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THE DWELL BIBLE LISTENING APP AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL TO HABITUATE DAILY
BIBLE ENGAGEMENT IN THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

A Major Applied Project
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By
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January 2023

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To my wife Jennifer Prugh and my children, the people of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and Child Development Center in Midlothian, VA, and the people of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and School in Tampa, FL, who have richly and graciously invested in me.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ESV	English Standard Version of the Bible
ION	International Orality Network
MAP	Major Applied Project
D.Min	Doctor of Ministry
LCMS	The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

ABSTRACT

Prugh, Daniel R. "The Dwell Bible Listening App as an Effective Tool to Habituate Daily Bible Engagement in the Local Congregation." Doctor of Ministry. Major Applied Project, Concordia Seminary, 2023. "115" pp.

Congregational members desire to engage the Bible daily. However, oftentimes there are barriers to this goal. One of the most important barriers is that people do not regularly read. This is problematic if the church desires for people to read the Bible daily. In addition, people encounter a tsunami of information every day, that makes it hard to prioritize regular engagement with the Bible. However, the church can help people to overcome these barriers to develop a daily Bible engagement habit through listening.

This research project explored the use of a new process for developing a daily Bible engagement habit by using the Dwell app. During the first phase of this project participants registered, completed a *Daily Bible Engagement* course, and completed the *21 Day Dwell Experience* using the Dwell app. The second phase of the project used a qualitative research method. Participants were purposely selected to be interviewed to gain insight into their experience. Results suggest that the process developed using the Dwell app can be an effective way to help people to habituate daily Bible engagement in the local congregation.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Throughout my life, I have noticed that congregational leaders in different churches have encouraged members to devotionally read the Bible each day to grow in their Christian faith. However, I have not experienced clear guidance to make regular reading part of my life (other than making devotional books available). Cultivating the regular habit of devotional reading is a challenge in a busy world that is constantly bombarding people with content. Every day there is a tsunami of information in many different media formats (i.e., print, video, audio) that is bombarding people. Also, the way that people engage content has changed, and many people no longer read anything of substance regularly.

In fact, according to the *Story of God Training* by Soma Ministries, here is a list of literacy facts compiled from the National Center for Education and Statistics and the National Institute for Literacy,

Did you know that in the USA...

- Over 50% of people over the age of 16 are functionally illiterate.
- 58% of the U.S. adult population never reads another book after high school.
- 42% of college graduates never read another book.
- 80% of U.S. families did not buy or read a book last year.
- Each day, people in the US spend four hours watching TV, three hours listening to the radio and 14 minutes reading magazines.
- It's estimated that we spend as much as 80% of our non-working, non-sleeping time in front of a screen – TV or PC.
- Researchers believe that 70% or more of the people in North America prefer non-literate means of communication. (Preferred oral learners)¹

¹ Caesar Kalinowski, *Story of God Training: Using Narrative & Dialogue in Making Disciples*, last modified May 2018, <https://www.caesarkalinowski.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/story-of-god-training-notes.pdf>.

According to these statistics, people do struggle to read in general, and according to Barna this is also true for reading the Bible. According to the Barna *State of the Bible 2019* report only 13% of the people polled mentioned reading the Bible daily.²

Research Problem

“How would you want to grow in your faith at Holy Trinity?”—this is the question that I have repeatedly asked as I have gotten to know the people of the new congregation that I am serving. It has not been surprising that some people have not had immediate answers to this question, since overall, many people struggle with understanding the need for spiritual formation. However, it has been exciting that people are open to growing in their faith. One concrete way to grow in faith is to engage the Bible daily, however it is difficult for people to develop this habit.

As I have sought to develop my own Bible-reading habit, I have found that engaging the Bible through listening has been helpful for me. The first audio Bible recording that I engaged was the audio resource provided at ESV.org, and it helped me to be more immersed in the story of the Bible. Since I did not have to focus on reading the text, I was able to allow myself to “soak in” the story. Also, listening allowed me to engage larger amounts of text at a time, which resulted in hearing more connections between chapters that I might have missed in the past.

I truly enjoyed listening to the Bible daily, and then I discovered the Dwell app. The listening experience was exceptional, and I found myself even more excited to listen to the Bible. The rich audio voices in combination with the soothing background music brought a new level of

² Barna Group, “The State of the Bible 2019: Trends in Engagement,” *Faith & Christianity*, Barna, last modified April 18, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-of-the-bible-2019/>.

connection with the Bible text. Little did I know, that was the reason that the Dwell app was created. Jon and Josh Baily created the Dwell app specifically to answer this question, “Why doesn’t there exist a beautiful Bible app that’s exclusively devoted to listening to the Scriptures?”³ This Kickstarter crowd-funded project resulted in the Dwell app on iOS and Android platforms, which include genuine voices, easy navigation, original background music, and original artwork. The Bailey brothers created “a new scripture listening app that’s mission is to help you cultivate a habit of listening to the most important book in history: the Bible.”⁴

Since the Dwell app has been helpful in my devotional Bible listening journey, I wondered if it could also be helpful for others. As Holy Trinity Lutheran Church seeks to fulfill the mission of Following Jesus, Growing Disciples, and Embracing Our Community, there is not currently an effective tool that helps people of the church and school to develop a daily Bible engagement habit. Therefore, the problem which this project will address is how to connect with those in the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and School who struggle to form the daily habit of engaging the Bible.

Research Question

The research question that I am asking is, “How can Holy Trinity Lutheran Church help people to habituate daily Bible engagement through using the Dwell Bible listening app?” I believe that this question is extremely important for the local congregation at this time because people need to be regularly connected to God’s story as recorded in the Bible. His Story is life-transforming, and regular engagement with it is important for the life of a believer who

³ “Dwell Scripture Listening App”, Kickstarter, last modified April 16, 2019, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/47059836/dwell-scripture-listening-app/description>.

⁴ “Dwell Scripture Listening App.”

encounters countless other messages with “competing narratives” each day through smartphone technology. While a smartphone allows people to have the entire digital world in the palm of their hand, there are both dangers and benefits to this reality. This research question will employ the benefits of smartphone technology as it allows access to the Bible through a medium that a majority of society embraces.⁵ Through the Dwell app, people will have the entire Bible on an app designed specifically for listening.

This research question uses the broad word choice of “engagement” for specific reasons. First, the point is to “connect” with the story regularly without specifically defining the level of “connection” (i.e., engagement). I want the research participant to be in contact with the text and then see the impact that it has on an individual. I hope that this will allow people to creatively think about the possible ways that they will listen daily. A concrete example of this is that one person might “engage” the text while driving to work or washing the dishes, whereas another person might sit with deep attention in the living room.

Second, the point is to separate the idea of engagement from specifically “reading” the text. The church, post-Reformation, has developed into a community that gives priority to print culture, which will be explored in this paper. However, the print culture world seems almost to no longer exist today for many people. Many people may have never considered that there are other ways to engage the Bible beyond reading, and they may not believe that they could be people who would be regularly connecting with the Bible in another format.

The research question brings to the forefront the benefit of healthy habit formation. Current literature in the social sciences is being used to help people to develop spiritual disciplines that

⁵ The Pew Research Center stated, “The vast majority of Americans—97%—now own a cellphone of some kind. The share of Americans that own a smartphone is now 85%, up from just 35% in Pew Research Center’s first survey of smartphone ownership conducted in 2011.” “Mobile phone ownership over time,” Mobile Fact Sheet, Pew Research Center, last modified April 7, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/>.

encourage one's faith in Jesus Christ. This research question seeks to discover if this is especially helpful for developing a daily Bible engagement habit.

The question specifically is addressed to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, as it seeks to help people with a daily Bible engagement habit. This means that everyone who currently has any connection with Holy Trinity Lutheran Church will be asked to participate in the study as long as they meet research qualifications. The reality is that the church needs to be aware of the positive influence that it has beyond the official membership roster. This would include school families, Cub Scout families, people who know the pastor, as well as any other connection to the church.

This question will be answered through qualitative research interviews that will be conducted following the project, along with data collected through the registration and listening process.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to develop a process using the Dwell app to help people to create a habit of daily Bible engagement. The specific process provided will include the *Daily Bible Engagement* class and the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. The *Daily Bible Engagement* class will assist people in understanding the 'why?' behind the need for daily Bible engagement. It will also give them an overview of the Gospel of John, and the instructions necessary to download and use the Dwell app on their mobile device. This class will prepare participants for the *21 Day Dwell Experience*, where the church will listen to a chapter a day of the Gospel of John over twenty-one days using a custom Bible plan on the Dwell app.

I hope that the participants find this specific process to be helpful for creating a daily Bible engagement habit. However, it is hard to know if twenty-one days will be enough time to start a new habit. I will get to learn more about the impact of this process by interviewing people to

determine if the process was beneficial for creating a Bible engagement habit. Even if a new habit is not formed as part of this process, I will seek to find out more about the individual's attitude toward engaging the Bible daily.

I desire to discover if peoples' lives have changed in any way. I want to know the benefit that people received from participating in this process, and the way that their faith life is now richer. Not only do I desire to see this in the individuals' lives who are participating in the project, but also the entire congregation as people will be participating in this project together over twenty-one days. I hope that Holy Trinity Lutheran Church will benefit from this process.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROJECT IN THE CONTEXT OF RECENT RESEARCH

Originality

As I looked over the Concordia Scholar website and the ProQuest database, I did not find any dissertations that specifically address using the Dwell app to habituate daily Bible engagement in the local congregation.¹ The information that I found online had more to say about using audio Bibles to reach other people groups who speak foreign languages. On the Concordia Scholar website, I found several dissertations that dealt with the devotional life of the congregation using the catechism.

This MAP combines the unique topics of habit, technology, and the Bible into one project to assist a congregation with spiritual growth. Each one of these topics on its own could be studied with great intensity, and people in the Christian community have divergent opinions on them. The topic of habit has gained traction in light of studies in neuroscience that explain more about the way the brain works; however, it is important to consider the specific way that this wisdom applies to spirituality. The topic of technology has been contested within the church over the years; however, today the receptivity of specifically smartphone technology has brought about many benefits and problems. One benefit is that my MAP can be executed to attempt to help people to engage the Bible more regularly. However, one problem with smartphone technology is that some social media applications can be harmful to people and lead to addiction and self-image issues.²

¹ The Concordia Scholar website can be accessed at <https://scholar.csl.edu/>. The ProQuest database can be accessed at <https://www.proquest.com/>.

² Taylor J. Bradman, M.A. student in Intercultural Studies, and David M. Gustafson, Chair, Mission and Evangelism, from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School state, “One of the reasons why photo-sharing may lead to

Lastly, the Bible is a complex book that many people claim to understand; however, very few people have been trained to interpret it. Pastors and church workers instruct the people of God in the meaning of the text within the community, and the Holy Spirit works through this means. Study Bibles also assist in giving people context as they devotionally read themselves.³ This MAP takes into consideration that many people do not read much anymore, which is another unique aspect of this project.

Literature Review

This part of my MAP will sort out several topics that apply to my project. Prior to having my project approved, I had not stopped to completely consider both the simplicity and complexity behind the scenes of a project that is encouraging the habit of daily Bible engagement. First, I will address literature that church leaders have published on the significance of reading the Bible daily. Second, I will survey current literature on habit formation from a social science perspective. A grace-centered exploration of daily devotional habits will be highlighted with the use of literature written by church leaders. Lastly, I will be using digital

anxiety, and sometimes depression, is because it encourages people to share false realities through edited selfies and yearly highlights to appear as if the content-creator lives luxuriously on a daily basis. This unreality may not only lead to frustration in the content-creator through self-objectification, but also in viewers through self-comparison. For the viewer, issues start to set in when they view attractive images of others on social media. These individuals are more likely to become dissatisfied with their own body image and experience a range of negative emotions and behaviors, including self-criticism, sadness, dysfunctional attitudes, low self-esteem, depression, and addiction.” Taylor J. Bradman and David M. Gustafson, “Who Are We? Identity in a Social Media Age,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 33 (2021): 107.

³ Matthew Hoehner states, “On the basis of this research the project affirms that the study Bibles affected the outcome of the Bible study, that is, the devotions. This contribution to ministry suggests that special attention should be given to these texts and what they bring to the understanding of the reader. A pastor or teacher should be aware of which study Bible his or her students are using to inform their understanding of Scripture, with a special focus on the study notes. This heightened awareness is also important as the reliability of the study notes and even the source of the resources is not always questioned by those using the study Bibles. Moreover, some students in this study looked to the study Bible as an authority of truth. Paul’s words to Timothy remind us of the important role the messenger plays in clearly communicating the gospel focused message in Christ, whether that communication takes place through print or in person.” Matthew Hoehner, “The Effect Of Study Bibles On Bible Study” (2012). DMin Major Applied Project, 102. <https://scholar.csl.edu/dmin/102>, 100.

smartphone technology to encourage a daily Bible engagement habit, so I will give a balanced perspective on this technology that is being used for ministry.

Daily Bible Reading

The Bible is an important book for the Christian church. However, just how important is it for the spiritual development of believers? Chapter Three of this MAP will identify that the Bible is the written Word of God. This section will look at church research studies that have measured the impact of Bible engagement on the spiritual life of church members. Both the REVEAL Spiritual Life Survey by the Willow Creek Association and the Transformational Discipleship Assessment (TDA) by LifeWay Research will be explored.

The REVEAL Spiritual Life Survey

The Willow Creek Church in Barrington, Illinois, started on a journey back in 2004 to better understand the impact that the church was making in the lives of church members. They wanted to better understand a person's spiritual journey. The church leadership had worked under the assumption that regular and increased church activity would result in growing Christian maturity.⁴ The benchmark for greater Christian maturity was centered around a growing love for God and love for neighbors. At that time, Greg Hawkins, the executive pastor of the Willow Creek Community Church, and Cally Parkinson, the director of communications, co-developed the REVEAL survey with the help of Eric Arnson that was launched in seven congregations in 2007. The survey helped to identify a church member's location on the spiritual

⁴ Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson state, "Weeks went by, but the data still was not making sense to us. In fact, the data itself was perfectly fine. We were just blinded by our bias that increased participation in church leads to spiritual growth. Once we got over ourselves and let the data do the talking, we learned three shocking facts about our congregation: (1) Increased participation in church activities by themselves barely moved our people to love God and others more; (2) We had a lot of dissatisfied people; (3) We had a lot of people so dissatisfied that they were ready to leave." Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Move* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 17, Kindle.

continuum.⁵ The initial survey's quantitative and qualitative research revealed that participating in church activities does not in itself increase spiritual maturity.

Since 2007, the Willow Creek Association has continued to administer the test to local congregations to gather more data. In the book *Move: What 1,000 Churches REVEAL about Spiritual Growth*, Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson look at the local congregation through the lens of 1,000 congregations and 250,000 congregants' responses to the survey. The purpose was still to place people on the spiritual continuum; however, they were seeking to further understand the movement towards being a Christ-Centered Christian. Hawkins and Parkinson express this reality:

If churches could do only one thing to help people at all levels of spiritual maturity grow in their relationship with Christ, their choice is clear. They would inspire, encourage, and equip their people to read the Bible—specifically, to reflect on Scripture for meaning in their lives. The numbers say most churches are missing the mark—because only one out of five congregants reflects on Scripture every day.⁶

The additional activities of participating in a small group and serving were also key indicators for movement along the spiritual continuum. However, Parkinson and Hawkins make a point to highlight their limitations of understanding a person's spiritual growth, they write, "Spiritual growth is not linear or predictable. It is a complex process as unique as each individual, and it progresses at a pace determined by each person's circumstances and the activity of the Holy Spirit."⁷ This is a recognition that, despite focusing on regular activities that promote spiritual

⁵ Hawkins and Parkinson state, "REVEAL identifies a spiritual continuum comprised of four segments of people at different stages of spiritual development: Exploring Christ, Growing in Christ, Close to Christ, and Christ-Centered. REVEAL's deeper value, however, is found in its insights about what creates movement along the journey; for example, which church activities, beliefs, spiritual practices, or activities (evangelism, serving, etc.) are most influential to spiritual growth at different points along the journey." Hawkins and Parkinson, *Move*, 259.

⁶ Hawkins and Parkinson, *Move*, 19.

⁷ Hawkins and Parkinson, *Move*, 26.

growth, true spiritual growth and maturity rest in the Holy Spirit's work in the life of a Christian.

For my project, the REVEAL study highlights the critical importance of daily reading and reflecting on the Bible for a congregation. The study encourages congregations to intentionally lead and direct people within the church to develop this regular habit. It was reported that developing a daily Bible reflecting and reading habit helped people who were both “stalled out” and “dissatisfied” with their faith journey. Hawkins and Parkinson share that, “It shouldn’t surprise us in the least, but our research confirms what church leaders have known for centuries: the Scriptures are the key to breaking through the barriers encountered by both the stalled and the dissatisfied. Those who are stalled need the Bible; those who are dissatisfied want the Bible.”⁸ This is important to consider since the study highlights that all people on a spiritual journey towards Christ benefit from the practice of daily Scripture reading and reflection. My project can help to assist people who struggle to develop a daily Bible engagement habit, which will be beneficial for the life of the entire congregation.

Transformational Discipleship Assessment (TDA)

In the book *No Silver Bullets: 5 Small Shifts That Will Transform Your Ministry*, Daniel Im makes use of the Transformational Discipleship Assessment (TDA).⁹ The TDA was developed by LifeWay Research in 2011, and it measures eight discipleship attributes of mature Christians. The specific attributes included Bible engagement, obeying God and denying self, serving God and others, sharing Christ, exercising faith, seeking God, building relationships, and being unashamed (transparency). Im supports his claims with the TDA results.

⁸ Hawkins and Parkinson, *Move*, 187.

⁹ Daniel Im, *No Silver Bullet* (Nashville: B&H, 2017), chap. 2, Kindle

Im's main point is that there is not a simple "silver bullet" when working in church ministry. He asked these questions in the introduction of the book, "Have you ever noticed the deep longing inside for the silver bullet? For that one quick, magical solution that will solve all of our problems?"¹⁰ Of course the answer is yes, because I myself can personally relate with his rhetorical question. However, he desires to give the reader an alternative framework in considering church ministry and discipleship. The idea of five micro-shifts in thinking is recommended to set the stage for the creation of a specific discipleship path for the church.

Im's definition of discipleship is, "...moving toward Christ." Im ties his definition of discipleship to his first micro-shift "From Destination to Direction." The church is usually interested in having people complete classes and programs to grow as disciples, which then ends with supposed maturity after completion. Im states this when he writes, "When you look at discipleship through a bounded-set lens, you tend to view maturity based on how long you've been a disciple. As a result, it's easy to view discipleship simply as being all about the classes you've completed, the number of times you've read the Bible, and other visible factors that can be measured."¹¹ This might be the case for participants, however Im states, that the better idea is that of 'pointing' in a direction. This is demonstrated when he writes about an open-set direction,

When viewing discipleship through a centered-set lens, maturity becomes more about relation to the center, which is Jesus Christ, and the direction you're moving toward. "The focus is on the center and of pointing people to that center." As a result, discipleship through a centered-set lens is best viewed as "a long obedience in the same direction" as put by Eugene Peterson.¹²

Just as in the REVEAL Study, Im is focusing on the movement towards being Christ-Centered.

¹⁰ Im, *No Silver Bullet*, chap. 2.

¹¹ Im, *No Silver Bullets*, chap. 1.

¹² Im, *No Silver Bullets*, chap. 1.

Of the five micro-shifts suggested, the shift “From Output to Input” is relevant to this MAP. Im uses concepts from business execution framework to consider the lead measures (input goals) and the lag measures (output goals). Im states, “Input goals are the things that you can do today that will produce the results that you want tomorrow (output goals).”¹³ He points out that church leadership tends to focus on desired outcomes (i.e., the eight TDA attributes) without suggesting certain “inputs” (i.e., lead measures that might make a difference today). He writes, “Making the micro-shift from output to input goals is the first step to figuring out how to actually move people toward Christ and disciple them.”¹⁴ The input goal of daily Bible reading did improve the likelihood of spiritual maturity. Im verifies this when he states,

In other words, the more an individual did the input goal of reading their Bible, the higher they scored in all of the output goals. So the more you can help your church to read the Bible, the better they are going to be able to obey God and deny self, serve God and others, share Christ, exercise their faith, seek God, build relationships, and be unashamed about their faith.¹⁵

This finding is important for the support of my project of encouraging daily Bible engagement through listening in the congregation.

Conclusions

Both the Willow Creek (REVEAL) and the LifeWay (TDA) studies give similar data and highlight the need for “movement towards Christ” in the lives of church members. They both give the healthy expectation that Christian maturity is Spirit empowered growth in obedience to God and love of neighbor. Also, both studies focus on individual devotional Bible reading in conjunction with a connection to the church. In the REVEAL study, it was recommended that the

¹³ Im, *No Silver Bullets*, chap. 2.

¹⁴ Im, *No Silver Bullets*, chap. 8.

¹⁵ Im, *No Silver Bullets*, chap. 2.

Scripture be read, proclaimed, and meditated on in worship, and that the pastor would encourage the church to daily read together. These findings are encouraging for me as I look forward to executing my project around daily Bible engagement.

Daily Bible Engagement Habit

The previous section of this chapter on the importance of “Daily Bible Reading” highlighted the benefit of this practice in the life of a Christian. My MAP will seek to help people to develop a daily Bible engagement habit. This section will explain the process of habit formation from secular and religious perspectives. I will also briefly share my connection with the topic, which contributed to the development of this MAP.

Introduction to Habit

On September 13th, 2017, I followed my regular routine of setting up my work area at the John Tyler Community College Library, so I could spend uninterrupted time for weekly sermon preparation and strategic ministry planning. This was something that I started several years prior to make sure that the most important work of the week would not get pushed away by the everyday business of the church office. Prior to starting my focused work time, I loved to briefly survey the library shelves for interesting reading opportunities. On this morning, I saw Charles Duhigg’s book *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business*, and I picked it up off the shelf for a quick read. As I read the introduction of the book that day and skimmed the chapters, I was fascinated by some of the points. Duhigg writes, “One paper published by a Duke University researcher in 2006 found that more than 40% of the actions people performed each day weren’t actual decisions, but habits.”¹⁶ Also, I was intrigued by the point that Duhigg

¹⁶ Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit* (New York: Random House, 2014), xvi.

made from the work of William James, “All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits.”¹⁷ This really caused me to stop and think about all the rituals and routines of my life.

James K. A. Smith

However, a quick glance at Duhigg’s book did not make much of a difference in my life until later in 2019, when I came across the book *Imagining the Kingdom* by James K. A. Smith. Smith brings up a humorous, yet important, personal illustration of reading Wendel Barry while eating a hotdog at Costco. The distance between the fundamentals of Wendel Barry (agrarian farmer) and Costco (bulk wholesaler) is tremendous, and Smith explains these personal inconsistencies between thought and action throughout his book. How could Smith believe in sustainable food practices, yet still be eating a hot dog at Costco? This simple example did hit home for me because I can regularly see these kinds of inconsistencies in my life and the lives of others. I am used to believing that people are “a brain on a stick” (as Smith suggests) that can make balanced informed decisions in every situation, however Smith refutes this proposition. Rather, he contends that our decision making through habit, “...is not just the exterior ritual and routine that you're going through it is an acquired disposition, it's a kind of default orientation that you have learned and acquired that has become woven into the fabric of your character so that now a habit something that is habitual.”¹⁸ He goes on to root these habits in an individual’s longings and desires, which are at the heart of one’s devotion (i.e., worship). A person’s devotion is seen in their daily liturgies (i.e., rituals and routines). These liturgies are centered around the individual’s belief concerning the “good life.”

¹⁷ Duhigg, *Power of Habit*, xv.

¹⁸ James K. A. Smith, “You Are What You Love,” The Veritas Forum, February 2, 2018, YouTube video, 10:50–11:05, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziz-x3htfEk>.

Smith supports this argument with the work of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty and social theorist Pierre Bourdieu. Smith states that “Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* is a classic account of how the body ‘knows.’”¹⁹ Smith unpacks this idea when he states,

Thus Merleau-Ponty adopts the Heideggerian neologism “being-in-the-world” to honor this richness and complexity. We don’t *have* a being-in-the-world; we *are* being-in-the-world—embedded, embodied actors at home in an environment that we navigate with a kind of intentionality that precedes knowledge and whose locus is in the body. Struggling to name this, Merleau-Ponty describes it as “preconscious knowledge.” It is an appreciation for such preconscious knowledge that is required if we are going to develop an adequate, nuanced philosophy of action.²⁰

Smith uses this work of Merleau-Ponty to give support to the importance of worship in Christian formation.

On the other hand, Pierre Bourdieu challenges the reason why people act or don’t act in a certain way. Smith summarizes Bourdieu when he states,

We are simply not autonomous animals who float in the world unencumbered except by our own freedoms. The autonomous “rational actor” is without dispositions or inclinations—without habits—and that is precisely the problem: such a theory of human persons will never truly understand human action because it fails to recognize the “inertia” of habitus, the complex of inclinations and dispositions that make us lean into the world with a habituated momentum in certain directions. We don’t “decide” our way into every action. Our being-in-the-world is characterized by inclinations that propel us to all sorts of action “without thinking.”²¹

Smith looks to Bourdieu to better understand the habits people develop through their life in the world. Smith then applies the idea of habit to the role of worship and ritual in the Christian life, which he believes is foundational for creating actors who participate in the *Missio Dei*. Smith

¹⁹ James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, vol. 2, *Cultural Liturgies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 41.

²⁰ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 44.

²¹ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 79–80.

uses the second part of the book to flesh out this idea in relationship to the ‘imagination’ that is formed through Christian worship.

It is important to remember that Smith writes his books to help people to take seriously the full experience of being alive in the world. He writes about the perspectives of Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu to support this reality, however he does not believe that solely participating in rites and rituals support a perspective of determinism. Smith refutes an accusation made by Kristen Guidero in the article “We Need More Than Liturgy” in his own article “We Need More Than Liturgy: AGREED.” Smith states,

In what she takes to be opposition to my project, Guidero emphasizes that “liturgical formation does not guarantee virtue formation.” But where do I ever make claims about such a “guarantee?” I reject any sort of liturgical determinism (just as Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu also reject determinism, as I note in ITK). And already in DTK, I noted the limits of liturgical formation.²²

Smith provides a helpful perspective on the complex experience of people living in the world and the significance of their habits for spiritual formation. My MAP recognizes that the daily habit of engaging the Bible has the possibility of developing a love and devotion for God’s life-transforming story.

Justin Earley

I appreciate the connection that Smith makes between worship and habit, so that people can take seriously the center of their devotion and the results of that for their life. The need to take an inventory of one’s liturgies is a helpful exercise. Justin Earley, an attorney from Richmond, VA,

²² James K. A Smith, “We need more than Liturgy: AGREED,” James K. A. Smith, August 22, 2014, <https://jameskasmith.com/we-need-more-than-liturgy-agreed/>.

applies the implications of Smith’s scholarship to his life.²³ Earley’s book, *The Common Rule*, is his attempt to put Smith’s work into practice. Earley writes that “Only in retrospect did I realize that, while the house of my life was decorated with Christian content, the architecture of my habits was just like everyone else’s. And that life had been working for me—until it collapsed.”²⁴ He had an extremely successful career and family life; however, he found himself regularly suffering from panic attacks. At that point in time, he knew that he needed to change his life, so he talked with his wife, and they began to create the Common Rule.²⁵

In the book *The Common Rule*, Earley writes about ideas that encouraged him on the journey to seeking a new way of life. Earley shares about the influence of James K.A. Smith,

As philosopher James K. A. Smith argues in his book *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, the habits we play out day after day are not tangential to our worship but actually central to it. Worship is formation, and formation is worship. As the psalmist put it, those who make and trust in idols will become like them (Psalm 31:6). So we become our habits.²⁶

Smith sheds light on the spiritual consequences that Earley was encountering as he suffered from living into secular liturgies with a misguided story of success and the good life. This helped Early to reconsider his habits, and he looked for assistance from the neuroscience perspective of Charles Duhigg to encourage him on this journey. Earley makes a helpful connection between Duhigg and Smith when he writes, “When we combine Smith’s insight that our habits are liturgies of worship and Duhigg’s neurological insight that our brains aren’t totally engaged

²³ I saw Smith and Earley speak at a Parent Forum on Thursday, February 27, 2020, at the Veritas School in Richmond, VA. This event helped me to think more about healthy habits concerning Christian worship and devotional life.

²⁴ Justin Earley, *The Common Rule* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019), 4. Kindle.

²⁵ Earley states, “A ‘rule’ is a set of habits you commit to in order to grow in your love of God and neighbor. As you may expect, this book is meant to be practiced, not simply read. Consider this book a companion, a handbook for trying out the Common Rule.” Earley, *Common Rule*, 21.

²⁶ Earley, *Common Rule*, 9.

when our habits are playing out, we have a robust explanation of how our unconscious habits fundamentally reshape our hearts, regardless of what we tell ourselves we believe.”²⁷

Earley suggests helpful “First Article” (of the Apostles’ Creed) insight regarding the neurological dynamics of habits from both Smith and Duhigg. He has seen a difference in his life after centering daily habits on Jesus Christ and his Kingdom that result in love of God and love of neighbor. One daily keystone habit (i.e., super-habit) that Earley suggests is “Bible before phone.”²⁸ Earley’s book helps people to take seriously the warning about the focus of their devotion, and it assists them to put into practice new healthy spiritual habits.

Understanding Habits

On some level, all people desire to have better habits. Charles Duhigg in his book *The Power of Habit* gives helpful insight into the neuroscience of habit loops (i.e., cue, routine, and reward).²⁹ This insight breaks down our biological process and provides a practical way to start battling life struggles for healthy change. Also, identifying Keystone Habits (i.e., most important habits) are helpful to successfully make needed lifestyle changes.³⁰ These ideas can be used in a beneficial way to encourage developing healthy habits. However, this research concerning habits only focuses on the biological aspects. It does not focus on the connection between habit

²⁷ Earley, *Common Rule*, 9.

²⁸ Earley writes, “A keystone habit is a super-habit. It’s the first domino in the line; by changing one habit, we simultaneously change ten other habits. Earley, *Common Rule*, 36. Zach Zehnder created a 40-day challenge entitled the Being Challenge that highlighted the use of “Keystone Habits” from Charles Duhigg to help people to follow Jesus. Zach Zehnder, *The Being Challenge* (USA: Red Letter Living, 2020).

²⁹ Duhigg states, “The process within our brains is a three-step loop. First, there is a *cue*, a trigger that tells your brain to go into automatic mode and which habit to use. Then the routine, which can be physical or mental or emotional. Finally, there is a *reward*, which helps your brain figure out if this particular loop is worth remembering for the future.” Duhigg, *Power of Habit*, 19.

³⁰ Duhigg states, “Some habits, in other words, matter more than others in remaking businesses and lives. These are “keystone habits,” and they can influence how people work, eat, play, live, spend, and communicate. Keystone habits start a process that over time, transforms everything.” Duhigg, *Power of Habit*, 100.

development and personal identity, which can be understood through secular and Gospel Centered perspectives.

James Clear

In the book *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones*, James Clear writes about habit from a different perspective than Duhigg. Clear connects habit development and change to the level of a person's identity. He identifies the three layers of behavior change as changing your outcome (1st layer), your process (2nd layer), and your identity (3rd layer). Clear states, "Outcomes are about what you get. Processes are about what you do. Identity is about what you believe."³¹ He believes that the most lasting change in a person comes when starting with one's identity. Clear writes, "The ultimate form of intrinsic motivation is when a habit becomes part of your identity. It's one thing to say I'm the type of person who wants this. It's something very different to say I'm the type of person who is this."³² This means that people need to determine their identity to develop habits that will reflect their desired outcome. Clear desires for people to consider small atomic habits that will make a one percent difference in their life, which will provide continued self-improvement over time.³³ Clear then suggests a four stage "habit loop" including cue, craving, response, and reward toward new healthier habits.

The way that Clear roots habit in identity is helpful for theological reflection because he is making a clear claim concerning his view of humanity. People can determine their identity and then work towards it. There is practical wisdom in Clear's work, and he does provide a step-by-

³¹ James Clear, *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones* (New York: Avery, 2018), 30–31, Kindle.

³² Clear, *Atomic Habits*, 33.

³³ Clear, *Atomic Habits*, 28.

step framework for forming healthy habits. However, Clear's view of humanity is problematic. The root of humanity's main issue is misplaced identity in relationship with God (Gen. 3). This means that no matter how hard people try to design their own identity and work towards it, they will always be found wanting and lacking. The endless pursuit of habits from a mistaken identity towards continued self-improvement will end in despair. However, given identity through the waters of baptism in Jesus Christ will invite a person into a story of trust in God that manifests itself in Gospel-centered habits of devotion that lead to life.³⁴

A Gospel-Centered Understanding of Habits

In the book *Grace Upon Grace: Spirituality for Today*, John Kleinig gives a different frame in considering the development of holy habits of a regular devotional life. Rather than a goal of continued self-improvement, Kleinig highlights the reality that baptismal identity in Jesus Christ causes people to see the world in a new way. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is applied personally to the believer's life, and one has a new nature in Christ. Life is not about an upward journey towards God or towards self-improvement; instead a person is seeking to be more dependent on God. Kleinig writes, "Our whole life as the children of God is a life of reception. We have been justified by the grace of God the Father, so we now live by faith in His grace. Because we believe in Him we now receive every spiritual gift from Him. We receive grace upon grace from the fullness of the incarnate Christ."³⁵

³⁴ Earley's Keystone Habit of "Bible before phone" takes this into consideration. Earley states, "Who am I? And who am I becoming? These are the questions our morning routines are inevitably asking and answering for us. But no words except the words of Scripture can bear the weight of a response to these questions. The story of Scripture is clear. We do not know who we are apart from the God who made us, and we do not know who we are becoming apart from the God who is renewing us. We long to know who we are. We daydream about the versions of ourselves that we hope to become. But apart from Jesus we can do neither of these things." Earley, *Common Rule*, 81.

³⁵ John Kleinig, *Grace Upon Grace: Spirituality for Today* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2008), 10, Kindle.

The life of reception from God can also be thought of as begging before God. Kleinig writes, “Luther, therefore, does not envisage the spiritual life as a process of self-development, but as a process of reception from the triune God. This process of reception turns proud, self-sufficient individuals into humble beggars before God.”³⁶ The Christian is a person who knows where to beg; this location is in the reception of the Word and Sacraments.

Kleinig encourages regular devotional time in the Scriptures independently and corporately to help shape an individual. This regular engagement with the written Word of God is extremely important. He equates this regular devotional life to breathing. Kleinig writes,

Our spiritual life, the journey of discipleship, is a lot like breathing. It is a life that is produced and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Jesus does not just give us new birth through water and the Spirit; He also gives us the Holy Spirit to sustain and empower us all the time so we can live and work together with Him as His royal sons and daughters. Every Sunday when we go to church, every day as we do our daily devotions, the risen Lord Jesus comes to us, just as He did that first Easter Sunday. Jesus stands in our midst, breathes on us, and says: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). As He breathes His Spirit on us, we breathe His Spirit into us.³⁷

This image continues to show the dependence that the Christian has on God and his Word for all life.³⁸ The regular routine and ritual of daily devotional reading and corporate worship are locations of life for the Christian. Developing these habits does not help a person to reach God, rather is a place where God meets us.

³⁶ Kleinig, *Grace Upon Grace*, 16.

³⁷ Kleinig, *Grace Upon Grace*, 46.

³⁸ Eugene Peterson writes, “Christians feed on Scripture. Holy Scripture nurtures the holy community as food nurtures the human body. Christians don't simply learn or study or use Scripture; we assimilate it, take it into our lives in such a way that it gets metabolized into acts of love, cups of cold water, missions into all the world, healing and evangelism and justice in Jesus' name, hands raised in adoration of the Father, feet washed in company with the Son.” Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), chap. 2, Kindle.

Lastly, it is in the regular engagement with the Word of God that the Christian is spiritually formed. Kleinig looks to Luther's spiritual formation process to show the pathway to a deeper relationship with the Triune God. He writes,

Luther does not advocate a particular practice of spirituality, but outlines the process of spiritual formation in the life of every Christian. This involves the interplay between three forces as we pray, meditate, and are tempted: the Holy Spirit, God's Word, and Satan. Luther claims that the interaction between these three forces is so powerful and effective that those who go along with it would, if necessary, be able to "write books just as good as those of the fathers and councils."³⁹

The focus on prayer directs a person to God, then one meditates on the Scriptures, which leads to life challenges that drive one back to prayer. This perspective of spiritual formation is not linear, but rather it is cyclical. However, the wrestling with God through prayer, meditation, and temptation will not last forever. The spiritual formation of the Christian will be complete by Christ's work through the Holy Spirit on the Last Day (Phil. 1:6).

Conclusions

It is important to understand habits from a secular and theological perspective. The "First Article" wisdom that can be gained from social science can assist people in making healthy life changes. However, it is also important to frame this wisdom in the Christian story, so that people understand the goal. The desired healthy habits of spiritual formation are not an upward journey of self-improvement, but a dependence on the Triune God for identity and life. My hope is that this MAP will communicate both realities and assist people in establishing a life-giving habit of daily Bible engagement through listening to the Dwell app.

³⁹ Kleinig, *Grace Upon Grace*, 13.

Smartphone Technology

My MAP uses smartphone technology to help people to develop a daily Bible engagement habit through using the Dwell app. This specific technology is still relatively new, and scholars are taking considerable time determining smartphone usage benefits and dangers. Also, this section will take into consideration the awareness of habit formation and the need to consider healthy boundaries for smartphone usage.

Impact of Smartphone Technology

I still remember living during a time when a phone was on the wall of a house and computers were not mainstream in the education system. These are foreign concepts in 2022, and the smartphone has made tremendous global impact. This started with cell phone technology in 1973. As this technology developed over time, it eventually made phone communication more accessible due to the affordability of towers as opposed to creating a landline infrastructure. Then in 2007, the invention of the iPhone made it possible for people all over the world to have a supercomputer in their hands.⁴⁰ Now in 2022, the number of smartphone and mobile devices worldwide is beyond comprehension with 6.648 billion smartphone users accounting for 83.72% of the world's population.⁴¹ This provides a far-reaching platform for connecting with people locally and around the globe.

⁴⁰ Even as early as 2014, the cellphone has helped to change the lives of the world's poor through 1) education, 2) surveys and polling, 3) agriculture, 4) banking the unbanked, 5) data analysis, and 6) health. Clara Tsao, "6 Ways Mobile Technology has Transformed the World's Poor", The Huff Post, October 8, 2014, accessed on June 27, 2022, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/6-ways-mobile-techology-h_b_4054076.

⁴¹ Bankmycell, "How Many Cellphones are in the World?," Bankmycell, accessed on June 27, 2022, <https://www.bankmycell.com/blog/how-many-phones-are-in-the-world>.

Benefits and Dangers of Smartphone Technology

The smartphone quickly became part of the lives of billions of people around the globe; however, humanity is still discerning the proper place of this technology in society. In the book *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*, Tony Reinke seeks to give a balanced assessment of both the benefits and the dangers of smartphones. He personally sees the benefits of the smartphone in his own life. Reinke writes about his smartphone being a “Ballast for daily life. My intelligent friend, my alert wingman, and my ever-ready collaborator. This blessed smartphone!”⁴² However, he has also critically thought about the dangers. He writes that the smartphone is “a digital vampire, sucking away my time and my life.”⁴³ On the journey of writing this book, he consults respected people who are his elders. He does this to gain wisdom concerning the ways that people have dealt with these kinds of situations in the past. The answer that he is given surprises him, when Oliver O’Donovan tells him that this is a question for Reinke’s generation. He writes,

O’Donovan concluded the interview with a striking warning: “This generation has the unique task assigned it of discerning what the new media are really good for, and that means, also, what they are not good for. If they fluff it, generations after them will pay the price.”⁴⁴

This book is Reinke’s reflection on using smartphone technology, and he shares about the need for continued discernment of his own smartphone usage. The final chapter of the book leads the reader through a series of questions that help determine healthy smartphone usage.

⁴² Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossways, 2017), 15, Kindle.

⁴³ Reinke, *12 Ways*, 15.

⁴⁴ Reinke, *12 Ways*, 19.

Smartphone Technology and Habits

When considering healthy smartphone usage, it is important for people to consider the habits that can be developed when using this device. One person who reflects on smartphone usage is James K. A. Smith in his book *Imagining the Kingdom*. Smith writes about the impact of the iPhone on growing individualism. I had never thought about the intimate nature of the interface with a touch screen. I also had not thought about the way that this technology could change the way one perceives the world. Smith states,

The iPhone brings with it an invitation to inhabit the world differently—not just because it gives me access to global internet resources in a pocket-sized device, but precisely how it invites me to interact with the device itself. The material rituals of simply handling and mastering an iPhone are loaded with an implicit social imaginary. To become habituated to an iPhone is to implicitly treat the world as “available” to me and at my disposal—to constitute the world as “at-hand” for me, to be selected, scaled, scanned, tapped, and enjoyed.⁴⁵

It is important to consider the fact that all technologies are not neutral tools for usage, but rather they do have the ability to shape their user. This means that people need to have an awareness of this reality and make specific choices concerning the work that they will do using a smartphone. They will need to make decisions about the applications they will use and the habits they will develop. A Bible engagement habit through listening to the Dwell app could possibly enrich peoples’ lives, whereas other social media applications may reinforce self-centered tendencies.

Boundaries

In the book *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place*, Andy Crouch helps families to think through the nuts and bolts of the way that new technology will impact the life of the family. Many people do not think about setting limits for

⁴⁵ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 143.

the use of devices; however, he says that this cannot be left to chance. He believes that these devices need to play a servant role to the humanity and need to be in the proper place. Crouch states,

So figuring out the proper place for technology in our particular family and stage of life requires discernment rather than a simple formula. Even the ten commitments in this book are meant to be a starting point for discussion—and as you read, they are the ones my own family has kept fitfully at best.⁴⁶

Crouch then gives examples of the ways that technology can be in or out of its proper place in family life.⁴⁷

Conclusion

The smartphone is technology that continues to change the world and the way that people interact with each other. It is encouraging that Reinke, Crouch, Smith and others are helping people to make good judgments concerning this technology.⁴⁸ This starts with making intentional choices concerning the boundaries for device usage, which cannot be left to chance. The device needs to be “put in its place” to enhance life and relationship.⁴⁹ Specific app selection can help equip a smartphone with life-giving or life-eroding content. My hope is that this MAP will provide a healthy habit through intentionally spending time listening to the Dwell app.

⁴⁶ Andy Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 19.

⁴⁷ Crouch determines guidelines for the proper place for technology in the family. He writes that technology is in its proper place when 1) it helps us bond with real people we have been given in love, 2) it starts great conversations, 3) it helps us take care of the fragile bodies we inhabit, 4) it helps us acquire skill and mastery of domains that are to the glory of human culture (sports, music, the arts, cooking, writing, accounting; the list could go on), 5) it helps us cultivate awe for the created world we are part of and responsible for stewarding, 6) we use it with intentional care. Crouch, *Tech-Wise Family*, 20–21.

⁴⁸ Other helpful works in this area are A. Treavor Sutton and Brian Smith, *Redeeming Technology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2021) and John Dyer, *From the Garden to the City* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011).

⁴⁹ Crouch, *Tech-Wise Family*, 20.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROJECT IN THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

I selected the MAP topic of engaging the Bible daily because of the significance of the Word of God. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, and the Bible is a written account of God's Word that transforms life. As people engage the Bible and hear the proclaimed Word, they meet the Word of God. I want my MAP to bring this reality to life in a new way for the congregation by challenging people to engage the Bible daily through listening. This chapter will root my MAP in the Word of God as delivered from the Bible and taught by the doctrine of the Church.

Biblical Foundation

The Word of God

The following section is a brief survey of the Word of God as recorded in the 66 books of the Old Testament and the New Testament. This is important to this project, because it allows for people to see that from before the beginning, the Triune God, Father, The Word (i.e., Son), and the Holy Spirit have been present. The Word of God, the pre-incarnate Christ, has been active and speaking throughout God's Story. Until one day the Word would become flesh, and this is his story.

The Creation

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1 roots the Word of God in the creation event. The Word always has been with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:3)." The Gospel of John helps the reader to look back to the

creation account in Gen. 1 with different lenses. The words revealed in Gen. 1:1–3 take on a new perspective, “[1] In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. [2] The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. [3] And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.” The verses from Gen. 1 take on greater significance, when one sees the one true Triune God in the opening verses of the Scriptures. God, the Father, created the heavens and the earth. The Spirit of God hovered over the face of the deep. Then, God “said,” the Word of God is present, just as St. John mentions in his Gospel account. As God himself speaks, the world is brought into existence, and the Word continues to be at work to sustain the creation.

However, the first humans Adam and Eve did not take God at his Word. When tempted, they left God’s purpose and care of their lives to seek to be gods themselves. In Gen. 3:5, “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” They listened to the serpent who tempted them, and as a result humanity and creation were placed under a curse of death. Adam and Eve were then expelled from their beautiful garden home of Eden.

This account appears to end in great tragedy, however when one looks closer the character of God is revealed. In Gen. 3:9, immediately after Adam and Eve left God’s presence the Lord was looking for them, “But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” Even after Adam and Eve rebelled God still called out to them. Then in Gen. 3:21, God shows compassion for these fallen people, “And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.” God was already willing to sacrifice an animal from his creation that he made and loved for the well-being of human creatures.

The Patriarchs

God continued to speak into the lives of people as recorded in the Bible. Specific characters like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were transformed by God speaking into their lives. He chose each of them to be part of his story, and he invited them to trust him. None of these individuals lived perfect lives, yet they all knew and trusted God. In a time when the world was doing “nothing but evil all the time (Gen. 6:5),” Noah was one who knew God. He listened to God by building the ark and his family and the animals were spared (Gen. 6–8). Abraham was in Mesopotamia (Acts 7:2b), and God spoke into his life calling him to follow him to a country that he did not know (Gen. 12:3). He journeyed with God, and God continued to encourage Abraham as he struggled to trust in the timing of the promise of a great nation (Gen. 12–21). Isaac would be called to trust the provision of the Lord as he walked with Abraham to the top of Mt. Moriah. He was bound as a sacrifice but then heard the Word from the Angel of the Lord to sacrifice the ram instead (Gen. 22). Jacob wrestled with God and his promises, and he would not stop until he was blessed and heard his new name Israel, which means “God strives” (Gen. 32). God shows a continued presence with his people, and this is known because he spoke into their lives.

The Law

Moses’ life started in a spectacular way, as he was rescued from death, by being pulled out of the river and adopted by the Pharaoh’s daughter (Ex. 2). He left Egypt in disgrace at 40 years of age (Ex. 2; Acts 7:23) and was called by God at 80 years of age through a burning bush (Ex. 3; Acts 7:30). God would speak into the life of Moses, and through Moses, God would speak to the people. God would use Moses to lead the people out of 430 years of slavery in Egypt and rescue them from Pharaoh’s hand. Only after God rescued the people, would he speak into their lives the best way for them to live (Ex. 20:1–2). The Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mt.

Sinai would speak to the relationship with God and the relationships between the people. Also, he would speak of his dwelling place with them—the Tabernacle—and the way that they would receive forgiveness—the sacrificial system. The Law of God spoke into the lives of the people, both to direct their ways and to show them their disobedience. The Lord would speak to the people through Moses, and he wrote down all that the Lord spoke to him on the mountain (Ex. 24:4).

The Prophets

Like Moses and others before him, God would speak to people that he chooses to ensure that the people understood the unfolding of the story. God spoke to Jeremiah, and His words brought judgment upon the people when they treated each other in destructive ways. God spoke to Daniel, and His words brought hope during seemingly hopeless situations when it seemed like God was not present or not strong enough to act. However, he would let the people know that they were not in exile by accident, rather they were sent there by God himself for the purpose of bringing them back to himself. God spoke to Ezekiel, and His Word brings life to dry and dead bones (Ez. 37), which is hope for a people and a nation that is seen to be extinguished with no hope. God spoke to Isaiah, and His Word promised a king and a savior of the world (Is. 9:6). God's spoke to the Prophets, His Word (i.e., the Word) continued to bring life to people living in a fallen world. Then at just the right moment, John 1:14 says, "The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us."

Jesus Christ

One night in Bethlehem, the Word spoken by an angel to Mary would be fulfilled, as the child that she bore was the Son of God (Luke 1:26–38). The Holy Spirit had come upon Mary,

and she became pregnant. The Word given to Joseph was that his name would be Jesus, he would save the people from their sins (Matt. 1:18–25). Jesus is the Christ, the Word of God, the one who spoke into the world, was now in the flesh.

The Gospel accounts from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John show that Jesus Christ is identified as the Son of God and receives the fullness of the Holy Spirit through the baptism by John the Baptizer (Matt. 3; Luke 3; Mark 1; John 1). As seen in the beginning, this is the moment that the Triune God is revealed, and then Jesus begins his public ministry. In his public ministry, Jesus speaks, and the world becomes renewed and restored. He speaks to the demons and casts them out of people (Mark 1). He speaks to the wind and the waves, and they obey him (Mark 5:35–41). He speaks to people who are sick, and they become well again (Mark 1). He speaks to the dead and they come back to life and eat (Mark 5; John 11). He speaks to the infirm and they are healed (Mark 2). He speaks words that cut to the heart of people to see their sin, and then he speaks words of life that restore people to the family of God (Luke 19). He speaks of his purpose to die and to rise again to the disciples, yet they do not understand (Mark 8; Mark 9; Mark 10). However, he will speak to them after his resurrection and open their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24). Over the forty days after his resurrection, “he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at one time (1 Cor. 15:6a).” He speaks to the disciples and tells them to wait for power from on high in Jerusalem before he ascends into heaven to be at the right hand of the Father (Luke 24). Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, speaks and a sinful world is transformed.

The Church

Jesus changed the world through his death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, and then he brought the promise of new resurrected life for all who believe in him. As Jesus ascended into

heaven, he had already told the people that they would receive “the helper” who is the Holy Spirit (John 14). Fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit came upon the people in a room in Jerusalem during the festival of Pentecost (Acts 2). This was the moment that had been spoken by the Word of the Lord to the Prophet Joel, that the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh (Joel 2; Acts 2). On that day, Peter would preach the account of God’s story and reveal to them that Jesus was the Christ, and three thousand people were cut to the heart with these words and baptized (Acts 2).

The church would be the result of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and Jesus’ words that he spoke in his Great Commission in Matt. 28 would become reality, “to go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The church would first be the gathered Jewish people, however with the call of Saul this would change (Acts 9). Jesus speaks to Saul, and he no longer persecutes Christians. Instead, he is baptized and then begins to proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. St. Paul would write letters to the churches that would be read in the assembly of the people sharing Jesus Christ with both the Jews and the Gentiles. The Gospel will be preached from Christ’s Ascension until the Last Day, when Jesus will come back to judge the living and the dead. Those who have faith in Christ will be resurrected to enjoy a new creation and those who do not trust in Christ will be resurrected to eternal death and destruction (Rev. 20).

Important Biblical Themes

What follows are some specific themes concerning the Word of God that are relevant to this project. These specific themes help to further demonstrate the importance of the Word of God as seen in the scriptures.

That You Might Believe

The accounts of Jesus' life, as recorded in the Gospels, were written for a specific purpose. St. John reveals that the accounts written in his book were included so that people would believe in Jesus and by believing have life in his name (John 20:30–31). St. Luke reveals that the account written is for Theophilus, so that he would have an accurate account of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:1–4). The Gospel writers know that as people are connected to this account of Jesus' life their lives will be transformed. The people that hear these accounts have the opportunity not just to hear about Jesus, but they can meet Jesus himself.

Faith Comes by Hearing

The Holy Spirit works to draw people to faith in Christ Jesus, who is calling out to the world to hear. This can be seen when St. Paul proclaims in Rom. 10:17, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” This verse is highlighting that a representative preaches the word, and God is the one who gives ears to be able to hear the message. This theme is demonstrated throughout the Story of God as the Word of God speaks through people and people hear and believe.

The Equipping of God's People

St. Paul speaks into the life of Timothy to impress upon him the importance of the Scriptures. The recorded words of the Law, the Prophets, and the Apostles are God breathed (2 Tim. 3:16a), which are just as God is saying them himself. N.T. Wright reinforces this when he says, “The early Christians believed—and this passage is one of the strong signs of this—that the reason the Scriptures were alive was because God had ‘breathed’ them in the first place, and the

warmth and life of that creative breath was still present and powerful.”¹ St. Paul continues by revealing the power of Scripture in the life of Timothy. He states in 2 Tim. 3:16b, that it is “...profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...” All of this is meant to “equip a man of God” (2 Tim. 3:17), which for Paul was Timothy or another person called to instruct others in the faith. However, the Scriptures not only equip the person for pastoral ministry, they also are transformative in the lives of the people who receive instruction and give witness to them. The Scriptures are the location of the written Word of God that transforms and equips for good works.

Daily Engagement of the Scriptures

Lastly, the biblical account supports regularly listening to God. In the book of Deuteronomy, the people are encouraged to pass the faith on to the next generations of the family through always having the words of Lord before them (Deut. 6:4–9). This is also seen in the New Testament with the young church that continues to daily devote themselves to the Apostles’ teachings and that they would attend the temple daily. Listening to the Scriptures regularly was important for the development of the faith of the people (Acts 2:42–47).

Theological Foundations

This section of my MAP will specifically talk about the doctrine of the Word of God. Since this MAP is focused on listening to the Bible, I will discuss both the spoken and the written Word of God. Then I will deal specifically with the Bible, the written Word of God, and its

¹ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Pastoral Letters: 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 118, Kindle.

usage with lay people in the church. This will highlight both the need for regular Bible engagement and instruction for the people of the church.

The Word of God

Jesus is the Word of God. This is the starting point for all discussion concerning the Word of God, however this still can be a confusing topic for both scholars and lay people. Often, people are not exactly clear on the specific meaning of the Word of God. Also, how does the Word of God connect to the Bible? Isn't the Bible the Word of God?

In the book *These are Written: Toward a Cruciform Theology of Scripture*, Peter Nafzger talks specifically about his quest to better understand the Bible. He highlights the challenges of having a Theology of Scripture. Due to the modern analysis of the Bible, the higher critical method deconstructs the text, casting doubt that Scripture is God breathed. In response to this modern method, a doctrine of inspiration was created to defend the Holy Spirit's work through the biblical authors. A Theology of Scripture that emphasizes inspiration would say that all Scripture of the Bible (i.e., the 66 books of the Old Testament and New Testament canon) is equally Word of God.

Nafzger then uses the rest of his book to root his Theology of Scripture in the doctrine of the Word of God, instead of the higher critical method or the doctrine of inspiration. Karl Barth, a twentieth-century theologian, made this move, and Nafzger builds from his work. Nafzger states that

In order to build on what is helpful in Barth, but to avoid his limitations, it is necessary to reexamine the nature and function of the Word of God in the biblical narrative. This examination will recognize God's frequent use of deputized discourse, and it will take into account the foundational and central significance of Jesus' death

and resurrection. In other words, it will result in a decidedly “cruciform” account of the Scriptures and the Word of God.²

The function of the Word of God in the biblical narrative is consistent throughout the Scriptures, and God speaks. Nafzger states that

The biblical narrative revolves around the Word of God. It is God’s primary means for communicating and accomplishing his will. Through his creative Word he brings all things into existence; through his spoken and written Word he establishes and maintains relationships with his human creatures; and through his incarnate, crucified, and resurrected Word he accomplishes salvation for his fallen creation. In contrast to the false gods who cannot speak, the one true God is known by what he says (see Ps 115:4–5; Jer 10:5; Hab 2:18–19; 1 Cor 12:2).³

The survey of the Word of God in the Biblical Foundations section in this chapter demonstrates this reality.⁴

The Written and Spoken Word of God

As Nafzger deals with the function of the Word of God in the biblical narrative, he primarily talks about the spoken Word of God.⁵ The spoken Word of God is the Word that God gave to specific people to share, and the written Word of God is the record of that spoken Word.

Nafzger writes that

Chemnitz notes that the Word God spoke through Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the other patriarchs was not initially written down. Instead, it was passed down from generation to generation “by a living voice.” As the centuries passed this oral

² Peter Nafzger, *These Are Written* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 66, Kindle.

³ Nafzger, *These are Written*, 67.

⁴ Nafzger spends a chapter writing about the categories of the ways that the Word of God functions in the biblical narrative. The specific categories included are The Speaking God and his Deputies, A “Normative” Word, Living and Active Words, The Personal Word, Sent By the Father, Sent By the Spirit, The Rejected and Crucified Word, The Resurrected and Vindicated Word, “Co-Missioned” Apostles, Sent with the Word and the Spirit, Spoken Word and the Sacraments, and From Spoken to Written Word.

⁵ Nafzger states, “Up to this point in our examination of the Word of God in the divine economy, I have said very little about the Scriptures themselves.” Nafzger, *These are Written*, 94.

tradition was in danger of losing its purity and becoming corrupt. So with Moses God provided a more permanent form of his Word.⁶

The written Word of God and the spoken Word of God are both locations where people meet Jesus. Martin Luther is one theologian, who wrote about the ways that the forms of the Word of God intersect with people.

Martin Luther and the Word of God

Martin Luther taught that the proclaimed Word, or the preached Word, was alive and that it changed people. When the Word of God is proclaimed properly, a person encounters God himself. This thought lines up perfectly with the way that the Word of God functions in the biblical narrative. Uuraas Saarnivaara writes in the “The Written and Spoken Word” Lutheran Quarterly article that Luther believed that the written Word of God was the “highest norm and standard of our faith and life.”⁷ He further comments in this article that

Luther gives both to Scripture (and the written word in general) and the oral testimony and preaching of the word their proper places in the Christian church: the written Word of God is primarily a ‘revelation-word,’ which is the norm and standard of all faith, life and teaching. The spoken word (in preaching, absolution, and sacraments) is the ‘means-of-grace-word,’ through which God forgives sins, works faith, and imparts His Holy Spirit.⁸

Luther gave importance to both these forms of the Word of God, and he believed in the Word of God to be a Means of Grace.

The Means of Grace

In the book *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition*, Robert Kolb writes about the Means of Grace. When discussing the Smalcald Articles, he states that

⁶ Nafzger, *These are Written*, 95.

⁷ Uuraas Saarnivaara, “Written and Spoken Word.” *Lutheran Quarterly* 2 (1950): 167, quoted in Peter Nafzger, *These Are Written: Toward a Cruciform Theology of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013) 110. Kindle.

⁸ Saarnivaara, “Written and Spoken Word,” 111.

Luther listed five ways in which God offers his power or resources and help against sin in the richness of his grace: First, through the spoken word [the sermon], by which the forgiveness of sin (the peculiar function of the Gospel) is preached to the whole world; second, through baptism, third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys; and finally, through the mutual conversation and consolation of Christians with one another.⁹

It is interesting to note that the Bible is not listed in this section from the Smalcald Articles that talks about the Means of Grace. What does that mean for a MAP that is centered around the written Word of God? Kolb makes this comment as well, and he gives two possible answers. One is that the written Word of God is the foundation for all the spoken directives. A second answer is that most people were not literate to read the Bible, so the idea of reading a Bible is more of a modern idea.¹⁰ However, Kolb then builds from the list of Luther in the Smalcald Articles to include new channels for the Word that include electronic media.¹¹ As Kolb writes about the Means of Grace, he states “...we recognize the three basic forms in which God’s Word is conveyed out of the Scriptures to us: written, oral, and sacramental.”¹²

The Lutheran Confessions

The Lutheran Confessions speak to the Word of God that is experienced through the Means of Grace. In Article V.2–3 of the Augsburg Confession it is stated, “For through the Word and the sacraments as through instruments the Holy Spirit is given, who effects faith where and when it pleases God in those who hear the gospel, that is to say, in those who hear that God, not on account of our own merits but on account of Christ, justifies those who believe that they are

⁹ Robert Kolb, *The Christian Faith* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1993), 183.

¹⁰ Kolb, *Christian Faith*, 183.

¹¹ Kolb, *Christian Faith*, 185.

¹² Kolb, *Christian Faith*, 185.

received into grace on account of Christ.”¹³ Also, in Luther’s Large Catechism Part II.52, Luther states, “Of this community I am a part and member, a participant and co-partner in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought into it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God’s Word, which is the beginning point for entering it.”¹⁴

The Bible and Individual Lay People

The Bible being in the hands of individual people to read is a relatively new phenomenon. This first became possible in a limited way during the 15th century with the invention of the Guttenberg Printing press, which made it possible for books to be mass produced and distributed. In the 16th century, Martin Luther translated the Bible into German. He was excited that as literacy rose, the people would have access to engage the Word of God in German households. This meant that the people would read in conjunction with the regular connection and direction of the church. In fact, in the book *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God*, Robert Kolb writes, “If people do not exercise themselves daily in God’s Word, Luther warned, they may go to church regularly but do not retain anything. ‘There is enough written in books. But not everything has been driven home into the heart.’”¹⁵

Over the last 500 years, this connection between Bible engagement and the church has dissolved due to Enlightenment thought that has moved people in the West to perceive the world in a more individualistic way. The result of greater individualism has led to people seeking to

¹³ Augsburg Confession V.2–3 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 41.

¹⁴ Large Catechism II.3 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 438.

¹⁵ Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 233.

engage the written Word of God without the ability to interpret it. In his book *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America*, Stanley Hauerwas shares strong concerns with people engaging the Bible on their own today. He correctly indicates that people assume that they should be able to understand the Bible because they can read, however he asserts that they do not have the proper context to understand. He writes, “They feel no need to stand under the authority of a truthful community to be told how to read. Instead, they assume that they have all the “religious experience” necessary to know what the Bible is about.”¹⁶ This completely individualist perspective is important for people in church leadership to consider when seeking to encourage people to engage the Bible. The church pastor can better understand the large responsibility that he has to help people to understand Scriptures through the corporate proclamation and teaching, so that people have a foundation for personal devotional engagement with the text. The Christian congregation is the most helpful community to encourage individual and small group devotional engagement with the Bible, because participants receive the needed guidance to engage the text. The Holy Spirit is the one who creates a desire to engage the Bible. The same rigor that is brought to the learning and growing in life outside church needs to be encouraged concerning the understanding of the things of God.

In the book *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition*, Robert Kolb also expresses the need to give guidance to people engaging the Bible. He also highlights the need for discernment concerning interpretation specifically for people who are unfamiliar with the Bible who also might be unstable in other ways. He states,

Flipping through the pages of the Bible and chancing upon one verse or another may deliver the wrong message. If we would just hand the Bible to someone depressed under the assaults of God’s Law and one or another form of evil, he might open by chance to a passage like Eccl. 4:1–3 and concur altogether too quickly with its

¹⁶ Stanley Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 15.

judgment that “the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive.”¹⁷

In this situation, a person sharing a Bible with a friend might think that they are bringing encouragement, yet as Kolb indicates it might bring danger. This is not meant to discourage people from sharing the Scriptures, however it is encouraging people to consider the importance of engaging the Scriptures in community.

In the book *A Concise Guide to Reading the New Testament: A Canonical Introduction*, David Nienhuis considers another caution when helping people to engage the Scriptures in a responsible way. He is writing specifically about lay people who are pursuing theological training. He discusses the struggle of finding suitable textbooks for students to grow in their understanding of learning to read the Bible. He wanted to use a textbook that would both teach the biblical context and encourage the careful reading of the text. This was important for him because he was concerned about the student coursework priorities. Nienhuis writes,

When given an assignment to read the introduction text along with the sections from Scripture, I discovered too many students were reading the textbook and skimming (or skipping) the assigned Bible reading. Because students have limited time, they often default to what is perceived to be the shortest possible route to the goal. And because their educational experience has trained them to be assessment oriented, they perceive the goal to be a grade that is determined by homework and exams; so they rush to “the expert” to help them get “the important parts” instead of reading the Scripture on their own. And This results in too many students spending their time reading *about* the Bible instead of actually learning to read the Bible themselves.¹⁸

In preparing for my MAP, I will consider the need for both appropriate biblical context and a high value of people engaging the text. Like the students Nienhuis mentioned, I’m sure that many people in the church skip over the biblical text to hear the commentary. This is the reason

¹⁷ Kolb, *Christian Faith*, 184.

¹⁸ David R Nienhuis, *A Concise Guide to Reading the New Testament: A Canonical Introduction*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 2.

that I am providing biblical context for the Gospel of John in the introductory class, and then I am asking participants to focus solely on listening to the Gospel of John a chapter a day.

Historical Context

This section of my MAP will discuss the movement in history from an oral culture to a print culture (i.e., knowledge that is learned through books). The print culture allowed for the spreading of ideas around the world through the distribution of books, which resulted in continued technological developments. Current digital technology has now shifted print culture to “secondary orality” (i.e., literate people who prefer oral communication) culture in the West.

Oral and Written Culture

Initially, I had assumed that print culture evolved from oral culture over the years, which meant that the dependence on written documents was not as important. However, the article by David Carr entitled *Torah on the Heart: Literary Jewish Textuality Within Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* gave me insight into the important place for written documents in the community life of the people. Carr writes, “This essay examines evidence for the interplay of memory recall and written technology in ancient Israel and surrounding cultures.”¹⁹ The few written documents served as tools for inscribing the words on the hearts of the people as indicated in Prov. 3:3; 7:3, “Write [my commandments/ teachings] on the tablets of your heart.”²⁰ Carr writes,

To be sure, there is more emphasis in the biblical tradition on “hearing” than on the “writing” and “reading” of biblical texts, let alone the education of students in such texts. Nevertheless, this biblical emphasis on “hearing” and “speaking” must be put in context. The point was not writing and reading texts written on parchment or papyrus,

¹⁹ David Carr, “Torah on the Heart: Literary Jewish Textuality Within Its Ancient Near Eastern Context.” *Oral Tradition* 25 no. 1 (March 2010): 17, EBSCOhost.

²⁰ Carr, “Torah,” 19.

the point was writing the texts of the ancient tradition “on the hearts” of the student, having them “hear” and internalize them.²¹

The written documents on scrolls allowed for the accurate transmission of the stories from generation to generation through oral transmission.

Dr. Jeff Kloha presented “The New Testament: Canon, Text, and Translation” at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Aberdeen, SD, for a South Dakota District of the LCMS event. This presentation explained the developments in written documents that led to the Bible being compiled into a book. The Old Testament writings were written on papyrus scrolls. The papyrus scroll was developed by the Egyptians around 3000 BC. Scribes would write on these scrolls, and each scroll was a handcrafted object.²² In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah in Luke 4:17, “And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written...”

It would not be until the development of the codex in the second century that books would begin to be put together. Christians were the ones that used the codex to compile Scripture together. Kloha states,

What's really interesting in the New Testament is every Christian writing that exists today is in codex form. They consistently used a book for copies of the Gospels, the Pauline epistles, everything. Where all other ancient literature is written on scrolls, it's a vast difference. It's like the rest of the world is using a PC and Christians are using Macs...²³

²¹ Carr, “Torah,” 24.

²² Ben Witherington III states, “Scribes in antiquity were not just secretaries copying documents; they were the scholars of the world. They were usually recruited from the upper echelons of society and, far from just copying and preserving documents, they created and interpreted them as well.” Ben Witherington III., *What’s in the Word: Rethinking the Social – Rhetorical Character of the New Testament*. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 35.

²³ SD District LCMS. “Reverend Dr. Jeff Kloha Presentation Part 1.” August 30, 2018, YouTube video, 36:21–36:48, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wkr5n_N_j08.

He further discusses that the codex allowed for “physical limitations,” which meant that nothing could be added to the book when it was completed.²⁴ This meant that the texts that were included were meant to be together, and the people were including the actual material that the churches were using in their communities.

The Beginnings of Print Culture

In the 1440s, the world changed with the invention of the Guttenberg printing press in Germany. This invention allowed for economic mass production of books and pamphlets with accuracy. Martin Luther was able to make a considerable difference in the church through the sharing of his ideas. This ended up being a powerful tool in getting information into the hands of people for them to consider (however many people were still not literate at this time). One desire of Luther was that people would be educated. Luther spent considerable time translating the Bible into German, so that people could have access to information themselves about the love of God in Christ Jesus. Also, he promoted the idea of the priesthood of all believers, which meant that the laity did not need to go through the clergy for access to God. God heard the prayers of the people, just as well as he heard the prayers of the clergy.

However, the creation of the Guttenberg printing press not only made it possible for people to have access to the Bible and other works, but it also changed the way that people associated with knowledge. Tom Winger talks about this in his Ephesians commentary:

But the explosive appearance of the printing press led to a profound cultural shift that introduced a normative the isolated reader surrounded by all the books that might content his heart. As this shift took hold in the Enlightenment era, texts lost their character as communal products to be read aloud by one person to others. Ancient texts, therefore, were no longer received in a context approximating what their

²⁴ SD District LCMS, “Reverend.”

authors intended and often became objects of scientific criticism in the silence of the scholar's study.²⁵

The printing press would begin this shift and create a means for the easy flow of knowledge around the globe. People no longer were limited to knowledge from their own community, rather they had access to knowledge from different places. The knowledge that people developed from all fields of study could be built upon, and it could have an opportunity to grow beyond the local community. This made it possible for the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, the Renaissance, and the Industrial Revolution, which all contributed to future developments of technology.

The Movement from Print Culture to “Secondary Orality”

Print culture thrived in the west for over 400 years. As people became literate, they became accustomed to looking to written communication for knowledge. This was the way that people engaged the world until new technology was created that again brought about the beginnings of another shift in the way that people interact with each other and the world. Shane Hipps, a Mennonite pastor, identifies these important inventions in an interview with *Christianity Today*. He states,

Between 1850 and 1890, there was an uninterrupted flow of inventions that radically altered communication structure in the West. The primary ones did the biggest damage to the print age—the telegraph, the photograph, and the radio. These are the inventions to which all of our most recent innovations, including the iPhone, can be traced back.²⁶

Neil Postman, in his book *Technology*, explains these communication changes through establishing the stages of the information revolution. The first stage is prior 1844, when

²⁵ Tom Winger, *Concordia Commentary. A Theological Exposition of Scared Scripture. Ephesians* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2015), 3–4.

²⁶ Shane Hipps, “From the Printing Press to the iPhone: Discerning the Technological Spirits,” interview by Mark Galli, *Christianity Today*, 53 no. 5 (May 2009): 64, EBSCOhost.

information was local and it applied specifically to community life.²⁷ However, with the invention of the telegraph in 1844, information could travel across the globe instantly. Postman writes about the implications, when he states, “The telegraph removed space as an inevitable constraint on the movement of information, and, for the first time, transportation and communication were disengaged from each other.”²⁸ The photograph was the next invention in the information revolution (around the same time), which made it possible to influence society with images.²⁹ Postman then writes about the continued movement of the information revolution, “And then, with Western culture gasping for breath, the fourth stage of the information revolution occurred, broadcasting. And then the fifth, computer technology. Each of these brought with it new forms of information, unprecedented amounts of it, and increased speeds (if virtual instancy can be increased).”³⁰ The stages of the information revolutions changed the way that people interacted with each other and the world. This is seen in the interaction with digital technology that further developed from the creation of computer technology.

Shane Hipps, in his book *Flickering Pixels*, gives insight into the specific effects of digital technology on the brain. A print culture required people to read books and to grow the ability to focus on ideas shared over hours. This requires the development of left-brained growth and function in this skill. Whereas the visual interaction with information through pictures seen on TV or engaging with short form writing on the internet or phone builds up the right brain skills. Hipps highlights the different relationship with text, when he states,

²⁷ Postman states, “Prior to the telegraph, information could be moved only as fast as a train could travel: about thirty-five miles per hour. Prior to the telegraph, information was sought as part of the process of understanding and solving particular problems. Prior to the telegraph, information tended to be of local interest.” Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage, 2011), 73, Kindle.

²⁸ Postman, *Technopoly*, 73.

²⁹ Postman, *Technopoly*, 73.

³⁰ Postman, *Technopoly*, 75.

Images aren't the only thing in electronic culture that fuels the right-brain. The digital age has transformed the meaning of literacy. We still rely heavily on text, but the text-based communication of the Internet and instant messaging generate a fundamentally different kind of literacy—an unusual right-brained sort of literacy. With blogs, email, and texting, we may actually read more today than ever. However, the way we read has radically changed.³¹

This is important to remember when considering the reality of the Bible in the life of Christians.

Hipps applies this thought directly to the Bible, when he writes,

The emerging right-brain culture presents other challenges as well. Protestant Christianity is a by-product of a single medium—the printed Bible. Without printing, no one could have challenged the authority of the pope. How disconcerting to have a faith yoked so closely to a medium that is now in the dusk of its life, at least its life as we currently know it. Our culture has a shrinking preference—and even aptitude—for reading books, especially complex ones. If the Bible is anything, it is complex, so it should not surprise us to see a growing biblical illiteracy in the electronic age.³²

This information is important to remember when thinking about the ways that the church will help Christians and non-Christians to engage the Scriptures.

Jay Moon, professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, has considered the shift from print culture to this new interaction with digital technology. In addition to being a seminary professor, he also serves on the International Orality Network (ION) board of directors.³³ Moon and ION recognize that the entire world did not shift to a print culture back in the 15th century. In fact,

³¹ Shane Hipps, *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 144, Kindle.

³² Hipps, *Flickering Pixels*, 146.

³³ The ION is made up of a global network of 2,000 organizations who are committed to “making God’s Word available to oral communicators in culturally appropriate ways to enable church planting movements everywhere.” “About ION,” ION, accessed June 1, 2022, <https://orality.net/about/>. The ION defines “orality” as, “Reliance upon the spoken, rather than written, word for communication.” “What is orality,” ION, accessed June 1, 2022 <https://orality.net/about/what-is-orality/>. I discovered the ION by searching for Grant Lovejoy on the internet after reading the *Christianity Today* article, “The Sound of Salvation.” Ken Walker, “The Sound of Salvation: Audio Bibles Propel Scripture into Remote Regions.” *Christianity Today* 54 no. 1 (2010): 13. EBSCOhost.

many people still live in oral cultures.³⁴ However, Moon can see the shifts towards orality that have developed from engagement with digital technology.

Moon writes about this in the article, “Fad or Renaissance? Misconceptions of the Orality Movement.” He discusses the affects that digital technology has had on people in the West who are still educated to be in a print culture, yet they prefer oral learning. These individuals are in the “Digital Secondary Oral” category.³⁵ Moon’s research speaks to this change,

When I assessed 281 students in the U.S. seminaries, I discovered that the learning approach preferred by the largest group of students (47.5 percent) is an oral tendency (see Table 2 and Figure 1.). This affirms what Ong and Sachs predicted about the rise in secondary oral or digital learners. When the three oral categories are combined (primary oral, highly oral, and oral tendency), the majority of students (53.5 percent) have an oral learning preference.³⁶

However, Moon is quick to specify that people with an oral preference do not just like to listen rather than read. He deals with this in the article under “Misconception #3: Oral learning preference is only about auditory learning.” He states,

Some mistake orality to be the same as an auditory learning ability (vs. visual or tactile/ kinesthetic abilities). These three modalities (or senses) simply describe the “main avenues of sensation” to facilitate learning. The orality movement attempts to understand a more basic difference—how are these modalities used differently when someone does not (or prefers not to) read, compared with someone who does read? In other words, how do oral learners use what they hear, see, and do (all three modalities) in the learning process differently than print learners? In addition to storytelling (auditory modality), oral strategists consider the role of the visual modality through symbols, pictures, art, and drama. Oral learners also utilize the

³⁴ The ION also reports on their website that, “Studies have shown that 80% of the world’s population are oral communicator—that is approximately 5.7 billion people!” “Who are oral communicators,” ION, accessed June 1, 2022 <https://orality.net/about/who-are-oral-communicators>. This is an eye-opening statistic, and the ION website does an excellent job providing diverse content to equip people for ministry. However, the website did not just offer helpful content, it also made that content accessible in ways that considered oral communicators. I recognized that the website was not just accessible by reading, a person could also choose to listen to the website. This is the first time that I noticed this feature on a website, however I have started to see this on other major websites. This has caused me to think about the world that I might be missing all around me, because my life is grounded in academic print culture.

³⁵ W. Jay Moon, “Fad or Renaissance? Misconceptions of the Orality Movement.” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 40 (2016): 13, EBSCOhost.

³⁶ Moon, “Fad,” 13.

tactile/kinesthetic modality to learn through rituals, dance apprenticeships, and experiences.³⁷

Moon's writing about "secondary orality" helps me better understand the current context of my project.

Conclusion

My theological and historical perspectives have grown in writing this MAP chapter. Encouraging daily Bible engagement is a worthwhile effort, and I hope that it encourages the participants. They will be encountering the Word of God, Jesus himself, as they listen to the Gospel of John over twenty-one days. However, it is important to give people context for their engagement with the Scriptures, which will be done as they participate in the *Daily Bible Engagement* course.

Also, it is exciting that this project does take into consideration the "secondary orality" learning preferences in a digital world. This MAP delivers the content through a digital phone application, which people are accustomed to using. Also, the Gospel of John was written to be listened to, and the chapters introduce Jesus. This should help "secondary oral" learners to connect with the Bible.

³⁷ Moon, "Fad," 9–10.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

I am excited to learn the answer to my research question, “How can Holy Trinity Lutheran Church help people to habituate daily Bible engagement through using the Dwell Bible app?” Will people daily engage with the most important life-transforming story more frequently after going through the process that I created? To answer this question, I used a qualitative research design that consisted of two phases. The first part of Phase 1 of my project was to participate in a *Daily Bible Engagement* class. The class formats were in-person and online. The three parts of the *Daily Bible Engagement* class were “Why Engage the Bible Daily?”, “Overview of the Gospel of John (Part 1 and 2),” and “Downloading and Using the Dwell App for the *21 Day Dwell Experience*.” This class prepared people to participate in the *21 Day Dwell Experience*, which was the second part of Phase 1. The *21 Day Dwell Experience* was to listen to the Gospel of John over twenty-one days by using a customized Bible plan on the Dwell app. The demographic data and the participation levels gathered from Phase 1 of this project were used to purposely select participants for Phase 2. Phase 2 consisted of interviewing seven participants to gather thick descriptions of their experience to answer my research question.

Phase 1

The participants needed to meet the following criteria to participate in this part of the project:

- a. Must be or have participated at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and School.
- b. Must be above the age of 18.
- c. Must be able to participate in the *Daily Bible Engagement* class.
- d. Must have the ability to download the smartphone app Dwell.
- e. Must have access to the internet and/or wireless data.
- f. Must have the ability to receive a daily text message to log listening feedback.

- g. Must be willing to participate in an online or in-person orientation. Must be willing to participate in the *21 Day Dwell Experience* (i.e., listen to the playlist provided by Pastor Daniel Prugh on the Dwell app and respond to daily text).
- h. Must be willing to participate in an up to 60 minute confidential recorded in-person or online interview conducted at the church office.

Phase 1 of this project started on December 24, 2021. The first part of this phase began with regular announcements in worship, on the church and school Facebook pages, and through emails sent out to the church and the school (see Appendix 4). Possible participants were asked to register prior to January 9th for this project by filling out an online form (see Appendix 1). The online form could be accessed through using a weblink or using a posted QR code. The registration form helped to verify that participants met the eligible criteria, and it helped to gather important demographic data. Also, this registration form helped participants to start making intentional decisions that would help them to possibly build a Bible engagement habit. They began to create a habit plan by agreeing to receive a daily text message to encourage their participation. Then they had the opportunity to decide when they would receive a daily text message. This would allow them to respond to give feedback and /or affirm that they listened for the day. Also, a later question on the registration form allowed for people to report the current frequency of their Bible Engagement, which included daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, and other. This registration question was optional. I intentionally did not specifically define “Bible Engagement” to allow for people to make their own determination going into the study.

In addition to these questions on the registration form, participants needed to select an in-person or online format for the *Daily Bible Engagement* class. Both classes were identical in content. The in-person classes were offered after worship in the fellowship hall at 12:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 2, 2022, and Sunday, January 9, 2022. After people signed up for the online class, they were emailed a link to connect to the *Daily Bible Engagement* class online. Both the

online class and the in-person class used the same material to prepare for the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. The in-person classes were offered to support people that needed more guidance with the technology requirements for participation in the project. The videos were watched in these classes and then people had the chance to ask questions. Also, I spent specific time helping the group download and practice with the Dwell app on their phones. After attending this class people would have all they needed to participate in the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. The online class could be completed at any time over the week prior to the start date of the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. People had the opportunity to reach out to me via phone or email to troubleshoot any technology issues. As mentioned, the last step for completing this class was to register for the Dwell app. This made it possible for me to verify their registration on the Dwell app administrative website. I was able to send text message reminders before the online course completion date of January 9th, so that people could start the *21 Day Dwell Experience* on January 10, 2022.

On January 10, 2022, sixty-four participants began the second part of Phase 1. They started the *21 Day Dwell Experience* by listening to the first chapter of the Gospel of John using the Dwell app. Each participant received their first daily text message at the time they requested to instruct them to listen to the daily chapter and then to respond to the message with “yes.” This was the only required response. However, people were invited to give additional feedback if they wanted to share insights or ask questions. Also, every text message included a brief encouraging message from me cheering them on through the project. This routine was followed for the duration of the *21 Day Dwell Experience* until the Dwell Bible plan was completed, and then everyone received a thank you text message that included an invitation to continue their new

daily Bible engagement habit by participating in Luke Daily, which is a twenty-four-day Dwell app plan for the Gospel of Luke.

Phase 2

The participants needed to meet the following criteria to participate in this part of the project:

- a. Meet all the criteria of Phase 1
- b. Complete the *Daily Bible Engagement Class*
- c. Complete the *21 Day Dwell Experience* and responded to most of the daily text reminders
- d. Sign the Informed Consent form (see Appendix 3)
- e. Participate in an online recorded Zoom interview or recorded in-person interview in the church office.

After the *21 Day Dwell Experience* was completed on January 30, 2022, I used a purposeful sampling method to determine the seven participants for the interviews. First, I used specific information that was gathered from the registration form, including age, sex, type of *Daily Bible Engagement* class (i.e., online or in-person), and self-reported prior Bible engagement level. Along with this information, I used the self-reported daily listening affirmation with the “yes” response to determine engagement for selection. Also, I considered the additional responses and feedback that were given by some participants. In the end, I made participant selections considering all these factors to gain insight from different perspectives. The candidates were invited to participate through an additional text message that invited them to use a Calendly link to sign up for an in-person or online zoom interview between February 6, 2022, and February 10, 2022. The text message also included a link to a digital copy of the Informed Consent Form.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher. Each interview participant was read the Informed Consent Form and then had time to ask questions prior to signing the form. The in-

person interview participants signed the form in the office prior to the interview. The online interview participants followed along with a digital form and then typed their name in a box verifying their signatures. Then I printed and signed the form and sent them a scanned copy via email for their records. The participants were then interviewed using a consistent set of questions in a consistent way by the researcher. Following the interview, the researcher used SONIX to transcribe the recording for analysis. The data is secure on a password protected computer and a locked office.

Methodological Approach

The Action Research methodology is appropriate for my MAP due to the nature of the D.Min program. The whole purpose of the program is to increase my competence in the theory and practice of pastoral ministry within my context. This goal works well with a definition of Action Research as suggested by Herr and Anderson in the book *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. The authors stated, “Action research is inquiry that is done by or with insiders to an organization or community, but never to or on them.”¹ Also Herr stated, “Action research is oriented to some action or cycle of actions that organizational or community members have taken, are taking, or wish to take to address a particular problematic situation.”² The problem that I will seek to answer in my context is that some of the members of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church struggle to form the daily habit of engaging the Bible. I will work together with the members of the congregation to conduct my project to learn through field

¹ Kathryn Herr and Gary L. Anderson, *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2015), 3.

² Herr and Anderson, *Action Research Dissertation*, 4.

research how my proposed Bible engagement process will possibly help to solve the stated problem.

Research Methodology

A qualitative research methodology will be used to gather data for my MAP. I will interview seven people of the sixty-four people who participated in the *Daily Bible Engagement* class and the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. The goal will be to gather thick descriptions of the lived experience of the interviewee. This methodology will help attend to my research problem, because it will allow for the participants to share about how the problem affected them. Also, the interviewee will specifically speak to how this Bible engagement process encouraged or discouraged his or her habit of daily Bible engagement. The participants' answers will help me to answer the research question, "How can Holy Trinity Lutheran Church help people to habituate daily Bible engagement through using the Dwell Bible listening app?" The questions will be open ended, and they will be reviewed with my advisor prior to the interviews being conducted.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Role of the Researcher

The following study has a few obvious limitations that need to be addressed. The first limitation is that I am the pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, and I am conducting research in this same context. Sometimes, people will not share honestly with the pastor the way they feel about a situation. This may be the case if the individual perceives that an answer will hurt the pastor's feelings. Also, this is "insider with insider" research, because the study will be done amongst only people of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and School. This may narrow the potential perspective of the results.

Other assumptions that I have are related to the research question, "How can Holy Trinity Lutheran Church help people to habituate daily Bible engagement through using the Dwell Bible

app?” First, I believe that the Dwell app is a useful tool in helping people to engage the Bible daily. Another assumption is that I believe that the habit of engaging the Bible daily is important. Lastly, I am assuming that not everyone in the congregation is daily engaging the Bible currently. I believe that people could be supported by using the Dwell app to assist in forming the habit of daily Bible engagement.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE DATA

Data Analyses

In this chapter, I will present the participation data from Phase 1 of this project, including registration, the *Daily Bible Engagement* class, and the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. I will also present the qualitative research data from the seven interviews that were conducted in Phase 2 following the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. This information will help to answer my research question, “How can Holy Trinity Lutheran Church help people to habituate daily Bible engagement through using the Dwell Bible listening app?”

Phase 1

I was excited to see a positive response to my project. It was gratifying to see that sixty-four people registered for my project and completed the *Daily Bible Engagement* class. This far exceeded my expectations, and I was even more excited about the diverse group of people who participated. There were twenty-six men and thirty-eight women in the study, and there was balanced representation from different age demographics (see Table 5.1). A big surprise was the strong representation from the 70–85-year-old demographic. One of my initial concerns was that the technology requirements may exclude this demographic; however, I was glad to see that this group had the greatest representation.

Table 5.1. The Project Participation Age Ranges

		Gender	
Age Range	Age Distribution	Male	Female
70–85	16	6	10

60–69	9	5	4
50–59	14	5	9
40–49	10	2	8
30–39	10	6	4
18–29	5	2	3
Total		26	38

Most of the people who participated in the project were connected to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, which was to be expected. However, the invitation to participate in this project was extended to anyone who has had a connection to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and School. People did not necessarily need to be a member of the congregation. This meant that people who were connected to this community through the school (at the present time or the past), through Cub Scouts, visiting worship, or knowing Pastor Dan were included. I wanted to see if the invitation to participate in this spiritual growth opportunity given by the church would be received by those beyond the formal membership. The breakdown can be seen in Table 5.2, and it is important to note that people had the opportunity to select more than one answer when describing their relationship. This means that many people selected more than one answer.

Another surprise was that a person who visited worship for the first time (when I invited people to participate) decided to sign up for my project. This told me that people visiting church congregations are interested in spiritual growth opportunities from the first moment that they arrive.¹ Also, I was encouraged that a member of the congregation invited a friend to participate in the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. This also showed me that creating a process for daily Bible

¹ She ended up registering for the online *Daily Bible Engagement* orientation class, and she completed the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. She participated daily with the text message reminders and gave regular feedback.

engagement is helpful for members of the church to connect the Holy Trinity Church ministry with other people. The person who was invited by a church member was from a Christian background. However, it was good that a congregation member wanted her friend to benefit from this project.

Table 5.2. The Ways the Participants are Connected to Holy Trinity

I am connected to Holy Trinity (please select all that apply):	
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church	57
Holy Trinity Lutheran School	25
Pastor Dan Prugh	28
Cub Scouts	3
Other	
“I visited last week for the first time.”	1
“Referred by church member”	1

The people who registered for this project had the option of participating in the *Daily Bible Engagement* class in-person or online (pre-recorded class). The in-person options were offered two times, which were two consecutive Sundays after worship in the fellowship hall. The in-person classes were identical to the online orientation; however, the in-person option would allow for people to ask questions about the project and to receive help with the technology requirements. I wanted to make sure that people had the support they needed to participate in the project. I was surprised that fifty-three people participated in the online class. This number was the actual number of people who completed the online class. Some people registered for the in-

person class; however, they decided to request the online version. I did encourage participants in the online class to contact me with any technical issues, and some people did take me up on this offer. However, the questions were easily answered, and people were able to move forward with the project. I was able to confirm the completion of the online course by checking on the Dwell website platform. This allowed me to see the people who had successfully registered for the Dwell app.

The eleven people who participated in the in-person class viewed the same video content as the people online, however they did receive the opportunity to give direct verbal feedback. The only questions that people had were around the downloading and the registering of the Dwell app. Once people were registered for the app it was easy for people to participate. One of the advanced steps for participation was first signing up for Dwell through the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church account (i.e., username and password), which allowed for people to have free access to this app. If people did not register through this account website, then they would be prompted to pay for the app. Also, they would not have access to the *21 Day Dwell Experience* Bible plan (i.e., church specific developed plan). Everyone was able to prepare for the *21 Day Dwell Experience* with relative ease. I was thankful that people were willing to work with the new process, and they gave helpful feedback.

Table 5.3. The Type of *Daily Bible Engagement* Class Participants Completed

Online Class	In-Person Class
53	11

One optional question that I asked on the registration form was, “I currently engage the Bible...” The answers included, Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Never, and Other (this allowed people to write in their own answer). I specifically did not define the word “engage” so that people

could determine for themselves their current engagement. The responses given are seen in Table 5.4. I was pleased that a variety of people chose to participate in this project. It was nice to have people who regularly engage the Bible daily, so I could find out if this project assisted or enhanced their existing Bible engagement habit. Also, some people did not have a daily Bible engagement habit. This meant that people that did not engage the Bible daily were open to growing in this way through participating in this project. This information was also helpful as one data point for me to consider as I used a purposeful method for selecting people to participate in Phase 2 of this project.

Table 5.4. The Bible Engagement Level of Participants Prior to the Project

I Currently Engage the Bible:	
Daily	30
Weekly	22
Monthly	4
Never	0
Other	
“A Few Times Per Week”	1
“As Needed; Irregular”	1
“Rarely”	1
“Not the Bible, daily book for Catholics”	1
No Answer	4

The registration form also allowed for people to select a specific time to have a text reminder to listen to the daily chapter from the Gospel of John. This text provided the following information, including the specific chapter number, an encouraging message, and a link to an

encouraging video from me. The registration form asked for this information, so that people would already begin to take the needed steps to create a plan that could lead to starting a regular listening habit. This was also reinforced during the *Daily Bible Engagement* class. In Table 5.5 the text time selection is shown to give a picture of the preferences of the participants. Most of the people chose morning times to be reminded; very few selected noon and evening options.

Table 5.5. The Daily Text Message Time Selection for Participants

Text Time	Text Time Distribution
5:00am	1
6:00am	6
7:00am	18
7:30am	3
8:00am	9
8:30am	3
9:00am	6
9:30am	1
10:00am	1
11:00am	1
12:00pm	6
2:00pm	2
3:00pm	1
3:45pm	1
4:00pm	1
5:00pm	1
6:00pm	2

Any	1
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The registration allowed for people to select any time they desired by filling in a blank. This was meant to help people to fit the new habit into their actual life schedule, instead of imposing offered times. In theory this was good for the participant; however, administratively, it was labor intensive for me. I spent hours preloading text messages into the Textedly text system, which did work well. However, if this process continues, the customized reminder text system would have to be further explored. If the Textedly text system would be used, there would need to be a standard daily reminder at one time for every person. I may need more training on the Textedly system, or I may need to find a new texting system that is more appropriate for this kind of usage. The texting system needed to provide confidentiality, the ability to unsubscribe, and the ability to respond.

The secondary purpose of the text message was to help people to self-report if they listened to the Bible chapter for that day. After completing my MAP committee approval meeting, I realized that there was a chance that people would not complete this project. When I developed this project, I did think this could be a possibility. However, I thought that the ease of daily engagement would make it relatively easy for people to complete a chapter a day for twenty-one days. I then realized that twenty-one days is a long time, and that “life” sometimes gets in the way for people to complete programs. As the project launched, I checked the daily text responses hoping that people would participate.

I was extremely encouraged with the regular response rate of the participants during the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. It was exciting that fifty-eight of the sixty-four participants did reply at least one time to the daily text message. However, fifty-four of the people responded in a way

that was consistent with listening to the Bible throughout the twenty-one days. My request to people in the orientation class was to experiment with a daily Bible engagement habit, so that they would continue forward even if they missed a day or two. The most exciting part of receiving this data is that forty-eight people responded almost every day to the text messages. In addition to this data, some people who did not reply to the text messages told me after the fact that they listened every day. This means that the daily listening rate could be higher than it was necessarily reported in the data. Also, some of the people within the fourteen to eighteen responses text range indicated in their daily text response that they were also responding for the previous day. This indicated that while they did listen to the Bible on Dwell, they simply forgot to respond to some of the text messages.

Lastly, I was very excited that nineteen people gave more responses than there were days in the program. This meant that people responded to the daily text message, and they also gave feedback. Usually, this feedback would result in a response from me to answer a question or to give a comment. It was great to see that there was digital interaction.

Table 5.6. The Number of Text Message Responses from Participants to the Researcher

Text Responses	# of People
22+	19
21	9
20	8
19	7
18	1
16	4

15	1
14	1
10	2
9	1
8	1
2	2
1	2

Phase 1 of this project was a success, and I was interested in learning more from the participants. I then used this data to select the seven individuals who would participate in the qualitative research segment of my project.

Phase 2

The first phase of my project was to test the new process to help members of Holy Trinity develop a daily Bible engagement habit. Phase 2 of this project assisted in helping to answer my research question, “How can Holy Trinity Lutheran Church help people to habituate daily Bible engagement through using the Dwell Bible listening app?” I was excited to interview seven of the people who participated in Phase 1 to gain insight into their experience with my project to answer this question.

Participants

The following participants gladly helped with the qualitative research portion of my project. I purposely selected these individuals to participate, so that I could better understand the way that this process helped them to develop a daily Bible engagement habit using the process created that included the Dwell app. In selecting participants, I wanted to have a blend of male

and female individuals that spanned the age ranges represented in Phase 1. Also, I wanted to include a person who self-reported having a daily Bible engagement habit to see if this process enhanced their existing habit. However, I really wanted to discover if this process helped people who did not have a daily Bible engagement habit to change their attitude about daily Bible engagement. This meant that I looked to interview people who had weekly, monthly, or other self-reported engagement. Lastly, I selected people who self-reported to the daily text messages most of the time.

Participant 1

Participant 1 is a woman in the 70–85-year-old age range who self-reported engaging the Bible daily prior to participation in this project. This participant responded to more than 100% of the daily text messages.

Participant 2

Participant 2 is a man in the 60–70-year-old age range who self-reported engaging the Bible weekly prior to participation in this project. This participant responded to 90.4% of the daily text messages.

Participant 3

Participant 3 is a woman in the 50–59-year-old age range who self-reported engaging the Bible weekly prior to participation in this project. This participant responded to more than 100% of the daily text messages.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is a man in the 50–59-year-old age range who self-reported engaging the Bible rarely prior to participation in this project. This participant responded to 100% of the daily text messages.

Participant 5

Participant 5 is a woman in the 40–49-year-old age range who self-reported engaging the Bible weekly prior to participation in this project. This participant responded to more than 100% of the daily text messages.

Participant 6

Participant 6 is a man in the 30–39-year-old age range who self-reported engaging the Bible monthly prior to participation in this project. This participant responded to 76% of the daily text messages.

Participant 7

Participant 7 is a woman in the 18–29-year-old age range who self-reported engaging the Bible weekly prior to participation in this project. This participant responded to 100% of the daily text messages.

The 21 Day Dwell Experience Reflections

The interview participants did help to answer the research question, and I am thankful for the time that they spent sharing their experiences with me. This is my first experience with qualitative research, so this has been a learning experience for me. I made sure to interview each person in a consistent way by using the included interview questions (see Appendix 5). I allowed

each person to answer the question, and I wanted to see the direction that each person took their answer without much leading on my part. The answers that I received gave me helpful insight into my research question. I was able to identify specific themes from the interviews that are presented in the following section.

Phase 2 Interview Themes

Ease of Technology

The use of new technology is an opportunity for difficulty; however, I was encouraged that the participants did find the Dwell app on their smartphone easy to use. Once participants registered, downloaded the app and signed in, the app was easy to use. Participant 6, states “The app for me was easy to download. I was able to relatively quickly learn how to use it with a little bit of instruction by you.” It was easy for people to use a new app on their phone, because many people keep their phones with them regularly. As Participant 7 indicates, “We have our phones with us all the time, and we can just play it.” This meant that people could have an easy way to complete the daily Bible engagement.

The ease of technology allowed for Participants 3 and 4 to listen to Dwell during their commute to work. Participant 4 specifically shared this concerning his commute, “If it wasn't like on the app and something I can just listen to...if I actually had to...sit and read it...you can't read when you're driving or whatever, you know, and so you got to find a special time to do it. Then I probably wouldn't really do it, but this makes it definitely a lot easier to actually...do it.” Participant 3 listened on the way to work as well; however, some days her commute was too short to complete the listening for the day. In addition, Participant 6 indicated that he would consider listening on the way to work when he returned to working in his office. This would be necessary for him since cell phones are not allowed in his place of work.

The app not only allowed for ease of engaging the Bible, but also the ease of varying the versions, voices, and music. Some of the participants commented on the usefulness of this feature, and that it was helpful for engaging the Bible. Participants 3 and 4 used the random setting and enjoyed the variety of the voices and translations. Both found the King James translation to be challenging to engage. Participant 5 specifically talked about her app selections in this way:

We started with a female voice, and I decided, No...For whatever reason, ...we felt like this is the Bible, it should be read by a male voice. So we chose that and had light kind of like a guitar sort of sound in the background, and it felt like we were there. You know, in the stories, at least to me, you know, I felt like...I was really in this walking with, you know, Jesus, walking with the stories.

Also, Participant 6 mentioned that

It took me a little bit to nail down the voice that I liked with the music in the background, which sounds kind of...particular, but I think it helps. Certain voices I didn't like listening to, right...I liked some voices over the others. And then I realized, I believe that...certain voices were aligned with different versions of the Bible, right? Some versions I like better than others. It was finding a voice that I liked with the version I liked.

These features allowed for the participants to customize the app for their listening experience.

Invitation to Listen Daily

Another theme I discovered was that the invitation to try the Dwell app was important. People who do not usually engage the Bible would not think to engage it daily unless invited to try through this project. Participant 6 mentioned this, when he stated, "I would read the Bible for sure. It just wasn't a daily thing by any means. And like I said, the fact that this is kind of a relatively quick three to five minutes. If I can get in that routine of in the car ride, once I go back to work or at lunch..." Now the participant is open to engaging the Bible daily when he was not engaging daily before the invitation to participate in this project.

However, it is also significant to see the importance of the power of the invitation to participate in a new process. Sometimes people will be somewhat interested in an activity, however they may consider participating simply because they want to help you out. This is important specifically in daily Bible engagement, since my desire is for all people to hear the story of Jesus. Participant 4 mentions this, when he stated, “I pretty much agreed to do it just because I wanted to help out with your project and everything. You know, it wasn't really necessarily for the Bible or the verses or anything itself. It was more to help you out and participate in your research.” Participant 4 finished the project and had a good experience with this process. It was important that he was invited to participate in the process.

Directed Process

The participants shared that they did benefit from having a specific process to follow to help with developing a daily Bible engagement habit. My process involved registration, the *Daily Bible Engagement* class, and the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. It was helpful to see that a specific process did allow people who did not currently listen to the Bible daily to engage the Bible. Without having a concrete process, some of the individuals would not have considered engaging the Bible daily.

A participant shared that the preparation for listening was also a helpful part of the process. The instructions given during the *Daily Bible Engagement* class gave people the tools they needed to move forward with the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. Participant 5 mentioned the importance of understanding the context of the Gospel of John by viewing the Bible Project Gospel of John summary prior to listening. She mentioned,

I also found that before we started, one of the most helpful videos was that video that you had from YouTube on the breakdown. I mean...that was the biggest part for us, is we were watching it. We projected it to...our big screen TV and we saw the structure. And for me, as [an instructor], I like seeing the structure, the layout of how

he wrote and the stories and how they fit and the intention behind everything I was anticipating, you know, sort of each of those parts as I listened...

This did help her enjoy the twenty-one-days of listening to the Gospel of John.

The daily text message reminders for the *21 Day Dwell Experience* were highlighted by the interview participants. This was an important part of the daily engagement process. Participant 7 stated, "I enjoyed the whole experience. I found that I was able to complete it every single day, especially because of getting notifications. So that was one of the things I found most helpful." However, Participant 7 also talked about the problem with the reminders being set for the same time during the entire *21 Day Dwell Experience*. She would have preferred for the option to have more customized reminders daily that aligned with her rhythms of the week.

Directed Listening

Along with the directed process, there was a consistent theme of the need for regular directed listening. The *21 Day Dwell Experience* was directed listening. Three participants said that they would not go on the Dwell app on their own to listen to the Bible. This was specifically reinforced by Participant 7, when she said, "I don't think I would log on and listen to like random sections. I like the idea that it's curated and I'm going to listen to it." Also, Participant 5 said, "I just like direction. So I will absolutely continue...and it doesn't even have to be everyone doing it. Just hey, this month, if you want to listen...just a direction from you, you know...like laid out." In addition, Participant 6 stated, "...maybe more guided programs, like if you hadn't told me Luke next, I think it was Luke, right? I wouldn't. I would have been like, 'All right, what do I read next?'" The participants liked the app; however, it would likely not be used without direction.

Listening with Others

Another theme that surfaced in interviews was the importance of listening in community. This comment was made on several different levels. One level was the importance of listening with the group of people over a set period. This was the format of the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. All the participants listened to a chapter a day of the Gospel of John over a twenty-one-day period. Participants 1, 5, and 7 all mentioned that this was good. The group starting and finishing at a specific time together was important to the participants.

As participants listened over the twenty-one days, they had the opportunity to connect with me concerning the questions or insights that they wanted to share about the chapter for the day. This could be done through the daily text message. Participant 5 mentioned,

And I just felt, you know, like I could carry [the Bible chapter] and think about it, and I would look forward to your responses...I was constantly like, Oh, my text message went off...I wanted it to be a response from you about what we had just done. So I feel like that anticipation is so much richer and purer like that engagement, that feeling of wanting to know more about the Bible. You know, I just haven't I haven't had that. I just go about my daily life. I pray. But I felt much more connected, you know, and I even still now, you know, from what we listen to this morning and as we've continued.

It was important to have a way to share feedback, and it did make it possible to build connection when engaging the Bible. However, this was not the most preferred level of connection.

Another deeper level of connection with the text came from shared engagement within households. Spouses had the opportunity to reflect on the text together. Participant 1 mentioned that this was a regular routine for her and her husband. She stated, "My husband and I read the Bible every day together in the morning before we participated in this. And of course, when I participated in this, he participated in this by listening to the Dwell experience with us, so we would get up and have our coffee and listen to the Bible on our phone every day. It was a good experience for us." This was not the norm for other participants. Engaging the Bible daily was a

new and exciting experience for Participant 6, who shared, “I like that it [spurred] conversations between [my wife] and I as well.” Also, Participant 3 was excited to have the opportunity to have the chance to listen with her husband. She mentioned, “So my experience with Dwell was a positive one. My husband also did it as well, so that was nice that we both could participate together.” These couples benefited from completing this process together.

However, Participant 5 shared that it gave deeper insight into the new daily Bible engagement in her home. Previously, she had never had a regular Bible engagement habit. She was excited that listening to the Bible made it possible for her and her husband to engage the Scriptures regularly and consistently. She also enjoyed talking with other members of the congregation. In fact, Participant 5 mentioned Participant 1 in her interview, when talking about people to emulate in the congregation. She stated, “Like we look at, you know, [her] Bible. Have you seen that? ...I mean, it's something noticeable...I look at these Bibles and I tell [my husband], I'm like, that is faith. You know, that is engaging daily.” It was exciting that this project process allowed for couples to grow their faith through daily Bible engagement together.

Finally, Participant 7 mentioned that it would be good to create opportunities for people to gather at different points throughout a listening plan. This participant did not have the same experience of connecting daily with another person about the texts. Participant 7 shared that it would have been better if there was greater community gathering and involvement. She stated,

I mean, I'm sure it'll probably be said by other people, but I think there could be some sense of community gathering. Some way to engage what's happening as the listeners, you know, like we were able to text you back if there was something that came up but to engage each other. I don't know how that would happen or the benefit of it. But if it was to be said, “Hey, the Dwell Bible app group, if you're listening this month to the gospel of Luke, come on over after church, whatever, like, we're just going to sit and get together and talk about what we've been hearing, what we've been thinking.” You know, like taking that extra step to push each other to have conversations about the Bible could be helpful.

This was also mentioned by Participant 3, who stated, “I think the Zooms, the online is good...But I think it’s always better when we can get together.” The importance of engaging the Bible daily in community would need to be a greater area of focus.

Listening

Some of the participants highlighted the importance of listening to the Scriptures.

Participant 5 reflected on the impact of listening to the Bible. This type of engagement with the Bible was like being in church. She stated,

But I also feel like so often we're not spoken to like the Bible speaks to us through this app, if that makes sense. It's conversation. You're listening to people, you're talking to people. But I don't know if we're really like spoken to like this. It feels like when we're at church, like how you speak to us at church, that's a whole experience, which is why we love coming. And I feel as if the Dwell app speaks to us in a way that makes sense...So you're being spoken to in such a different way through that app.

Listening to the Bible through the app brought a new dimension to personal devotion, since the text was listened to instead of being read.

Also, Participant 1 shared about the different experience of listening through the app. Previously, she read the Bible with her husband each day. They would take turns reading, and then they would talk about the text as they went along. The Dwell app created a new kind of experience for her. She stated, “it was different than listening to my husband or listening to me read it...It was really...different. I found more detail. I heard more detail. I was more interested in more detail.” Dwell provided enrichment to an existing Bible engagement habit.

Multi-Sensory Listening

The participants did like the new practice of listening; however, they also appreciated the opportunity to listen and follow along with the text at the same time. When Participant 1 mentioned the greater detail in listening to the Bible being read, she was still following along by

reading her Bible. Also, Participant 2 mentioned, “I liked listening to the Bible...Also, there was an option to read and listen at the same time. So to me, that would keep my focus on what I’m listening to by reading as well.” Some of the Dwell app translations did include the read along feature, however other options did not. Participants 6 and 7 both shared that this was a helpful feature. In fact, Participant 7 specifically shared,

I personally don’t think I could continue doing it without the closed captions because it would make it too easy for me to just turn it on and to not actually actively listen. So like for me, I had to read it otherwise, especially in those low moments, it’s going to be like, OK, well, it’s on and I’m checking the box, you know? And like, Oh, I got to the end. Like, great, that's wonderful. Even though I didn't actually engage with the Bible.

She also shared in her interview that she does not prefer to listen to podcasts, rather she enjoys watching videos of podcasts and other content. Participant 6 shared, “I actually really liked being able to read along as well. I’m very much a visual learner and I find if I’m just listening to someone, my brain can have a tendency to kind of go off in other areas and start thinking about other stuff...I liked being able to read along with it.” Participant 3 also mentioned the desire to want to spend the time listening and following along with the text. The Dwell app specifically added the karaoke reading feature to assist with the multi-sensory engagement with the text.

The Bible is Interesting

Another theme that came to the surface is that the Bible is interesting. All the participants enjoyed listening to the Bible. An example of this is when Participant 4 mentioned,

But I did enjoy it. You know, I did like doing it as I got into it. And you know, I think one of the things I liked is like I heard verses and stories and stuff that like I knew, but I didn’t really know where they came from or like things like that. So it was kind of interesting to say like, Oh yeah, I know that that's where that comes from or whatever. So, I like that aspect of it. It was kind of interesting from that standpoint to me.

Then Participant 7 shared that she was interested in hearing the next part of the story on some days. Participant 5 talked about the feeling of walking with Jesus while listening to the chapters. Participant 1 shared that hearing about Mary in the text caused her to think about being a mom with her own kids. Overall, the participants enjoyed listening to the story, and they were engaged in the text.

More Explanation

However, some of the participants indicated that it would be helpful to include explanation with the listening section each day. This was illustrated by Participant 4 when he said, “I kind of like the idea of having some analysis or something along with it. So you can understand a little bit about what you're reading or listening to.” This was also requested by Participant 3, who stated, “It was a great experience. Maybe a little bit more guidance. So what are we looking for in the reading? Because the Bible is hard to decipher, not knowing it and some of the passages were familiar.”

However, it was also mentioned by Participant 4 that this might increase the amount of time required to listen. He said, “But that also takes more time, like if you have like a five minute...verse or a chapter and then another five or ten minutes of analysis that could take them more time, which people may not want.” Other participants mentioned that the strength of the daily engagement was the manageable listening time. However, Participant 3 and 5 both mentioned that they enjoyed the weekly video that was sent out after the start of the next listening plan for Luke. At that time, the daily text messages concluded, and I sent out a weekly video giving some of my thoughts on the readings.

Peaceful

Some participants recognized that engaging the Bible each day was helpful for their day. A regular response from those interviewed was that it was peaceful to listen. This was shared by Participant 4,

I can see why people like to do it, because it can give you a little bit of a feeling of like comfort and stuff like that...His words and his teachings can definitely...give you a little bit of peace...If you need that or whatever. So I can see why people do it on a daily basis now, even though I didn't before.

Also, this was shared by Participant 5 who shared that she personally experienced peace from engaging the Bible Daily. She shared, "...this was, you know, sort of like a calming experience. In the morning time before we started anything, made coffee, sat down. Listen to...the app with the music in the background...". Later, Participant 5 shared, "I mean, telling you our mornings changed for sure. It calmed." In addition, Participant 2 commented on the way that this was a helpful practice that added to his day. He stated, "My experience was a good one. Each day it brought...to the Lord, you know, early in the morning and it was a great experience for me, something that, you know, I typically read devotions, but this was something else that really added to my day. So it was a great experience for me." The participants did find value in daily Bible engagement, and the written Word of God spoken through the Dwell app was peaceful and helpful.

Life Changing

One of the specific questions asked to participants was, "How did your participation in the *21 Day Dwell Experience* change your life?" Many of the participants thought that this was a big question for a twenty-one-day Bible listening exercise. At first some participants were not initially sure; however, they all came up with an answer. For example, Participant 4 shared that it changed his morning commute, and it allowed for him to easily engage the Bible daily through

the Dwell app. Later in the interview, he shared this about his attitude towards daily Bible engagement, "...I think my attitude towards it did change because of the experience...like before this, I never really would have considered doing it."

Then Participant 6 mentioned that the project opened up conversation about the Bible with his spouse. This was the first change that he mentioned after thinking about the question. Then he explored the change in his Bible engagement throughout the *21 Day Dwell Experience*, and he hoped that the 3–5-minute listening would continue. However, he then circled back to say, "I like that it [spurred] conversations between [my wife] and I as well."

Participant 3 mentioned that this daily Bible engagement encouraged her to innovate new shared ministry. She was encouraged to invite other friends in her workplace to participate in a prayer group, which was an encouragement. Each member of the prayer group brought insight to the group. Participation in the *21 Day Dwell Experience* also was encouraging for her family life at home.

Participant 5 shared that participating in the *21 Day Dwell Experience* helped her engage the Bible. She said, "I actually was able to engage in the Bible, probably more than ever." Then she continued to share that her life changed in this specific way. She shared,

And I feel like...what we listen to, you know, whatever part we listen to in the morning, I sort of kept with me...throughout the day and it sort of was able to apply, you know, the word or that part, I thought about it, you know, I thought about it throughout the whole day. That means I was actively engaged in the Bible, not just in the morning when I was listening, but throughout the day I kept thinking about it...I said, 'You're going to feel this, you're going to think about. It's going to become sort of part of who you are.' And I don't think that I ever really felt that so much before.

This process made it possible for this participant and her husband to engage the Bible daily and it made a difference.

Other participants mentioned the changes they experienced. Participant 2 shared that this encouraged him to study more of the Bible. Then Participant 1 shared that both she and her

husband picked up on more details of the text that she might have missed before when they only read to each other. Lastly, Participant 7 shared that she left the process knowing that she could engage the Bible daily, which is a good thing. All the participants had a positive experience participating in this project, and none of them had used the Dwell app prior to participating in this project.

Continued Listening

Some of the participants responded that they were interested in continuing with the daily listening through Dwell. Prior to the interviews, I did invite people to the next listening plan entitled “Luke Daily.” This was reflected in the participant responses. Participant 2 stated, “Well, it’s a positive impact because not only have I went through our study on John...I started to do Luke now, so I’ve continued on.” Also, Participant 3 shared, “I’m still continuing to listen because then I found myself like getting into the car and...I was used to listening in the morning... Well, I’m supposed to listen because I have this habit now.” Participant 4 mentioned, “...I did find that I liked it and it wasn’t too challenging to fit it in because I had that time anyway, you know, and so I did sign up for the next one, the Luke one...So I find that interesting, too.” Participant 5 shared, “I really hope our church, you know, does like we’re doing Luke now, I hope we do another.” Participant 1 shared, “I mean, we’re continuing to do it. We didn’t just shut it off. Once we got finished with that, we are using it and we will continue to use it.” Participants 6 and 7 did not decide to move on to the next listening plan, however they did have a good experience with the project. It was exciting to hear that people continued listening to the Gospel of Luke.

Reflection on the Themes

In the previous section, I highlighted the recurring themes that emerged from seven interviews conducted for this project. In this section, I will be interacting with the themes to discuss my findings from this project. I will be considering the information in light of my research question, “How can Holy Trinity Lutheran Church help people to habituate daily Bible engagement through using the Dwell Bible listening app?”

Bible Engagement is Powerful

One of the main reasons I selected this project for my MAP is that I believe that engagement with the Bible is life transforming. This belief is rooted in the doctrine of the Word that was explored in Chapter Three. It was exciting to see that all the people who participated in this project experienced changes in their lives and movement occurred. They found time to listen to the Scripture daily. People experienced a new sense of peace through engaging the Gospel of John, and the text did inform their day. This was reported by people who regularly engaged the text daily. Daily listening was also beneficial for people who previously engaged weekly, monthly, or rarely.

Bible engagement also spurred new life into relationships and communities. The regular engagement did bring about continued and new conversation between spouses that participated in the project. In the past, people would not have had these conversations, however they were now having more spiritual conversation around the Bible. Also, this regular listening did bring about the creation of a new ministry in the work life of a participant. Daily Bible engagement did bring about positive movement in the lives of the people that were interviewed.

It was also important to hear that people would listen to the text just for the sake of listening to the text without having commentary. Listening to a chapter a day of the Bible was a

new practice for most of the participants, however it gave them great knowledge of the content of the Gospel of John. This greater knowledge was appreciated, however people also desired to have more insight into the meaning of the content. This helps me to see that scripture engagement does stir up people's lives, and it does open people up to hear its meaning. This is an encouragement to me to continue to both have people engage the story as written and to provide interpretation. People are open to and interested in knowing about the meaning of the text they engaged.

Process is Important

This research has taught me that it is important to have 'clear processes' to assist people on their spiritual journey in the church. People do benefit from guidance in connecting with the things of God. This project is just one example of creating a specific process to engage the Bible daily using a different method than asking the people to read the Bible daily. This specific process took into consideration the reality that people do not read as much in general, and it used new familiar technology to bring the Bible to people with beauty and ease. The process gave a clear expectation for the individual, it gave clear reasons for Bible engagement, and then it gave specific encouragement as the community embarked on this journey together. The process helped people to understand what they were doing, helped them to plan when they would do it, and then encouraged them through the process. The result of this process is that most of the people did engage the Bible daily over a twenty-one-day period. Also, many people continued to listen to the Bible after the twenty-one days concluded.

Creating a process for "Daily Bible Engagement" is important, however it is not the "silver bullet" process to completely transform a church. Some people in the church will not be led to participate in this process or other options. However, it is important to consider the intentional

ways that a congregation is helping people to develop spiritual disciplines that encourage their faith. If I had not created this process, then some people would have never considered engaging the Bible daily.

Directed Engagement is Helpful

It is important to remember the need for directed Bible engagement. The people who went through this process would only continue with direction. The participants liked the Dwell app; however, many did not see themselves using it unless a plan was provided. Just providing the option for people to engage the Bible through an app is thoughtful, however, more direction is needed for the app to be useful.

After the completion of the *21 Day Dwell Experience*, I continued to offer reading plans with a modified process. I supplied a daily Bible listening plan for the Gospel of Luke and then the Book of Acts. The process was adapted from a daily text message follow up to a weekly YouTube content video that provided insight on certain parts of the daily readings.

Then I modified process one more time for the next Bible listening plans. The next plans supplied were “Genesis Daily,” “The Exodus,” “Who’s in Charge (Judges and the United Monarchy),” and “When Things Fall Apart (The Divide Monarchy).” The most recent plan is “A Prophet to A Cold Kingdom,” which was a daily reading through the Book of Isaiah. When I started the “Genesis Daily” reading plan, I started to work with a group of pastors to develop a podcast entitled “Talking about the Bible.” This podcast supplied commentary on the daily listening plans. A new episode was released each Friday. The podcast was an experiment, and ten episodes were created. I am looking to create a new strategy in the future for regular listening content engagement.

Invitations are Critical

This project reminded me of the power of a personal invitation to participate in an activity or event. Some of the people who participated in my project were interested in creating a new Bible engagement habit. However, many people participated to help me with my project. It really does not matter the reason “why” people participated; the important part was that they did participate. It was exciting to see that everyone who participated had a good experience and their lives were enriched. The people who engaged the Bible every day prior to participating in this exercise had the chance to experience a new way of interacting with the Scriptures. However, the people who did not previously interact with the Scriptures did have the opportunity to listen to the entire Gospel of John. Many people who have attended churches for years have not heard the entire Gospel of John over the span of a month. A personal invitation to listen to the Bible through an app was a welcomed opportunity to connect with Jesus.

Habits Can be Formed Quickly

When I was designing my project, I was realistic about the possibility of habit formation. The literature I read about developing habits was not conclusive about the number of days that it would take for new habits to be established. Basically, the literature stated that it depends on the person and the habit. This led me to set the expectation that people would have an ‘attitude shift’ concerning the habit of daily Bible engagement after participating in my project. Also, after I met with my MAP committee to approve my project, I was warned that many people may not complete my project. I had not thought about this possibility, since I figured that people would have the time to listen a little every day. However, once I thought about the busy nature of life, I started to consider that this could happen. These were the expectations that I had prior to starting my project.

The good news was that I was pleasantly surprised that most of the people did complete the entire *21 Day Dwell Experience*. Also, the strategy of introducing a small shift of 3–5 minutes of listening was an attainable daily goal. People also found ways to “habit stack,” which meant that they attempted to add “listening to the Bible” to the times that they would already be listening to something else (e.g. morning commute, breakfast, etc...). Also, it was a huge surprise that people wanted to continue with the listening plans. The Dwell app does make it easy for people to access the Bible to engage every day. It was encouraging to see that people found daily Bible engagement to be important and many participants continued listening.

Community Listening is Important

I did not think through the gathered community aspect of this project, and it was brought to my attention during the MAP committee approval process. I was focused on the corporate nature of individuals listening to the Gospel of John at the same time, and then the daily interaction with me through the text message. I didn't think about the connections that people would need to have with each other. In the end, I decided that the established project design was executable, and that I would add the request for people to pick a listening partner. This was an optional request that was made during the *Daily Bible Engagement* orientation class. Participants were asked to write down a person that they would consider listening with for the duration of the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. After making this addition, I decided that I would specifically listen for feedback concerning this topic.

I was pleasantly surprised at the feedback that I received regarding the importance of community listening. The people who participated in the *21 Day Dwell Experience* liked the way that the entire church listened to the same Bible text everyday together. Also, people appreciated having a daily accountability text message that allowed for feedback. The people who

participated in this way felt like they were part of the experience. However, I found out through the interviews that people experienced a deeper level of engagement through listening with another person. Listening to the Bible with a spouse was the most common community listening, and it yielded a positive outcome for the couples. In addition, interviewees mentioned that it would be nice for activities to be planned where people got together regularly once a week to discuss insights from the texts.

Conclusion

The project gave me insight into the difference that daily Bible engagement can make in peoples' lives. All the participants in this project had a positive experience and they found benefit in engaging the Bible through the Dwell app. It is most important to have a specific plan to help people to engage the Bible daily to make it possible for people to develop this habit. This project provided one process option. It was exciting to see that people wanted to continue forward with daily Bible engagement after participation in this project.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I am excited to finally have an answer to the research question, “How can Holy Trinity Lutheran Church help people to habituate daily Bible engagement through using the Dwell Bible listening app?” This is an important question, because the church desires to help people to grow closer to the Triune God through engaging the written Word of God in the Bible. However, often there is not a specific way to help people to develop a daily Bible engagement habit. There is encouragement to read daily devotional material, yet there is not usually a recognition of the barriers of developing a daily habit. One of the most important barriers that was named in this project is that people do not regularly read. This is problematic if the church desires for people to read the Bible daily. In addition, people encounter a tsunami of information every day, that makes it hard to prioritize regular engagement with the Bible. As a result of this project, Holy Trinity was able to help people to habituate daily Bible engagement through using the Dwell app. The project took seriously the importance of the need for daily Bible engagement and the current limitations to engagement that people encounter.

Chapter Two of this project highlighted the simplicity and the complexity of daily Bible engagement. The topics of habit, technology and the Bible were all explored to better understand the way that the church could help people engage the Bible daily. The REVEAL study by the Willow Creek Church in Barrington, Illinois, and the Transformational Discipleship Assessment (TDA) by LifeWay Research highlighted the importance of a daily Bible reading habit for Christian maturity (i.e., growing in love for God and neighbor). The studies recommended this important priority would make the biggest difference in the spiritual growth of church members.

Since the topic of daily Bible reading was so important for Christian spiritual maturity, it was important to spend time better understanding this habit. My paper examined the topic of habit from both theological and secular perspectives. James K. A. Smith and Justin Earley emphasized the spiritual effects that our physical habits have on our lives. Charles Duhigg and James Clear examined habits from the social science perspective. Duhigg highlights the neuroscience of habit loops (i.e., cue, routine, and reward). He also identifies Keystone Habits (i.e., the most important habits). Daily Bible engagement is a Keystone Habit that helps with overall spiritual maturity.

James Clear made the connection between habits and identity. He wrote that a person's identity is the most important part of establishing new habits. He sees developing new atomic (i.e., very small) habits as being the way towards continued self-improvement to achieve a desired identity (i.e., belief about oneself). This secular insight is important for my paper because it presented a problematic view of humanity. The problem that humans have is misplaced identity in themselves (Gen. 3) instead of the Triune God. If people place their identity in anything else but God, then they will only find despair. However, Gospel Centered habits of devotion place one's identity in Jesus Christ through the waters of baptism. John Kleinig writes that these habits of devotion are receptive from God, and they lead to life.

The topic of smartphone technology allowed for a balanced consideration of both the benefits and the challenges of new technology. One benefit is that 83.72% of the world population has a smartphone in their hands, which means that they have the technology to connect with life-giving apps like Dwell.¹ This gives people easy access to the written Word of

¹ Bankmycell, "How Many Cellphones are in the World?" Bankmycell, accessed on June 27, 2022, <https://www.bankmycell.com/blog/how-many-phones-are-in-the-world>.

God in an audio format, which makes it possible to create a daily Bible engagement habit. However, I also noted that unrestrained smartphone usage can lead to problems, so it is important to develop healthy smartphone usage boundaries.

Chapter Three rooted this project in the proper theological and historical perspective. This chapter spent time specifically tracing the biblical foundations of the Word of God from the beginning, to the coming of the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ, and to the Last Day. God desires to speak into the world and into our lives personally, and he has given everything in Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection to rescue a fallen world.

The Theological Foundations section made the connection between the biblical account and the doctrines of the church. Peter Nafzger rightly developed a theology of Scripture that centers on the Word of God as revealed in the biblical narrative. He shared that the Word of God is present in a spoken proclaimed form and a written form (i.e., the Bible). He highlighted that Martin Luther believed that the written and the proclaimed Word of God brought about transformation in peoples' lives. This is in line with the Lutheran Confessions that identify the importance of the Holy Spirit's work through the Word and the sacraments as seen in Article V.2–3 of the Augsburg Confession. People rightly understand the Word of God, when engaging it within the corporate worship and individual devotional life of the congregation.

The historical context informed me of the movement in history from oral culture to print culture. In an oral culture, ideas are passed through people sharing stories. In a print culture, ideas are shared through reading written documents. Historically, the oral cultures wrote down stories to make sure that oral transmission was accurate. As different technology developed, there was a shift from scrolls to books (i.e., the Codex). However, everything changed with the development of the Guttenberg printing press in the 1440's. This invention allowed for the cheap

reproduction of books, and that eventually led to a print dominate culture as literacy increased. People engaged the world through printed materials, until recently with the shift to “secondary orality.” This category is made up of people who can read, but they prefer to engage with the world in an oral way. This information was helpful in considering the use of an app that would give access to the Bible in an audio format.

Chapters Two and Three demonstrated a need to design and implement a project that would help people to develop a daily Bible engagement habit using the Dwell app. It was exciting to see that sixty-four people from the Holy Trinity Church and School community decided to participate in this project. These individuals took the *Daily Bible Engagement* class to prepare for the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. Most of the participants listened to the daily chapter from the Gospel of John, and then they responded ‘yes’ to the text message. Some participants decided to respond to the daily text messages with questions and reflections. After the completion of this part of the project, seven people were purposely selected to be interviewed concerning their experience. The interview participants affirmed the usefulness of the process that I created, including Registration, *Daily Bible Engagement* class, and the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. The people who participated in this process shared that the Dwell app helped them with developing a daily Bible engagement habit. The feedback from this project has encouraged me to consider the ways that I will use this process for future ministry.

Possibilities for Future Ministry

Continued Use of the Process

My research project has demonstrated that the church can help people to engage the Bible daily through using the Dwell app. This is the reason why Holy Trinity still has a Dwell account for church members and friends to utilize. Since I completed my project, the participants have

had the opportunity to participate in eight Bible listening plans on the Dwell app that I have provided. The group that participated in this project benefited from both participating in the *Daily Bible Engagement* class and the *21 Day Dwell Experience*.

Due to the success of this project, I will start offering three opportunities a year (i.e., the fall, the spring, and the summer) when the congregation can encourage new people to consider developing a daily Bible engagement habit. I will follow the same process of Registration, *Daily Bible Engagement* class, and *A Daily Bible Listening Experience*. I will create different plans for each opportunity offered. However, I will make sure to develop plans that will have a similar number of days as the *21 Day Dwell Experience*.

My hope is that the people who participate in these Bible listening groups will continue to listen regularly following the initial participation in the process (just as the people who originally participated in my project). Also, I hope that new people will be invited to participate in this process who are not currently part of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. This could be a good tool for congregational evangelism.

Circuit and District Presentations

I am planning on sharing my project with the Tampa, FL, pastor circuit, and the Florida—Georgia District of the LCMS (FL–GA District). I will share my project findings with the circuit during a regularly scheduled monthly meeting. The goal of this presentation will be to communicate the importance of daily Bible engagement, and to offer the specific process that I established for Holy Trinity as an option for other congregations to consider. This would be an opportunity to think about the ways that the circuit could work together on specific initiatives. One initiative could be promoting daily Bible engagement by using the Dwell app.

Also, I will be requesting to lead a breakout session for an upcoming pastors conference for the FL–GA District. The project creates a great intersection for the topics of habit, technology, and the Bible. The presentation would share my findings and offer the specific process that I created. This will be another place to seek continued feedback concerning my findings, and it will allow for opportunities to further consider ideas to refine my process.

Suggestions for Future Research

I am happy with my project topic and research; however, as I started my project new ideas continued to enter my mind. I am glad that I had the opportunity to measure the impact of people daily listening to and reflecting on Scripture. It was important for me to have people to listen to Scripture only, since people tend to overlook Scripture as familiar and then immediately look to devotional thoughts or commentary. However, I did receive the feedback during interviews that people desired to have commentary and reflection on the text to help them better understand the Scripture. It would be interesting to see if adding daily devotional commentary to the listening plan would improve the experience. I wonder if this would be helpful for developing the daily engagement habit or if it would be too much to add at one time. The interviews highlighted that the brief daily listening allowed for people to easily complete the task. It might be better to start with listening daily to the text, and then adding commentary after the people get used to the habit of listening to the Bible daily.

One area of future assessment could be around the impact of daily Bible engagement on the participants' relationship with Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the Word of God teaches that people encounter Jesus Christ in the Scriptures, so this likely happened in this study. However, it would be helpful to know more about the result that this engagement had on the participants' understanding of Jesus Christ and his work in their lives. The interview questions did not capture

this information, so adding a question that explores this topic would give more clarity to this aspect of the study.

Another area of future research could be around adding the in-person community gathering and reflection times throughout the *21 Day Dwell Experience*. There could be three gathering opportunities throughout the experience. The meetings would be relaxed and social in nature. There could be a conversation guide with weekly insight from the text for group reflection. The event would allow for people to make new friends and grow in deeper insight of the texts. It would be interesting to know if the gathering aspect would create a deeper sense of daily engagement as opposed to only listening to the text daily and responding. Would people listen more carefully each day if they would be coming together to discuss the text each week?

Based upon my project, I would setup three gatherings over the twenty-one-days. If the *21 Day Dwell Experience* started on a Monday, the first gathering would be on Sunday (i.e., day 7). The next gathering would be on the next Sunday (i.e., day 14). Then the final meeting would be on the evening of the next Sunday (i.e., day 21).

Final Thoughts

I am excited that the people of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and School benefited from the process that I created for daily Bible engagement using the Dwell app. I learned that it is helpful to assist people in developing habits that benefit spiritual growth. However, it is important to remember that spiritual growth is not an upward climb to God, rather it is a greater recognition of complete dependence on Him. The habit of daily Bible engagement nurtures this posture of knowing where to beg. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to lead the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church congregation on this Bible engagement journey.

APPENDIX ONE

Registration

This Registration Form can be viewed: <https://forms.gle/Y3DtpzqPEScxX3XH6>

Registration for Pastor Dan Prugh's - D.Min MAP

Thank you for your willingness to sign up to help Pastor Dan complete his Major Applied Project (MAP) that is the last part of his Doctor of Ministry (D.Min) degree.

Please fill out the following registration form to participate in his project "The Dwell Bible Listening App an Effective Tool to Habituate Daily Bible Engagement in the Local Congregation." The point of the project will be to explore the benefit of listening to one chapter of the Gospel of John (4 - 7 minutes daily) on the Dwell Bible app for 21 days.

The different parts of the project include:

1) Participating in the "Daily Bible Engagement" class (online or in-person) - This is the brief orientation that will prepare you for the next parts of this MAP. This will include 1) Why Engage the Bible Daily?, 2) Gospel of John Overview, and 3) instructions to install the Dwell Bible App for the "21 Day Dwell Experience." Do not preinstall the Dwell App before taking this class, you will be able to use this app free of charge by participating in this project.

2) Participating in the "21 Day Dwell Experience" - From January 10th - January 30th, you will use the Dwell Bible app to listen to one chapter of the Gospel of John each day. Each day you will receive an encouraging text message. You will be asked to respond to this text messaging indicating that you listened today.

3) Participate in an Interview - After the "21 Day Dwell Experience," you may be asked to participate in an interview with Pastor Dan. If you are selected, you will be called after the "21 Day Dwell Experience" and asked to participate in the research component of this study. Prior to the interview you will be given an Informed Consent form to read and sign.

If you have any question about the following registration form, please contact Pastor Dan Prugh prughd@csl.edu or 804-836-4126.

Welcome Video:

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=Vz8feXkY66U>



1. Name: *

2. Phone Number: *

3. Are you 18 years old or older? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

4. What is your birth year? *

5. Are you able to receive texts? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

6. What time would you like to receive your daily text? * Note: Text messages will be sent to you at the time you select (ex. 7:00am) over the 21-day period.

7. Can you download apps on your phone? *Note: You will be given free access to the Dwell Bible Listening App by participating in this project, please wait to download the app until taking the orientation class. *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

8. I am connected to Holy Trinity (Please select all that apply):

Check all that apply.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

Holy Trinity Lutheran School

Pastor Dan Prugh

Cub Scouts

Other: _____

9. I will attend the "Daily Bible Engagement" Orientation Class: *

Mark only one oval.

Online Class – Pre-recorded (Must be completed by Sunday, January 9th)

In-person Class - Live (Sunday, January 2nd from 12pm - 12:30pm in the HTLC Fellowship Hall)

In-person Class - Live (Sunday, January 9th from 12pm - 12:30pm in the HTLC Fellowship Hall)

10. (Optional) I currently engage the Bible:

Mark only one oval.

Never

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Yearly

Other: _____

Google Forms

APPENDIX TWO

Daily Bible Engagement Class

This class can be viewed: <https://forms.gle/6N59ne8zkWWJeyKTA>

Daily Bible Engagement Class

This is the online class that will prepare you to participate the *21 Day Dwell Experience* for Pastor Dan's Doctor of Ministry (D.Min) Major Applied Project. The three sections of the class are:

1. Why Engage the Bible Daily?
2. Overview of the Gospel of John (Part 1 and Part 2)
3. Downloading and using the Dwell app for the 21 Day Dwell Experience

Welcome Video

<https://youtu.be/XmKWMVRvoWs>



Part 1 - Why Engage the Bible Daily?

The following videos will help you to understand why participating in this project is important.

Video #1 - Why engage the Bible?

Video #2 - Why engage the Bible daily?

Video #3 - How to develop a daily Bible engagement habit?

Video #4 - How is a daily Bible engagement habit different from other habits?

Video #1 - Why engage the Bible?

<https://youtu.be/xnw1WvnN2O4>



Later Optional Study

Lutheran Hour Ministry - The Bible on Trial

(<https://www.lhm.org/studies/studydetail.asp?id=16902>) This study is not required for this class. This link is for people who would like to explore this topic on their own at another time.

Video #2 - Why engage the Bible daily?

<https://youtu.be/Qlybngua4Bw>



Video #3 - How to develop a daily Bible engagement habit?
<https://youtu.be/LlsBAx4vRZ0>



When are good times for you to listen to the Bible Daily?

Who could you listen to the Bible with daily for the 21 Dwell Experience? *Note - This is not required.

Video #4 - How is a daily Bible engagement habit different from other habits?
<https://youtu.be/Pp1tGgQXB0A>



Part 2 - Overview of the Gospel of John (Part 1 and Part 2)

Below are two brief videos produced by The Bible Project (<https://bibleproject.com/>) that will help you to have a foundation for your daily listening. These videos will help you to have a sense of the chapters as part of the whole story. This section will take about 17 minutes to complete.

John 1-12 Bible Book Overview Video | The Bible Project
<https://youtu.be/G-2e9mMf7E8>



John 13-21 Bible Book Overview Video | The Bible Project
https://youtu.be/RUfh_wOsauk



Part 3 - Downloading and using the Dwell app for the 21 Day Dwell Experience

The following section will help you to be ready for the 21 Day Dwell Experience. This section takes about 10 minutes.

Video #1 - Register for the free Dwell Account

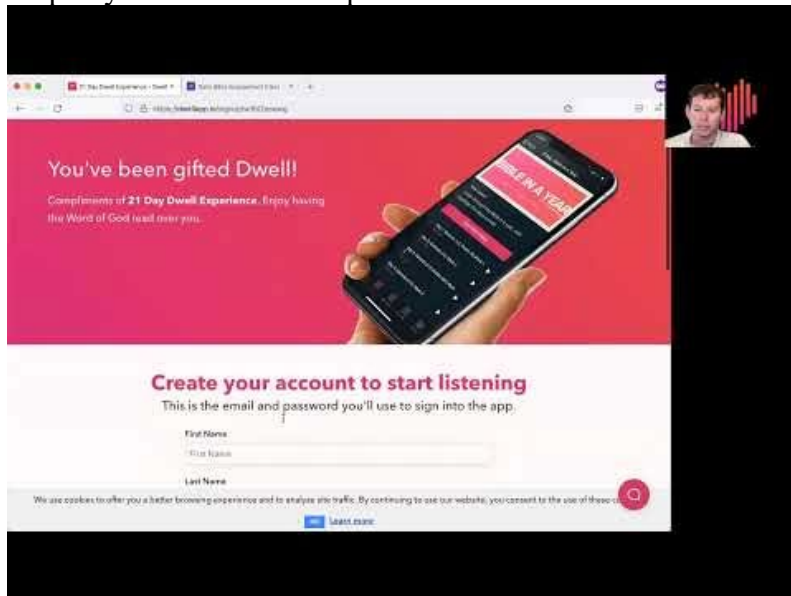
Video #2 - Download the Dwell App, then sign in using account information, then register for 21 Day Dwell Experience Plan

Video #3 - What to expect on January 10th and for the next 21 days of listening?

Video #4 - What happens after the 21 days of listening?

Video #1 - Register for free Dwell Account

<https://youtu.be/V2h2cDcpaU8>



Video #2 - Download the Dwell App, then sign in using account information, then register for 21 Day Dwell Experience Plan <https://youtu.be/vNij3ZrPV8c>



NOTE - If you don't see the "21 Day Dwell Experience" on the home page after you download the Dwell App, type "21 Day Dwell Experience" into the search tool. After it comes up, select it, and make it a favorite. Then it should be under favorites on the home screen. If this still is not working please reach out to Pastor Dan 804-836-4126 or attend the In-person class on Sunday, January 9th at Holy Trinity. Thank you for your flexibility and your help with this project.

Video #3 - What to expect on January 10th and for the next 21 days of listening?

<https://youtu.be/6RXBTWIYDV0>



Video #4 - What happens after the 21 days of listening?

<https://youtu.be/XIufHBru2Ds>



I completed the Daily Bible Engagement Class. *

Yes

No

If you have any questions, please reach out to Pastor Dan via email prughd@cs1.edu or phone 804-836-4126. Thank You!

APPENDIX THREE

Informed Consent



Holy Trinity Lutheran Church & School

3712 W. El Prado Blvd. Tampa, FL 33629
(813) 839-6847

Informed Consent Form

Study Title: The Dwell Bible Listening App an Effective Tool to Habituate Daily Bible Engagement in the Local Congregation

Researcher: Daniel R. Prugh

Email Address and Telephone Number: prughd@csl.edu, (804) 836-4126

Research Supervisor: Dr. David Peter

Email Address: peterd@csl.edu

You are invited to be part of a research study. The researcher is a student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri as part of the Doctor of Ministry program (D.Min). The information in this form is provided to help you decide if you want to participate in the research study. This form describes what you will have to do during the study and the risks and benefits of the study.

If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the researcher. Do not sign this form unless the researcher has answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

As a result of this research, I expect that the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church will help people to create a habit of daily Bible engagement through the use of the Dwell Bible listening app. Sometimes it is hard to move from learning new information to action, so I expect that the Dwell app will assist in helping people to engage in the Bible daily in a format that works well with the ways that people engage content today. I hope to find out that the people will be excited about daily engaging the Bible, and that this experience helps participants to grow in their faith in Jesus Christ.

WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to be in this study because you are:

- Connected of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and School.
- Above the age of 18.
- Able to use Zoom.
- Able to download the smartphone app Dwell.
- Able to access the internet and/or wireless data.
- Able to receive daily text message reminders.
- Willing to participate in the *Daily Bible Engagement* class.
- Willing to participate in the *21 Day Dwell Experience* (i.e., listen to the playlist provided by Pastor Daniel Prugh on the Dwell app and respond to daily texts).
- Willing to participate in a one-hour confidential tape recorded in person interview conducted at the church office.

If you do not meet the description above, you are not able to be in the study.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THIS STUDY?

About 30+ participants will be in this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researcher is a pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and School.

WILL IT COST ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You do not have to pay to be in the study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to be in this study, your participation will last about 1 hour. You will have to come to the church office 1 time during the study.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

If you decide to be in this study and if you sign this form, you will do the following things:

- give personal information about yourself, such as your age, gender, occupation, and education level.
- answer questions during an interview about engaging the Bible using the Dwell Bible App.

While you are in the study, you will be expected to:

- Follow the instructions you are given.
- Tell the researcher if you want to stop being in the study at any time.

WILL I BE RECORDED?

The researcher will digitally record your interview. The researcher will use the file in order to create written transcripts for data interpretation. The researcher will only use the recordings of you for the purposes you read about in this form. They will not use the recordings for any other reasons without your permission unless you sign another consent form. The recordings will be kept for seven years and they will be kept confidential. The recordings will be destroyed after seven years.

WILL BEING IN THIS STUDY HELP ME?

Being in this study will not help you. Information from this study might help researchers help others in the future.

ARE THERE RISKS TO ME IF I AM IN THIS STUDY?

No study is completely risk-free. However, we don't anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed during this study. You may stop being in the study at any time if you become uncomfortable.

WILL I GET PAID?

You will not receive anything for being in the study.

DO I HAVE TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can decide not to be in the study and you can change your mind about being in the study at any time. There will be no penalty to you. If you want to stop being in the study, tell the researcher.

The researcher can remove you from the study at any time. This could happen if:

- The researcher believes it is best for you to stop being in the study.
- You do not follow directions about the study.
- You no longer meet the inclusion criteria to participate.

WHO WILL USE AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT MY BEING IN THIS STUDY?

Any information you provide in this study that could identify you such as your name, age, or other personal information will be kept confidential. Names and any other identifying markers will be removed. In any written reports or publications, no one will be able to identify you.

The researcher will keep the information you provide in a password protected computer and /or locked file cabinet in the church office and only the researcher and research supervisor will be able to review this information.

If digital recordings are made, the researcher and research supervisor will be able to review this information.

Even if you leave the study early, the researcher may still be able to use your data. The data would be used if it is needed to complete the study.

Limits of Privacy (Confidentiality)

Generally speaking, the researcher can assure you that she/he will keep everything you tell him/her or do for the study private. Yet there are times where the researcher cannot keep things private (confidential). The researcher *cannot* keep things private (confidential) when:

- The researcher finds out that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused
- The researcher finds out that that a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide,
- The researcher finds out that a person plans to hurt someone else,

There are laws that require many professionals to take action if they think a person might harm themselves or another, or if a child or adult is being abused. In addition, there are guidelines that researchers must follow to make sure all people are treated with respect and kept safe. In most states, there is a government agency that must be told if someone is being abused or plans to hurt themselves or another person. Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study. It is important that you do not feel betrayed if it turns out that the researcher cannot keep some things private.

WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT THIS STUDY?

You can ask questions about the study at any time. You can call the researcher if you have any concerns or complaints. You should call the researcher at the phone number listed on page 1 of this form if you have questions about anything related to this study.

DO YOU WANT TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

I have read this form, and I have been able to ask questions about this study. The researcher has talked with me about this study. The researcher has answered all my questions. I voluntarily agree to be in this study. I agree to allow the use and sharing of my study-related records as described above.

By signing this form, I have not given up any of my legal rights as a research participant. I will get a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I attest that the participant named above had enough time to consider this information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date

DO YOU WANT TO BE DIGITALLY RECORDED IN THIS STUDY?

I voluntarily agree to let the researcher digitally record me for this study. I agree to allow the use of my recordings as described in this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX FOUR

Bulletin and Email Announcement

“Please consider participating in Pastor Dan Prugh’s Major Applied Project (MAP) to complete his Doctor of Ministry degree from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO. The main point of his MAP is to help people create the life-transforming habit of engaging the Bible daily through listening by using the Dwell Bible App. Pastor Dan will be asking participants to listen to a chapter of the Gospel of John (about 4–7 minutes daily) over 21 days starting on Monday, January 10th. To learn more about this project and to register please scan the QR code below or <https://bit.ly/3eaweoV>. Please email Pastor Dan with questions pastor@holytrinitytampa.org.”



APPENDIX FIVE

Interview Questions

1. Describe your experience of participating in the *21 Day Dwell Experience*.
2. How has your participation in the *21 Day Dwell Experience* changed your life?
3. Describe your current attitude towards engaging the Bible daily after participating in the *21 Day Dwell Experience*.
4. How does this impact the habit of future daily Bible listening for you?
5. Do you intend to continue to use the *Dwell Experience* resource for daily Bible listening? If so, why? If not, why not?
6. How could the Dwell App and the *Dwell Experience* be improved in order to make the process of listening to the Scriptures more meaningful for you?

APPENDIX SIX

Daily Texts Messages with Encouraging Video Links

- Day 1** - Listen to John Chapter 1 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes.
Optional - If you have questions about or reflection on the chapter feel free to text those back as well. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/GNPIRDrknNE>
- Day 2** - Pastor Dan's Map Great Job! Day 2 - Listen to John Chapter 2 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/ip7Us5Lm8Dw>
- Day 3** - Pastor Dan's Map Keep on going! Day 3 - Listen to John Chapter 3 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/6sm7Wv5PJr0>
- Day 4** - Pastor Dan's Map Good work! Day 4 - Listen to John Chapter 4 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/FrcsYCSqwsW>
- Day 5** - Pastor Dan's Map Happy Friday! Day 5 - Listen to John Chapter 5 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/gVsBWTyt76Q>
- Day 6** - Pastor Dan's Map It's Saturday! Day 6 - Listen to John Chapter 6 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/MMSoVOzYe9I>
- Day 7** - Pastor Dan's Map It's Sunday! Day 7 - Listen to John Chapter 7 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/nQXiWxNiid4>
- Day 8** - Pastor Dan's Map Made it to Monday! Day 8 - Listen to John Chapter 8 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/moKrbzdeZ0E>
- Day 9** - Pastor Dan's Map It's Tuesday! Day 9 - Listen to John Chapter 9 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/5AUXPKxuh7U>
- Day 10** - Pastor Dan's Map It's Wednesday! Day 10 - Listen to John Chapter 10 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/NVzU39gWxno>
- Day 11** - Pastor Dan's Map It's Thursday! Day 11 - Listen to John Chapter 11 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/tivEAZLvqrA>
- Day 12** - Pastor Dan's Map It's Friday! Day 12 - Listen to John Chapter 12 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: https://youtu.be/_6lW2jHCJvK
- Day 13** - Pastor Dan's Map It's Saturday! Day 13 - Listen to John Chapter 13 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/fKFY0NGXQnM>

Day 14 - Pastor Dan's Map Great Job! Day 14 - Listen to John Chapter 14 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/XCm6Im-PJKM>

Day 15 - Pastor Dan's Map Made it to Monday! Day 15 - Listen to John Chapter 15 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: https://youtu.be/SZqJ_wan2Es

Day 16 - Pastor Dan's Map It's Tuesday! Day 16 - Listen to John Chapter 16 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: https://youtu.be/wZ5pe98_tqQ

Day 17 - Pastor Dan's Map It's Wednesday! Day 17 - Listen to John Chapter 17 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/8d1L0AL6vHU>

Day 18 - Pastor Dan's Map It's Thursday! Day 18 - Listen to John Chapter 18 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/qG2FZi97jik>

Day 19 - Pastor Dan's Map It's Friday! Day 19 - Listen to John Chapter 19 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/YIPVKFCwpWg>

Day 20 - Pastor Dan's Map It's Saturday! Day 20 - Listen to John Chapter 20 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/arZcBKMzS18>

Day 21 - Pastor Dan's Map Celebration Sunday! Day 21 - Listen to John Chapter 21 - After you listen, please respond to this text with - yes. Encouraging Video: <https://youtu.be/mtLane7NQUM>

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