Rom. 6:14). The believer is to be filled with the Spirit (vivification) through which the old man can be put to death. So the believer is under two dispositions, the old nature and the new nature in Christ. These are not weighted equally, otherwise there would be no guarantee of victory. The new nature is more powerful and rules, however, the old nature is still able to exert influence and rise up. Hence it needs to be continually slain. Mortification involves the habitual battle against the sin nature, weakening it degree by degree. The disciplines of self-examination, confession of sin, repentance, self-denial, walking in obedience, meditation on the holiness of God, and being filled with the Spirit must be continually practiced to shrivel the sin nature and strengthen the new one. In this way the believer grows in character, becoming more and more conformed to the image of Christ.

In terms of self-examination, Owen identifies nine things to be taken into account. These are: 1) an examination of the “symptoms of sin” and their dangers; 2) developing a clear sense of the “guilt, danger and evil” of sin; 3) “loading the conscience with the guilt of sin”; 4) Praying continually to be delivered from the “power of sin”; 5) determining if and how a particular sin is related to one’s “temperament and disposition”; 6) analyzing the “occasions” of sin; 7) Rising up against the “first actings” of sin; 8) meditation on one’s spiritual poverty and; 9) listening to God’s voice in so far as release of one’s conscience (Ferguson 1987, 151).

The practice of mortification and dealing with the sin nature can only be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit’s work in us, which is vivification.

Vivification is submission to the Holy Spirit's filling to drive us toward holiness. The end goal is sweet communion with Christ and conformance to Christ-likeness in all things. Calvin defines it as "the desire to live in a holy and devoted manner, a desire arising from rebirth; as it were said that a man dies to himself that he may begin to live to God" (Calvin 1960, 3.3.3).

The Holiness Tradition (Foster 1998a, 61) which Foster identifies as a stream beginning with James, the brother of Jesus, has been characterized by the regeneration of the heart in love and total devotion to God. Throughout the entire church age, people such as Gregory of Nazianzua, Bernard of Clairvaux, John Wesley, Phoebe Palmer and Dietrich Bonhoeffer have stirred up the hearts of many to pursue a total consecration to Christ, which know no bounds. Such consecration is not only possible, but essential to true discipleship. Growth in character and virtue is not optional for the believer but an essential mark of true and saving faith. Such growth happens only through an abiding union with Christ that manifests itself in actions. There is a continual effort required to rise up victorious in the battle against sin and self. There is a training that one must undertake, much like an athlete who trains for an athletic event. Spiritual exercises are essential.

At the end of this chapter, readers are invited to engage in reflective exercises focusing on sin, temptation and the inner battle. The practice of doing a daily *Prayer of Examen* is introduced (Sherbino 2008, 54). Readers are asked to identify situations in which temptations and transgressions occur. They are asked to identify Godly counterparts to sin and practice them. Assigned readings and questions for reflection focus on the confession of sin and being filled with the Spirit.

3.2.4 The Presence of God – The Peace of Love

Whereas the previous chapter has been concerned with an understanding of sin and the putting to death of the old nature, the focus of this one is developing a vibrant personal relationship with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The theme verse is: “*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you*” (Isaiah 26:3). This is the essence of sanctified living, to seek God continually in all things. Foster identifies sanctified or sacramental living as one of the six living streams of the Christian life, which he calls the *Incarnational Tradition* (Foster 1998a, p.237). It is the call to holiness, to a life devoted to God.

Knowing God must be differentiated from knowing about God. There are two kinds of knowing, scientific and personal (Shepherd 2004). The Hebrew meaning of “know” implies intimate experience of. To know someone personally is to have had a number of intimate interactions, which have resulted in a change in both subject and object. Martin Bruber’s *I and Thou* (Buber 1958) explores the dynamics of personal knowing and “the between” of relationship. Hence to know God, or to be known by God requires vulnerability. God has already made Himself vulnerable before us through the cross. The cross shows above all that there is no limit to God’s love for people. A true experience of the presence of God requires a response to God’s vulnerability through self-surrender and openness. Many people harbour an inward anger towards God because others have wounded them. If God is sovereign, they reason, He is also to blame for He has allowed the wound to occur. Such an attitude is a misunderstanding of the sovereignty of God. God is not a cosmic micro manager as some might imagine. Rather, He accomplishes His purposes through the path of self-abasement and

vulnerability (Phil 2:6-8). He does not force or coerce his way into people's lives. Rather, He achieves His greatest accomplishment on the cross, where He is seen as most weak and debased (Shepherd 2005). The unpacking of past hurts is possible through an apprehension of the God who incarnates all suffering. Suffering as a Christian is counter cultural for many. Our society asserts that we all deserve health, wealth and happiness. Yet we live in a world under disharmony and distress and that while it is okay to desire to be free of hurt, "it is also okay to hurt" (Crabb 1988, 71). Hurts are often those very things that ordain us to ministry. In that sense we are called to become *Wounded Healers* (Nouwen 1979). The right path is to put the pursuit of God at the center of the Christian life, rather than something to be achieved only after temporal and relational pleasures have been satisfied. Once that longing is satisfied, all others pale in comparison. Obtaining the peace of God comes only through a submission to His will in all circumstances. This is what I have called the discipline of release.

Release is related to self-denial and bearing one's cross, which are critical aspects of the Christian life (Calvin 1960, Vol. 1. 690). Release is based on the understanding that we are not our own, but belong to Him who saved us and called us to live accordingly (2 Cor. 5:15). This discipline is examined as pertaining to areas in which many believers struggle: forgiveness, circumstances and time, fasting, self-denial and simplicity.

From my role as a pastor, I have observed that there is much misunderstanding as to the nature of forgiveness. Therapists and counsellors are quick to call people to forgive offenses. However forgiveness is a two-step process for in many offenses there are two wounded parties, God and the victim. Forgiveness requires first a

release of the offense to God, trusting that He will deal with the offender as appropriate. Secondly, the cycle of forgiveness, which includes restoration, is never complete until there is repentance, confession and restitution (if possible) by the offender and acceptance by the one offended. This second movement is essential in restoration of the relationship. Without it, the cycle of forgiveness and restoration is not complete. However, those who have been injured have no control over the abuser and hence must be content to release the offense to God and pray for and bless the offender. However, if there is no repentance on the part of the abuser, the victim is not required to pretend that the offense never occurred. Nor is the victim required to continue to stay vulnerable to repeated abuse. Rather believers are commanded to release offenders to God, to bless and pray for those who persecute and maliciously use them (Luke 6:28).

The discipline of release also extends to other aspects of life such as circumstances and time. Brother Lawrence excelled at the practice of the presence of God precisely because every action was done in love and offered to Him alone (Lawrence 1996, 21). Sanctified living means offering every moment of life to God and living fully by the Spirit continually. Sanctified living also requires an understanding that creation itself is good. The dualism of Gnosticism that sees spirit as good and matter as evil is to be rejected. Rather all things, be it one's vocation, service, things produced for the good of people, work, play and rest are given by God for man's enjoyment and should be appreciated and offered to God in worship. Sanctified living celebrates the rhythm of life in the cycles of day, weeks and seasons. It seeks to make every present moment sacramental (Caussade 1982). Family life offered to God makes every meal a love feast and provides an avenue for worship. The Sabbath cycle and the Church year allows for the practice of the presence of God not only in family but also in

community. One's involvement in society, through work, volunteerism and recreation should bring the reality of God to bear upon all aspects of society, whether business, politics, art, music, sports or institutions of learning and care. Christians are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-14).

The discipline of release also involves fasting and self-denial. In fasting we release our body's physical hold on us by denying ourselves food or drink for a season, for a spiritual purpose. Fasting is a sign of humility and dependence on God. We show God that we are serious in our devotional stance and in our petitions. In the Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) that is part of this project's data collection strategy, the category of self-denial was the lowest scored of any of the spiritual categories (see Section 5: Analysis and Outcomes). Yet Christians, all through the centuries have testified to it being the key to spiritual growth (Nysewander 2002, 18). Consequently, an explanation of the importance of fasting and a call to experiment with fasting was added to the material in chapter four, as a result of the first group's SAQ score analysis.

The discipline of release also involves a life of simplicity. Jesus lived a life of simplicity in total dependence on the Father. He condemned covetousness and love of money. The Christian life is to be one of simplicity. Simplicity means that we set our hearts on things above and live in ways that demonstrate this. That does not mean that we cannot have possessions, but that those possessions should not consume us or displace our devotion to God. Possessions ought rather to be submitted to God's will for His service. They must be held loosely and used for the benefit of all. Many are distracted in our society with things, programs and activities, which take them away from a life of discipleship and devotion to God. This chapter ends with a call to a life of simplicity.

The exercises in this chapter focus on exploring vulnerability in relationships, specifically before God. Participants will reflect upon past hurts and afflictions in the light of the cross. Small group discussions of the nature of forgiveness allow participants to explore their experiences and feeling about release. Psalms of lament are explored and experienced in order to embrace woundedness. Participants are invited to begin the practice of fasting for a specific spiritual purpose.

3.2.5 Prayer and Worship – The Breath of Love

Virtually every treatise on discipleship includes a section on prayer and worship. Just as breath is essential for life, so the soul's communion with God is essential in discipleship. Like breathing, being filled with the Spirit, worship and prayer are to be continuous activities (Eph. 5:18, 1 Thess 5:17).

The ability to address God through prayer is one aspect that differentiates humankind from the animals. Both were created on the sixth day of creation, but it is only to Adam that God speaks. Hence, human beings are recipients of God's address. They are created with the ability to respond to God, which is prayer (Shepherd 2004). Theologically, prayer is a great privilege but also a holy duty. A personal relationship, through faith, is the basis of one's union with Christ. Prayer is the life breath of that relationship, the soul's communion with the divine Lover (Curtis 1997, 161). Such communion ought always to be mindful of the basis of that relationship. For the believer, the cross of Christ is to be the operational reality of one's soul life. The one who truly understands what Christ has done for her will long to rest at the feet of the One who has redeemed and filled her with His Spirit. The mature disciple sees God's

continuing presence and communion as a vital part of inner life. And so, the psalmist writes:

Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.
You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me
to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on
earth that I desire besides you. (Psalm 73:23-25)

Yet, as Richard Foster points out, “In contemporary society our adversary majors in three things, noise, hurry and crowds.” (Foster 2008, 15) So discipline is required to establish patterns of prayer and worship. Where silence, solitude, prayer and worship are practiced repeatedly, desire for prayer and worship increases and a supernatural delight becomes the resplendent fruit of such communion.

In this chapter, the origin of prayer as a human response within and without the community of faith, provides a backdrop for a close look at how Jesus, the divine Teacher, instructs and models prayer for the disciples. Jesus showed prayer to be thoroughly intimate and childlike as He addressed God as “Our Father”(Matt. 6:9). For Jesus, prayer also was a cry for the Kingdom (Grenz 2005, 10). Grenz points out that this yearning is thoroughly eschatological and evangelistic. The kingdom is now but not yet. Christ’s reign in the believer’s heart through the Holy Spirit is evidence of an interior Kingdom, which is seen through eyes of faith (Col. 3:15). Yet the full manifestation of that Kingdom will not be made known until Christ appears (Col. 3:4). By faith, believers enter into the divine reality of its existence as they declare Jesus as King of Kings.

To help readers expand their experience with prayer, several patterns of prayer are examined. Hannah’s Prayer in the first chapter of *1st Samuel* is analyzed to illustrate the elements of effective prayer as a heart cry to God, born of adversity.

Another pattern is the practice of praying through the Psalms. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his little book *Life Together* (Bonhoeffer 1993, 44) identifies what he calls the secret of the Psalter, which is that there are often two distinct voices praying, the psalmist's and Christ's as Christ prays along with him. This is a vital part of Bonhoeffer's theology of prayer, in which Christ is the Mediator of the believer's prayers to the Father. It is only because the believer is in Christ that the Father hears prayers (Isa. 59:2-3). In praying the Psalter, one learns how to enter into the flow of an established pattern of prayer that models the various types of prayers. Through the study guide, praying the Psalms will have already been introduced to the readers in the exercises of chapter one, but here it will be expanded upon by examining prayers of confession, lament, thanksgiving and praise (Sherbino 2008, 47-118).

Another pattern is the Lord's prayer (Matt. 6:9-13), where the headings of praise, purpose, provision, pardon, people and protection give shape to this prayer (Galicinski & Harvest Bible Chapel, Barrie 2005a, 29). In this prayer, Jesus not only shows the disciple how to pray, but what to pray for. In praying this prayer, by restating, elaborating and contextualizing each phrase, the soul is raised into a mystic embrace with Christ the Author and Mediator of the prayer. It is a prayer not to be memorized and used as a repetitive mantra, but rather a means of moving one's mind, heart and will in tune with the Father, through the Son in the power of the Spirit.

Yet another pattern of prayer is the collect. A mainstay of Anglican spirituality, this prayer consists of an address to God, a reference to some divine attribute which grounds the prayer, a petition related to the subject of the prayer and a concluding doxology (Webber 1993, 236). This pattern trains the disciple to ground petitions in the attributes of God, and rounds out the prayer with adoration and blessing.

The final pattern is the simplest and for most believers and the easiest one to remember. The pattern of Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication (ACTS) (Grenz 2005, 25). This acronym provides a sound theological pattern for prayer. Rather than rushing into petition, the one praying is taught to come into God's presence with adoration and worship, acknowledging and glorifying the One who alone is worthy of ultimate praise. An acknowledgement of one's own sin and unworthiness sets the heart of the one praying in an appropriate stance of humility and contrition before God. Thanksgiving acknowledges the many blessings that God has bestowed and establishes gratitude as the mindset of the petitioner. Only then, does the one praying move into presenting requests before God. This ACTS pattern, while simple, theologically grounds a person's approach to prayer.

Prayer is also a powerful way of sharing the relationship that one has with God with another and can thus be a powerful witness (Rinker 1984, 14). Often, in the course of everyday conversation, people disclose difficulties, afflictions or concerns that worry them. These may not be believers and could be indifferent or even hostile to God. Yet such disclosure presents an opportunity for a disciple to bless someone by offering to pray immediately. As a believer prays, the people who hear have a window of insight into the relationship that the believer has with God. That mysterious "between" that exists between the believer and the Lord is profoundly real and often has a powerful impact on the hearers because they are being let in on a real relationship between the disciple and his Lord.

Like prayer, worship is the soul's response to God. But it is not a response that one can fabricate out of one's own being. It is very much a gifted response (Ngien 2008). As faith itself is a gift (Eph. 2:8), which must be exercised to be complete, so too

worship is the energized response of a soul filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit illuminates believers, giving them an appropriate view of God and themselves. In scripture, a proper apprehension of God compels one to fall down in worship (Is. 6:5, John 20:28, Rev. 1:11). As Dennis Ngien points out, in commenting on Bernard's of Clairvaux's *Song of Songs*: "We do not immediately leap to the intimate union, or in Bernard's words 'a holier intimacy' of the kiss of the mouth. He advised that we must begin at the bottom and move to the top." (Ngien 2008, 68) This brings to mind the woman who covered Jesus feet with kisses, about whom Jesus said "her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much" (Luke 7:47). The Greek verb often used for worship is *proskunuo*, which literally means to fall down before or kneel before. There is a holy reverence and submission in worship that makes worship first an attitude of the heart. Worship that does not begin with the heart is just going through the empty motions of externalism. The believer is to worship "in Spirit and in Truth" (John 4:23). The believer is also to love God with all one's heart, soul and mind (Matt. 22:37). Worship is to be with abandon. It is to be costly. King David danced before the ark of God with all his might, costing him the affection of his wife (2 Sam 6:16). The woman who poured out an alabaster jar of pure nard upon Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair, bestowed a precious possession on Him, and made this act an intimate, passionate and costly picture of worship (John 12:3). Worship, like prayer is to be continuous, a lifestyle of adoration and the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name (Heb. 13:15).

Robert Webber pointed out that worship is rooted in an event. Hebrew worship always looks back to and rehearses the deliverance from Egypt. It makes this one event in the past the defining operational reality of the present. Likewise, Christian worship always looks back to and rehearses the cross of Christ. As Webber says:

“Worship tells and acts out the living, dying and rising of Christ... it celebrates God’s saving deed in Jesus Christ” (Webber 1994, 33). Hence, a component of worship is meditation on the cross of Christ and a rehearsal and telling of the gospel. The believer’s worship is rooted in the cross of Christ and is an intimate poring out of affection and love on Christ. The Greek words for love inform this (Lewis, 1960). We are to love Christ with affection (*storge*), with brotherly love (*philo*), with self giving love (*agape*) and with the erotic love of a passionate lover (*eros*). Worship is the bride’s sweet surrender and giving of herself with total abandon to the One who has swept her off her feet (Curtis & Eldredge 1997, p.159). Worship is the first task of the believer and the first task of the church. Worship is also the presentation of our bodies in Christ’s service (Rom 12:1). It is thoroughly emotive, obedient and practical. It is above all a lifestyle.

The exercises of this chapter will focus on praying through psalms and scriptures, on prayers of confession, lament, petition and thanksgiving. The three templates for prayer will be used as models for participants to experience. Worship and prayer will be intertwined as a love response to what God has done and is doing. Both group prayer and worship and individual prayer and worship will be stressed.

3.2.6 God’s Word – The Nourishment of Love

The importance of the word of God in discipleship is critical. “Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word² that comes from the mouth of God” (Deut. 8:3b). The word of God is both the utterance of God and also the incarnate One, Jesus Christ (John 1:1). They cannot be the word of God in exactly the same sense for

² I have chosen to capitalize Word of God only when Word refers to the incarnate One, Jesus Christ.

one is word spoken and the other is a Person. The word of God as speech is that which God utters Himself through the prophets and that which He endorses as speaking for Him. Hence the word of God is an aspect of revelation. What God reveals is not a book, but Himself. He is both the Author of such revelation and the content of it. (Shepherd 2005, lecture: *The Meaning of Scripture*) The incarnate Word (*logos*) of God is the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the Son who takes on human flesh. God has never been without His Word, for Christ was there in the beginning with God and it was through Him that God created everything that has been created (John 1:1-3).

A major objective of this chapter is to motivate the reader to a habitual formational and systematic study of scripture and to provide interpretive tools for doing so. The activity of the word of God is essential in the life of the disciple for it performs divine surgery on calcified hearts (Heb. 4:12). It is through the Holy Spirit illuminating the word, that the believer comes into the fullness of knowledge of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word.

Gordon Fee points out that the aim of God's word is to help believers "live under the control of the Holy Spirit in obedience to the Father through the redemptive grace of the Son" (Fee 1995). Fee shows that the ultimate aim of such spirituality is a lifestyle of worship. Spirituality must have as its focus a thirst and yearning for God Himself. As the psalmist writes "my soul and my flesh long for you;" "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you; my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1).

In this chapter, the origins of scripture are explored as part of the grounding of the reader. The mechanism of inspiration is also explained. The words of scripture written are very much the author's own words and yet they are appropriated by God as

His own words. Such appropriation is confirmed by the process of canonization whereby the text is enrolled by the church into the canonical collection through the witness of the Holy Spirit. Hence the prophet or apostle's words are seen to be God's words. Even so, authors are intentionally aware when they write (Wolterstorff 1995, 5). The authors are both the prophet/apostle who penned the words and also the Holy Spirit who inspired and superintended the writing and compilation. One is not allowed to invent meanings that an author never intended. Hence the mind must be fully engaged, exercising discernment in interpreting scripture.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit transforms people as they read scripture through the process of illumination. As they read, they encounter the incarnate One, who leaps from the pages of scripture and they experience a transformation born of personal knowing. In devotional times, in times of reflection and meditation, this process is paramount. Nevertheless, there is a danger here. The reader is also influenced by many factors, internal and external, and can "read into" a passage what is not the intention of the Holy Spirit. There are many spirits in the world and the spiritual gift of discernment is required (1 John 4:1). The reader should learn principles and steps, which will guide proper exegesis and help discover the divine message. The reader must also be concerned with the collective witness of members of the body of Christ as custodians of the meaning of scripture. Communal discernment is essential, so that gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon the body of Christ, the Church, are used to collectively ground the meaning of scripture (1 Cor. 12:4-12).

A goal of this chapter is to help the reader understand the process of exegesis and to give them some tools for the study of scripture. An understanding of context is essential. Such context can be historical, covenantal or literary. Reading the Old

Testament law for example, must be informed by the Mosaic covenant. For a believer under the New Covenant, the Apostolic witness to the role of the Mosaic law must inform our interpretation of it. Believers must be equipped with interpretive tools, with which to make an interpretive journey to exegete the meaning and application from Old Testament passages. Duvall and Hayes provide a simple interpretive framework for approaching scripture passages. They call it the “Interpretive Journey” (Duvall & Hayes, J. Daniel 2001, p.21). A brief summary of their method is provided so that readers have a simple tool with which to approach scripture. The framework uses the analogy of living in a biblical era town and traveling in time into a modern town. Its four steps are: “1. Grasping the text in their town; 2. Measuring the width of the river to cross; 3. Crossing the principalizing bridge; 4. Grasping the text in our town”. (Duvall & Hayes, J. Daniel 2001, 24) This journey is used as a simple template with a number of examples to help readers with basic exegesis.

Another useful technique for identifying the meaning of a passage of scripture was developed by Haddon Robinson. He pioneered the concept of looking at meaning as an idea, which consists of a subject and a complement (H. W. Robinson 2001, 39). The subject is what the author is talking about, and the complement, what the author is saying about it. Robinson’s process is of value in discovering and applying the main concepts in a passage of scripture.

The exercises of this chapter focus on analyzing scripture passages in order to give participants exposure to the tools of content analysis, main idea thinking and applying interpretive principles. They are given an opportunity to do so in large and small group settings and privately on their own. In addition, the formational practice of *Holy Reading* (Sherbino 2008, 17) is continued in individual devotional times.

3.2.7 Love's Rule – The Convictions of Love

Two dangers in the life of the disciple have always been legalism and licentiousness. The Apostle Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Corinthians are replete with admonitions against these dangers. Hence a proper understanding of the action of grace and law is critical to spiritual growth. When the God who is Love rules in a believer's heart, the Holy Spirit liberates the believer from the enslavement of law but also brings about convictions that change behavior. The Apostle John writes: "*No one born of God makes a practice of sinning*" (1 John 3:9). While believers want to do what is right, a misunderstanding of the Old Testament law can bring about confusion as to what God requires of them. The theology of this chapter focuses on the relationship between law and gospel in order to give the disciple a method of developing personal convictions that are biblically based yet consistent with Christ's call to obey His commandments. The Ten Commandments are used to illustrate the dangers of moralism and to illustrate how an "interpretive journey" (Duvall & Hayes, J. Daniel 2001, p.171) is necessary to apply theological principles based on the differences between the Old and New Covenants. In Lutheran theology, the preamble to the Ten Commandments is critical (Shepherd 2002, lect. 12) for it establishes the relationship through faith upon which obedience is to be a love response in gratitude to the God who has already redeemed:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (Exodus 20:2)

Any attempt to obey the commandments apart from faith in the completed work of Christ becomes moralism, and is be counted as transgression for “anything that does not proceed from faith is sin” (Rom 14:23). The moralist is just as far from God as the immoral person. He who keeps the law without faith violates the first commandment to honor God (Philip D. Krey & Peter D. S. Krey 2007, p.76). Jesus’ great commandment (Matt. 22:37-39) summarizes the entire law by loving God and neighbor. The royal law of love is the summation of the law and is fulfilled in Christ. Yet how can a disciple be sure that he or she is always acting in love?

To answer this question, four functions of the law are examined. The law reveals the heart of God for his people Israel. The law also brings about conviction of sin. The law also restrains evil in the world. The law, properly interpreted, reveals principles that show believers how they are to live. Interpreting the law requires an understanding of interpretive principles, which take into account historical and covenantal context, language, situation, time and culture. Jesus fulfills the law and the prophets (Matt. 5:17) and becomes the final interpreter of the law. As Duvall points out:

Some Old Testament law Jesus restates (Matt 19:18-19) but some he modifies (5:31-32). Some law he intensifies (5:21-22, 27-28) and some he changes significantly (5:33-37, 38-42, 43-47). Furthermore some laws he appears to abrogate entirely (Mark 7:15-19). Jesus is not advocating the continuation of the traditional Jewish approach of adherence to the law, nor is he advocating that we dismiss the law altogether. (Duvall & Hayes, J. Daniel 2001, 323)

In this chapter, the Ten Commandments are used to develop ten convictions that take the principle of each commandment and apply it to the situation today. These convictions are then presented as disciplines, which every believer is called to practice. Briefly these are:

<u>The Commandment</u>	<u>The Discipline of:</u>
Preamble “I am the Lord....”	Remembrance
No other Gods	Exclusive Worship
No images	Renouncing idols / loving God
No name in vain	Guarding my tongue
Sabbath	Regular Rest
Honour father & mother	Giving honour
No murder	Renouncing anger
No adultery	Guarding eyes/ renouncing lust
No stealing	Integrity
No false witness	Truthfulness
No coveting	Contentment & thankfulness

These convictions when practiced become personal disciplines that demonstrate a love for God and neighbor, which can only be achieved in the power of the Holy Spirit, through faith. They also serve as a defense against licentiousness. Licentiousness is a danger when the disciple has no real convictions, but demonstrates attitudes and actions that violate Christ’s call to holiness.

The exercises of this chapter focus on applying the interpretive principles to Old Testament laws and invite the participant to develop personal and family convictions. Participants will be invited to apply this method to personal situations in the marketplace and in family life. They also explore scriptures in which Jesus applied the principle of “law to the proud and grace to the humble” (Comfort & Cameron 2006, p.22) to illustrate Christ’s use of law and grace.

3.2.8 Mission and Community – The Expressions of Love

Disciples of Jesus Christ are a sent people. Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, so send I you” (John 20:21 NAU). Allan Hirsch argues that this mission, this sending is primary. Christology grounds Missiology, which grounds Ecclesiology (Hirsch 2006b, 134). Jesus’ parting command was not to plant churches but to go make

disciples. As disciples are made, He builds the church. Hirsch identifies this sending impulse as one of the major factors that differentiate the early church and the blossoming third world church from the present western church. Whereas the present western church focuses on gathering as community, the early church was primarily about mission, spreading the gospel and developing community along the way. The process of making disciples was inherently dangerous. The apostles were not looking to establish communities in which they could settle and live in security. Rather they were always looking to move out into new territory, while at the same time strengthening and maturing the communities that were established as they did so. Moreover, they called upon the newly formed disciples to imitate their own manner of life (Phil. 3:17). This combination of mission, danger, adventure and community is what Hirsch calls *Communitas* (Hirsch 2006a, p.218). It is in the context of shared ordeal that strong communities are built. This is a major reason why the persecuted church has such a strong sense of community. Therefore a critical aspect of discipleship is accepting the adventure and danger of “being sent” as a personal responsibility of every believer.

Unfortunately this runs counter to the culture in many churches. Many churches do send their people out, but with the message “come to our church”. They spend their resources trying to draw people and then providing them with the best programs to make them stay. Steve Hill points out that this is like the farmer standing at the barn door and inviting the harvest to come in (S. Hill 2010, 19). Rather, Jesus sent his disciples out into the world and gave them a simple template for evangelism. They were to go into villages, declaring “peace” to each house. If a person of peace was there they were to stay, eating and drinking whatever was set before them. They were to heal the sick and declare the Kingdom (Luke 10:5-9). Western culture finds this difficult, but

there are ways that it can be done. In the process directed by Jesus in Luke 10, we are not to lead with declaration, but lead with a declaration of peace, blessing and fellowship. We are to pray for needs. This can be done in work places, the marketplace, places of leisure, public places, wherever people gather. Prayer evangelism is a powerful witness. Our subsequent declaration of the Kingdom is a testimony to the Holy Spirit's power to transform lives. Here the personal testimony of each believer is a powerful instrument that can be used at a moment's notice. Believers are to live with a continual sense of remembrance as to who they are and whose they are. This remembrance is the Hebrew sense, which is to make the event remembered the operational defining reality of every life. To "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19) is to make the cross the defining operational reality of one's life. Discipleship is cross bearing and living in the light of the resurrection, so as to proclaim Jesus as Lord allowing Him to inform how life is to be lived. For this reason, disciples need also be trained in how to proclaim the gospel as a simple witness. While there are many approaches to evangelism, one of the simplest and most effective is the "*Way of the Master*" (Comfort & Cameron 2006). This questioning technique uses natural law or the Ten Commandments to make the point that all have sinned and violated God and so are facing eternal condemnation. Jesus Christ is then presented as the one who paid the penalty for each person's sin so that he or she could be set free. While some are more comfortable than others, it is a powerful tool for sharing the gospel. This method is adapted and presented as tool for evangelism.

Bonhoeffer points out in *Life Together* that "It is not simply to be taken for granted that the Christian has the privilege of living among other Christians."

(Bonhoeffer 1993, 17) Christian community is a privilege and a source of

“incomparable joy”. He points out that it is only through the common bond of Jesus Christ that believers can come together and belong to one another. Christians need one another to speak the Word of God into each other’s hearts, to encourage and uplift one another, to pray for one another and to share life with one another. However, community can never be solely for the sake of community alone. It is not to be an end in itself but a means to an end. Each disciple is called to give first allegiance to Jesus Christ and to obey Him alone in whatever call that He should give. Believers have a continual responsibility to abide in Him and get their direction from Him alone, walking continually in the Truth. That is a lifelong process and an incomparable adventure. As they do so, they prepare themselves for that day when they will see their Bridegroom face to face. Meanwhile, they are to live entirely for Him. And He becomes *Love’s Greatest Joy* for them.

The exercises of this chapter focus on examination and what it means to “be sent”. Participants reflect on how and to whom they are personally being sent. The primacy of God’s command to make disciples will be examined. Participants develop their personal testimony so that it can be shared naturally in just a few minutes. Participants also practice, using a series of questions to share their faith.

3.3 Summary

In the overall development of the theology of this book, there is a movement from the God who is Love into union with the believer through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ (Chapter 1). This work not only releases the believer from the bondage of sin and self, but also frees the believer to be the authentic human being that God designed him or her to be. This divine transformation is a supernatural act whereby

the Holy One descends into the pit of self-contradiction that every person descends into as a preparatory work of grace. Such descent requires the death of self in unity with the death of the Savior. It results in new birth and a spectacular ascent into the heavenlies with the Holy One who is resurrected, vindicated and enthroned as supreme Lord of all. This divine transformation results in a new creation born of God (Chapter 2). The believer now has been given a new standing with God (justification) and a new nature from God (sanctification). Immediately the inner battle against the sinful self begins as the believer experiences the effect of indwelling sin, which mitigates against the Holy Spirit, which indwells the believer. The believer is called to mortify the sinful self through the power and resources of the Holy Spirit, the word of God and with the help of the people of God (Chapter 3). Simultaneously, the believer begins to bask in the glow of the presence of God through the Holy Spirit. The believer is also called to progressively live by the power of the Holy Spirit and practice the discipline of release. Past hurts, wounds, as well as material possessions, time and circumstances are to be released to the One to whom the believer now belongs (chapter 4). Prayer becomes the life breath of the believer and communion with the Bridegroom is made the heart of a growing relationship. Worship becomes a lifestyle of spiritual service to God and people (chapter 5). The word of God is now the believer's spiritual nourishment and means of communication with the divine Lover (Chapter 6). The living word inspires convictions and disciplines in how to live in the body as a movement to perfection in holiness in preparation for the great wedding day (chapter 7). The bride is not to sit idly waiting, but is sent by the divine Lover out into the harvest to tell others of the love of God and to invite everyone to partake with her in that divine wedding. Her Lord's call to make disciples becomes her divine passion as she fellowships and works with others

who are similarly betrothed (chapter 8). In this divine drama, Jesus Christ becomes the believer's greatest Joy. He is *Love's Greatest Joy*.

Chapter 4: Project and Methodology

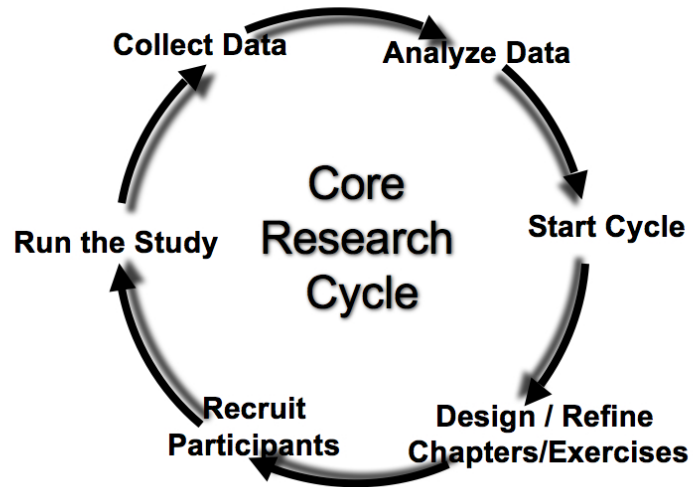
4.1 Introduction/Overview

This project is the development of a book and integrated study guide *Love's Greatest Joy*, through action research. The action research methodology (Coghlan & Brannick 2009, 8) involves a series of cycles of constructing, planning, taking and evaluating action. Zuber-Skerritt and Perry, refer to both a core and a thesis action research cycle (Coghlan & Brannick 2009, 11). The core cycle is the constructing, planning, taking action and evaluating in relation to the objectives of the project. The thesis action research cycle is a cycle of reflection on the progress of the project by the researcher.

In the context of this project, the core action research cycle involved two cycles of leading two different groups of participants through the material in two ten week blocks of time. For each participant, reading the book and study guide and doing the associated spiritual exercises was an intervention into their own spiritual life. The effect of this intervention was measured using a number of data collection and evaluation methods outlined in section 4.3. The feedback from this data was then used to modify the material and the process in which the participants participated to optimize the objectives of the project. This process was then repeated with a second group, which benefited from the revised material and the process. Hence, two core action research cycles were completed. Figure 4 illustrates the elements of the core research cycle.

Figure 4: The Core Research Cycle

Love's Greatest Joy -book & study guide



From the perspective of the participants, a third action cycle was observed, which was a cycle of learning. Each week, they were given a chapter of the book to read and reflect upon. They were also assigned questions for reflection and spiritual exercises to do on their own. They were also asked to make notes in the manuscript of concepts that struck them both positively, negatively or which may have confused them. Once a week, the entire group was brought together to participate in a reflective session in which feedback was given on the content of the chapter. In addition, participants were asked to share the impact that reading the material and working through the study guide and exercises had on them personally. This was done in both a large group (10-12) and a small group (2-4). As the participants went through the cycle of reading, reflecting, doing exercises, journaling and reporting, they experienced a series of action learning cycles which began, in some cases, to challenge fundamental personal assumptions and

develop new insights that resulted in significant behavioural change. The three action research or learning cycles are summarized in Table #1 below:

Table # 1: The Three Action (Research) Cycles

PHASE CYCLE	CONSTRUCTING	PLANNING	TAKING ACTION	EVALUATING
THESIS CYCLE	Design and writing of Book, Study Guide and Project.	Development of participant process and data collection strategy.	Writing, revising the project report. Finalizing the book and study guide.	Reflecting on contents and process. Analyzing data, drawing conclusions.
CORE (PROJECT) CYCLE	Writing and refining book and study guide.	Recruiting participants, planning session content, data collection.	Conducting group sessions, administering data collection tools, research note taking, interviews.	Analyzing data, research notes, using feedback to refine the material and the process.
PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING CYCLE	Assembling as a group, developing learning expectations and preparing to engage weekly.	Setting aside time each day for reading, reflecting, exercises, journaling.	Reading and reacting, answering questions, doing exercises, journaling, sharing with others.	Weekly group sessions, proving feedback, reacting to the material and the process, looking inward, making changes.

4.2 The Writing Process

The initial writing of the book and study guide took place between November 2010 and April 2011. A schedule was developed to complete the book and study guide using the project objectives and the theological rationale for each chapter (see Chapter 3). As the writing progressed, the first action research group began working through the initial chapters. I was writing and participating fully in the Spiritual Exercises with the group. This was extremely valuable, in gauging and adjusting the content and magnitude of the chapters and the exercises based on my own experience and the group interaction.

The study guide for each chapter was written in tandem with the book. The study guide consisted of:

- A. Questions for Reflection
- B. Large Group (or Individual) Exercises
- C. Small Group Breakout Exercises
- D. Assignment for Next Week

The “Questions for Reflection” were designed to be answered by participants in their journals. The questions focused on the content of the chapter and required the participants to engage the material personally and apply it to their own lives. Each participant was given a blank journal, which was to be used as a personal reflection tool. Participants were told that the content of their journals would remain private and not be accessed in any way during the research, other than what they might choose to voluntarily contribute verbally.

The Large Group Exercises were designed for the large group of participants together, under the leadership of the researcher or the study leader. These exercises introduced practices which members of the group might not be familiar with, such as Breath Prayers, Holy Reading, the Prayer of Examen, and various reflective exercises (Sherbino 2008, p17,55). Approximately thirty to forty minutes were allocated for these exercises.

The “Small Group Breakout Exercises” were designed for smaller groups of three to four participants of the same gender. These exercises called for a personal response to the material, facilitated by keeping the group small. From experience in leading a small group ministry, it has been found that keeping these groups gender specific increases the likelihood of self disclosure, especially in dealing with issues such as sin and temptation. While no specific instructions were given in the study guide about the make-up of these groups, a section in the preface does suggest gender specificity for these small group breakouts. Approximately twenty minutes was

allocated for these exercises. They were designed to stimulate one on one interaction among the participants, focusing on issues that required more interpersonal intimacy than was likely in the large group.

The “Assignment for Next Week” section of the study guide consisted of specific spiritual exercises, which were to be done by individuals daily throughout the following week. These exercises required about thirty to forty-five minutes in solitude each day. In addition, participants were asked to read the succeeding chapter in the book and to underline and make notes in the wide margins provided.

In designing the study guide, it was necessary to honour the nine-week time frame for the participants. Hence it was necessary to have people begin to participate in spiritual exercises such as Holy Reading (Sherbino 2008, 18) and Prayer prior to actually having read the book chapter that pertained to that spiritual discipline. This provided a challenge during the writing phase, as it was necessary to cover some instructive content in the study guide itself.

Because the writing phase overlapped the action research phase, it was possible to make edits to the content of study guide based on specific experience with the group. For example, in one question, the participants were asked to write down twenty specific things that God had done in scripture and to reflect on the significance of each one. As feedback was received from the group, it became evident that twenty examples was too many and it was adjusted immediately in the study guide to ten.

The complete text of the book and study guide *Love's Greatest Joy* is attached as Appendix J. It has also been published on Feb. 12, 2012 by Deposits of Faith, Barrie, ON, Canada and is available from Lulu.com. (ISBN 978-1-105-35020-7). It is also availableom.

4.3 Data Gathering

In order to ascertain the degree to which participating in the study impacted the spiritual maturity, faith practices and religious affections of the participants, several tools were developed to measure the impact of the material and the study experience on the participants. These were:

1. A “Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire” that was completed by each participant at the initial meeting of each group and again at the final meeting of the group (see Appendix A).
2. Research notes taken by the researcher during the course of the sessions.
3. A “Feedback Questionnaire” (take home) that was completed by each participant during the final week (See Appendix B).
4. The marked up text of *the book* and *the study guide*, which each participant read and in which each made notes and highlights.
5. A post session interview with each of the participants by the researcher. During this interview, the results and data analysis from items 1 and 2 were shared with the participants and each was invited to comment and express their own insights and reflections. A *Post Session Interview Form* was designed to help guide the interview (Appendix E).

4.3.1 The Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)

In order to provide quantitative data regarding the effects of participating in the study on the spiritual maturity of participants, an assessment tool was required which would provide a means of determining changes in areas of soul-life and

discipleship. Ideally this tool would provide an assessment of many categories of Christian spirituality so that specific data about the effects of going through the study could be compiled. In addition, the tool needed to measure these categories on a continuous scale where post study scores could be compared with pre study scores. The researcher has had experience in designing tools of this sort related to consumer responses to the quality of products and services. Therefore, it was decided to use a questionnaire that was composed of statements related to areas of discipleship, asking participants to rate these on a scale with reference to the degree to which each statement was true or not true of that participant.

The purpose of the *Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire* (SAQ) was to collect basic demographic information about each participant, and to provide a benchmark at the start of the study with which to compare changes as a result of the study in several spiritual categories. The spiritual assessment process needed to be simple, easily readable, resistant to desirability bias, robust in sensitivity and take no more than twenty minutes to complete. Quantitative measures would provide additional data along with qualitative indicators for comparison purposes and statistical analysis.

A number of spiritual assessment instruments and assessments were examined in order to identify the general approaches used (Hill & Hood 1999; Nelson 2010; Hawkins 2007; Hawkins 2008). The approach, which appeared to meet most of the above criteria was to develop a series of statements asking respondents to affirm to what extent each statement was true of them using a six point Likert scale (Likert 1961). A six point scale was chosen as it was free of an indifference center number, requiring participants to choose either for or against the statement with three levels of conviction. These statements would be grouped to assess a number of general categories of spiritual

life. Within each category, individual attributes would be assessed using several statements per attribute. Some statements were designed to measure only one attribute while others were used to measure several. Twenty-one of the one hundred statements were negatively worded so that a low number indicated a positive score rather than a high number. Three volunteers tested the statements and changes were made to a number of statements based on their feedback. In the scoring process, these statement scores were subtracted from seven in order to invert the statement response to a positive assessment. A total of thirty-eight attributes were assessed which were grouped into six general categories. Each attribute was letter coded for ease of scoring using an Excel spread sheet. Statistical tests of significance and Shewhart control charts (Shewhart 1931) were used to analyze the data and to present the results to the participants in the post session interviews (See chapter 5). Below is a listing of the attributes assessed, the letter codes and the general categories. The number of statements assessing each attribute is also noted to the right of each attribute.

4.3.2 Questionnaire Summary

Total Number of Statements = 100 (some questions assess several attributes)

Grounding (G) – 13 statements

Basic Doctrines – including Sin, Trinity, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Forgiveness, Works Salvation, Bible Knowledge, Obedience, Convictions

Religious Affections – 56 statements

Love for God (LG) - 5
 Love for neighbor (LN) - 5
 Holiness (H) - 20
 Selflessness (SE) - 3
 Awareness/Intimacy (A) - 8
 Faith (F) - 11

Motivation to Grow (M) - 4

Devotional Practices – 45 statements

Time with God (DP) - 17
 Prayer (P) - 10
 Fasting/Self Denial (SD) - 2
 Worship (W) - 3
 Bible Reading/Interpretation (BR) - 4
 Meditation (ME) - 3
 Giving (GI) - 2
 Vulnerability (V) - 2
 Community (C) - 2

Spiritual Maturity -26 statements

Sinnership³ (S) - 3
 Affliction (AF) - 2
 Comforting Others/Mercy (CO) - 4
 Problem Solving (PS) - 3
 Transformation (T) - 3
 Gratitude (GR) - 4
 Humility (HU) - 4
 Delight (D) - 3

Mission – 10 statements

Volunteerism (V) - 2
 Evangelism (E) - 3
 Living for God (LIG) - 3
 Mutual Ministry (MM) - 2

Fruit of the Spirit – 21 statements

Love (L) - 2
 Joy (J) - 2
 Peace (P) - 2
 Patience (PA) - 2
 Kindness (K) - 2
 Goodness (GO) - 2
 Faithfulness (FF) - 2
 Gentleness (GE) - 2

³ Sinnership. I use this term in the book to mean the influence of the “old self” of Eph. 4:22 (See *Love’s Greatest Joy* – chapter 3)

Self Control (SC) - 3
Forgiveness (FR) - 2

Based upon each of these attributes, statements were composed that sought to determine the extent to which that attribute was displayed in the life of the respondent. The statement numbers, the statement and the attributes scored are shown in Appendix A. The statements were then randomized, so that the final questionnaire presented to the participants had statements presented in random order rather than in attribute order. The final questionnaire is also shown in Appendix A.

The SAQ was given to participants to complete during the first session of each group. As the questionnaire contained several pages, participants were also given cards with the rating scheme for each statement as follows:

Please answer the following using a scale of 1 to 6 as indicated below:

- 1 = Definitely not true of me
- 2 = Mostly not true of me
- 3 = Seldom true of me
- 4 = Sometimes true of me
- 5 = Mostly true of me
- 6 = Definitely True of me

Each participant completed the same questionnaire again during the final session of the group. The *pre* session and *post* session results were analyzed and categorized for each participant as outlined in Section 5 - Outcome.

4.3.3 Post Session Feedback

Following the completion of the study, a *Research Group Feedback Questionnaire* was given to each participant to take home and complete. The purpose of this questionnaire was to give participants the opportunity to give feedback on the overall process of participating in the study, to assess the impact on their understanding

of the Christian life and to assess the effect of participating in the study on their walk with God. A ten-point scale was chosen so as to quantify answers to questions that assessed the objectives of the project. In addition, several open-ended questions with an abundance of white space on the form were prepared to elicit overall impressions and to provide an opportunity for candid comments and heartfelt responses.

Nine questions were asked, or input sought, on the following:

1. The amount of time spent by participants on the following aspects of the study: reading, reflecting, journaling, devotional exercises and discussing the material with others outside the group.
2. Participants were asked how much impact did this study have on their understanding of God, love for God, desire to live for God, comfort in trial, personal convictions for living, reaching out to others, developing new spiritual disciplines and delight in God.
3. Participants were asked how much of a difference participating in this study made in their understanding and experience of the need for solitude, salvation, their inner nature, the role of trials and suffering, holiness, prayer, worship, God's word, The Law, The Mission of God, Integrity, Working Hard, Christian Community, God's will and God's eternal purposes.
4. Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of the following aspects of the study on their spiritual growth and closeness to God: reading the chapters, questions for reflection, book feedback at group meetings, large group exercises, small group breakouts, devotional assignments, sharing with friend or spouse, journaling, personal time with God.

5. Participants were asked to describe in their own words the impact that going through this study has made in their lives.
6. Participants were asked if they had embarked on any new initiatives as a result of this study.
7. Participants were asked which chapters of the book impacted them the most and why. (Followed by a list of chapter titles)
8. Participants were asked what changes or suggestions they had for the book or the exercises or any other aspect of the study.
9. Participants were asked to comment on the process of participating in this research study.

A copy of the actual questionnaire is attached in Appendix B.

4.3.4 Post Session Interview

The final step in data collection was a *Post Session Interview* with each of the participants. The purpose of this interview was to provide an opportunity for one-on-one dialog with each participant in order to clarify the results of the *Research Feedback Questionnaire*, to present the results of each participant's pre and post study *Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire* and to authenticate and confirm the results. Data from the questionnaire was presented to the participants using SPC/PI+ Advanced Statistical software (Galicinski 1990). In addition, input was sought from each participant regarding improvements in the material itself or the process. Participants' notes from handouts of the book and study guide also provided opportunities for discussion and feedback.

This interview involved following a series of prepared questions to stimulate discussion and provide uniformity of structure for each participant. As researcher, I used these interview forms to record notes from each interview. The form used for the *Post Session Interview* is shown in Appendix D.

4.4 Participant Recruitment

Two distinct groups of research participants were recruited from the Barrie Christian community. A formal letter of invitation to participate in the study was mailed out to those whom we had contacted by e-mail or by telephone. A copy of the letter of invitation is attached in Appendix C.

Ten participants completed the course of study in the first research group, which met from March 10 to May 12, 2011. The group included three married couples and four individuals, three of whom were currently married, four men and six women. All members were professing Christians with an average age of 59 ranging from 40 to 73. They indicated that they had been baptized followers of Jesus Christ ranging from 18 to 59 years with an average of 34 years. They attended three different churches. The breadth of Christian maturity and experience was seen to be an asset in providing mature and seasoned input on the book, the study guide and the process.

Ten individuals comprising the second participant group began the study on September 28, 2011. One participant dropped out after four weeks for personal reasons. Nine completed the study on November 16, 2011. This second group consisted of four men and five women, and included two married couples. They were also recruited from the Christian community in Barrie and attended four different churches. The average

age of this group was 55 with a range from 42 to 63 years. All were baptized followers of Christ for an average of 17 years ranging from 2.5 to 27 years.

4.5 Action Research Cycles

Each of the two research groups met together for two hours each week for ten weeks. The first meeting was introductory and included time for each participant to complete the *Informed Consent* form and the *Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire* (SAQ) (see Appendices E and A). During this session participants received an orientation, which included a detailed review of the *Informed Consent* form, the purpose of the study, expectations of the participants and an opportunity to ask questions about the process. Each participant was given a three ring binder, which included the Preface and the first chapter of the book and study guide. The material was printed so that each page had two-inch margins on all sides giving participants much room to make notes right in the binders. In addition, each participant was given a wire bound personal journal in which to write answers to questions, reflections and observations. Participants were told that whatever they wrote in their journals would be strictly private and that they would not be asked to turn them in, but that they were for their own personal edification. Anything that they wanted to share with the group would be at their own discretion. Participants were also instructed on the importance and necessity to maintain absolute confidentiality with respect to anything that was shared in the open group and the small group breakouts. Participants were asked to read the book chapter and to set aside one hour each day for reading, reflecting, answering the questions for personal reflection and doing the spiritual exercises assigned during group sessions. The post study feedback questionnaire contained a question that sought input as to how much time was

actually spent (see section 5.1.2). They were also invited to identify one person, who might be a friend or a spouse, with whom they would meet each week and share one thing that they were learning as a result of this study. This would provide an opportunity for them to impact others beyond the group itself. Feedback was also obtained in how much time they spent sharing with a friend (see 5.1.2).

The first session was begun and concluded in prayer for each individual, for the group as a whole and for the process of participating together in this study and for the objective of drawing the group closer in relationship to God and to one another.

Each of the eight working sessions followed a general pattern of :

1. Life report - prayer requests and time of prayer (10 minutes)
2. Feedback on reading the chapter – things that struck you or confused you (50 minutes)
3. Large Group Spiritual Exercise – (40 minutes)
4. Small Group Breakout (same gender) Exercise (20 minutes)

This pattern was designed to provide a balance between time for reflection and feedback on the content of the chapters and time spent doing the spiritual exercises in the large and small group format. It was during these sessions that the researcher received the most important input as to how people were responding to the material and to effectiveness of the exercises. This data was recorded in the researcher's own copy of the book/study guide and in his own journal. It provided the bulk of the specific data, which was then used in the adjustment and refinement phase (see below).

The final meeting was used to solicit general feedback on the book, the study guide and the process of participating in the research study. In addition, participants completed the SAQ again. They were also invited to share with the group, the impact

that participating in this study made on their own life and the lives of those with whom they may have shared the material.

4.6 Adjustment and Refinement

Adjustment and refinement of the material occurred as a result of the input received from the weekly sessions and the total sum of the data received from all sources. Because the writing process overlapped the first action research cycle, the feedback and data received from each weekly session had a direct impact on the writing of the next chapter of the book. For the second research group, the feedback received impacted the editing and refinement of subsequent chapters, which occurred while the second group was participating in the study. The details of this evaluating and constructing are described in Chapter 5 – Outcomes & Analysis.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

It has been an important consideration of this project to protect the human dignity and best interests of those volunteers (the participants) who participated in the action research groups. *The Tri-Council Policy Statement regarding Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* was used to guide the process of providing full disclosure to the participants of the benefits and risks of participating in this study and in obtaining a fully informed consent from each person prior to participating in the study (Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, December, 2010). This has been done in several ways.

At the first meeting of the participants, participants were read each paragraph of the *Informed Consent Form* that was designed specifically for this project under the

guidelines of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (see Appendix E). After each paragraph was read, participants were asked whether they understood the paragraph and were given an opportunity to ask questions for clarification. This process took about thirty minutes.

As part of this process, the researcher described the risks to the participants in detail. These included the voluntary disclosure of very personal information by the participant, which may make that person feel vulnerable before other members of the group. Participation in this study might also cause the participant to change one's own values and beliefs about God and His call on one's life. This might affect one's relationships with others who may not understand or empathize with such spiritual development. There is also a risk that one might not agree with the material being presented causing an adverse emotional response. One might also not foresee the impact that participating in the spiritual exercises might make on one's life. The researcher provided an opportunity to the participants to ask questions regarding these risks.

During this initial meeting, the researcher also described the benefits that the participants would likely receive as a result of their participation. It was likely that participation in the study would enhance each one's spiritual development and relationship with God and others. It would likely improve the contents of material and so make a positive contribution to the discipleship of other believers. It would add to the body of knowledge about discipleship training. In addition, it was communicated to participants that the results of this study would be published in a thesis, which would allow the researcher to fulfill the requirements of a Doctor or Ministry degree.

All of the potential participants agreed to participate in the study, giving their consent, which was an indication that they perceived that the potential benefits outweighed the risks.

In addition, every effort was made to minimize these risks through interviews of potential participants and the exercise of discernment in the selection of individuals who would participate in the study. Some potential candidates were rejected for reasons of possible risk to other participants.

The researcher also informed the participants of his intention to maintain absolute confidentiality and anonymity in this project report. No one reading the report would be able to identify any individual participant. The researcher alone would have access to the data generated by their participation.

The researcher emphasized the importance of the group members maintaining confidentiality with respect to one another. Each participant was asked to covenant that nothing shared in the study group was to be shared with anyone outside the group.

The researcher also stressed the voluntary nature of participation in the study. Participants were told that any participant was free to withdraw from the study at any time. All data from any withdrawing participant would be destroyed once they had indicated his or her intention to withdraw. Every participant indicated by signing the consent form that they understood clearly that continued participation in the study was at one's sole discretion.

The nature of the relationship between the researcher and several of the participants was one of being a co-participant in a house church, which has no formal organizational structure or membership. Hence the interaction between the researcher and participants was an extension of this informal relationship. The remainder of the

participants attended other churches and had no ongoing relationship with the researcher.

Participants were told that the personal journals of participants would not be examined in any way. These journals were for their private reflective use and would remain in their possession at all times.

They were also told that anything that they volunteered to share verbally was at their sole discretion and would be used in the report at the discretion of the researcher, but without disclosing anyone's identity.

Participants were then asked to sign two copies of the consent form and were eyewitnesses of each other's consent. The researcher signed both copies and each participant retained a copy, signed by both parties. These informed consent forms are on file with the researcher.

For the above reasons, it is evident that every member of the group received full disclosure as to the risks and potential benefits of participating in the study and of his or her obligations with regard to confidentiality as well of his or her freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without censure or embarrassment.

Chapter 5 – Outcomes & Analysis

In this chapter, the outcomes of the three action research cycles that are a part of this project are examined, beginning with the participants' learning cycle, then the core cycle of constructing, writing, conducting/evaluating, and refining the material and finally the thesis cycle, examining the action research process as a way of writing a monograph. The analysis and reflection on each cycle is designed to provide both objective and subjective insight into the effectiveness of the book and study guide and of the project as a whole.

5.1 Participants' Learning Cycle

In section one, seven specific objectives for the book and study guide were articulated. (See pages 7 and 8) These had to do with motivation, grounding, transformation, comfort, discipline, delight and action. The evaluation of these objectives necessitated asking certain questions with respect to the participants of the study. Three questions that related to the participants' action learning cycle are discussed:

1. What impact did participating in the study have on the participants? (i.e. What did they learn?)
2. How did this impact occur? (How did they learn?)
3. How did the participants respond to the research process?

In order to answer these questions, quantitative and qualitative data was examined in order to provide insight to these questions.

The source of this data was:

1. The Post Study Questionnaire, which collected both quantitative and qualitative data.
2. The Post Session Interview (qualitative data).
3. Each participants' book margin notes (qualitative data).
4. The Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (pre and post study) and associated statistical analysis (quantitative and qualitative data).
5. Research observation notes (qualitative).
6. Informal data collected through ad hoc comments and observations (qualitative).

5.1.1 What was the Impact?

The most direct source of data regarding the impact of the study was from question two of the Post Study Questionnaire: *“How much of an impact did participating in this study make to your: ...?”* (followed by a list of items related to the study objectives – see Appendix B). Participants were asked to rate each on a scale of one to ten, where one indicated “No Difference”, five indicated a “Moderate Difference” and ten indicated a “Huge Difference”. The frequency distribution of replies is shown in the form of histograms for each item reproduced in Appendix H. The percentage of participants that indicated a moderate to huge impact (rating from five to ten) was:

Motivation to live for God	91%
Developing New Spiritual Disciplines	89%
Comfort in Trials	83%
Delight in God	78%
Reaching out to others (Action)	78%
Grounding (Understand God's Character)	72%

Ninety-one percent of the participants (n=19) indicated a moderate to huge impact on their motivation to live for God, indicating that, without a doubt, the objective of motivation to grow spiritually and draw near to God was met. This parameter was measured using responses from three categories, *Desire to Live for God*, *Love for God* and *Personal Convictions for Living*. This was confirmed by *Post Study Questionnaire* and interview comments such as:

Going through this study has given me a greater desire to be in God's word daily.... When I read I really enjoy it and want to know Him more and I have a desire to obey . I think about God throughout the day, talk with Him and have a more profound experience of Him.

Attending the study has allowed me to spend more time learning more about our God, thus making my walk with the Lord closer.

This study opened my eyes and heart regarding personal convictions, a desire to live for God. It also provided me with a process for growth in these areas.

Being far from God when I started, I am blessed to have gone through this study. I have been drawn back to quiet times with the Lord. Reading His word, walking in Truth has saved me!

It was so amazing, I was awestruck so often. I have realized that there is so much more that I can do to draw near to God.

This was a profound experience for me – helped me put my life in perspective with Christ's life. His life overshadows mine.

Studying this important information over a short period of time did help me grow in focus.

This book was very impactful and made a difference on so many levels, realigning and grounding me back to Christ...

I have learned so much about different aspects of the Christian life.

I have experienced significant growth in understanding.

Motivated me to want to grow further.

I have become more focused and reflective.

Rekindled my love for God.

Re-centered my life around Christ.

The full participant impact statements from the Post Study Feedback Questionnaire are shown in APPENDIX G.

Almost ninety percent of the participants indicated a moderate to huge impact on the development of new spiritual disciplines. This is confirmation that this objective was met. Participants identified that they learned how to spend time alone with God, using breath prayers, praying scripture, meditating on passages using Holy Reading and fasting as new found practices. In addition, the greatest aspect of the study in effectiveness (question 4 of the Post Session Questionnaire) was identified as participants' *time alone with God* (average 7.32 on a scale of 1 to 10). Almost equal in impact was the *reading the book chapters* (average 7.2). It is clear that the reading the chapters and engaging in personal devotions had a major impact on the spiritual life of the participants. Several participants also noted that they had begun the practice of regular fasting as a result of taking the study.

Participants' comments regarding the development of spiritual disciplines were:

For me it was the process, the structure – how to pray – It gave me a newfound joy that I can have by receiving His love by going to prayer – instead of trying to fix things, I now go to prayer.

To my surprise, I began to feel deeply moved when I began to use the formula for a quiet time.... This breath prayer corrected my perspective. Another revelation for me was through the Prayer of Examen.

I have begun fasting with prayer.

I never understood fasting before, thought it was cultural thing, now I fast to draw close to God.

Fifteen of nineteen participants in the groups indicated a moderate to huge impact on three objectives, comfort in trial, delight in God and reaching out to others. This indicates that these objectives were met for most of the participants.

Participants' comments that exemplify changes in these areas are:

I was on the borderline of depression and uncertainty in my life and in my walk when I started this study. ... I have experienced significant growth in understanding that led me to feeling that a cloud was lifting, healing was taking place in some areas of my life and a grounding was taking place. I am truly blessed by this experience.

I am more at peace with where I am and who I am as a child of God.... The study has helped me focus my eyes on Jesus and the reason to run.

[I have an] understanding that we have been /are being sent by God out into the harvest and [have been given] the practical authentic application with how to do this, following Christ's model.

[I need to] be more conscious of the people in my neighborhood, to take more time to talk with them. To be there for my children and grandchildren - to pray for them consistently.

Seventy-two percent of the participants indicated a moderate to huge impact on grounding in the Christian faith. Given the age maturity (Average: 59 and 54) and years as believers (Average: 34 and 17) for each group, this is remarkable. Post study statements from participants also confirm this. One, who had been a believer for over 40 years remarked:

I had no idea that there would be such a battle [within the heart of the believer]. I was looking at life through rose-colored glasses. I had no idea that Satan would use my sinful self against me.

Others said:

I had heard all about God's love before, but it made a real impression on me. When we reject God's love, it causes Him great pain. God really suffers for us in real time.

I have a better understanding of the danger from within. I am better able to release people and situations to God.

I want to focus on the discipline of remembrance and make the cross the defining operational reality of my life.

Another data source that shed light on what aspects of faith and life were most impacted, was question three of the post study feedback questionnaire. This question asked the participants to rate on a scale of one to ten the difference that participating in the study had made in their understanding and experience in a number of aspects of faith and life. The results for this question are presented in a series of histograms in Appendix H. These items are listed below in order of greatest impact to least. The average rating on the scale of one to ten is given for each in Table 2.

Table 2. Average Ratings on a Scale of One to Ten of the Difference that Participating in the Study Made to the following:
(decreasing order of rating)

1. Your Mission	8.33
2. Fasting	8.0
3. Prayer	7.21
4. Need for Solitude	7.20
5. God's Word	7.14
6. Your Inner Nature	7.0
7. The Law	6.76
8. Holiness	6.76
9. God's Will	6.76
10. Sin	6.7
11. Christian Community	6.7
12. Integrity	6.47
13. Worship	6.41
14. Salvation	6.02
15. Trials & Suffering	5.82

Three of the five top-rated items are related to spiritual disciplines, fasting, prayer and solitude. The top item was a sense of mission (being sent out into the world to make disciples), which was the focus of the final chapter of the study. These very high average ratings are another indication that the objective of developing spiritual disciplines was substantially met.

Another question in the post study feedback questionnaire focused on which chapters of the book impacted the participant the most.

The chapters that received the most indications of greatest impact were (descending order of impact) :

3. The Battle Within – The Victory of love	10
4. The Presence of God – The Peace of Love	6
1. God’s Amazing Love	5
6. The Word of God – The Nourishment of Love	5
7. Love’s Rule – The Disciplines of Love	4
8. Mission and Community – The Expression of Love	4
2. Transformation - the Purpose of Love	3
5. Prayer and Worship – The Breath of Love	3

It appears that participants were most impacted by differing chapters depending on how the Holy Spirit was working in them to bring new insights to their understanding on the Christian life. The *Battle Within* chapter received the most mention. This chapter focused on the presence of indwelling sin in the heart of the believer and the dual responsibilities of mortification and vivification. The Puritan formulas for resisting temptation and becoming aware of the inner action of the sin nature as well as living a life of constant vigilance were deeply appreciated. The section on forgiveness in the chapter entitled *The Presence of God – The Peace of Love* was also mentioned many times as having great impact. During the second session, a

member of the group called me in tears after having read the section on forgiveness.

This member had been receiving Christian counseling for a number of months and still had not understood the true nature of forgiveness as a release to God. The person was overwhelmed with joy and release after having read this chapter.

Another valuable source of data on the impact of the study was from the participants' notes made in their own copies of the book and study guide. These were reproduced on letter size paper with two-inch margins, to give ample room for notes. The participants volunteered their books at the end of the study, so that the researcher could observe their notes. Generally the notes made were of three types. The first was notations of typing, grammatical and Bible reference errors. The second was underlining or highlighting of certain portions, indicating that a particular statement was noteworthy. The third was reactions, both positive and negative to the material in the form of detailed notes. This material was of great value in the refining and editing process for the second revision of the material. It provided the researcher with insight as to what to cut, what to expand upon and what to clarify. It also allowed for the correction of errors. In addition, these notes gave the researcher much insight into what was impacting the participants and how. Because the volume of such data is enormous, it is difficult to synthesize concisely. A few examples of these notes follow to provide a sampling.

Powerful, convicting, convincing. Needed to hear this.

I was intrigued by this very much, because I have personally witnessed this despair in people that I have known.

Excellent!

This whole page was very well written. Easy to understand and I learned something here.

How does this apply to God, His knowing us? He is not changed by knowing us, but we are changed by knowing Him.

I'm sorry, but all this is way over my head.

I got so excited reading this paragraph.

5.1.1.1 *Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)*

The major source of quantitative data regarding the impact of the study was obtained from the results of the SAQ. This questionnaire was designed to assess thirty-eight categories of personal spiritual characteristics grouped into six summary categories: *Grounding, Religious Affections, Devotional Practices, Maturity, Mission and Fruit of the Spirit* (see pages 80-82). The questionnaire was filled out by the participants prior to embarking on the study (*Pre* results) and again after completing the study (*Post* results). A spreadsheet program was used to summarize and score the data and the results were analyzed and presented using *SPC/PI+ Advanced Statistical Software* (Galicinski 1990). The results for each participant are shown in Appendix F. Each participant was shown his or her own results at the post session interview where these results were explained in detail. In addition, statistical tests of significance were performed on paired data sets comparing Post and Pre results by category and by summary categories for each participant. The statistical significance tests were performed using a probability threshold of $P=.05$, which means that the results are considered statistically valid 19 times out of 20 and or have a 5% chance of a false indication. Tests were performed using *SPC/PI+ Software* by Qualitran Inc. (Galicinski 1990, 38). The results of the statistical tests are shown in Appendix F for each participant (upper center of each page).

The tests showed a statistically significant increase in overall scores for ten out of nineteen participants (53%) for *all categories* as well as for the *summary categories*. The amount of increase ranged from 10 to 35%. Seven of the nineteen (32%) showed a statistically significant increase in one or more category, but no significant change in all categories taken together nor in summary categories. Two of the nineteen (10%) showed no significant change in any category. One participant (5.2%) showed a statistically significant decrease in one summary category (Fruit of the Spirit).

In summary, there were statistically significant increases in scores in one or more category for sixteen of nineteen participants (85%). These statistics are summarized in Table 3 below. Each chart was reviewed with each participant during the post study interview (Appendix F – lower center Shewhart control chart) (Shewhart 1931; Galicinski 1988; Galicinski 1990).

Table 3: SAQ Statistical Test Summary

Percentage of 19 participants in which there were statistically significant changes in scores between the Post and Pre Study Assessments using p value = .05

- 53% - Significant increase in category and summary scores of 10-35%
- 32% – Significant increase in one or more category
no change in all categories taken together or in summary categories
- 10% - no significant change in any category
no significant change in all categories taken together
- 5% - significant decrease in one summary category (no change in others)

Figure 5, following, indicates the types of instances where a statistically significant increase in a category score was observed. Those categories that showed the

greatest frequency of change were Transformation (6 participants), Self Denial (6), Forgiveness (6) and Kindness (4).

Figure 5

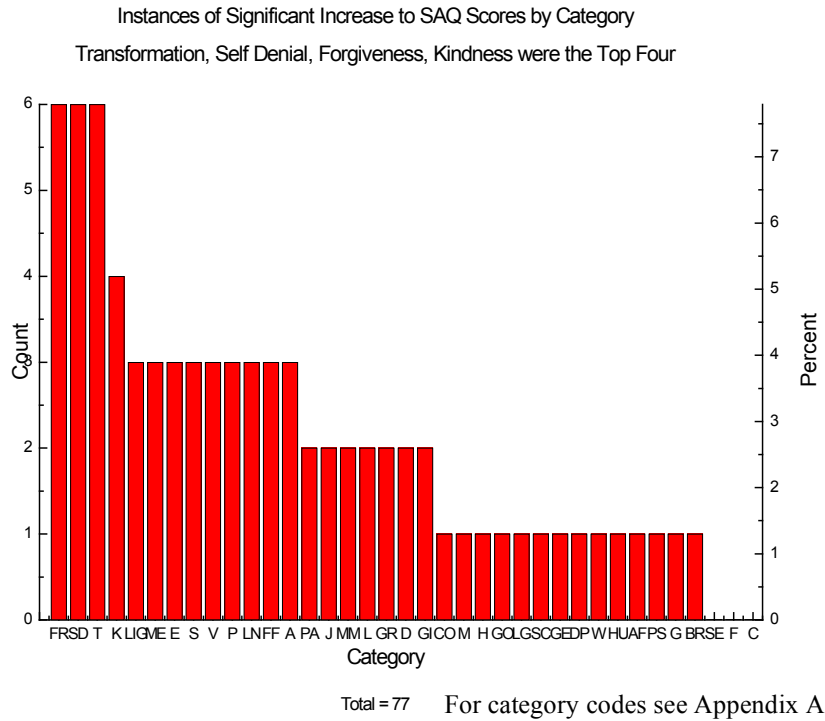


Figure 6, following, shows the number of instances of a statistically significant *decrease* in category scores was observed. The total number of statistically significant *decreases* in SAQ category scores was 14. The total number of occurrences of statistically significant *increases* in SAQ category scores was 77. Figure 7 shows the ratio of instances of significant increases to decreases.

Figure 6 – for category codes see Appendix A

Instances of a Significant Decrease in SAQ Score by Category
Pareto Chart

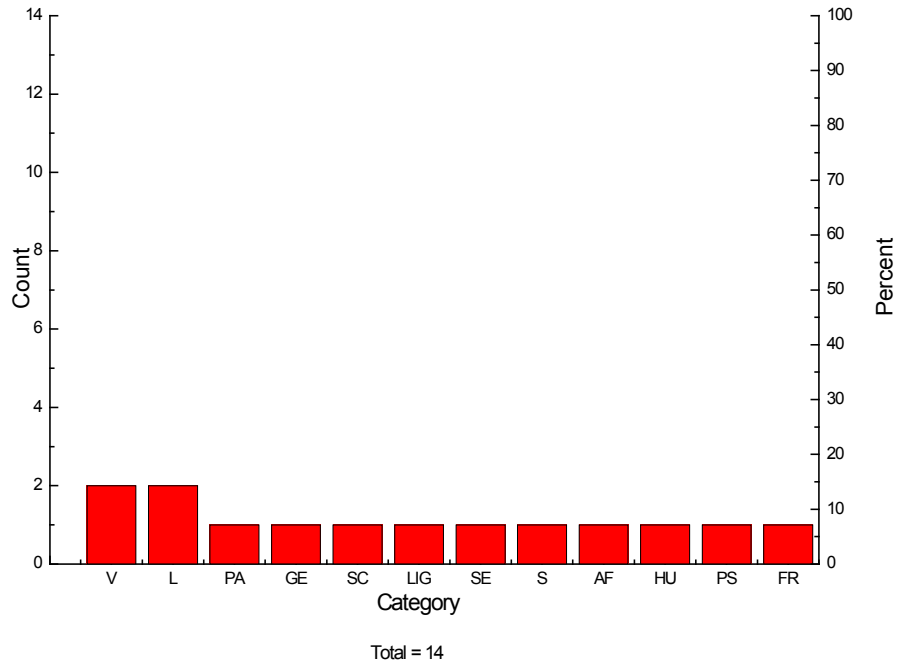
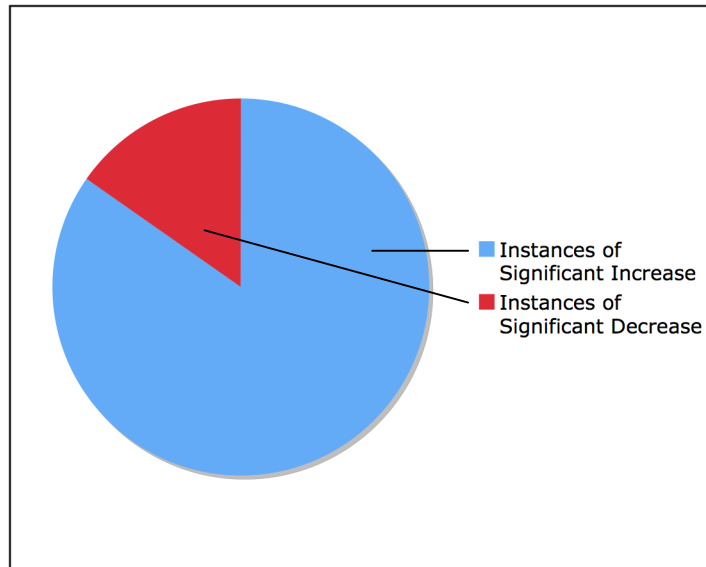


Figure 7 – Ratio of Significant Increases to Decreases



The results of instances of increase and/or decrease were shown to each participant during the post session interviews and confirmation and explanatory comments were sought. It was during these interviews that an interesting phenomenon was observed among those whose paired scores (post –pre) had shown no statistical difference or a decrease in one or more categories. The one participant whose SAQ scores overall indicated a statistically significant *decrease* after the study indicated in her post study interview that she had become “so much more self aware”. She said,

I have had a tendency to believe that I was OK because of all the things that I was doing, but now I am asking myself the deeper questions. I am more critical of myself.... There has been a real humbling.

This person’s scores in the one summary category *Fruit of the Spirit* dropped significantly after the study. In addition, her pre-study scores were quite high (average 5.28 on scale of 1 to 6). By her own admission, after the study, her self-assessment was significantly lower and became more realistic (average 5.02).

Another participant had rated herself quite highly in the pre-study questionnaire in many questions (average 5.23). After the study, her self-assessments showed significant increases in two categories (Giving and Humility) and a statistically significant decrease in two other categories (Evangelism and Love). In the post study interview she admitted that her initial impression of herself was inflated.

Before the study, I was feeling self assured in my relationship, but have now been brought into a new place of understanding of how weak and needy I really am before God. I felt God speak to me and say “Who do you think you are?”

This raises an interesting issue in spiritual self-assessments as a whole. If it is true that the closer that one gets to God, the more one is aware of one’s own poverty

before God, then we might well expect to see self-assessments adjusted down for those who are self assured of their own spirituality when they come into the study. Their scores would understandably come down once new knowledge and conviction bring about a new humility and a truer awareness of self. Three scriptures that come to mind are:

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
(Matt. 5:3)

For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.
(Revelation 3:17)

People have varying degrees of difficulty in seeing themselves clearly. For those who start with lower self-assessment scores (average 3.0 to 4.5), there is room to move upwards. For those whose scores are initially high, scores can only remain the same or come down. If the impact of the Holy Spirit's work throughout the study is a humbling and a more realistic view of self, then one would expect scores to come down for these people. This phenomenon is defined as *Realistic Self-Adjustment*. In the example of the second participant described above, humility scores went up significantly as a confirmation of a new found poverty of spirit. In addition, in her post session interview, she committed herself to giving more to God and the poor and this was consistent with her giving score also going up significantly. Also, her evangelism and love scores went down significantly because she realized how little she really loved and how much more she needed to reach out to people. She said, "I have realized that I need to be out there more sharing my faith and giving of myself."

It is possible that this phenomenon was operating to some extent in some or all of the participants, and may be a factor in why some scores showed no significant

difference and in some cases actually went down. In the post session interviews, as their questionnaire results were shared, several participants indicated similar sentiments. One would expect that a positive result in spiritual growth is a new sense of ones' poverty before God, which is manifest in lower SAQ scores. This phenomenon adds another variable to those, which must be considered in analyzing the results of such self-assessments.

In interpreting this data, we can be confident in the statistical tests results as to whether or not there has been a significant statistical difference pre and post study. However determining the cause of such differences is highly speculative. There are many factors that could affect a person's self-assessment score. These are:

1. The level of spiritual well being that a person has when they complete the questionnaire. This can vary greatly from day to day. If one is feeling particularly good about their own spirituality on a particular day, they might rate oneself higher than on another day when they are feeling low.
2. The Likert scale itself is subject to interpretation because assigning a meaning to "seldom true of me" or "mostly true of me" can vary greatly by individual.
3. The Realistic Self Adjustment phenomenon described above can make interpretation of differences after a spiritual intervention (such as the study) challenging. As people grow in humility and poverty of spirit, their self-assessment scores may drop.
4. Desirability bias can affect the score that participants give. Participants may understand that the researcher has an expectation that measures of spiritual maturity and practice will increase after such a study. Participants might be

subconsciously predisposed to rate themselves higher after the study than before. Moreover, those who understand that poverty of spirit is desirable may rate themselves lower.

5. There is a genuine change in maturity or practice of the participants, which causes a difference in their scores.

In order to make valid observations from such data, the self-assessment process must be done in a way that minimizes the effects of factors 1 to 4 and maximizes the effect of factor 5, which is what the assessment is trying to measure. For this reason, a number of strategies have been adopted. First, the actual score are not to be considered significant, but the change in score from post to pre study. This minimizes the effect of factors 1 and 2. Secondly, the questionnaire has been designed with one hundred questions and administered at an interval of nine weeks apart. It is unlikely that participants would be able to “remember” how they scored a particular item the first time that they took the assessment. Thirdly, many assessment items were negatively worded so that higher numbers actually resulted in a lower score. Fourthly, the questionnaire was randomized, so that there were no patterns to the questions. Fifthly, the result of each self-assessment was shown and explained in detail to each participant using the charts shown in Appendix F. Notes were made as to whether the participant verified changes in scores that the data indicated. These notes indicated that each participant did confirm that most of the changes reflected by the data were valid indicators of a change. However, some participants had no idea why certain scores increased or decreased. These unexplainable changes were likely due to one of the variability factors. Finally, given the age and independence of the participants (average age was 57, average years as a believer was 20), it is unlikely that these are the type of

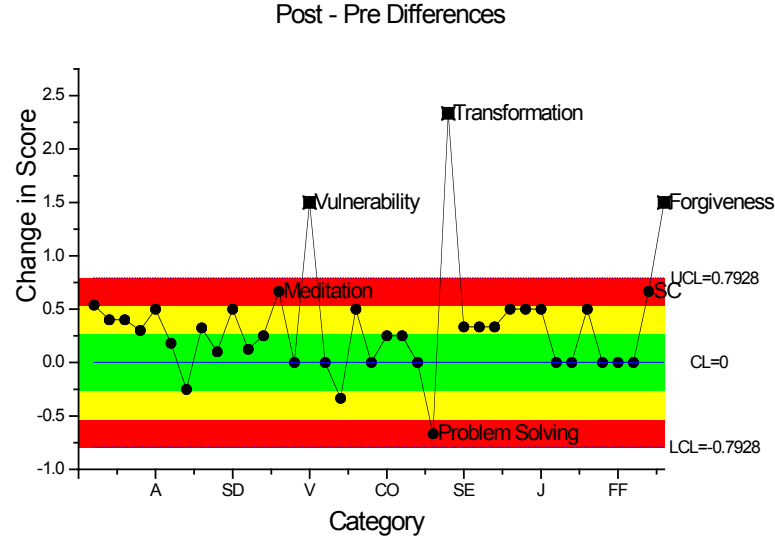
people who would be subject to any motivation to bias the results to please the researcher.

The results of the SAQ process are shown in Appendix F. The results for one participant are described below as an example.

On the right side of each SAQ chart page are the scores by category for the pre-study questionnaire (top) and the post-study questionnaire (bottom). The centerline for each chart is 3.5, the indifference center on the Likert scale of 1 to 6. The zone from the center to the maximum and minimum is divided into three equal parts. The inner zone (inner one third) represents little conviction about the item assessed, the middle zone, moderate conviction and the outer zone (outer third), a strong conviction. The positive direction is above and the negative direction below the centerline. As stated previously, the absolute scores are difficult to assess because of the variability due to the many factors listed above.

Most significant is the change in scores by category for the pre and post assessments. For the first participant, these are shown on the chart, *One Participant's Change in SAQ Scores*, which is plotted in the lower center of each page (see page F-1). It is reproduced following in Figure 8.

Figure 8: One Participant's Change in SAQ Scores



The upper and lower control limits for this chart are Shewhart individual control limits using three standard deviations, which represent 99.7% of the natural variation in category scores. They are calculated using the moving ranges between successive category scores and predict the category score variation (Galicinski, 1992,43). Statistically, any plot point outside these limits represents a significant change due to a special cause (997 times out of 1000). Any plot in the outer zone is statistically significant 19 times out of 20 (Galicinski 1992, 32). In this case there are three categories, which show a very significant change (outside the limits) and three that show a significant change (red zone). These are labelled on the chart as Vulnerability, Transformation and Forgiveness, Meditation and Self Control. One category, Problem Solving, showed a decrease. In addition, it can be seen visually that most of the plot points (26 of 38) are above the centerline, nine are on the centerline and only three are below. This indicates that, in 26 of 38 categories, there was a modest increase in self-assessment score. Nine categories indicated no change and three indicated a decrease.

However, it should be noted that the amount of change is due to natural randomness for those in the inner and middle zones and only points in the outer zone could be interpreted as statistically significant (19 times out of 20).

When this result was shown to the participant, comments were solicited. In this example participant responded as follows:

With respect to increase in Transformation: “God is really working in me. I am being changed.”

With respect to increase in Vulnerability: “I now know that I have to be more open and vulnerable.”

With respect to increase in Forgiveness: “I now release hurts to God.”

In this way, the significance of the assessment results were verified by the participant and are a confirmation of change.

To assess the overall impact across all categories taken together, statistical tests of significance were performed with category scores paired before and after the study. The results of the paired statistical t-tests by category, post and pre, are shown in the upper center of each chart page and are reproduced below for the first participant.

Paired t-Test on Data1 Pre and Data1 Post

	mean	std. dev.	N
Pre	4.05358	0.87265	38
Post	4.39662	0.63497	38

t = -4.04462

p = 2.55633E-4

At the 0.05 level The two means are significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data2 B and Data2 C

	mean	std. dev.	N
B	4.11884	0.59818	6
C	4.53799	0.57339	6

t = -6.65546

p = 0.00116

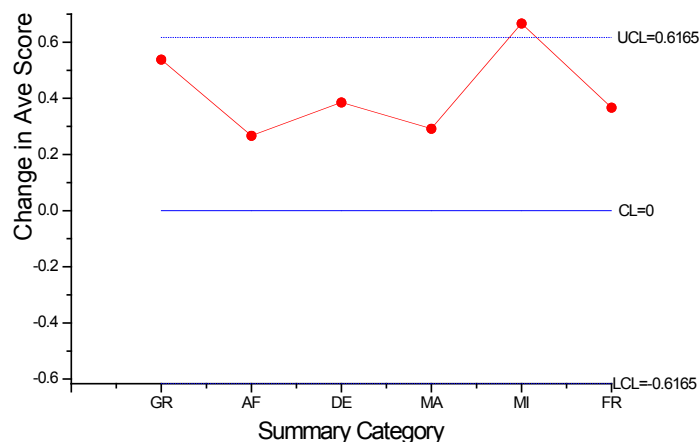
At the 0.05 level The two means are significantly different

Here the first set of results indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the average of all categories before and after the study. The average has increased from 4.05 to 4.39. The p value is .000255 indicating that the probability that this increase could be due to randomness is 2.55 in 10,000.

The second set of results looks at the six summary categories, Grounding, Religious Affections, Devotional Practices, Maturity, Mission, and Fruit of the Spirit. The results show a statistically significant increase in the average score by category from 4.12 to 4.53. The p value is .00116 indicating that the probability that this change could be due to randomness is 1.16 in 1000.

The results by category are also plotted on a Shewhart control chart (Shewhart 1931) shown on the upper left of each page in Appendix F. The plot for the first participant is reproduced below in Figure 9.

Figure 9: One Participant's Change in Summary Categories Score



Note that all plot points are above the zero (center) line. This indicates that there has been an increase in summary averages for each summary category.

While the data above certainly indicates that there has been a change in assessment scores after the study, the data itself does not indicate the cause of the change. However, the qualitative data taken from statements made by the participant confirms that there has indeed been a positive change in spiritual growth. For the participant above, the following statement was written in answer to the post session feedback question on what impact the study had on that participant's life.

Going through this study has given me a greater desire to be in God's word daily. To worship Him in song! I delight when He gives me understanding. I have never read a book on discipleship before. This study has already been of benefit to me and I am sure will be to many new as well as older Christians.

This participant is just one example of the nineteen who completed the study as part of this project. The charts for each participant are given in Appendix F. Examining these charts closely reveals a great deal of data regarding each participant's scores before and after the study. The charts can be used to ascertain that a change did or did not occur, but only direct data from each participant can shed light on possible causes of these changes.

5.1.2 How Did This Impact Occur?

The second question to be considered for the participants' learning cycle was "How did this impact occur?" Which aspects of the study experience contributed to the learning and discovery process? Question four of the Post Study Feedback questionnaire was designed to assess this question. Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of the various aspects of the study in their spiritual growth and closeness

to God, using a scale of one to ten where one indicated not effective, five indicated moderately effective and ten indicated extremely effective.

The results are shown in a series of Histograms shown in Appendix H. The average ratings for each item are also shown. To summarize, the following aspects of the study had the greatest impact.

They are listed in order from greatest effectiveness to least.

1. Reading the Chapters – average 7.72
2. Your Own time with God – average 7.32
3. Book Feedback Discussions – average 6.91
4. Sharing with a friend/spouse – average 6.47
5. Questions for Reflection – average 6.44
6. Devotional Assignments – average 6.38
7. Large Group Exercises – average 5.92
8. Small Group Breakouts – average 5.75
9. Journaling – average 5.63

Reading the chapters, participants' own time with God, and the book feedback discussions had the greatest impact with ratings from the 6.91 to 7.72. The many notations in each participant's copy of the book as well as the comments made in the post session interview confirmed this observation. In addition, the way that the study was designed, participants were expected to read the material, reflect on it, make notes, and come prepared to discuss what they had read. Participants indicated that they had spent an average of 3.6 hours each week reading each chapter of 20-30 pages (question # 1 of Research Feedback Questionnaire). This ranged by participants from one to eleven hours. It is not surprising then that the actual reading process was rated as one of the most significant in the learning process. Secondly, participants were expected to respond to the material on a weekly basis by observing a devotional time of solitude daily during which they participated in the assigned spiritual exercises. They indicated

that they had spent an average of 2.3 hours each week doing the devotional exercises. Together with the reading time, this represents an average of 5.9 hours each week or approximately one hour each day. Just less than half (39%) of this time was spent doing the devotional exercises. Hence, time spent alone with God was a very significant aspect of the study. Many participants commented that they had never before participated in spiritual exercises that were so structured. The importance of doing the exercises was continually stressed each week at the meetings, encouraging participants to ensure that they spent time alone with God doing the exercises. These exercises were very specific and featured Holy Reading, structured prayers, times of reflection related to the chapter content and, for the second group, fasting (a section on fasting was added to chapter four after the first group). Comments from participants indicated that, had the exercises not been done, the effectiveness of the entire study would have been greatly diminished. Some participants indicated that the exercises took more time than they would normally spend.

The weekly book chapter feedback discussions were rated an average of 6.91 on the effectiveness scale of 1 to 10. These discussions provide the bulk of the data that were used to rewrite, edit and modify the chapter content. This was extremely valuable in the writing process. The pattern that was followed each week was to go around the group and ask for a brief summary of the overall impact of the chapter that had just been read. Then, the group would go through the chapter page by page, summarizing the main idea of each section and providing feedback on readability, theological content, reactions, likes and dislikes. Often, the group discussion would settle in on one topic and strong direction was required to keep the discussion focused and fluid. While 45 minutes had been allocated for this process each week, the group would often spend

an hour or more, which reduced the amount of time available for large group and small group exercises. During this time, many concepts were clarified and driven home for the participants. Providing such a venue for readers who would simply have the book available would require the production of short videos that would summarize and review the main ideas of each chapter. The idea to produce such videos and distribute them via website or DVD disk came from one of the members of the group. This idea has great merit and will be implemented during the publication of the book.

The next most effective aspect of the study was sharing what they had learned with a friend or spouse, answering the questions for reflection, and devotional assignments, all of which were rated around 6.5 on the scale of 1 to 10. Participants indicated that they had spent on average 0.8 hrs sharing what they were learning with a friend. This ranged from fifteen minutes to two hours among the participants. It confirmed that for some this was a significant aspect of the study. Several participants indicated in their post interview comments that sharing what they were learning forced them to articulate not only the knowledge gained, but also the effect that this had on them personally. Throughout the group meetings and in the post session interviews, participants indicated that they “got a lot out of” the *Questions for Reflection*. The questions were designed to reinforce learning by asking participants to apply the read material to their own current life situation. In addition, they were asked to answer these questions in their journals, which developed the practice of writing and reflecting on spiritual issues in a personal journal. These journals were given to participants at the start of the study. They were told that these journals would be confidential and that they would not be asked to disclose anything written therein, other than what they might volunteer in the group discussions. One participant said in the post session interview

that discovering the journaling process was the single biggest take-away from the study. The participants indicated that the average time that they spent journaling was 1.03 hours each week.

Large Group Exercises, Small Group Breakouts and Journaling all scored in the range of 5.92 to 5.63 on the scale of 1 to 10. This scale indicated a rating of 5 as having “moderate impact”. It was not that these elements had little impact but that they were not ranked as highly as the others. Both the large group exercises and the small group breakouts, were occasionally cut short because too much time was taken in providing chapter feedback. On some evenings, small group breakouts were omitted due to time constraints. For these reasons, it is not surprising that these were ranked as less effective than other elements, which received more time. A two-hour time frame for each weekly group session was not quite enough, given the scope of the agenda each evening. During the second group, more discipline was exercised in limiting the book feedback discussions so that these exercises would be given more time. In the study guide, the large group exercises are entitled *Individual or Large Group Exercises*. These exercises could also be done individually in a situation where more time would be available. Modifications were made to some of these exercises in order to shorten them for the second group.

5.1.3 Participants’ Response to the Research Process

The Post Study Feedback Questionnaire devoted an entire page to asking participants to comment on the process of participating in this research study (item #9, Appendix B). The responses were generally detailed and reflective. They are reproduced in Appendix I. These comments were also reviewed in the post session

interviews. All of the participants who completed the research process indicated that it was a positive experience. Some used words such as “wonderful privilege”, “very interesting”, “finished too quickly”, “challenged me”, “intense” to describe the experience. Several expressed a newfound understanding of the amount of work and research involved in writing a book. Another common theme was an underestimation of the amount of effort that was required of them. Some found themselves feeling guilty for not having enough time available. Participants indicated that they had invested an average of 7.16 hrs (ranging from 2 to 15 hours) in the study in addition to the two hour weekly meeting. This is a very significant investment by some members and is an indication of the devotion of some members to the process.

One tension expressed by participants was created by the dual objectives asked of them to simultaneously review and assess the material and participate in the study as a spiritual journey. Reviewing and assessing requires an intellectual, analytical and critical stance, while submitting to the material, as a spiritual adventure requires throwing oneself into the material in an experiential way. Several participants in the first group commented that they would have preferred to be less analytical and critical in their reading and simply let the material envelope them. Another indicated a desire to take the study again without the burden of having to provide feedback on the material.

This issue was largely the result of the instructions that had been given the first group to be critically reflective of the material so as to provide input into the content of each chapter. For the second group, this aspect was de-emphasized and the group was asked to focus on experiencing the material as a spiritual journey taken together. In essence, the first group had a greater concern for the content of the book, while the second, more of a concern for experiencing the book and the spiritual

exercises. This strategy appeared to be successful from comments received by participants in answer to a question about the process. One participant wrote:

We went from a technical/analytical feedback group and un-
seemingly evolved to a group of imperfect people who love God and
began to share our lives and how this book and the reading exercises
were making positive differences in our lives and walk with God. We
became a cohesive group, interacting and enjoying one another and
the process.

From my point of view as researcher, this development was not surprising because the second group had the benefit of the refinements made as a result of the first research cycle. All of the participants who finished the study (19 of 20) found that the process was positive, stretching, demanding and intense.

5.2 Core Research Cycle

The core research cycle consisted of designing and writing the book and study guide, the assessment tools and data plan, recruiting participants, conducting the sessions, collecting data, analyzing data and feedback and refining and rewriting the material through two action research cycles.

The initial step was to develop an outline for the content of the book that would meet the project objectives. The overarching questions: “What does a disciple look like?” and “What does a disciple do?” provided shape to the thinking. With the backdrop of the various historical discipleship streams and the essentials of the theology of sanctification, the themes and content of the eight chapters were identified. The seven aspects of love (the purpose of, the battle of, the presence of, the breath of, the nourishment of, the disciplines of, the expressions of) provided the overall unity for the book. An Excel spreadsheet was used to lay out the theology, the learning elements,

resources and themes for each chapter. This spreadsheet was invaluable in planning and went through many revisions as the work unfolded. One aspect of planning was the overlay of the spiritual exercises over the chapter content. It was important to get participants started in having a daily devotional time with breath prayers and Holy Reading on the first day and then expand these as participants were exposed to the content each week. The feedback questionnaire indicated that these daily quiet times with God and the questions for reflection were second in impact only to reading the chapters, confirming the success of this strategy.

The next step in planning was to describe the theology and rationale for each chapter of the book. *Chapter 3: Theological Rationale* served as an initial template for the content of each chapter and was used extensively throughout the writing phase to guide the writing process. A writing schedule was developed which required that the first four chapters of the book be completed before the first group of participants began to meet. The remaining chapters were written allocating two weeks for each remaining chapter. The final chapters were completed just in time to be handed out to participants. This writing phase was extremely intense and required approximately 20-30 hours per week.

Writing for a group audience, just ahead of that group, was a great motivator for the writing process. The sure knowledge that a group of people would soon be reading and reflecting on what was just written, was a powerful motivator and stimulant. It also kept the audience fresh in mind, so that the writing was not done in an abstract way, but with an awareness of a specific audience made up of individuals. The offsetting risk was that the content and exercises might have been moulded too much for particular individuals rather than a larger audience.

The Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) was designed early in the cycle, as it was required at the first group's initial session. Designing this assessment tool required composing one hundred statements that would attempt to quantify thirty-eight spiritual categories. Other such tools were examined (P. C. Hill & Hood 1999; Nelson 2010; Hawkins 2007; Hawkins 2008) to provide ideas for designing these statements. In addition to designing the questionnaire, a scoring matrix was created using an Excel spreadsheet. The design and subsequent deployment of the SAQ was an interesting learning experience. The importance of statement wording became apparent when the questionnaire was tested on a number of people prior to use. Statements had to be neutral in tone so as not to bias responses (see Appendix A). Statements were also randomized so that themes were not apparent to the responder. Many statements were used to score several categories. Some categories, such as *holiness*, were based on twenty statements while others such as *self-denial*, were based on just two. Hence the measurement of some categories was more precise than others. This was one weakness in the SAQ that could have been rectified by adding more statements. However, there is a trade-off between robustness of data and the time asked of participants to complete such an assessment.

The use of Shewhart control charts (Galicinski 1992, 41) in analyzing SAQ scores was of great value in differentiating between random variation and variation due to special causes. Using statistical control charts to analyze results of the SAQ removed the uncertainty of trying to decide whether a particular difference was significant or not. Definitive observations of changes using the charts were augmented by qualitative comments of the participants. The control charts were also useful in communicating statistical concepts to the participants, most of whom had no knowledge of statistics.

When participants were shown their chart page (see Appendix F), they were very quickly able to grasp the significance of the results.

An assessment of collective impact was more challenging because of the realistic self-adjustment phenomenon with some participants. Half of the participants assessed themselves in the middle ranges and then reassessed themselves higher in the post study SAQ. Some participants rated themselves at the high end of the scale initially and then rated themselves lower due to a realistic self-adjustment. For others there was no significant change. The presence of driving forces in the positive direction due to improvements in spiritual practices was combined with driving forces in the negative direction due to realistic self-assessment. Hence the most useful aspect of the SAQ was in assessing individual scores where consultation with each participant could verify and confirm results.

The combination of SAQ results, Post Study Feedback Questionnaire, participants book notes, Post Study interviews and researcher notes provided a rich source of data from several vantage points. Much like the triangulation process of taking compass bearings on different points of land in order to get a “fix” on one’s location, having all of these sources of data provided a multi directional perspective on what had impacted participants. For example, one participant’s response to Chapter three, *The Battle Within – The Victory of Love*, was confirmed from a number of vantage points. This person’s SAQ score on the one category “sinnership”, that is an awareness of one’s own indwelling sin, rose significantly by thirty percent after taking the study and indicated a significant shift on the statistical control chart. This person also indicated this by underlining and marking exclamation points in his book notes that the concept of indwelling sin was critical. In addition, during the feedback session, the

person said, “This has been the best chapter so far. It is worth buying the book just for this one chapter. You just don’t hear this preached from the pulpit.” In addition, in this person’s post session feedback questionnaire, he wrote: “An understanding of sin in our own heart is the most important thing. This chapter impacted me the most.” This also came out in the post session interview, where he said, “I so appreciate now the concept of indwelling sin. This concept is just not understood in the church today.” This is one example of many where having several sources of data collaborated a significant impact.

An important aspect of this project was the recruiting of participants for the study. It was decided to recruit participants who had come from a number of church backgrounds in order to provide diversity to the groups. Of the 19 participants who completed the study, the church backgrounds included Anglican, United Church, Baptist, Church of Christ, Congregational Christian, Pentecostal, Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Missionary Alliance, Salvation Army, Dutch Reformed and non-denominational. Many had several church backgrounds in their history and most were currently in evangelical churches. The participants’ age was an average of 59 for the first group and 55 for the second. The range of ages was from 40 to 73. This represented an older demographic with no one in the groups under 40. This was one weakness in the study. A broader spectrum of ages and ethnic groups would have been desirable. Nevertheless, it was a challenging audience. Members had been believers for many years and considered themselves to be mature Christians. One had been in seminary for several years and was soon to earn a Master of Divinity degree. Participants did not hesitate to express concerns and issues that they had with the material or the process.

Another important aspect of this project was the weekly session where participants gathered to review and reflect on the material, provide input and participate in large and small group exercises. These weekly sessions were the backbone of the data collection process for they provided direct and fresh input from participants. After starting each session with prayer, the researcher would go around the group in random order and ask for general comments on the chapter that they had just read. This was designed to elicit an overall reaction to the impact of the chapter. Participants were quite vocal as to whether they liked, appreciated, had difficulty with or disliked the thrust of each chapter. They readily offered comments and suggestions. During the first session of the first group, one participant suggested that all participants turn in their notes at the end of the sessions. This was not part of the original data collection plan, but was enthusiastically affirmed by all. It was fortunate that this suggestion was made in the first session, for it was important for the participants to know in advance if the notes that they were making were private or would be reviewed. The commitment to submit marked up books was obtained from the second group at their first meeting. During the chapter review times, detailed notes of all comments were taken. The importance of randomizing the order in which people responded was soon discovered. If the first two responses were excitedly positive, these might tend to temper subsequent comments that might be negative. Similarly, initial negative comments tended to damper some more positive comments. One thought that occurred late in the process was to have participants write out a general reflection on the chapter and hand it in prior to engaging in open dialog. As data was gathered about responses to a chapter or a section, the researcher used that information to make immediate edits and, in some cases, to rewrite certain sections. For example, in chapter two, the section on

transformational logic was deemed by the majority to be too intellectual and “heady”. It was subsequently rewritten twice in order to make it more understandable and reader friendly.

Once initial reactions to the chapter were recorded, the researcher led the group through the chapter page by page and provided a verbal summary of the contents and solicited specific comments. During this phase a number of different types of input would be received:

1. Typos: Errors in spelling, grammar, or references.
2. Red Flags: Statements that might be perceived as antagonizing certain readers.
3. Over my head: sections that were too complicated to follow easily.
4. Omissions: key concepts pertaining to the topic that were not included.
5. Reactions: positive or negative. These were expressions of appreciation, agreement, excitement or concern, disagreement and hostility.

These items were recorded in research notes and used to revise content by elaborating on, rewriting or removing certain sections. Reviewing the material in this way also allowed the group to process the content together and learn from one another’s comments, reactions and interactions. While this was a valuable part of the learning cycle for participants, it would not be available to readers who simply read the book. One participant suggested making a video commentary of the chapter content that could be available on the Internet. That would allow readers to benefit from a summary commentary by the author. Many of the participants made comments as to the richness of the material and the volume of concepts that were being addressed in each chapter. This was an indication that the objective of theological depth was being met for these

people. On the negative side, sometimes participants were overwhelmed by the volume of content, and unable to thoroughly digest one concept before being introduced to another. Several participants indicated that they had found it helpful to read a chapter several times.

The next item during meetings was to review the *Questions for Reflection* that the participants had been asked to complete in their journals. These questions were designed to stimulate the participants to reflect on and apply the concepts covered in each chapter to their own situation. These were very well received and very little editing was necessary.

One reason for this was the author's many years of experience in crafting questions for small groups each week based on the Sunday sermon. He had not only composed these types of questions but had led several small groups through them. This honed the ability to craft questions that would help people apply biblical concepts to their own lives.

The next part of the weekly session was the large group exercises. The exercises allowed for direct modeling of spiritual practices such as prayer, Holy Reading (Lectio Divina), reflecting on one's own death, praying the psalms, analyzing scripture passages, writing down personal convictions and sharing our faith. They were well received and allowed the group to work on something together. Thirty to forty minutes for these had been allocated and often that was not enough time. A readership study group that was less focused on content feedback would have had more time, so this is not really a concern. The exercises provided an opportunity for the researcher to be somewhat directive in leading the group. In actual practice, this would likely vary depending on the experience of the group leader. Overall, only one major change was

made to the large group exercises. That change had to do with the exercise for chapter eight, which initially was to break into pairs and role-play sharing our faith. It was sensed that it would be uncomfortable for many. It was changed to reviewing a passage of scripture (Acts 17:16-34) where the Apostle Paul was interacting with a group in Athens. The participants were asked a series of questions related to the passage and asked to relate that to a process outlined in the chapter and then to share their own experience.

The final section of the evening was the small group breakout. The breakout groups were divided along gender lines, so that men and women formed into separate groups. Breaking into same gender groups was not prescribed in the exercise, as some discipleship groups might not wish to do so. The researcher's personal experience has been that this frees up people to share more intimately than in mixed groups. The small group breakout questions were designed to probe a little deeper and to allow people to share personal experiences. An initial question was provided to stimulate discussion and participants were also asked to share personal issues that could be prayed for by the small group. The feedback indicated that some felt truly blessed by these times of sharing.

Once each weekly session was concluded, research notes and the notes made in the researcher's copy of the material were used to make initial changes to the material. This resulted in the second version of the material which included fixes made due to typos, reference errors, and rewrites of certain sections. In the case of the second group, these changes and edits produced the third version of the material. The third version of the material also had changes made that were the results of the detailed notes that the first group of participants had made in their own copies of the material. For the

second group, these detailed notes provided for additional edits in the fourth and final version of the book.

The final post study interview with each participant was a very rewarding part of the process. Most interviews were conducted in the participant's own home, so that they would be more at ease in sharing openly. Receiving such direct insight into each participant's spiritual growth was an intense experience. As researcher, I felt that I was very much on holy ground, for I was seeing evidence of a change in attitude and demeanor in so many of the participants. Many had clearly been moved into a deeper understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. In some, these stirrings included a new sense of dislocation. The assumptions by which they had been living were suddenly crumbling and a new paradigm of being was emerging. The Holy Spirit was clearly moving in these people in a deep and profound way. For others, the experience was more on a practical level. They had discovered new spiritual practices, which had enhanced specific elements of their devotional life, and had an enhanced understanding of spiritual life but had not experienced any paradigmatic shifts.

The questions and format followed are outlined in the Post Session Interview form shown in Appendix D.

5.3 Thesis Cycle

The thesis cycle consisted of the process of designing the project, the book and study guide, developing the participant process, data collection strategy, writing the project report, finalizing the material and evaluating the entire process.

Using the action research process to produce a curriculum or a book is a particular application of the action research process. Typically in action research, a

constituency is identified and a problem or opportunity is brought to that constituency. Members of the constituency become active participants together with the researcher in seeking to construct, plan and take action in the form of an intervention or change to the system, the results of which the group then analyzes together, drawing conclusions and then reconstructing one or more action research cycles. The researcher is a part of the process and one of many participants, acting as a facilitator of the process, which is owned by the participants.

In writing a book or curriculum, the researcher is also author and creator of the curriculum, and is a primary agent in the process. The intervention to the status quo is the book or curriculum, in this case *Love's Greatest Joy*, the book and study guide. In this instance, the participants were not actively engaged in the design of the initial intervention, but became participants in assessing and reviewing the effect of that intervention upon themselves. They subsequently provided input into the content of the material and process, but were not directly *authors*, but rather *influencers* in the process and the final product.

In designing such an action research project, the objectives of the project give shape to the overarching aim or purpose, which the author is attempting to achieve. In this project the objectives involved moving the participants into a greater love for God, a desire to do His will, and allowing the Holy Spirit to bring about an inner transformation that would move participants into action as people of God sent into the world to live for Him (see pages 7-8 for detailed objectives). The underlying assumption behind these objectives is that what people understand, believe and then act upon, shapes them spiritually and impacts their relationship with God. The popular saying “we are more likely to act our way to a new way of believing than we are to

believe our way to a new way of acting” (Little 1983, 27) illustrates the importance of acting on beliefs. Hence, in this project, participants were asked to not only read the material, which provided a cognitive stimulant to their belief, but also to engage in certain exercises, which would allow the Holy Spirit to move in them in ways that would change them beyond what simple reading could do. They were also asked to take what they were learning and experiencing and share those things with a spiritual friend. In these ways, their reality was shaped by what they cognitively understood, acted upon and taught to another. They were invited to do this not as independent agents, but as part of a group of participants who together had committed themselves to a journey of discovery.

The data indicates that it was the combination of all the elements of the process, which contributed to the overall impact of the study. The three elements that contributed *the most* to the impact on participants were reading the chapters, their own time with God and sharing with a friend. In Chapter One of the book, the point was made that God is defined by what He does (see page J 12). So too, people are defined by what they do. A person cannot become close to God, unless that person acts like one close to God. For example, a New Creation in Christ puts to death the old self, because that is what a New Creation in Christ does. Likewise, a person who is a disciple makes disciples, for that is what disciples do. There is no shortcut to spiritual intimacy with God. Those who achieved the most progress in the objectives of the study were those who were most active in doing what was asked of them.

The thesis cycle was wrapped around achieving these objectives and producing a product, the book and study guide, which would achieve project objectives for those who used it. The specific theological content of the material was driven by

personal convictions based upon the researcher's own journey, study and experience combined with the collective wisdom of saints past and present. Little that is new has been revealed, but existing concepts and theology have been repackaged. Several participants commented that they had never heard some of these things explained in this way before. (i.e., "you just don't hear this preached from the pulpit", "this concept is just not understood in the church today") However, it has been written in a way that has brought much clarity to those who have read the material and participated in the process. The design of that process was heavily coloured by years of experience in teaching adults, where a key objective has been to make learning as experiential as possible. Hence, the overlay of the content of each chapter and the exercises that made up the study guide were a critical element of the project in which the participants had relatively little input. They were able to respond and comment, but there really were no instances in which major changes to the essential template were made. This is to be expected because the participants were not involved in the design of the initial intervention, the book.

The assessing of results was an important aspect of the thesis cycle, for in it laid the authentication of the claim of the project. That claim is that this process would produce a superior end product, validated by good results. There was no guarantee that the material and the participant process would lead to any of the ambitious objectives of this project. In the one participant who left half way through, it clearly did not. The material so failed to resonate with him, that he was not able to continue. However, for the other nineteen participants, the impact was unmistakably positive. The process of assessing that impact through the weekly meetings, SAQ, the Feedback forms and

participant interviews was a rewarding and a learning experience. The writing of the project report was an important aspect of putting it all together and in perspective.

What has been learned from the thesis cycle is that writing for a specific audience, represented by research participants who have names and faces, requires greater precision in language and attention to what one says, than writing for an unknown audience. Due to proximity of the writing and reading process, and the participative group process, what one says in print must be defended in person. The impact of what one writes is immediately felt in concrete terms.

In addition, receiving direct specific and fresh input from the participants was beyond measure in value. It allowed for the refining and editing of the content in real time, which kept the material current. Observing first hand how participants responded to the exercises and seeing their countenances change through a process of experiential learning was profoundly rewarding. The collective impact was to energize the writing of the next chapter and to rely more and more on the Holy Spirit as it became obvious that what members were engaged in was a spiritual experience that God Himself was moving them through together.

Another lesson is that the process of conducting spiritual self-assessments is extremely complex. There are many variables that impact how people view themselves from a spiritual perspective. The researcher has conducted surveys of people at random in public where simple questions related to morality have been asked (i.e., Would you consider yourself to be a good person?) It was discovered that people generally have a positive view of themselves (48 out of 50 answered in the affirmative in one sample). However, when specific questions are asked that highlight moral failure, (i.e. "Have you ever stolen anything?") that view quickly changes. So too many Christians have a

positive view of themselves with regard to spirituality. As they become more knowledgeable about God, morality and ethics, they become aware of their own poverty of spirit. In conducting the Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire, this same phenomenon was observed. It is common to have a positive opinion of oneself, which is quickly shattered by knowledge. When this happens, it is the work of the Holy Spirit bringing about conviction of the heart. One's subsequent opinion of oneself may well be adjusted down. This phenomenon, which was named *Realistic Self Adjustment*, makes the drawing of conclusions from spiritual self-assessments difficult. One may argue that the most profound result might be if everyone's score dropped dramatically. However, some do come to the questionnaire with a humble view of themselves, so this phenomenon cannot be assumed. Personal validation of results with the participant is absolutely critical. Without such validation, self-assessment results are difficult to interpret.

The compiling of data and the assessment of outcomes for this project was a process of discovery. It was in great anticipation that such data was collected and analyzed. As the picture began to emerge, it was with a sense of relief mixed with joy and awe, to see that what has been observed subjectively in group sessions and conversations was being born out by the data. The positive impact of the material and the process in achieving the objectives was unmistakable. Yet describing and reporting on these results has proven to be a challenging experience. Many intangibles have been sensed that have been difficult to describe. This has also applied to the participants. There are many things that they have learned and movements of the soul that have occurred that are extremely private and simply not easily shared. Many of these belong to the realm of mystery and underground movements of soul and spirit that only the

Holy Spirit can plumb. As researcher, I can only sense them remotely and stand back in worship.

Section 6: Conclusions

Applying action research to the process of writing a book and study guide has been an enlarging experience. It has provided discipline in the writing process, forcing the early articulation of objectives and a process through which those objectives were pursued. It has required an apprehension of the theology of discipleship and the role of the Holy Spirit, who works in people to transform them through an encounter with the living God. It has also required application of the theology of knowing and believing by which people come to understand and experience Truth. It has necessitated the identification of critical doctrines related to the essentials of the faith handed down through the prophets, apostles and the Son. In developing the content, the author has had to rediscover and articulate the great theological truths of the faith in a way that resonates in this culture.

As the author embarked on the process of writing this book, his life's journey had led him to observe those elements that were lacking in most Christians' understanding of the nature of God's call to discipleship. The content of the chapters and the study guide exercises were driven by an apprehension of the importance of articulating a theology of walking with God and helping people put this theology into practice through spiritual exercises that invite the Holy Spirit to work in one's spirit. A survey of discipleship practices, contemporary research and principles of adult learning also informed the process.

The objectives were to make this study a transformative, convicting, enlightening and motivating experience for readers and participants. The data supports

conclusively that this has been achieved. The author's beliefs regarding what was lacking in many Christians' understanding and experience of discipleship have been authenticated through the impact that the study has had on the participants. These participants benefited not only from their experience of the study but also from their role as active partners in the development of the material.

However, the author takes little credit for the positive impact that this book has had on participants. Ultimately, the divine teacher is the Holy Spirit who guides believers into all Truth (John 16:13). Without the openness of the participants to the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's leading throughout this project, there would have been little impact. The author is grateful that God has used this book and this process to make an impact on those who participated. He is also grateful for the participants. They took their roles seriously and were committed to the process. Of the twenty people who started the process, only one withdrew. The other nineteen participants embraced the project with great relish and dedication. The author is deeply indebted to them for their faithfulness. The resulting material and this project have benefited greatly from their efforts.

This study has shown that people seeking to draw closer to God benefit greatly from having a disciplined structure to follow. The participants in this study spent an average of 3.6 hours each week reading and commenting in their notes on the material that they were given each week. They also spent an average of 2.3 hours per week doing the devotional exercises in which they spent time alone with God. The time that they spent allowed the Holy Spirit to work in them. The knowledge that their feedback and comments were a critical part of the process also stimulated them to participate earnestly. Most engaged intently with the material and diligently performed

the exercises required by them. The knowledge that this was a research study sponsored by a seminary and would likely result in a published book provided impetus to their diligence.

In addition, it is clear that people earnestly desire to be a part of something larger than themselves. They will actively participate and do what they are asked to do in order to contribute to a venture in which they believe. At the same time, their perseverance was fueled by the spiritual benefits that they were anticipating they would reap from the study. The goals of this study required much more of the participants than just learning new knowledge. The nature of that knowledge changed their understanding of God, who they are and how their lives are interconnected with the Holy One. In participating in this study, they experienced God in new ways. In experiencing Him, they themselves were changed. Their active participation and self-disclosure were essential.

The study results confirmed that people learn and experience God in different ways. Information processing through reading the material was the foundation of the experience. The spiritual exercises and participants' time alone with God enabled inner changes to occur through the action of the Holy Spirit. The experience of writing answers to questions and sharing those in open sessions and with a spiritual friend quickened understanding and forged deeper convictions. These set the stage each week for a new learning cycle as fresh material was read, responded to, discussed and lived out during the week. It appears that the combination of all these elements and the interaction between them contributed greatly to the positive impact of the study. While there is insufficient data to prove this conclusively, this sentiment was expressed by some participants in their comments in the post session interviews.

It has also been shown that collecting data about a person's spiritual self-awareness is a complex process. The Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) was developed to measure a large number of categories related to spirituality. This tool provided valuable insight into specific dimensions of discipleship. While absolute scores were of limited value because of the many factors that affect how people see themselves, this tool was extremely useful in tracking changes in 38 categories of discipleship over the course of the study and proved to be a verifiable measure of specific changes that participants had actually experienced. It provided an opportunity to dialogue with the participants about aspects of their spiritual self-awareness. One specific enhancement to the SAQ that is recommended is to employ a ten-point scale, rather than a six-point scale. The six-point scale allowed only three levels of discernment in the positive and negative directions. A ten-point scale would provide for five units in each direction. It is likely that this would improve the sensitivity of the statistical analysis. It also presents an opportunity for further refinement and additional testing. The use of statistical software to identify significant changes was extremely valuable and removed any subjective element from the analysis of data. Shewhart Control charts (Shewhart 1931, Galicinski, 1990) have proven extremely useful in such analysis and are highly recommended (see Appendix F). The self-assessment questionnaire (SAQ) was also useful in identifying gaps in the material and resulted in the addition of an entire section on self-denial and fasting.

The action research process, whereby groups of participants have been invited to join the process of writing, experiencing and refining the material has been extremely beneficial to the author as well as the participants. It has provided the author with direct and timely feedback from a number of sources and provided the participants

discipline in reading, reflecting and engaging God through spiritual exercises. It has also allowed them to engage one another and people outside the group in discussions of the things of God and faith. It has developed a sense of community among the participants. (The groups have scheduled a reunion evening to get together and reflect on their experience.) The process has allowed the impact of the material and the study process to be measured and has provided valuable data for editing and refining the contents of the book. And ultimately, it has enhanced the quality of each participant's relationship with God and His people. It has engendered in each one a sense of personal calling (The average rating of sense of personal mission was 8.3 on a scale of 1 to 10. See Appendix H, 6). Due to the many benefits of participating in this study to the participants, a third group is to begin the process in March 2012.

Finally, this study resulted in a book and study guide *Love's Greatest Joy – A Closer Walk with God*, which facilitated significant learning and self-discovery by participants. This learning occurred several ways, through information processing, group interaction, spiritual exercises, time alone with God, action, reflection, journaling, and one-on-one sharing. The final product has exceeded expectations in the impact that it has had on those who participated in the study process. Its quality has been significantly enhanced through the collaborative methodology of action research. The data supports the very positive impact that this book and has had on those participants who read it, contributed to its development, engaged God through it and were transformed by it.

APPENDIX A
Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire
(Final, Randomized)

Name _____ Age _____ Gender _____

I have been a follower of Christ for _____ years.

Baptized: Yes No How long ago? _____ years

Church background & history _____

Please answer the following using a scale of 1 to 6 as indicated below:

- 1 = Definitely not true of me
- 2 = Mostly not true of me
- 3 = Seldom true of me
- 4 = Sometimes true of me
- 5 = Mostly true of me
- 6 = Definitely True of me

- 1 I go out of my way to help others even when it cost me personally. _____
- 2 I accept suffering as a part of the Christian life. _____
- 3 I often listen to worship music. _____
- 4 I thank God often for His blessings. _____
- 5 I have a good sense that God is guiding me. _____
- 6 I am willing to let people know what is going on inside me. _____
- 7 I share my faith regularly with people around me. _____
- 8 When I feel down, I lift my heart up to God. _____
- 9 I sense that God is continually transforming me. _____
- 10 I see every action as a form of worship. _____
- 11 I often experience an awareness of God's love. _____
- 12 I love to talk to strangers about God. _____

- 13 Learning more about God and living for Him is my greatest desire. _____
- 14 I believe that Jesus died for my sins. _____
- 15 I often pray out loud for people in their presence. _____
- 16 I have inner tranquility and a sense of God's peace. _____
- 17 God is the most important person in my life. _____
- 18 I sometimes follow the crowd and fail to do what is right. _____
- 19 I regularly give away a substantial portion of my income as led by God. _____
- 20 I quiet myself and pray several times a day. _____
- 21 My relationship with God is pretty much the same today as it was a year ago. _____
- 22 God often uses me to bring comfort to others. _____
- 23 God sees me as righteous because of the things I do. _____
- 24 I sometimes have to suffer affliction for what I believe. _____
- 25 When people are hurting, I am moved to help them. _____
- 26 I have an very good knowledge of the scriptures. _____
- 27 I am full of joy, optimism and hope. _____
- 28 I strive for godliness and avoid immorality. _____
- 29 I find it hard to release people who have hurt me. _____
- 30 I don't mind waiting, especially to see God work. _____
- 31 I am quick to forgive an offense, and let God deal with it. _____
- 32 I often ask God to forgive my sins. _____
- 33 I often spend time in silence meditating on God or scripture. _____
- 34 I keep myself pure by fleeing temptation. _____
- 35 I am easy to be around and gentle in spirit. _____
- 36 I care deeply for other people. _____

- 37 Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. ____
- 38 I am consistent in my devotion and trust in God. _____
- 39 I find it hard to love others. _____
- 40 God is definitely molding me to be more Christ-like. ____
- 41 I often deny myself good things in order to live closer to God. ____
- 42 I often delight in just knowing God. _____
- 43 God sees me as righteous because Jesus died for me. _____
- 44 People find me hard to be around because I am blunt. _____
- 45 I have a consistent devotional life, spending quality time with God each day. ____
- 46 When a hard time has passed, God works with me to help me learn from it. _____
- 47 When faced with a decision, I pray and seek God's guidance. ____
- 48 If I have a problem, I talk it through with God and allow Him to lead. _____
- 49 I worship God spontaneously several times a day. ____
- 50 I see my life as belonging to God. ____
- 51 I am often overwhelmed by what God has done for me. _____
- 52 I give of myself to help others grow in their faith. _____
- 53 I am aware of God responding to me in a variety of ways. _____
- 54 Even if things look really bad, I still believe that God is with me. _____
- 55 I often give in to urges that please only myself. _____
- 56 I have a burden for the lost. _____
- 57 I often fail to do what I know God wants. _____
- 58 I am able to deny my urges and put off self-gratification. _____
- 59 The Bible makes sense to me. _____
- 60 I never ignore someone who asks me for something. ____

- 61 I believe that I must work hard to please God in order to be accepted by Him. ____
- 62 I am deeply aware of my own sinfulness. ____
- 63 When I pray, I have a sense that God is listening attentively. ____
- 64 I believe that God is One, yet Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons each fully God. ____
- 65 I worship God regularly. ____
- 66 I am often troubled and disturbed by things. ____
- 67 I am sometimes surprised at the ugliness that comes out of my heart. ____
- 68 I believe that all my sins have been forgiven. ____
- 69 I read and reflect on scripture daily as a devotional practice. ____
- 70 When I think of God, I feel like bursting into praise. ____
- 71 I often give in to temptation. ____
- 72 I am kind, respectful and friendly in my relationships. ____
- 73 I sense that I am a long way from personal holiness. ____
- 74 I tend to be terse with people who bother me. ____
- 75 My heart really goes out to those who are suffering. ____
- 76 Even if feel that God does not grant my prayers, I still trust him completely. ____
- 77 I fast regularly for a specific purpose. ____
- 78 I invest my time in ministering to others. ____
- 79 I often memorize scripture. ____
- 80 My awareness of God's working in me affects me greatly. ____
- 81 I often open myself up to others and let them know what God is doing in me. ____
- 82 I often ponder scriptures rolling them over in my mind. ____
- 83 I am frequently aware of God prompting me to do something. ____
- 84 I seldom complain because God has done so much for me. ____

- 85 I read or listen to Bible teaching or preaching often. _____
- 86 I see others as more worthy than myself. _____
- 87 Thankfulness characterizes my life. _____
- 88 I earnestly and passionately want to grow in my relationship with God. _____
- 89 I am accepting, gracious and loving toward others. _____
- 90 I sense the Holy Spirit dwelling within me. _____
- 91 I fellowship with other believers regularly. _____
- 92 I spend a significant time in prayer each day. _____
- 93 When things go wrong, I trust that God will see me through. _____
- 94 I study my Bible daily. _____
- 95 I feel very close to God. _____
- 96 I love God with all my heart. _____
- 97 Listening to God is an essential part of my life. _____
- 98 I enjoy the company of other Christians. _____
- 99 I am committed to obeying Jesus Christ. _____
- 100 When problems arise, I tend to get upset. _____

Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire
(Coded and Non Randomized)

Name _____ Age _____ Gender _____

I have been a follower of Christ for _____ years.

Baptized: Yes No How long ago? _____ years

Church background & history _____

Please answer the following using a scale of 1 to 7 as indicated below:

- 7 = Definitely not true of me
- 8 = Mostly not true of me
- 9 = Seldom true of me
- 10 = Not sure – May be true of me
- 11 = Often true of me
- 12 = Mostly true of me
- 13 = Definitely True of me

- 1 Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. ____ G
- 2 I believe that God is One, yet Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons each fully God. _____ G
- 3 I believe that Jesus died for my sins. ____ G
- 4 I am willing to let people know what is going on inside me ____ V
- 5 I sense the Holy Spirit dwelling within me ____ G H
- 6 I believe that all my sins have been forgiven _____ G
- 7 God sees me as righteous because Jesus died for me _____ G
- 8 God sees me as righteous because of what I do ____ HU-
- 9 I believe that I must work hard to please God in order to be accepted by Him ____ G-
- 10 I have an very good knowledge of the scriptures ____ G

- 11 I earnestly and passionately want to grow in my relationship with God ___ M
- 12 I thank God often for His blessings _____ GR
- 13 I am committed to obeying Jesus Christ ____ G, H
- 14 I am aware of my own sinfulness _____ G HU
- 15 I often ask God to forgive my sins ___ G H
- 16 I often experience an awareness of God's love _____ A
- 17 God is the most important person in my life ___LG H A
- 18 I love God with all my heart _____ LG G H
- 19 I really care for other people. ___ LN H CO
- 20 I go out of my way to help others even when it cost me personally _____ SE LN
M MM CO
- 21 I feel very close to God _____ LG H A
- 22 I keep myself pure by fleeing temptation. ___ LG H
- 23 I often give in to temptation _____ H-
- 24 I have a consistent devotional life, spending quality time with God each day ___
DP P LG
- 25 Listening to God is an essential part of my life _____ DP P
- 26 I am frequently aware of God prompting me to do something _____ , P, A
- 27 I am aware of God responding to me in a variety of ways _____ P, A
- 28 My awareness of God's working in me affects me greatly ___ A, ,
- 29 I pray several times a day _____ P DP
- 30 I spend a significant time in prayer each day ___ P DP
- 31 When I pray, I have a sense that God is listening attentively ___ P, DP, A
- 32 I often pray out loud for people in their presence _____ P DP MM
- 33 I fast regularly for a specific purpose. _____ DP, SD

- 34 I sense that I am a long way from holiness ____ S HU
- 35 I worship God spontaneously several times a day ____ W DP
- 36 I often listen to worship music ____ W DP
- 37 I see every action as a form of worship ____ W DP
- 38 I attend worship services regularly ____ W DP
- 39 I read my Bible daily as a devotional practice ____ DP BR
- 40 I study my Bible daily. ____ DP, BR, M
- 41 I read or listen to Bible teaching or preaching often ____ DP, BR, M
- 42 I spend time in silence meditating on God or His word. ____ DP, ME
- 43 I often ponder scriptures rolling them over in my mind ____ DP, ME
- 44 I often memorize scripture ____ BR, ME
- 45 I don't mind waiting, especially to see God work ____ PA
- 46 When I feel down, I lift my heart up to God ____ PS, F, W
- 47 I regularly give to a church or mission a substantial portion of my income ____
GI
- 48 I never refuse someone who asks me for something. ____ DP GI H
- 49 I often open myself up to others and let them know what God is doing in me
____ V
- 50 I fellowship with other believers quite often ____ C
- 51 I enjoy the company of other Christians ____ C
- 52 I have a good sense that God is guiding me ____ DP, A, F
- 53 I often delight in just knowing God ____ D
- 54 I often deny myself good things in order to live closer to God ____ SD
- 55 When I think of God, I just feel like bursting into praise ____ D
- 56 Even if things look really bad, I still believe that God is with me ____ F

- 57 Even if God does not answer my prayers, I still trust him completely ____ F
- 58 I am often overwhelmed by what God has done for me. ____ GR
- 59 I see others as more worthy than myself. ____ HU
- 60 Thankfulness characterizes my life ____ GR
- 61 I am aware of my own sinfulness ____ S
- 62 I am often surprised at the ugliness that comes out of my heart ____ S
- 63 I sometimes have to suffer affliction for what I believe ____ AF
- 64 I believe that suffering is a part of the Christian life ____ AF
- 65 God often uses me to bring comfort to others ____ CO
- 66 When people are hurting, I am moved greatly to help them ____ CO
- 67 When a hard time has passed, God works with me to help me learn from it
____ AF
- 68 When faced with a decision, I pray and seek God's guidance ____ DP, P, PS, F
- 69 If I have a problem, I talk it through with God and allow Him to lead. ____ P, PS,
F
- 70 I seldom complain because God has done so much for me ____ GR
- 71 When things go wrong, I trust that God will see me through ____ F
- 72 When problems arise, I tend to get upset. ____ F- PA-
- 73 I invest my time in ministering to others ____ SE, MM LG
- 74 I give of myself to help others grow in their faith ____ SE, MM
- 75 I share my faith regularly with people around me ____ SE E LN
- 76 I love to talk to strangers about God ____ E LN
- 77 I have a burden for the lost ____ E LN
- 78 I see my life as belonging to God ____ LG
- 79 My heart really goes out to those who are suffering ____ CO

- 80 I sense that God is continually transforming me _____ T
- 81 I feel that I am pretty much the same this year as last year in my relationship with God _____ T-
- 82 God is definitely molding me to be more Christ-like _____ T, H, A
- 83 I am accepting, gracious and loving toward others _____ L, H
- 84 I find it hard to love others _____ L- H-
- 85 I am full of joy, optimism and hope. ____ J
- 86 Learning more about God and living for Him is my greatest desire. D M LG
- 87 I have inner tranquility and a sense of God's peace _____ P
- 88 I am often troubled and disturbed by things _____ P-
- 89 I am kind, respectful and friendly in my relationships ____ K H
- 90 I tend to be blunt with people who bother me _____ K- H- PA-
- 91 I regularly seek Godliness and avoid immorality _____ GO H
- 92 I often follow others and fail to do what is right. _____ GO- H-
- 93 I am consistent in my devotion and trust in God _____ FF H F
- 94 I often fail to do what I know God wants _____ FF- H-
- 95 I am easy to be around and gentle in spirit _____ GE
- 96 People find me hard to be around because I am blunt _____ GE-
- 97 I am able to deny my urges and put off self gratification ____ SC H SD
- 98 I often give in to urges that please only myself ____ SC- H- SD-
- 99 I am quick to forgive an offense, and let God deal with it. _____ FR, H
- 100 I find it hard to release people who have hurt me _____ FR

Spiritual Assessment Codes and Summary Categories

Grounding G

Basic Doctrines – Sin, Trinity, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Forgiveness, Works
 Salvation
 Bible knowledge
 Obedience
 Convictions

Religious Affections

Love for God LG
 Love for neighbor LN
 Holiness H
 Selflessness SE
 Awareness/Intimacy A
 Faith F
 Motivation to Grow M

Devotional Practices

Time with God DP
 Prayer – Public/Private P
 Fasting/Self Denial SD
 Worship W
 Bible Reading/Interpretation BR
 Meditation ME
 Giving GI
 Vulnerability V
 Community C

Spiritual Maturity

Sinnership S
 Affliction AF
 Comforting Others/Mercy CO
 Problem Solving PS
 Transformation T
 Gratitude GR
 Humility HU
 Delight D

Mission

Sense of Mission	MI
Volunteerism	V
Evangelism	E
Living for God	LIG
Mutual Ministry	MM

Fruits of the Spirit

Loving L
Joyful J
Peaceful P
Patience PA
Kindness K
Goodness GO
Faithfulness FF
Gentle GE
Self Control SC
Forgiveness FR

APPENDIX B

Research Group – Feedback Questionnaire

Name: _____ Date _____

Thank you for your participation in this research study. Please and answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. How many hours did you spend each week:
 - a. Reading the material _____
 - b. Answering the Questions for Reflection _____
 - c. Devotional Exercises (Prayer/ Reflection) _____
 - d. Discussing the material with friend/spouse _____

2. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 10. How much of a impact did participating in this study make to your:

1 = No Difference 5 = Moderate difference 10 = huge difference

- a. Understanding of God's character, heart and purposes _____
 - b. Love for God _____
 - c. Desire to live for God _____
 - d. Comfort in trial _____
 - e. Personal convictions for living _____
 - f. Reaching out to others _____
 - g. Developing new spiritual disciplines _____
 - h. Delight in God _____

3. How much of a difference has participating in this study made in your understanding and experience of the following: (Use scale of 1 to 10)
 - a. Need for solitude _____
 - b. Salvation _____
 - c. Sin _____
 - d. Your inner nature _____
 - e. Trials and suffering _____
 - f. Holiness _____
 - g. Prayer _____
 - h. Worship _____
 - i. God's Word _____
 - j. The Law _____

6. Have you embarked on any new initiatives as a result of taking this study?

7. Which chapters of the book impacted you the most and why?

- Chapter 1: God’s Amazing Love
- Chapter 2: Transformation – the Purpose of Love
- Chapter 3: The Battle Within – The Victory of Love
- Chapter 4: The Presence of God – The Peace of Love
- Chapter 5: God’s Word – The Food of Love
- Chapter 6: Prayer & Worship - The Breath of Love
- Chapter 7: Love’s Rule – the Disciplines of Love
- Chapter 8: Community and Mission - The Expressions of Love

8. What changes or suggestions do you have for the book or the exercises or any other aspect of the study?

APPENDIX B

Research Group – Feedback Questionnaire

Name: _____ Date _____

Thank you for your participation in this research study. Please and answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. How many hours did you spend each week:
 - a. Reading the material _____
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 - c. Devotional Exercises (Prayer/ Reflection) _____
 - d. Discussing the material with friend/spouse _____

2. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 10. How much of a impact did participating in this study make to your:

1 = No Difference 5 = Moderate difference 10 = huge difference

- a. Understanding of God's character, heart and purposes _____
 - b. Love for God _____
 - c. Desire to live for God _____
 - d. Comfort in trial _____
 - e. Personal convictions for living _____
 - f. Reaching out to others _____
 - g. Developing new spiritual disciplines _____
 - h. Delight in God _____

3. How much of a difference has participating in this study made in your understanding and experience of the following: (Use scale of 1 to 10)
 - a. Need for solitude _____
 - b. Salvation _____
 - c. Sin _____
 - d. Your inner nature _____
 - e. Trials and suffering _____
 - f. Holiness _____
 - g. Prayer _____
 - h. Worship _____
 - i. God's Word _____
 - j. The Law _____

- k. Integrity _____
 - l. Fasting _____
 - m. Christian Community _____
 - n. God's will _____
 - o. Your Mission _____
4. Please rate the effectiveness of the following aspects of the study in your spiritual growth and closeness to God: (scale of 1 to 10)

1= not effective 5= moderately effective 10 = extremely effective

- a. Reading the chapters _____
 - b. Questions for Reflection _____
 - c. Book feedback at meetings _____
 - d. Large Group Exercises at meetings _____
 - e. Small Group Breakouts _____
 - f. Devotional Assignments _____
 - g. Sharing with friend/spouse _____
 - h. Journaling _____
 - i. Your own time with God _____
5. Describe in your own words the impact that going through this study has made in your life. (use back if necessary)

6. Have you embarked on any new initiatives as a result of taking this study?

7. Which chapters of the book impacted you the most and why?

- Chapter 1: God’s Amazing Love
- Chapter 2: Transformation – the Purpose of Love
- Chapter 3: The Battle Within – The Victory of Love
- Chapter 4: The Presence of God – The Peace of Love
- Chapter 5: God’s Word – The Food of Love
- Chapter 6: Prayer & Worship - The Breath of Love
- Chapter 7: Love’s Rule – the Disciplines of Love
- Chapter 8: Community and Mission - The Expressions of Love

8. What changes or suggestions do you have for the book or the exercises or any other aspect of the study?

APPENDIX C – INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE LETTER



TYNDALE
Seminary

Dear Friend,

I would like to make you aware of an opportunity to participate in a research project with Tyndale University College and Seminary. This project is on Christian discipleship and involves a book and study guide *“Love’s Greatest Joy – Walking the Path of Truth”*. The writing of this book is a part of an action research project under supervision of the Doctor of Ministry program at Tyndale University, College and Seminary.

This research project involves assembling a small group of people to participate in this study for ten weeks. Members of the group will read and respond to the material and participate in weekly group meetings to add their own insights to modify and refine the material and the exercises that will be a part of it.

The sessions will run on Wednesday evenings from September 28 to November 16, 2011. Participants will be given one chapter of the book to read each week. The chapters will be about 25-30 pages. In addition participants will be asked to do certain spiritual exercises that should take about 30 to 45 minutes, five times a week. These exercises would likely replace any devotional time that you might currently be doing. There will also be a spiritual self-assessment questionnaire done at the beginning and the end of the process that will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. One on one interviews about the process will also be conducted periodically.

Each week as we gather together, we will review together the material read, participate in small group discussion and exercises and you will have an opportunity to provide valuable input that will result in modifications to and fine tuning of the material and exercises.

Strict confidentiality will be maintained and the identity of participants will not be disclosed either directly or indirectly. This project is under the supervision of the Ethics Committee at Tyndale University and strict guidelines as to doing research involving human subjects will be observed at all times. You will also be asked to sign an informed consent form in order to participate.

The benefits to you as a participant are that you will likely grow spiritually. You will also be able to reflect on how people grow and mature in Christ and be able to provide valuable feedback that will hopefully make this a powerful tool for spiritual formation. It is my desire to have this book published and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you played an active part in its development. Each participant will receive a complimentary copy.

As you can appreciate, it is important for those who start the program to attend regularly, do the assignments and complete the program. At the same time, I assure you that this is a completely voluntary study and that you may drop out at any time if unforeseen circumstances arise.

Thanks you so much for taking the time to consider this. Contact me at **(705) 719 6297** or my e-mail at lgalicinski@depositsoffait.com. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Les Galicinski'.

Les Galicinski, D. Min. candidate
Tyndale University College & Seminary

9. Review Assessment results:

10. What other spiritual input did you receive during the course of this study?

11. Any suggestions for changes or additions to the material or the process?

12. Final Comments?

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form**Action Research Project for a Book and Study Guide: “Love’s Greatest Joy”**

Researcher: Les Galicinski, D Min (candidate), Tyndale University, College & Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Program, 25 Ballyconnor Court, Toronto, ON M2M 4B3

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the above mentioned research study conducted by Les Galicinski, under supervision of the Doctor of Ministry Department.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to assess the impact of reading this book and participating in individual and group exercises on my spiritual development and maturity as a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is also to participate in the development and fine tuning of the contents of the book and study guide for the purpose of enhancing their effectiveness as discipleship training tools.

Participation: My participation will consist of reading one chapter of the book each week and answering the questions in the study guides as well and participating in weekly meetings in which I will participate in group exercises and discussions. In addition, I will be observing daily devotional times (30-45 min) as outlined in the study guides and recording reflections in a personal journal. I will also be providing feedback and suggestions for modifying and enhancing the material and devotional sessions. I will also be asked to complete a spiritual assessment questionnaire at the beginning of the study and at the end (20 min.). I will also participate in a post study interview.

Risks: My participation in this study will entail that I may volunteer very personal information, and this may cause me to feel vulnerable before other members of the group. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks through discernment in the selection of individuals who will participate and constant reminder of the importance of maintaining strict confidentiality. My participation in this study may also cause me to change my values and beliefs about God and his call on my life. This may affect my relationships with others who may not understand or empathize with my spiritual development. I understand that any such changes will be completely voluntary without any coercion or expectation of such change by the researcher or other members of the research group.

Benefits: My participation in this study will likely foster my own spiritual development as a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is most likely that I will grow spiritually into a more mature follower of Christ resulting in a greatest sense of God’s presence and call in my life. I will also have the opportunity to enhance the contents of the book and study guide in order to make a positive contribution to the discipleship of other believers who seek to grow to maturity. I will also be participating in adding to the body of knowledge about discipleship training.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for research purposes and for publication in a Doctoral dissertation authored by the researcher. In this publication my confidentiality will be protected and my name will not be

disclosed. My **Anonymity** will be protected by not disclosing my name in any publication, but by referring to myself as a participant described in such general terms that no one would be able to identify me from among the other participants.

I understand and agree that an exception will be made if I disclose information that makes me liable for prosecution under the criminal code of Canada. In this case this information may be disclosed to the appropriate authorities at the discretion of the researcher.

Conservation of data: The data collected will be kept in a secure manner. Computer files containing data will be password protected by the researcher. Hard copies of data will be stored in locked containers. Data will be destroyed once the Doctoral dissertation is accepted and published by Tyndale University.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed.

Acceptance: I, _____, (*print name*) agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Les Galicinski, Doctor of Ministry candidate, Tyndale University College and Seminary, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or Dr. Paul Bramer, Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, Tyndale University. Tel. 416-218-6757

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Officer for Ethics in Research, Tyndale University, College and Seminary, 25 Ballyconner Dr., Toronto, ON, M2M 4B3, Tel. 416-218-6757

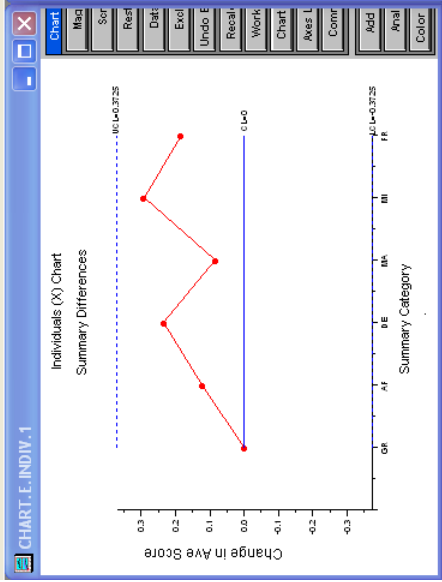
There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____



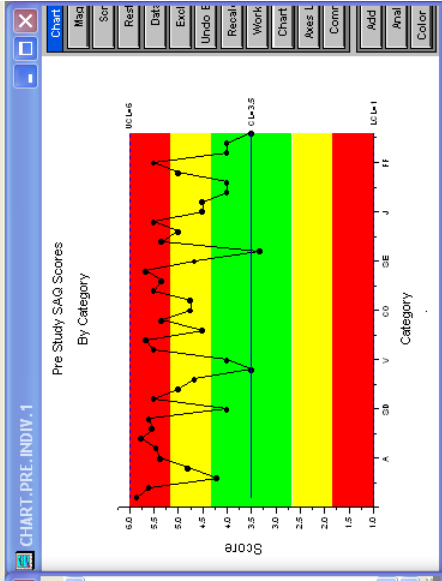
Analysis Report
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Paired t-Test on Data1_PRE and Data1_Post
 mean std. dev. N
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 Post 5.03351 0.62616 38

t = -2.9178
 p = 0.00596
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different

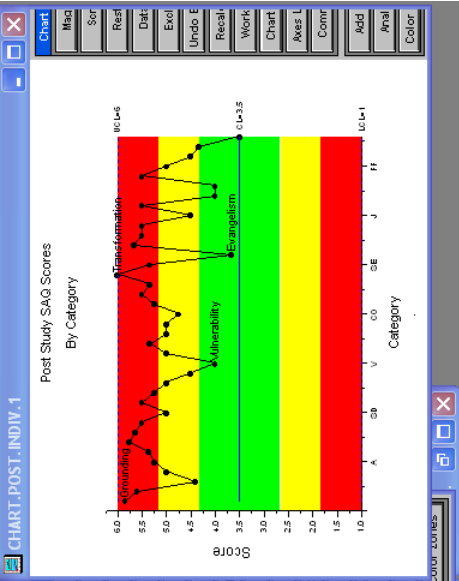
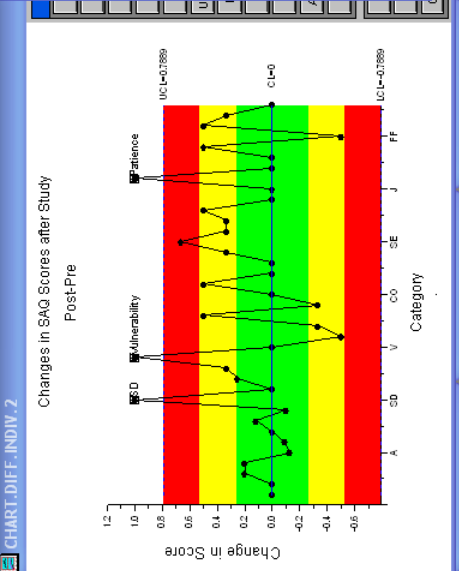
Paired t-Test on Data2_B and Data2_C
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 C 5.1242 0.44204 6

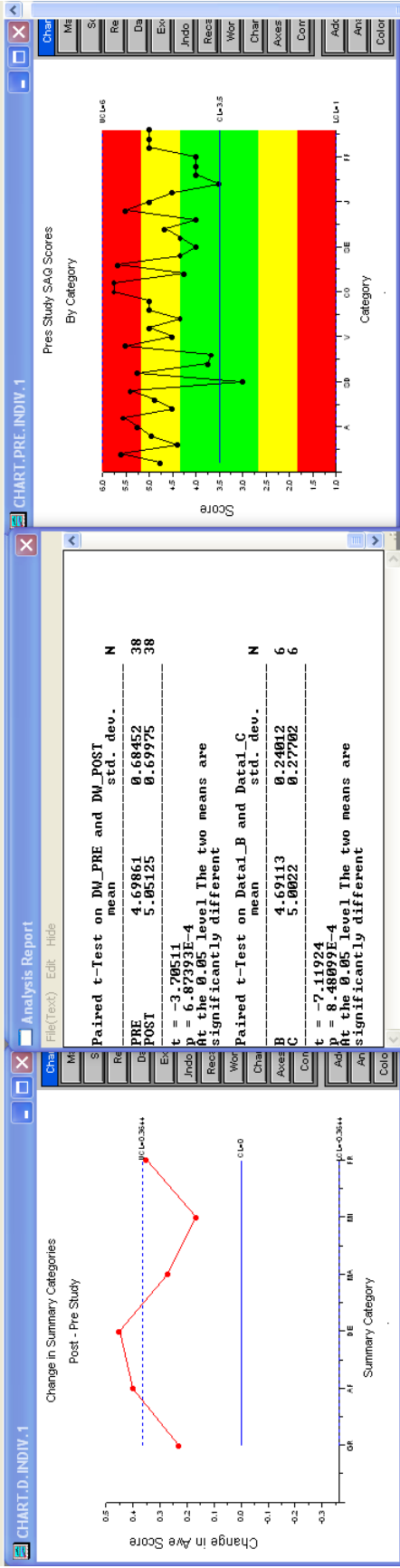
t = -3.52729
 p = 0.01679
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different



Data2

	A(X)	B(Y)	C(M)	D(Y)
1	GR	5.84615	5.84615	0
2	AF	5.12089	5.24242	0.12153
3	DE	4.81068	5.04412	0.23344
4	MA	5.1875	5.27083	0.08333
5	MI	4.41667	4.70833	0.29166
6	FR	4.45	4.63333	0.18333
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18				





Analysis Report

Paired t-Test on DW_PRE and DW_POST

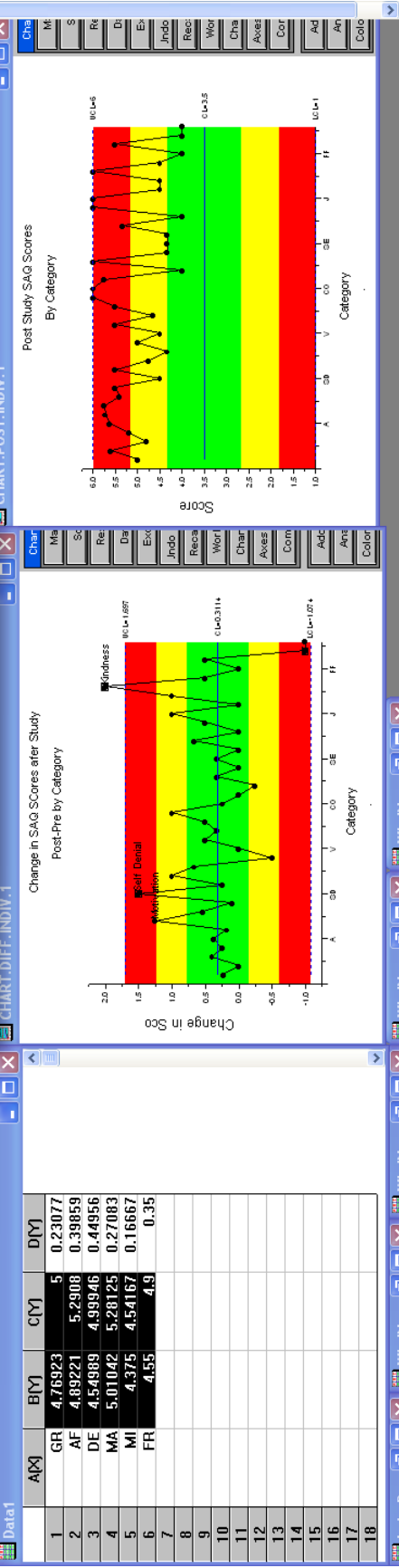
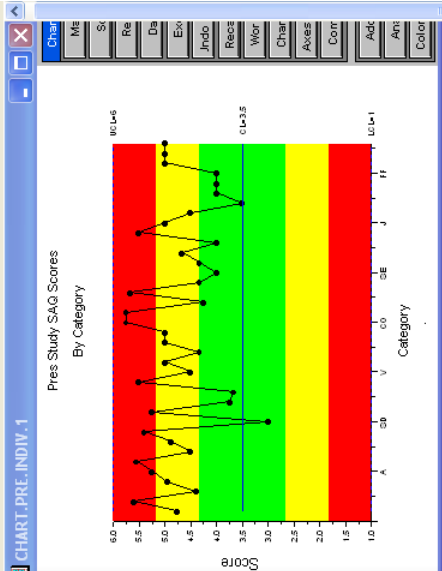
mean	std. dev.	N
4.69861	0.68452	38
5.05125	0.69975	38

t = -3.79511
 p = 6.87393E-4
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data1_B and Data1_C

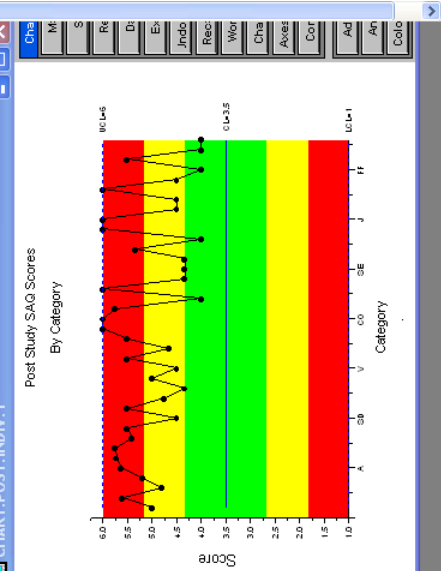
mean	std. dev.	N
4.69113	0.24012	6
5.08222	0.27762	6

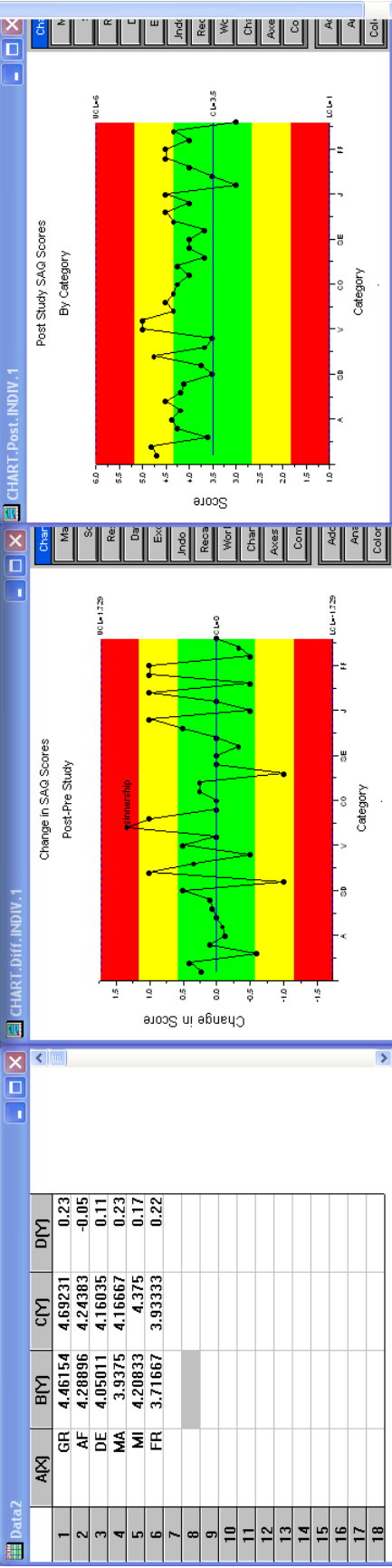
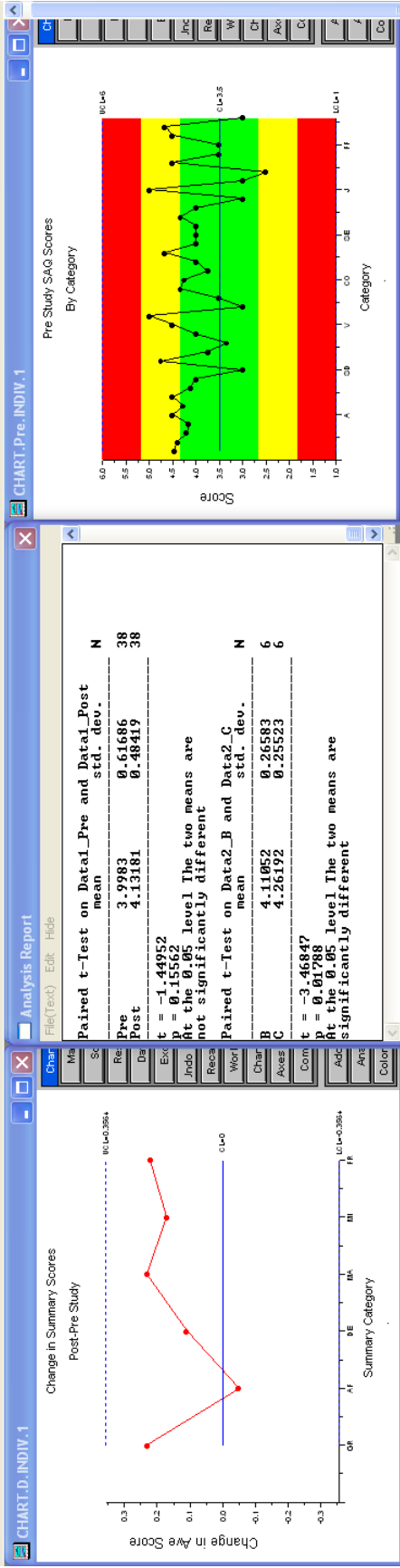
t = -7.11924
 p = 8.48099E-4
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different

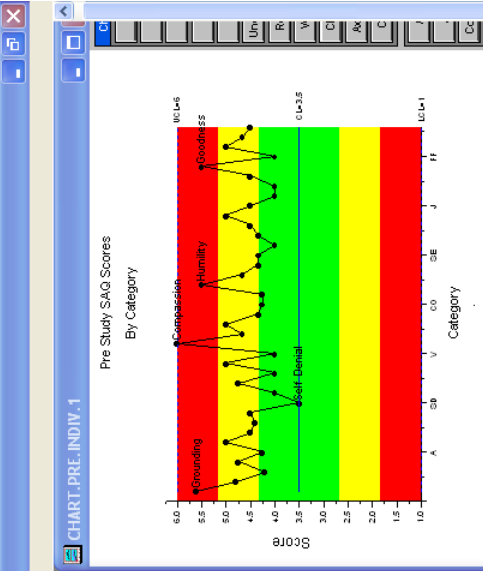


Data1

	A(X)	B(Y)	C(Y)	D(Y)
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2	AF	4.89221	5.2908	0.39859
3	DE	4.54989	4.99946	0.44956
4	MA	5.01042	5.20125	0.27083
5	MI	4.375	4.54167	0.16667
6	FR	4.55	4.9	0.35
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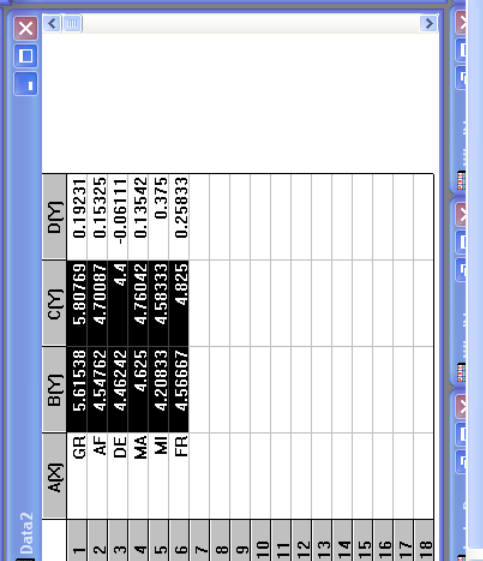
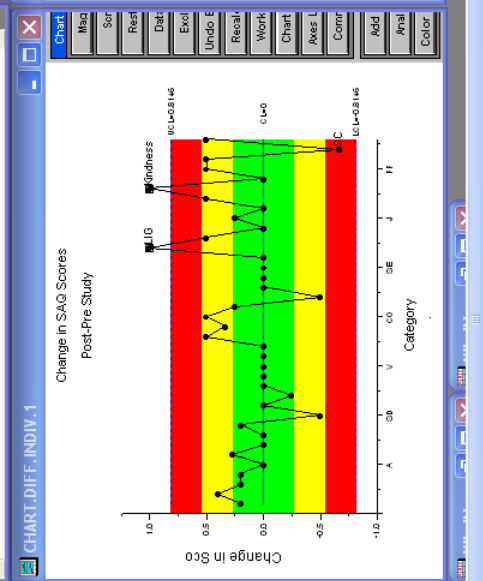
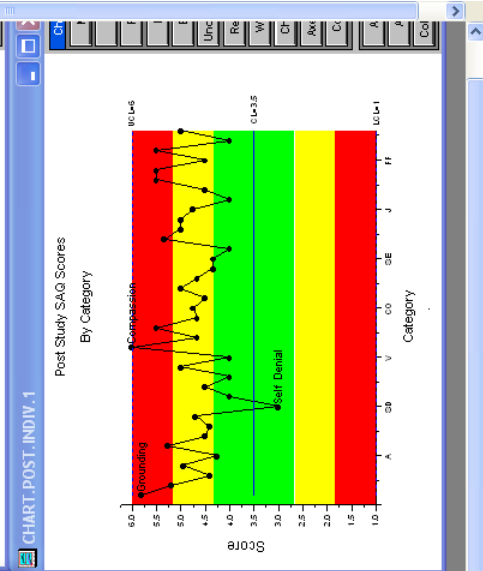


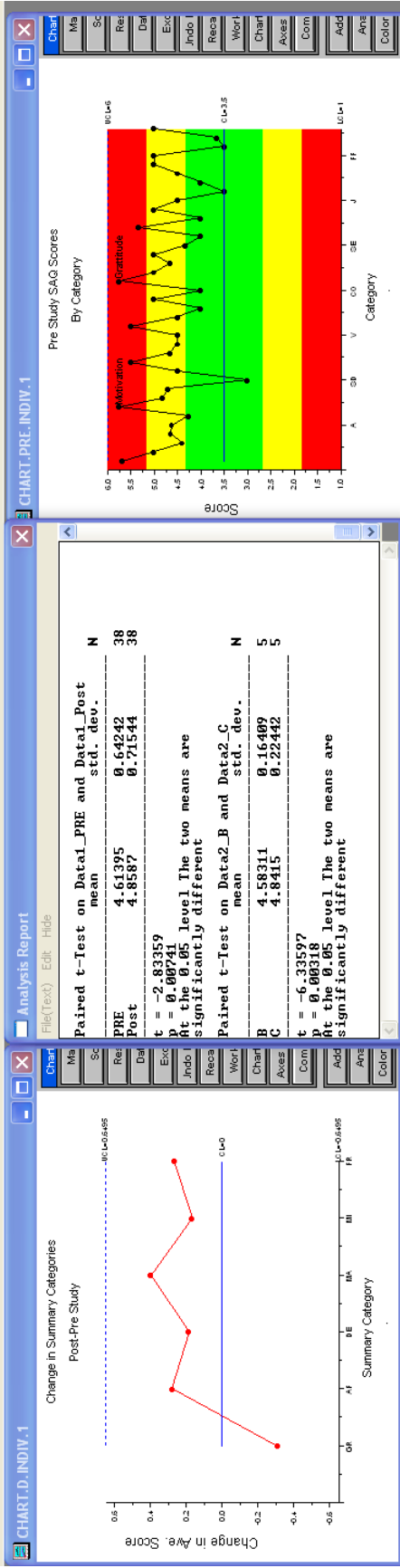
AX	BY	CM	DM
1	GR	5.61538	5.80769
2	AF	4.54762	4.70087
3	DE	4.46242	4.4
4	MA	4.625	4.76042
5	MI	4.20833	4.58333
6	FR	4.56667	4.825

Analysis Report
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Paired t-Test on Data1_PRE and Data1_POST
 mean std. dev. N
 PRE 4.55554 0.52173 38
 POST 4.71832 0.60733 38
 t = -2.74386
 p = 0.00931
 At the 0.05 level The two means are significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data2_B and Data2_C
 mean std. dev. N
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 C 4.84622 0.49428 6
 t = -2.95422
 p = 0.03173
 At the 0.05 level The two means are significantly different

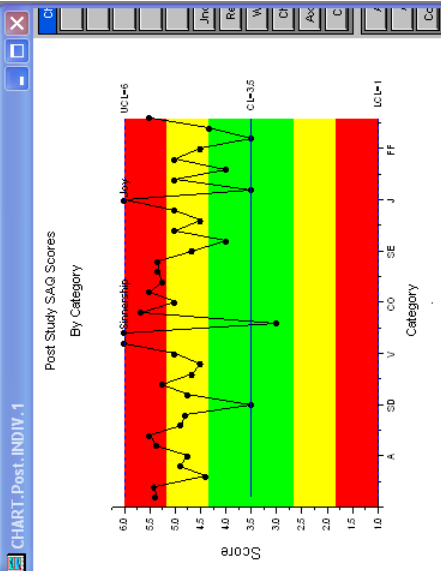
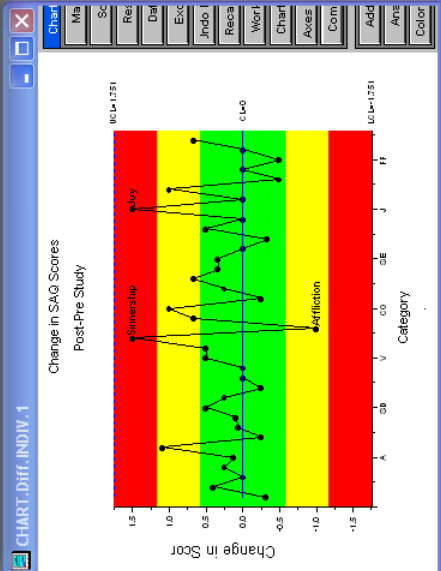
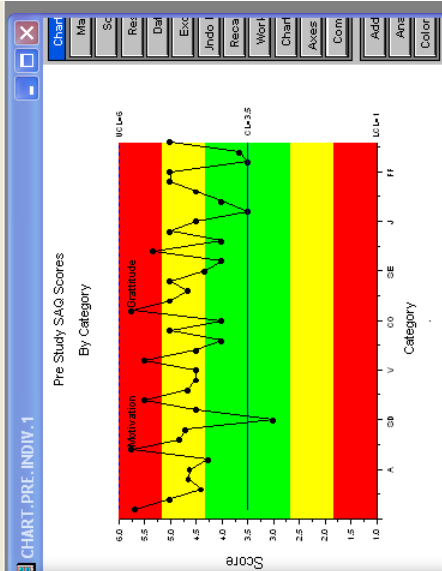


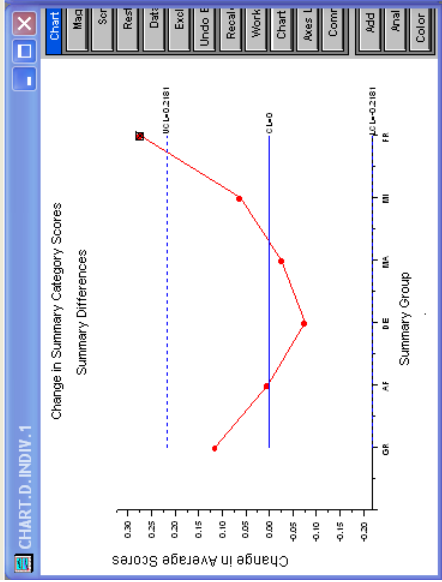


	AX	BY	CM	DM
1	GR	5.69231	5.38462	-0.30769
2	AF	4.71872	4.99719	0.27846
3	DE	4.63224	4.81656	0.18431
4	MA	4.73958	5.13542	0.39583
5	MI	4.45833	4.625	0.16667
6	FR	4.36667	4.63333	0.26667
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Analysis Report
 Paired t-Test on Data1_PRE and Data1_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 PRE 4.61395 0.64242 38
 Post 4.8587 0.71544 38
 t = -2.83359
 p = 0.00741
 At the 0.05 level The two means are significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data2_B and Data2_C
 mean std. dev. N
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 C 4.8415 0.22442 5
 t = -6.33597
 p = 0.00318
 At the 0.05 level The two means are significantly different

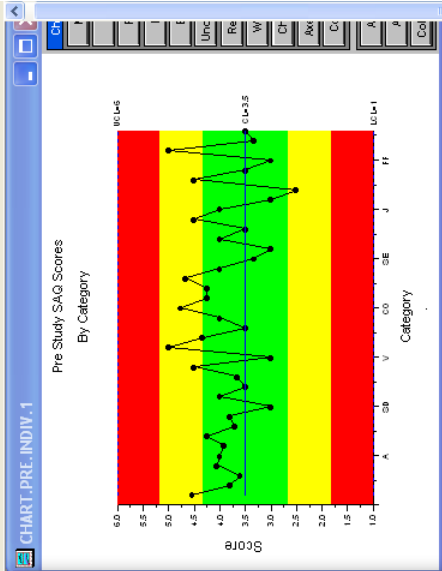




Analysis Report

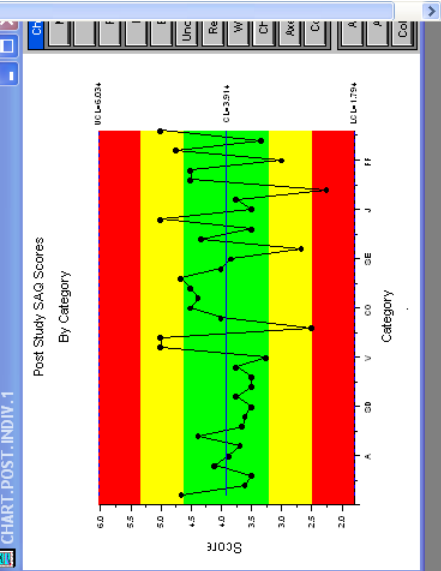
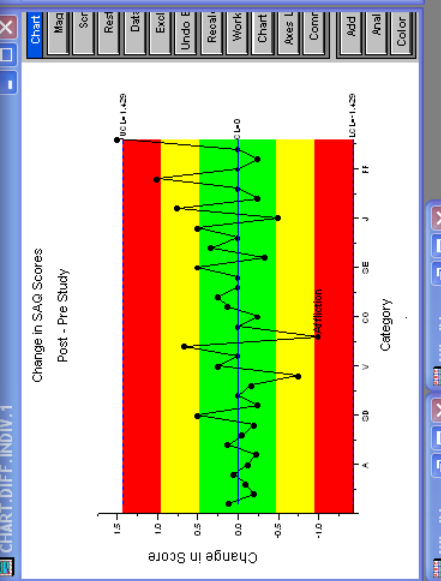
Paired t-Test on Data1_PRE and Data1_POST
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 PRE 3.86149 38
 POST 3.91424 38
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 p = 0.47609
 At the 0.05 level The two means are not significantly different

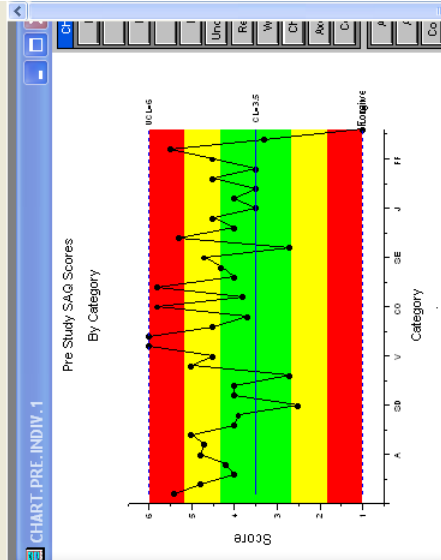
Paired t-Test on Data2_B and Data2_C
 mean N
 B 3.91894 6
 C 3.96941 6
 t = -1.15931
 p = 0.29868
 At the 0.05 level The two means are not significantly different



Data2

	AM	BM	CM	DM
1	GR 4.53846	4.65385	0.11538	
2	AF 3.84892	3.85216	0.00325	
3	DE 3.79695	3.7219	-0.07505	
4	MA 4.21875	4.19271	-0.02604	
5	MI 3.375	3.4375	0.0625	
6	FR 3.68333	3.95833	0.275	
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Analysis Report

Paired t-Test on SEM_PRE and SEM_POST

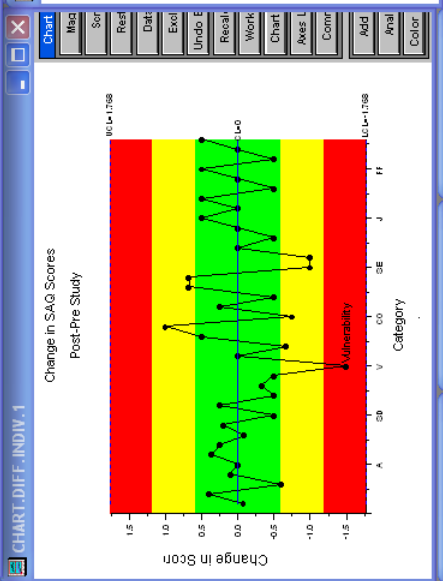
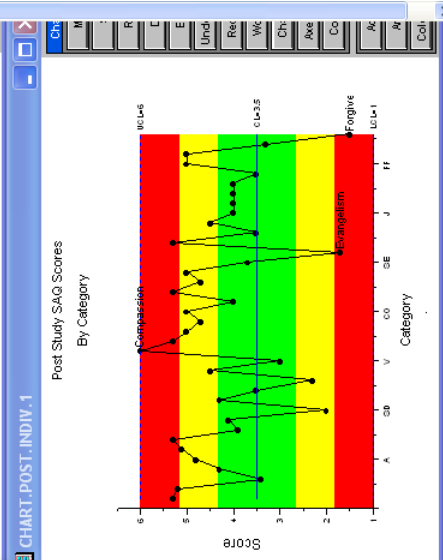
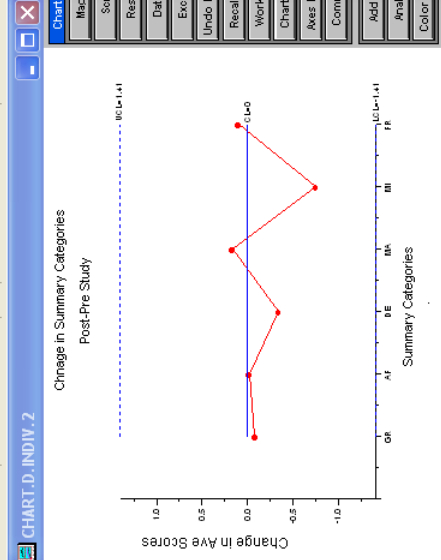
	mean	std. dev.	N
PRE	4.26053	1.03259	38
POST	4.18421	1.06686	38

t = 0.85245
At the 0.05 level The two means are not significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data1_B and Data1_C

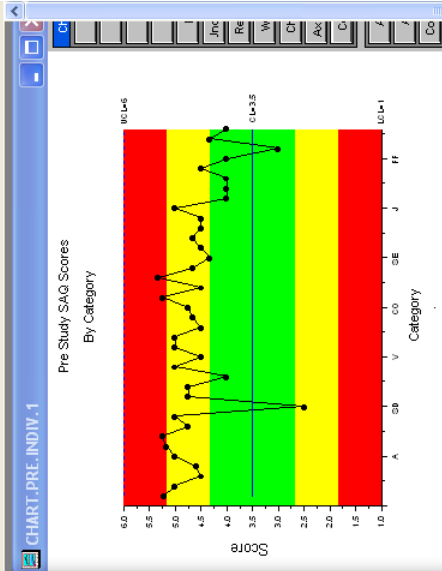
	mean	std. dev.	N
B	4.43256	0.57199	6
C	4.27925	0.73928	6

t = 1.18924
At the 0.05 level The two means are not significantly different



Data1

	A(X)	B(Y)	C(Y)	D(Y)	E(Y)
1	GR	5.38462	5.30769	-0.07692	
2	AF	4.53286	4.51537	-0.0175	
3	DE	4.06957	3.72952	-0.34005	
4	MA	4.7	4.86458	0.16458	
5	MI	4.125	3.375	-0.75	
6	FR	3.78333	3.88333	0.1	
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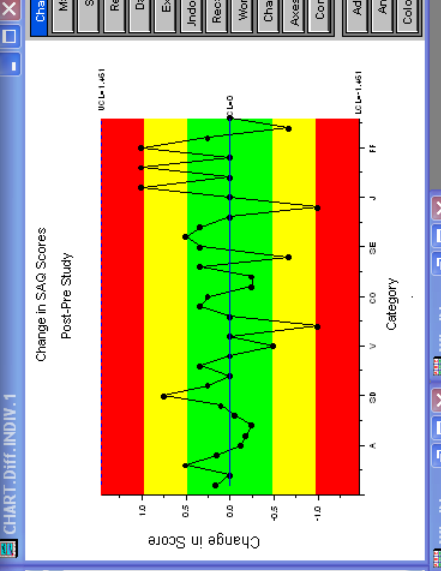
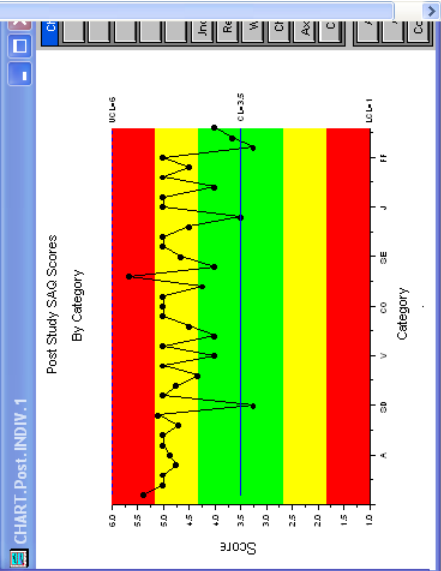
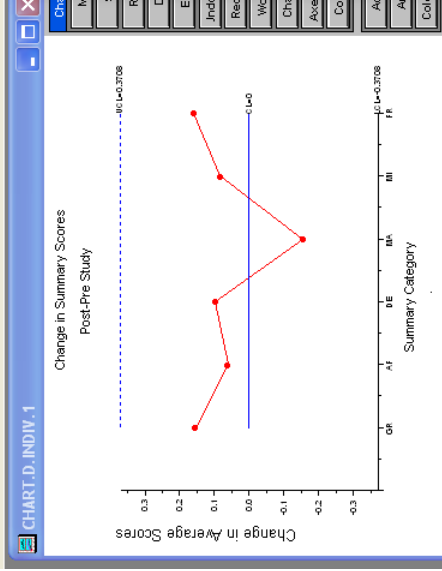
Analysis Report

Paired t-Test on Data1_PRE and Data1_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 PRE 4.55335 0.58394 38
 Post 4.62234 0.57962 38

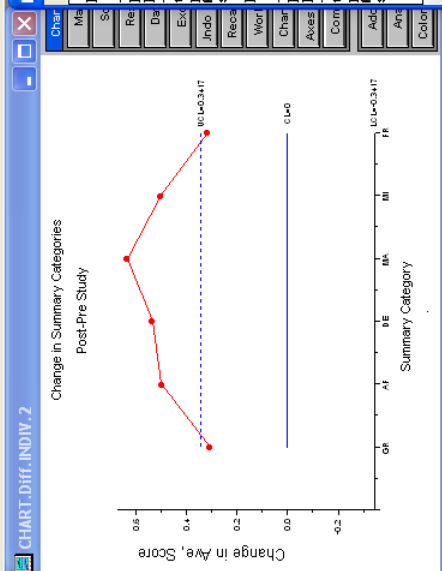
t = -0.9142
 At the 0.05 level The two means are not significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data2_B and Data2_C
 mean std. dev. N
 B 4.57514 0.37739 6
 C 4.74137 0.37681 6

t = -1.40205
 At the 0.05 level The two means are not significantly different



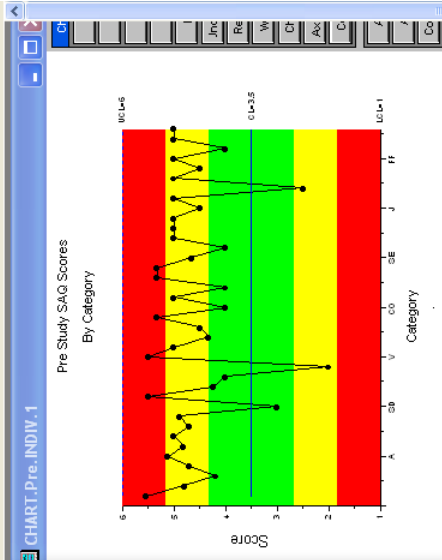
AXI	BM	CM	DM
1	GR	5.23077	5.38462
2	AF	4.83788	4.89881
3	DE	4.47386	4.57102
4	MA	4.83333	4.67708
5	MI	4.54167	4.625
6	FR	4.13333	4.29167
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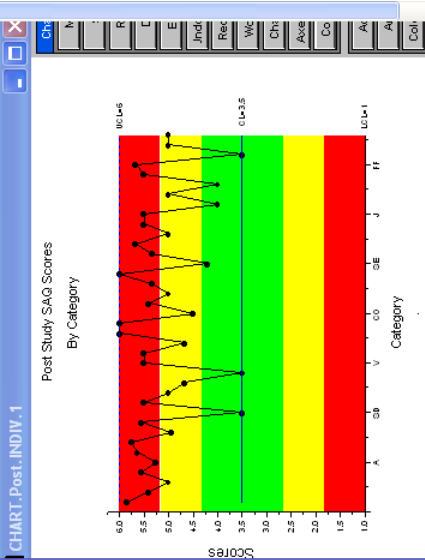
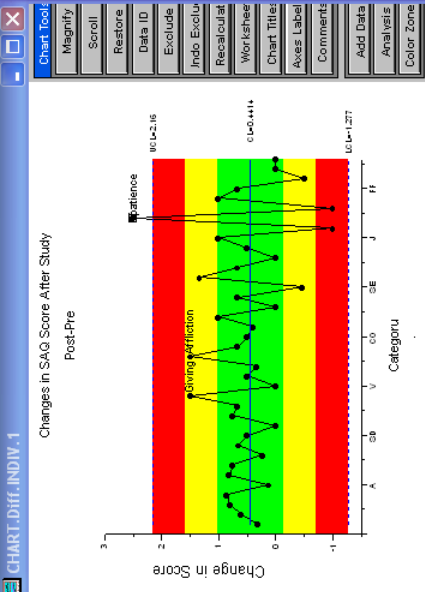
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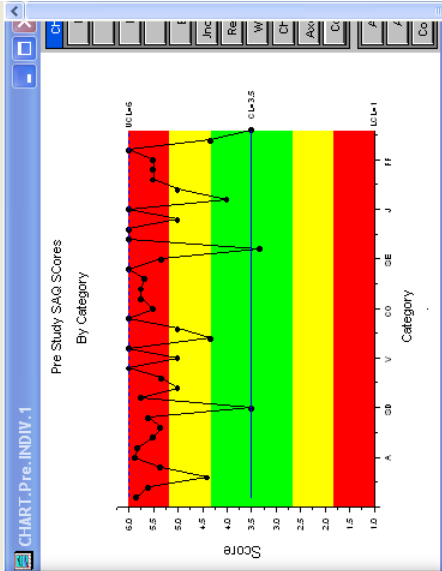
Paired t-Test on Data1_Pre and Data1_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.60625 0.77573 38
 Post 5.10179 0.69294 38
 $t = -4.69527$
 $p = 4.74155E-5$
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data2_Pre and Data2_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.77475 0.41304 6
 Post 5.25763 0.37119 6
 $t = -8.88405$
 $p = 3.00627E-4$
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different



AX	Pre(M)	Post(M)	Diff(M)	EM
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GR	5.53846	5.84615	0.30769	
AF	4.75855	5.25599	0.49744	
DE	4.31732	4.85149	0.53417	
MA	4.72917	5.3629	0.63333	
MI	4.875	5.375	0.5	
FR	4.55	4.86667	0.31667	

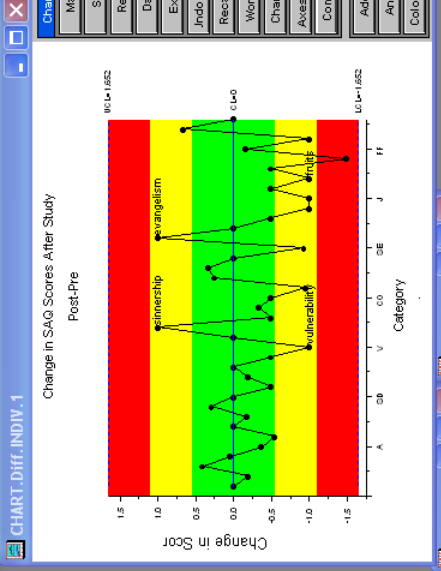
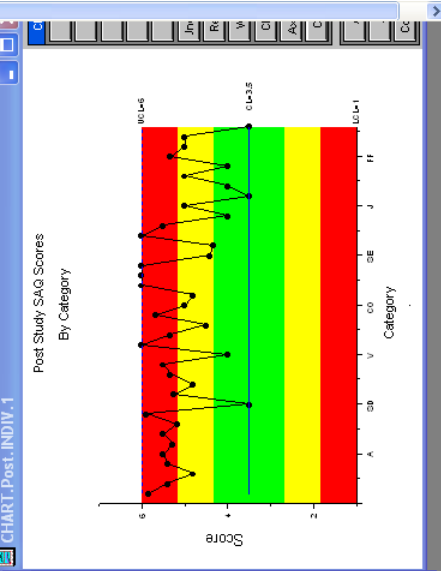
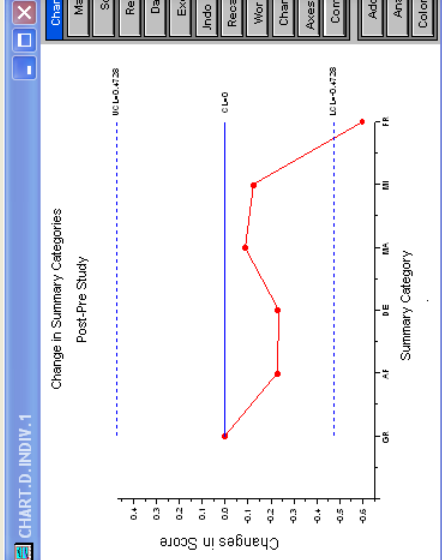




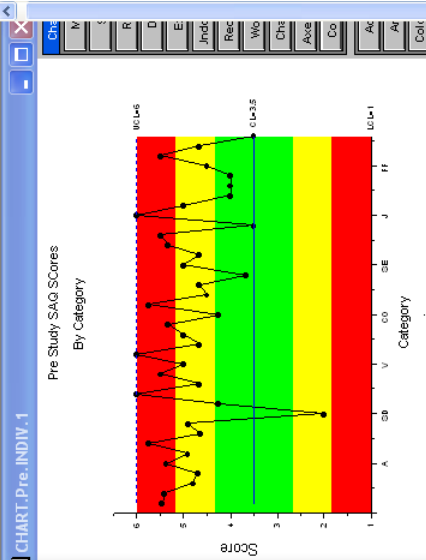
Text Output

Paired t-Test on Data1_Pre and Data1_Post
 mean mean
 Pre 5.28752 0.7553
 Post 5.02592 0.74725
 N 38 38
 $t = 2.95128$
 $p = 0.00768$
 At the 0.05 level The two means are significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data5_B and Data5_C
 mean mean
 B 5.35926 0.2993
 C 5.14679 0.47218
 N 6 6
 $t = 2.4857$
 $p = 0.05545$
 At the 0.05 level The two means are not significantly different



AX	AY	BY	CM	D(Y)
1	GR	5.84615	5.84615	0
2	AF	5.41093	5.18023	-0.2307
3	DE	5.28181	5.04985	-0.23195
4	MA	5.5	5.4129	-0.0875
5	MI	5.08333	4.95833	-0.125
6	FR	5.03333	4.43333	-0.6
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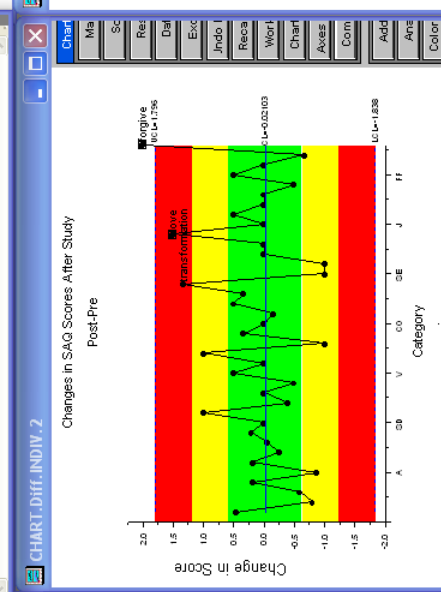
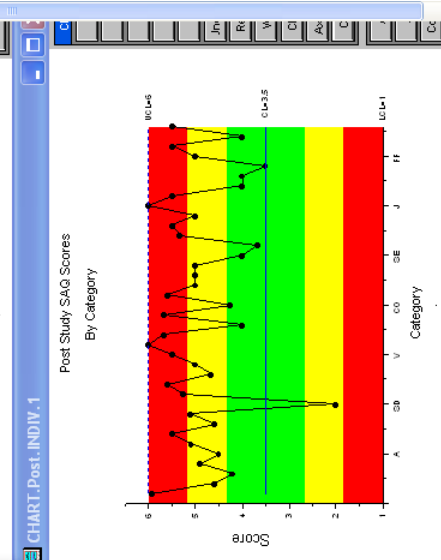


Text Output

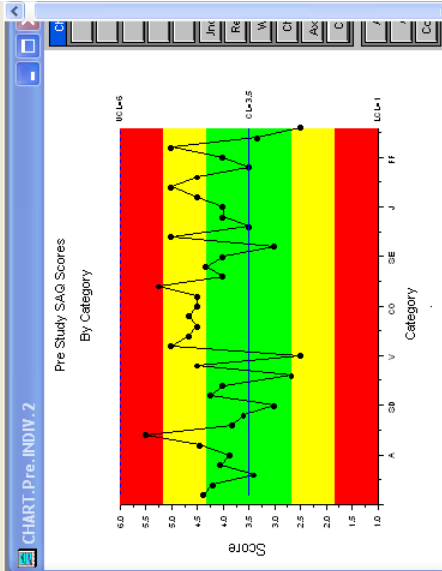
Paired t-Test on Data1_Pre and Data1_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.79893 0.81879 38
 Post 4.87111 0.82748 38
 $t = -0.65002$
 $p = 0.51969$
 At the 0.05 level the two means are not significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data2_Pre and Data2_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.94826 0.3576 6
 Post 5.04769 0.44719 6
 $t = -0.71712$
 $p = 0.50539$
 At the 0.05 level the two means are not significantly different

AX	Pre(Y)	Post(Y)	Diff(Y)	EM
1	GR	5.46154	5.92308	0.46154
2	AF	5.13344	4.68283	-0.45061
3	DE	4.77375	4.85733	0.08359
4	MA	4.72917	5.02292	0.29375
5	MI	5.125	5	-0.125
6	FR	4.46667	4.8	0.33333
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AX	Pre(Y)	Post(Y)	Diff(Y)	EM
1	GR	5.46154	5.92308	0.46154
2	AF	5.13344	4.68283	-0.45061
3	DE	4.77375	4.85733	0.08359
4	MA	4.72917	5.02292	0.29375
5	MI	5.125	5	-0.125
6	FR	4.46667	4.8	0.33333
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Text Output

Paired t-Test on Data1_Pre and Data1_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.9899 0.73974 38
 Post 5.18553 0.74232 38

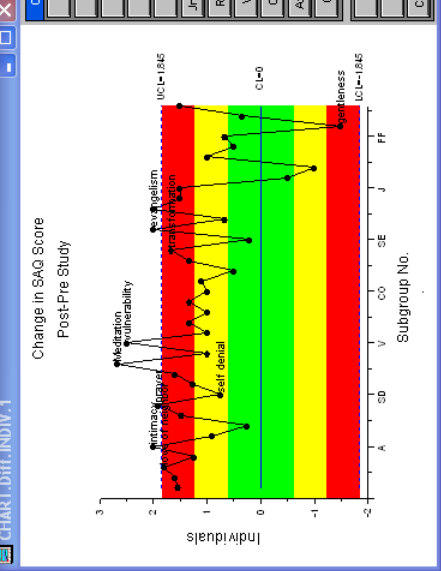
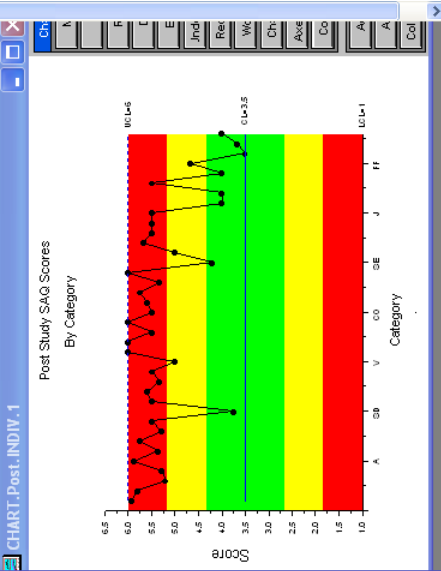
t = -7.90482
 p = 1.83082E-9
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different

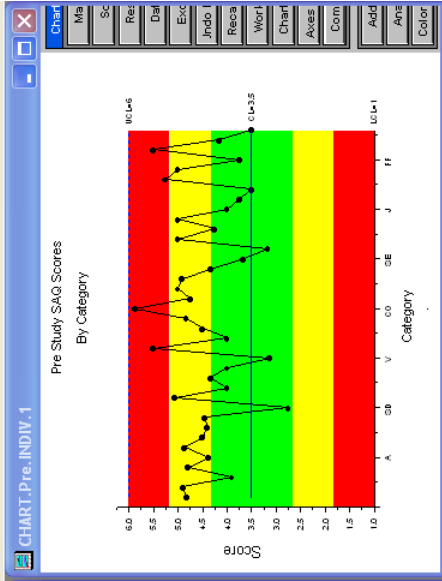
Paired t-Test on Data2_Pre and Data2_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.96431 0.48275 6
 Post 5.34234 0.51023 6

t = -6.22186
 p = 0.00157
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different

Chart

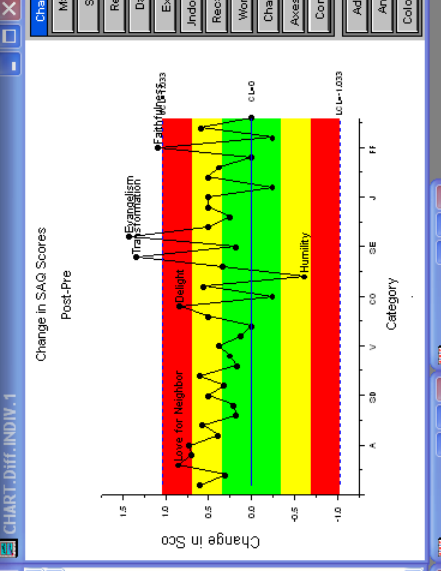
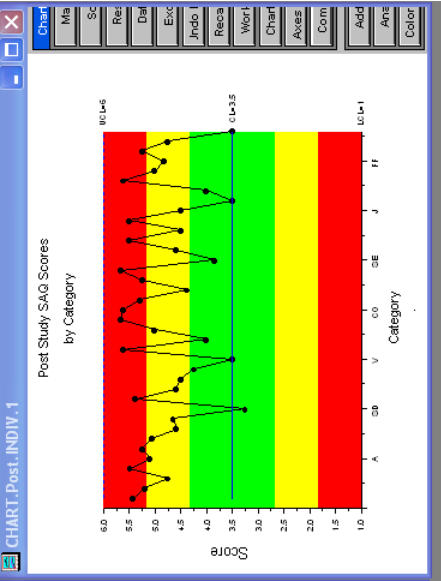
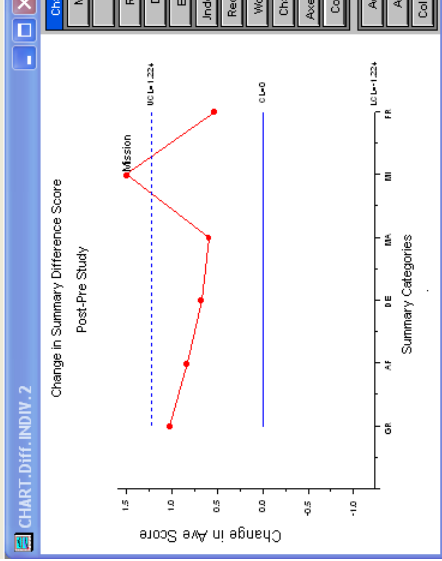
AX	Pre(M)	Post(M)	Diff(M)	E(M)
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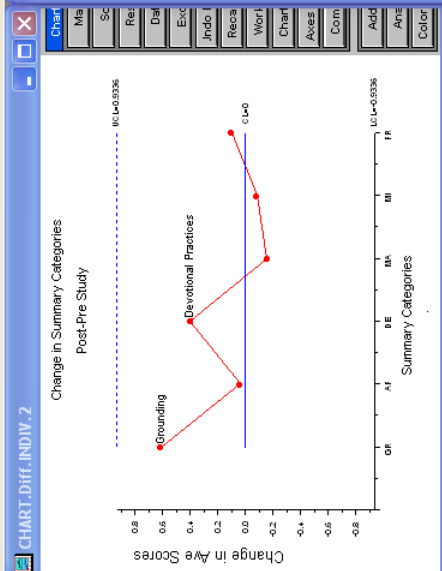


Paired t-Test on Data1_Pre and Data1_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.40774 0.70897 38
 Post 4.79944 0.68842 38
 $t = -5.84945$
 $p = 1.0041E-6$
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data2_Pre and Data2_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.4085 0.35782 6
 Post 5.25963 0.37119 6
 $t = -5.81581$
 $p = 0.00212$
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different



	AX	Pre(M)	Post(M)	Diff(M)	EM
1	GR	4.82692	5.84615	1.01923	
2	AF	4.42754	5.25599	0.82845	
3	DE	4.1814	4.85149	0.67009	
4	MA	4.77604	5.3629	0.58646	
5	MI	3.88542	5.375	1.48958	
6	FR	4.34167	4.86667	0.525	
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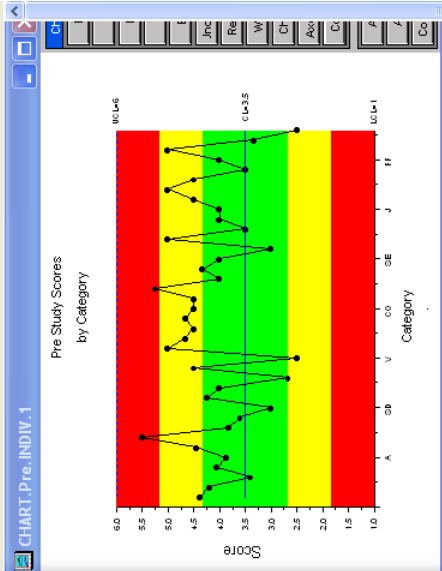
Chart

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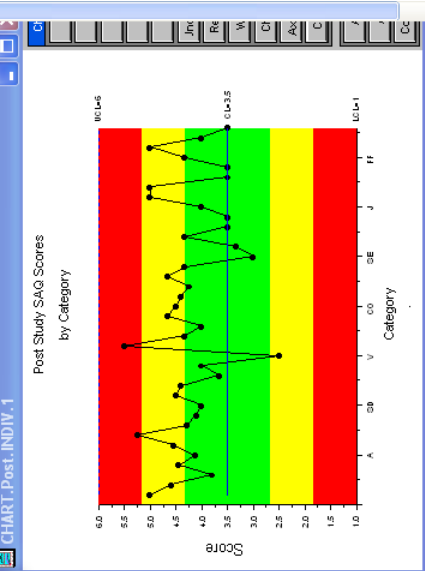
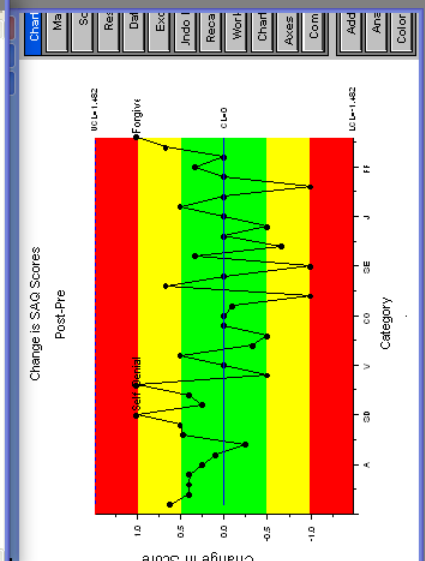
Paired t-Test on Data1_Pre and Data1_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.0909 0.73974 38
 Post 4.1941 0.62945 38
 $t = -1.21134$
 $p = 0.23344$
 At the 0.05 level the two means are not significantly different

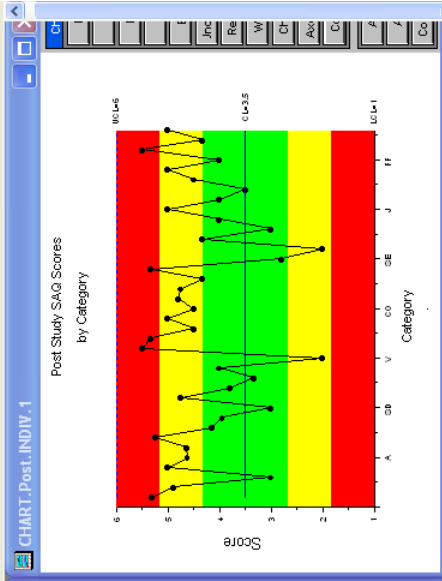
Paired t-Test on Data2_Pre and Data2_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.06431 0.40275 6
 Post 4.21711 0.51093 6
 $t = -1.25578$
 $p = 0.26468$
 At the 0.05 level the two means are not significantly different



Data2

AX	Pre(Y)	Post(Y)	Diff(Y)	E(Y)
1	GR	4.38462	5	0.61538
2	AF	4.21136	4.25213	0.04076
3	DE	3.70447	4.10675	0.40229
4	MA	4.55208	4.39375	-0.15833
5	MI	3.5	3.41667	-0.08333
6	FR	4.03333	4.13333	0.1
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Paired t-Test on Data1_Pre and Data1_Post

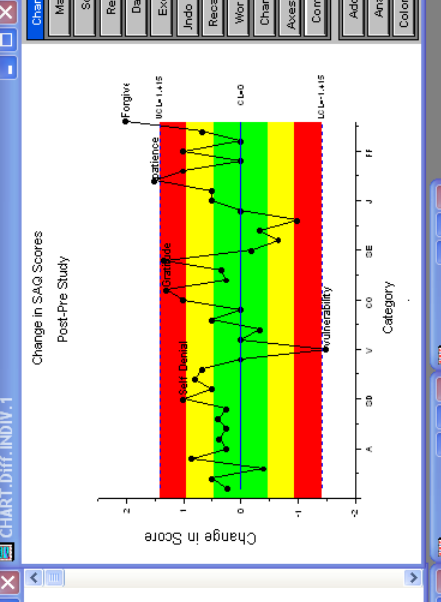
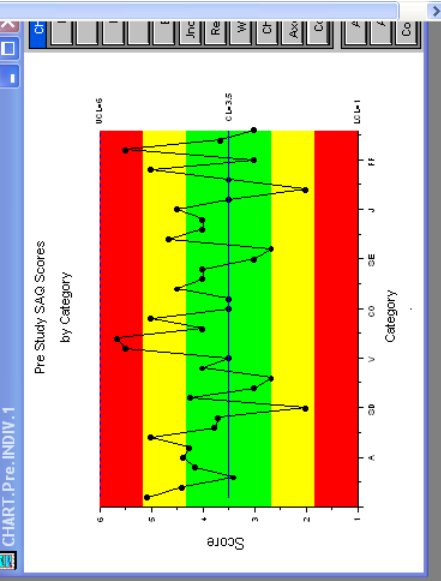
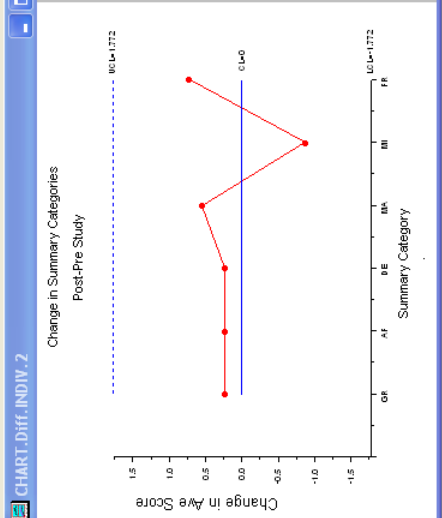
	mean	std. dev.	N
Pre	3.92691	0.98137	38
Post	4.282	0.91472	38

t = -3.20699
p = 0.00277
at the 0.05 level The two means are significantly different

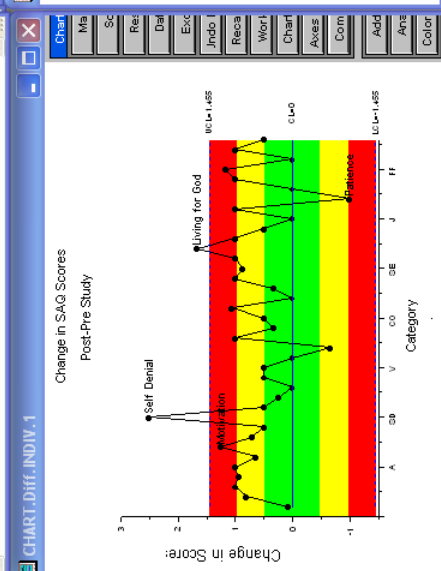
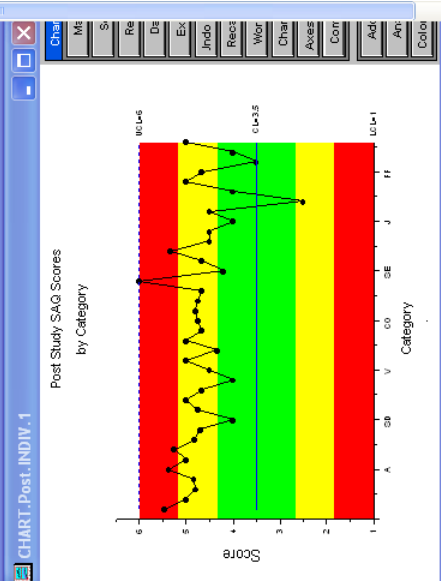
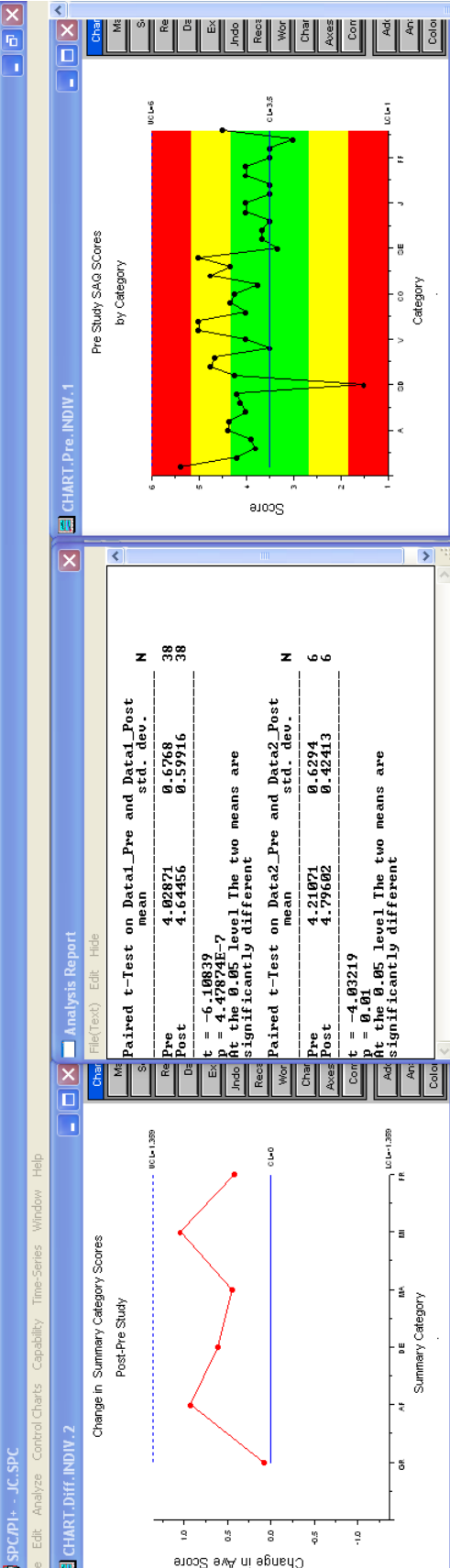
Paired t-Test on Data2_Pre and Data2_Post

	mean	std. dev.	N
Pre	4.68435	0.54752	6
Post	4.26503	0.85814	6

t = -0.79635
p = 0.46195
at the 0.05 level The two means are not significantly different



	AX	Pre(M)	Post(M)	Diff(M)	EM
1	GR	5.07692	5.30769	0.23077	
2	AF	4.08539	4.31591	0.23052	
3	DE	3.59793	3.83115	0.23322	
4	MA	4.27083	4.81875	0.54792	
5	MI	3.70833	2.83333	-0.875	
6	FR	3.76667	4.48333	0.71667	
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Analysis Report

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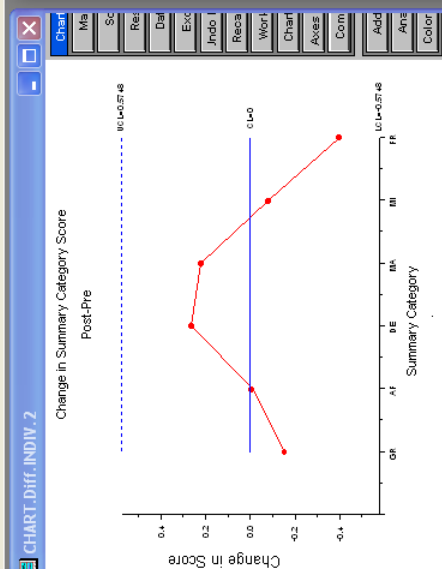
Paired t-Test on Data1_Pre and Data1_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.02871 0.6768 38
 Post 4.64456 0.57916 38
 t = -6.10839
 p = 4.47874E-7
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data2_Pre and Data2_Post
 mean std. dev. N
 Pre 4.21071 0.6284 6
 Post 4.77002 0.42413 6
 t = -4.03219
 p = 0.01
 At the 0.05 level the two means are significantly different



Data2

AXI	Pre(M)	Post(M)	Diff(M)	EM
1	GR	5.38462	5.46154	0.07692
2	AF	3.996	4.92262	0.92662
3	DE	3.99826	4.60447	0.60621
4	MA	4.42708	4.87093	0.44375
5	MI	3.70833	4.75	1.04167
6	FR	3.75	4.16667	0.41667
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Analysis Report

Paired t-Test on Data5_Pre and Data5_Post

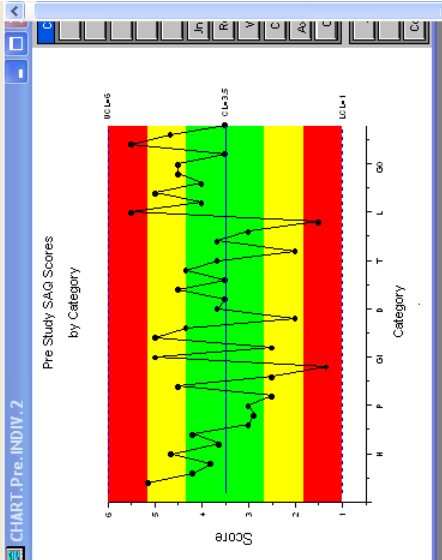
	mean	std. dev.	N
Pre	3.74104	1.06947	38
Post	3.71731	0.85851	38

t = 0.25094
 p = 0.80325
 At the 0.05 level the two means are not significantly different

Paired t-Test on Data2_Pre and Data2_Post

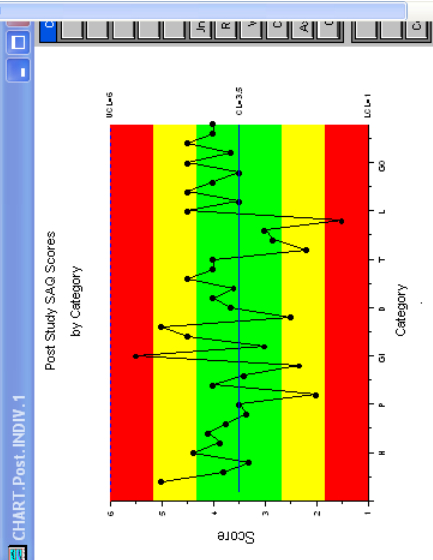
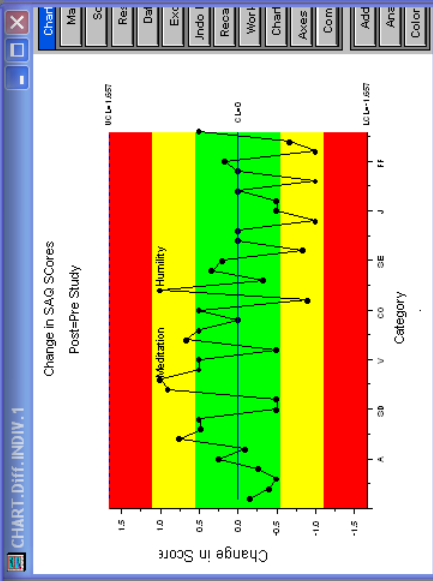
	mean	std. dev.	N
Pre	3.80959	0.884	6
Post	3.78286	0.78929	6

t = 0.2653
 p = 0.80137
 At the 0.05 level the two means are not significantly different



Data2

	AX	Pre(M)	Post(Y)	Diff(Y)	E(M)
1	GR	5.15385	5	-0.15385	
2	AF	3.63669	3.62926	-0.00743	
3	DE	3.24619	3.50959	0.2634	
4	MA	3.6875	3.90833	0.22083	
5	MI	2.66667	2.58333	-0.08333	
6	FR	4.46667	4.06667	-0.4	
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APPENDIX G
Participants' Impact Statements

Source: Post Study Feedback Questionnaire

Participant statements in response to the question: What impact did going through this study have on your life?

Going through this study has given me a greater desire to be in God's word daily. To worship Him in song! I delight when He gives me understanding. I have never read a book on discipleship before. This study has already been of benefit to me and I am sure will be to many new as well as older Christians. Studying this important information over a short period of time did help me grow in focus. Confirmation of what I have felt and understood in my walk with Christ. Reading the chapters at times was exciting and filled with some ah ha moments! Being in the moment with God's word -- internalization and trying to visualize God's word. I found the study reinforced what I already knew and also learned much more. The battle within between the new nature in Christ and my old inner self was also enlightening. I simply felt I wasn't trying hard enough to be like Christ and wasn't letting the Holy Spirit empower me. This study opened my eyes and heart regarding personal convictions, a desire to live for God. It also provided me with a process for growth in these areas. A great benefit to having this study for my wife and I was discussions at the dinner table. I have become more focused and reflective. It amazed me to see God speak directly to me in situations I was going through each week. The last chapter was like a confirmation of what God wants me to be involved with which was answered prayer. It was filled with great reminders and encouragements. I was sad to see chapter 8 come. I truly enjoyed the reading and feel blessed to have been a part of it.

I was on the borderline of depression and uncertainty in my life and in my walk when I started this study. I have experienced significant growth in understanding as outlined on the following pages and had the experience of reading words and chapters and gaining understanding that led to me feeling that a cloud was lifting, healing was taking place in some areas of my life to some degree, and a much needed grounding was taking place. I am truly blessed by this experience. This book brought me back to the basics of what I needed to do and how to do it. Also, the important things like prayer and worship. All the chapters in the book had great information. This was a powerful experience for me. Being far from God when I started, I am blessed to have gone through this at this time. It helped me put my life in perspective with Christ's life. Seeing God's heart for me through my trials has helped me so much. It has drawn me back to quiet times with the Lord, reading the word and walking in truth has saved me! There are so many depths of truth to Jesus.

I have a better understanding that the greater danger is from within. I am better able to release people and situations to God.

It is a discipline to be exercised daily. I want to focus on the discipline of remembrance, making the cross the defining operational reality of my life - but not

above communing with Jesus Himself. I will focus on the discipline of renouncing anger and praying for abusers, renouncing lust, convicted of my sin of idleness, discipline of thankfulness, covetousness is the root of sin.

Overall, this study has helped me to review my relationship with my heavenly Father. I am more at peace with where I am and who I am as a child of God. The study has helped me to focus my eyes on Jesus and the reason to run the race set before me.

Even though I started asking God to change me and to open my eyes to new aspects of Himself, I felt I really fell short, in part to family obligations which took me away from the daily disciplines required. But I do recognize the areas I am lacking in being a devoted, full out, surrendered disciple.

Attending the study has allowed me to spend more time learning more about our God, thus making my walk with the Lord closer. Before attending the study, I had established a familiar routine in spending time with the Lord Jesus. The routine was comfortable, I felt close to the Lord and I thought my prayer life was good. After I started attending the study, I began to feel spiritually challenged mainly because I had to set aside what was familiar and implement new ways to meet with God in prayer. I became angry that I had put myself in this situation which would cause me to change my approach of how I would now spend my time with the Lord, after all, I did sign a contract that I wanted to honour. To my surprise, I began to feel deeply moved when I began to use the formula for a quiet time. The breath prayer that really spoke to my heart was "Lord, I am continually with You, You hold my right hand, You guide me with Your counsel". I always prayed "Lord, You are with me". This breath prayer corrected my perspective, that is, it is I that follows Christ, die to myself, my ways, my thoughts etc. and follow Him! It puts God in His rightful place in my prayer.

Another revelation for me was through the prayer of examen; it illuminated my heart as to what I need to bring before the Lord in prayer.

Dying daily to my self and living daily in Christ by His Spirit was a valuable reminder to bring my prideful ways before the Lord so He can work on my heart to develop in me humility and a servant's heart.

The Holy Spirit convicted me on many issues that are in my life that need changing during this study, and for that I am truly grateful. A study that has stretched me and takes me deeper in my relationship with God is well worth taking.

It was interesting to read. Enjoyed the exercises.

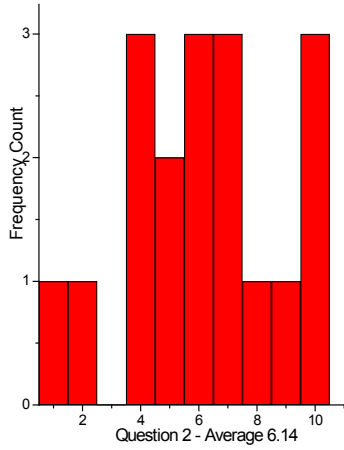
It gave me some new ways to pray.

This has recentered my life around Christ.

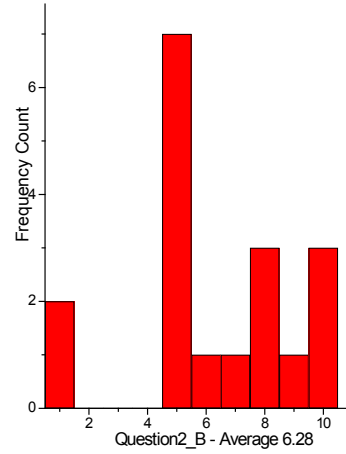
APPENDIX H

Participants' Ratings of the Impact of Participating in the Study on:

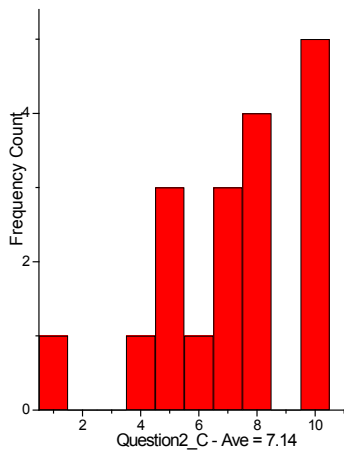
Impact on Understanding of God's Character



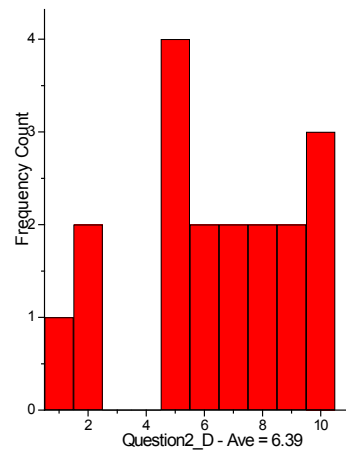
Love for God



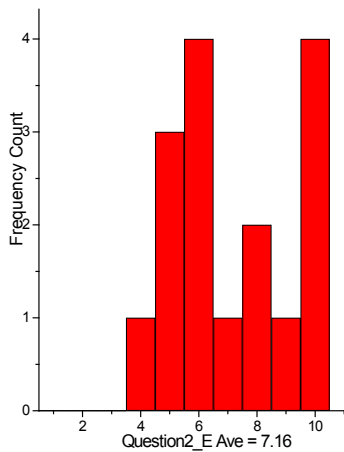
Desire to Live for God



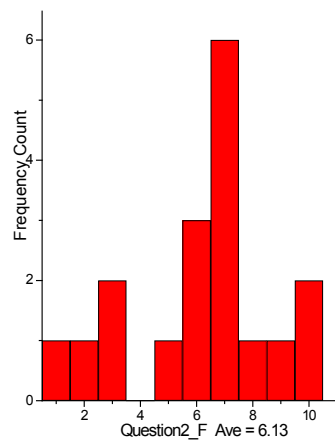
Comfort in Trial



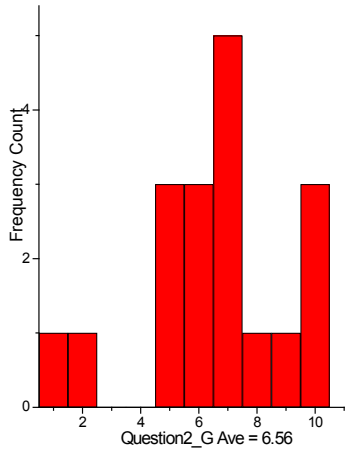
Personal Convictions for Living



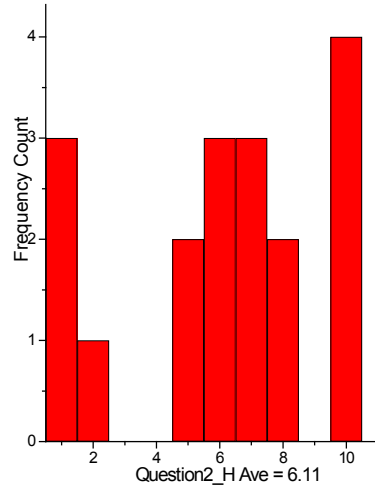
Reaching Out to Others



Developing New Spiritual Disciplines



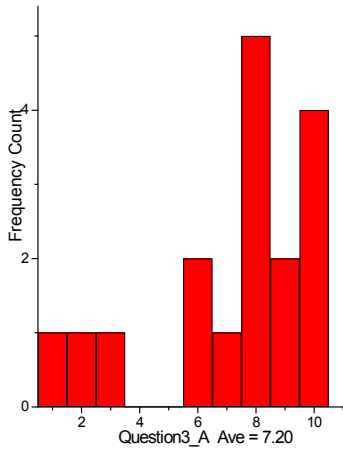
Delight in God



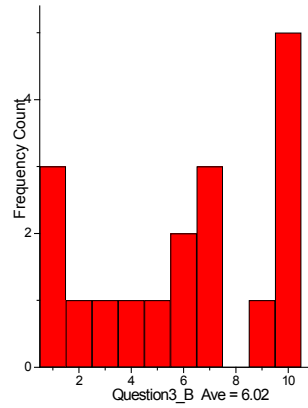
Participants Responses to Post Study Feedback Questionnaire: Question 3

How much of a difference has participating in this study made in your understanding and experience of the following?

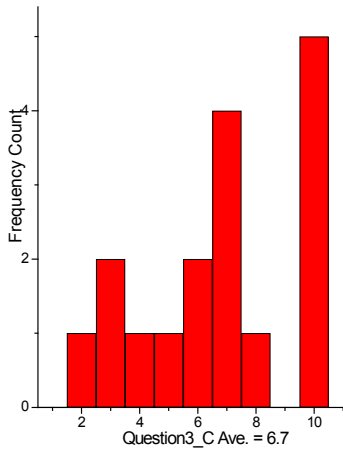
Need for Solitude



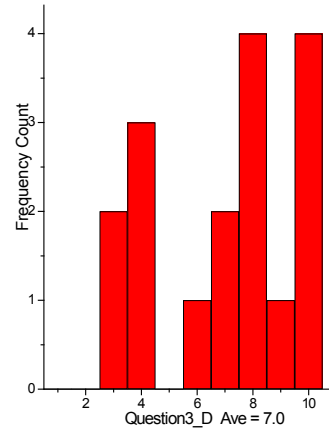
Salvation



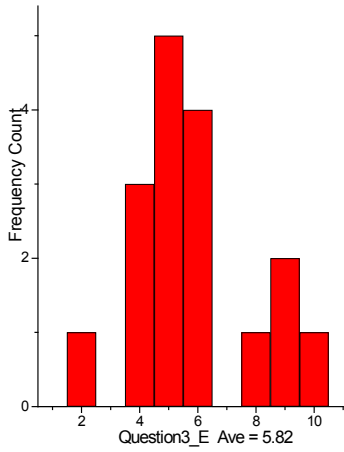
Sin



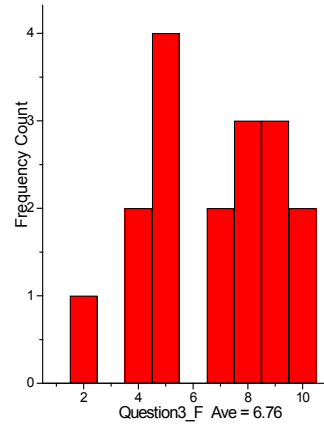
Your Inner Nature



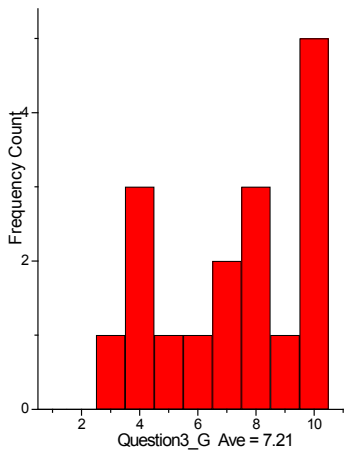
Trials and Suffering



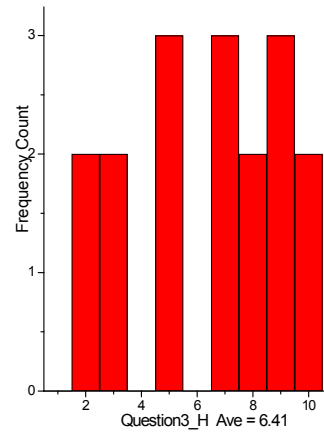
Holiness



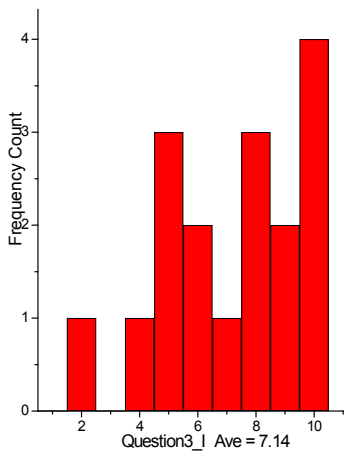
Prayer



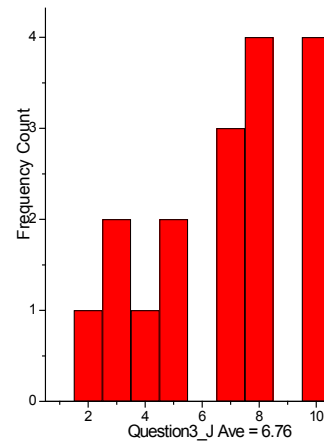
Worship



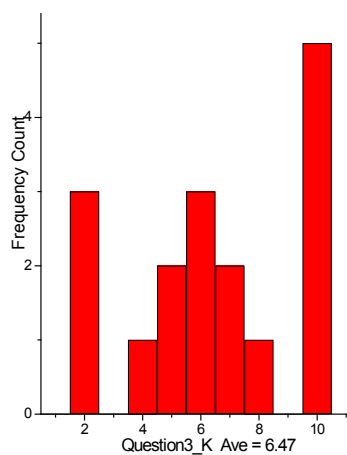
God's Word



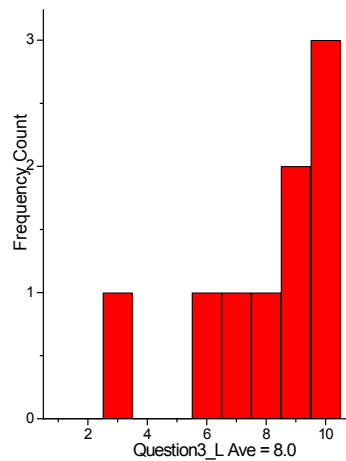
The Law



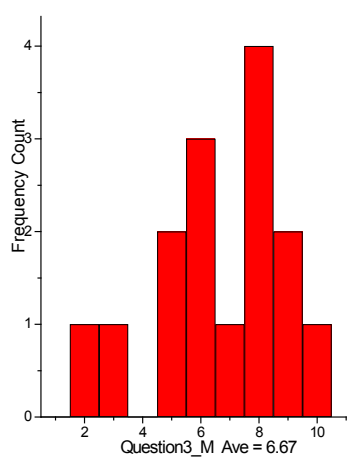
Integrity



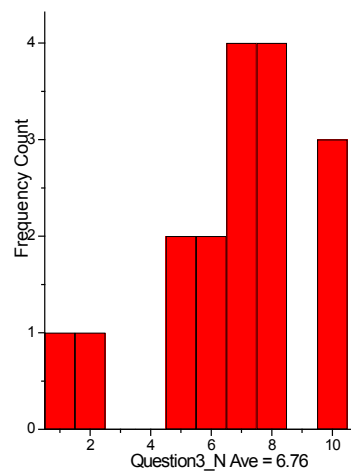
Fasting



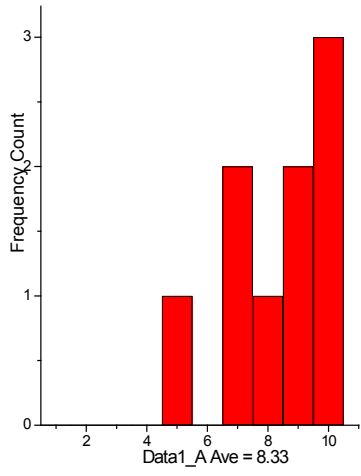
Christian Community



God's Will

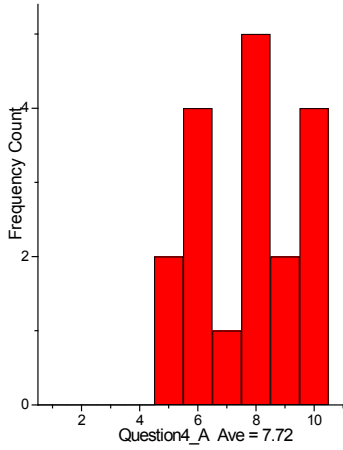


Your Mission

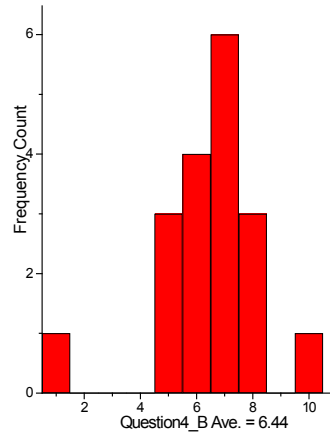


Responses to Question 4: **Rate the effectiveness of the following aspects of the study on your spiritual growth and closeness to God.**

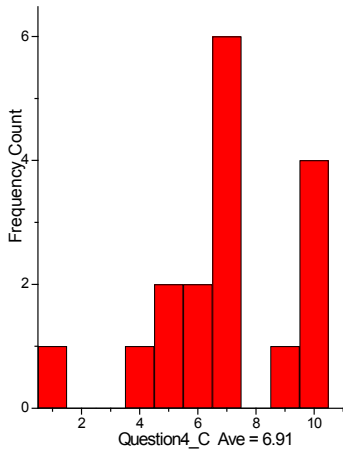
Reading the Chapters



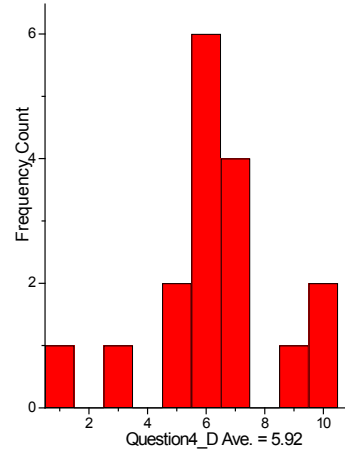
Questions for Reflection



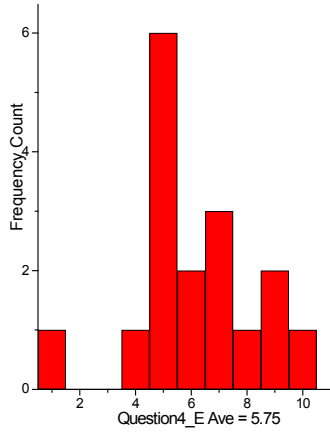
Book Feedback at Meetings



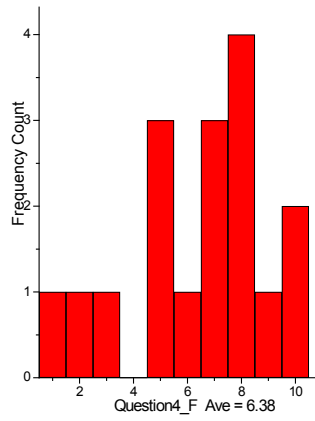
Large Group Exercises



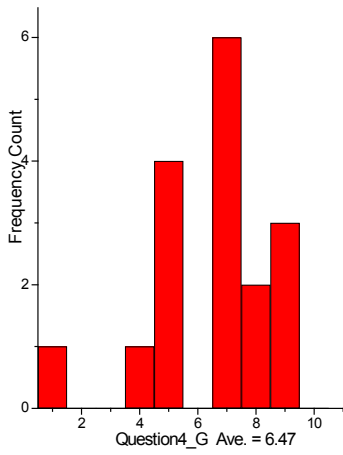
Small Group Breakouts



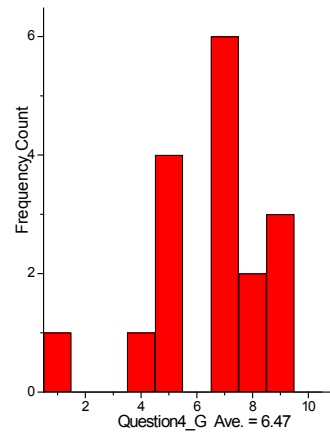
Devotional Assignments



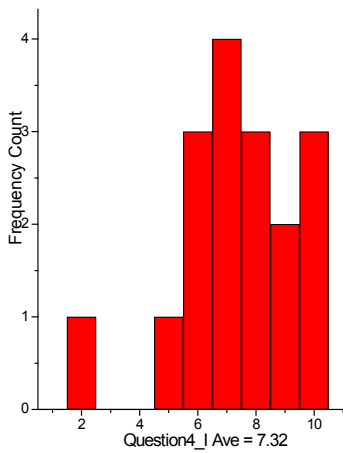
Sharing with Spouse Friend



Sharing with Spouse Friend



Your Own Time with God



APPENDIX I PARTICIPANTS COMMENTS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

It was a wonderful privilege to participate and give input into the book.

It wasn't meant to be finished as quickly in my opinion! We need to think and reflect. It took me far longer than the estimated time to complete each assignment. I had quality time of internalizing the thoughts and just commented on how I was feeling as I read. I took time to thank the Lord for revealing some not so desirable things in me that still need to change but was encouraged about the things He's moving me towards.

The participation by each one of us and how it impacted them. The honesty and that was allowed to be shared - very refreshing.

It was a very interesting process to be a participant with this group of people. I have seen close-up how much work there is to be done to write a book. Les, I thank you for making the effort to write this book on discipleship. I will continue to pray for you as you are working to finish the book.

This study challenged me in particular out of my comfort zone. It reinforced serving others "outside" of the church. It was concentrated with information and biblical revelations. The opportunity to discuss the chapters at every meeting helped guide me and enhanced my understanding.

I found it informative, enlightening, and motivating. I now understand the meaning of the practice of putting scripture on the door posts for the Hebrews. We also need a reminder daily of God's love, presence, peace and power as we endeavour to serve Him and reach out to the lost in darkness.

It was intense, trying to fit everything in and balance work/life (family and other commitments). March, April and May are extremely busy months at work - year end, etc. long hours. There was pressure to try and discipline myself and not spend as much time as was suggested left me feeling guilty. With the assignments and reflections, I found them overwhelming because they took me a lot longer to get through than I expected. I have never participated in a research study before and did not know what to expect. Would be excellent if fully retired!

This was a very interesting thing to do. I found myself more caught up in assessing the book than participating in the study. I would like to reread the book to focus more on the study. I really thought the study questions were excellent. Some of the exercises were more involved/time consuming that I would like.

I have enjoyed reading the material and talking with my husband about it.

The context of the book was very insightful in the need for discipleship. Very instructive in how to disciple someone. Gave me some ways to open a conversation about Christ in

my own way. It is easy for us to think that Jesus did a wonderful job and that there is nothing left for me to do.

I am glad that this was a weekly group study, rather than attempting to read the whole book at one time. There is a lot to digest. The questions and exercises were very helpful. I enjoyed being part of the group. It is always interesting to hear what others have to say about what they learned as we reviewed each chapter together. Hearing others perspective on God's word helps me to learn about God outside the box of my own understanding and stretches me. This whole experience challenged me to walk in a deeper and more obedient relationship with God.

I would like to have heard from more of the people rather than a few people always commenting.

It is an intense study. I would have liked more time to get through each chapter.

Too much time focused on the book content rather than on Jesus. Too little time in breakouts. It felt more like a book review rather than a group of believers pouring into each other. The book is so dense with theology that it would be useful as a reference book to go back over again and again. Any chapter could be a book in itself. The book covers all the essential spiritual disciplines. A very well written book.

It has been an absolute blessing for the reasons outlined above.

I came to learn about God and more about my faith. To move forward from where I was stopped. I enjoyed the discussions about each chapter and the other comments made. The explanation of each chapter was also helpful. I think a DVD is a good idea but should be shown after reading each chapter.

It has been a growing experience, deepening my faith and trust in Jesus and my relationship with Him. I have appreciated the work you have done on this study. I am humbled by your love not only for Christ, but also for us! Thank you.

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