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# TECHNOLOGICAL DISCIPLESHIP: HOW MODERN PLATFORMS CAN IMPROVE DEVOTIONAL HABITS IN CORE CHURCH

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TECHNOLOGICAL DISCIPLESHIP:  
HOW MODERN PLATFORMS CAN IMPROVE DEVOTIONAL HABITS IN  
CORE CHURCH

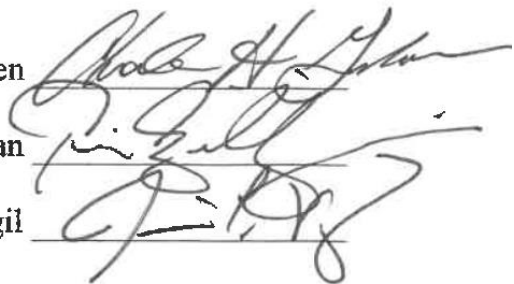
By  
Greg Phelps

A Project Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of  
SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY  
In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Doctoral Mentor: Dr. Charles Gaulden

Second Reader: Dr. Tim Gilligan

Director of the DMin Program: Dr. Jim Vigil

Handwritten signatures of the three individuals listed: Charles Gaulden, Tim Gilligan, and Jim Vigil. Each signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of its corresponding name.

## **Abstract**

In a society immersed and fascinated with technological devices and tools, the researcher explored the extent to which online platforms can provide a productive means to implement discipleship programs in a church plant through the use of internet video devotional materials. The relatively low practice of regular devotional habits in today's Church has become an increasing problem. The purpose of this project was to examine the possibility of spiritual formation within the congregants of Core Church through the use of online video devotions.

The project consisted of sixteen online video devotions that were created from four sermons delivered at Core Church. Participants in the study were evaluated through the use of two questionnaires to measure the influence the video devotions had on their spiritual growth. The findings of the project indicated the respondents believed the program created a substantial increase in their spiritual formation. However, the data revealed a lack of substantial improvement in the participants' devotional consistency and discipline.

The implication of technological integration with devotional programs is profound in the increasingly internet-connected church. The use of online devotional programs can multiply the pastor's influence and maximize the church's resources while having a more substantial effect on the growth of the congregants.

## Acknowledgments

I am filled with gratitude and thankfulness toward the many people who believed in me and encouraged my journey in this project and doctoral program. Dr. Charles Gaulden was more than just my academic advisor, but my mentor and sounding board and the most effective encourager possible. The joy of writing and researching this dissertation was made possible through the amazing encouragement of Dr. Tim Gilligan. Each chapter submitted for his review always contained more support and faith in my work than necessary edits and rewrites. My successful completion of this program could not have been achieved without the leadership and life words of Dr. Jim Vigil. As director of the D.Min. Program, Jim's absolute belief in my calling to this task never wavered. My profound thanks also to Dr. Alan Ehler for his willingness to oversee the program and Southeastern University for offering such strong academic and ministry-oriented classes. A special thanks to Dr. Cindy Campbell for her ability to suggest necessary and relevant comments on my writing, while never failing to encourage my efforts.

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## Chapter 1

### The Project Introduced

A useful tool for bringing the unchurched into Christianity is a church plant; however, converts in today's post-modern society approach the church essentially biblically unaware. The church today is facing new and daunting obstacles in its mandate to evangelize the world. Jonathan Morrow in his article on spiritual formation believes that “every generation of Christian theologians faces a different set of cultural and philosophical issues. This was the case for Augustine and Aquinas, and it is no different today.”<sup>1</sup> In the twenty-first century, the church is appealing to a culture inundated with new technology that offers opportunity and challenges.

Research reveals that 78 percent of self-identified born-again Christians struggle with some of the fundamental elements of faith in Christianity.<sup>2</sup> The wavering Christians “do not buy into the reliability of the Bible, the existence of Satan, the need for God's grace to attain eternal life, or personal responsibility to share their belief with others who believe differently.”<sup>3</sup> The Barna study revealed a worldview in a majority of self-

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1. Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 34.

2. George Barna, *Futurecast: What Today's Trends Mean for Tomorrow's World* (Austin, TX: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 129.

3. Ibid.

identified Christians who have drifted drastically from a biblical foundation. The biblical illiteracy in the church today presents an acute problem for the church plant growing primarily through new converts.

One major challenge for the church-planter is to develop a viable means of discipleship that can tap into the current technology-savvy generation. The well-trained pastor of a church plant understands the need for discipleship and can encourage new believers in their walk with God. The clarity of the make disciples command can easily get lost in the efforts to plant a new church. The myriad of tasks required to bring the church plant to life can seemingly overshadow the calling and need for discipleship. The church-planting pastor is faced with addressing multiple issues on several levels to complete everything necessary for the new church to launch and grow.

The pressure on a leader to succeed and grow a new church can overwhelm the pastor's obedience to the call of God. David Snapper has critiqued church growth expert Peter Wagner's belief that a new church should be able to exceed the 200-member mark by the end of the first year and if it has not in "two years, something is going wrong, and your chances of ever doing it are greatly diminished."<sup>4</sup> This belief is still widely accepted today and can cause the church-planting pastor to overly focus on the church dynamics and metrics that directly affect the expected growth. The nature of the demands creates a hierarchy of achievements that can cause the need for a well-developed discipleship program to lag. The loss in the program is often due to an unintentional focus away from

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4. David Snapper, "Unfulfilled Expectations of Church Planting," *Calvin Theological Journal* 31, no. 2 (November 1996): 465.

discipleship and a distraction from spiritual formation. Building and creating a discipleship program within the new church can be seen as less critical to building and growing the church.

Acts 29, a recognized church planting organization, listed the goals a new church-planter should strive to achieve. The organization did not state a priority but indicated that the most important goals were listed first. The church-planter is first encouraged to focus his or her time and energy when launching the church into spiritual vitality, theological clarity, conviction and commendation, healthy marriages, relationships, leadership, maturity, missional lifestyle, and disciple-making.<sup>5</sup> A consensus is that disciple-making is essential in the church plant, yet spiritual formation often becomes the least funded and the most bereft of the pastor's time and focuses. The need for innovative ways to engage church congregants in the primary forms of discipleship is acutely present in current society.

The research project will explore the integration of current technology and social platforms to create a viable means of discipleship in a church plant setting. Quantitative and qualitative components will be used to measure results from the active participants. The project participants will be volunteers from a church plant and online individuals with connections to Core Church. The outcomes from the research will provide data to measure the involvement of the participants and the use of devotional materials distributed during the project and facilitated through the means of technological and social media.

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5. "Plant A Church," Acts 29, accessed June 26, 2018, <http://www.acts29.com/competencies>.

## Research Question

The primary research question is: To what extent can current technological tools and platforms provide a productive means to implement discipleship programs in a church plant through the use of devotional internet materials?

## **Relationship to the Ministry of the Researcher**

The focus of the research will be on the congregants from Core Church in Tampa, Florida. For successful church growth, a church-planter needs to implement an effective means to encourage spiritual discipleship in new congregants. The post-modern society in today's world has created individuals who begin their spiritual walk with little to no understanding of spiritual matters. The ability to construct viable programs that will provide relevant tools for discipleship is a need that exists across all church life in America. Society's familiarity with social platforms and new technology has created an opportunity for unparalleled access to new and creative forms of spiritual formation. Church discipleship was one of the highest priorities for the founding pastor of Core Church. The research from the project will afford insight into profitable and realistic discipleship programs that rely heavily on current technology with the possibility of future implementation in other church plants.

Core Church has faced the ongoing problem in implementing a viable discipleship program for new converts since planting in 2013. The attempts at more traditional

spiritual life programs have proved ineffective or created schedule conflicts that new converts are unable or unwilling to follow. The results of the failure have created a viable subset of the church with a desire for spiritual growth but one that lacked structural support to help motivate and inspire regular biblical and devotional interaction. A discipleship program that introduces participants to the primary devotional material through the use of familiar technological and social media will substantially engage new and young converts.

### **Contextual Scope and Limitations**

The objective of the project was not to define or determine the appropriate means of discipleship for a church plant. Instead, the study will focus on evaluating the effects of the devotional material in the project relating to weekly sermons. The participants of the proposed research project will be active congregants of Core Church who attend each Sunday or participate online. The nature of the technological aspects of the project will allow outside participants to join the research via online access to the weekly sermons. The research will comprise of several essential elements: sermons, weekly devotions, and pre- and post-questionnaires. Congregants from Core Church and internet participants will be asked to volunteer for the study. The internet participants will be identified from the family, friends, or social network of Core Church participants. The volunteers will sign up online and be asked to commit for one month to the following process:

- The participants will complete a pre-study questionnaire to create a baseline for the project.
- The participants will be encouraged to listen, either in person or online, to four consecutive sermons during the project month, which will be delivered by the researcher on Sunday mornings.
- Each week, four video devotionals, derived from the Sunday morning sermon, will be posted online for the participants.
- The participants will commit to viewing the devotional material provided throughout each week.
- The devotionals will be made accessible on the Core Church website under the heading of devotionals.
- Throughout the week, the participants will receive social media reminders via Twitter and Instagram with devotional links attached that will connect them to the devotionals.
- After the four-week sermons and devotions, the participants will be asked to complete a post-study questionnaire.

The study will be limited to two specific groups of participants. The first group will be those who physical attended the Core Church Sunday service and hear the sermon live each week. The second group will consist of participants who agree to access and listen to the sermon via the Core Church podcast, provided on iTunes and Google Play. The study will be limited to participants who signed up before the beginning of the sermon series.

The project will use narrowly focused assumptions regarding the participants in the study. The contrasts and commitments provided from the pre- and post-study questionnaire will be examined for the analysis. The participants will access the questionnaires through SurveyMonkey; the relevant information will be acquired without divulging the identity of the participants. The assumptions will be drawn from the data showing neutral, increased, or declined use of devotions. Contrasts will be drawn from participants who viewed the sermons live and internet participants who did not attend Core Church but accessed the devotions online.

**Delineations of terms:**

- In-church Participants: participants attending Core Church in person
- Internet Participants: participants not attending Core Church
- Social Media links: one-sentence notices directed to the devotions
- SurveyMonkey: online questionnaire, able to be accessed anywhere

**Project Goals and Objectives**

The goal of the project will be to increase participants' practice of using devotional materials and overall spiritual hunger for God's Word. Two specific objectives will qualify each of four primary goals. The researcher will analyze the final data from each set of goals and objectives drawn from the measurement instruments.



The first goal of the project will be to increase participants' use of weekly devotions. The researcher will apply two specific objectives to measure the outcome of the goal. The first objective will be to have at least 50 percent participation from the regular attendees at Core Church. The smaller size of Core Church's congregation will create a higher likelihood of reaching the 50 percent rate. The second objective for the goal will be to have at least 60 percent of the participants successfully view at least 80% of the weekly devotions. To reach the 80 percent goal, 60 percent of all the participants will have viewed at least thirteen of the sixteen devotions provided. The rationale for the 50 and 60 percent goals is to allow the material to provide sufficient spiritual impact for each participant.

The second goal in the study will be to increase the personal reflection of spiritual growth in the participants. The first goal will acknowledge increases in a person's spiritual habits, while the second will measure personal reflection in spiritual formation within different populations. The second goal will be explored through two primary objectives. The first objective will be that at least 60 percent of the participants acknowledge an increase in devotional habits. While the second objective will be to have at least 50 percent of the two populations record a spiritual increase from the project devotions.

The third goal of the research project will be to measure the effectiveness of the technological distribution of the devotions. The use of technological media such as YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter will be to make it easier for the people's involvement by creating greater ease for accessing the devotional material. The objectives will measure the video devotions viewed through YouTube. Analysis of survey results will

indicate the effectiveness of the platform. The second objective will be to compare and contrast the Core church participants with the internet participants to examine differences between people who heard the sermon in person and viewed the devotions and individuals who have not listened to the message through the church's podcast or in person.

The fourth goal will be to gather information from the responses to determine the most effective means to create and distribute future devotions. The participants' responses concerning the length and content of the material will establish the objectives for the goal. First, information will be gathered from the questionnaires to determine if the video devotions were a sufficient length to convey the ideas but not too long so the devotions will be viewed entirely. The second objective will measure the impact of the material in the sixteen devotions. Each devotion will contain or support content from the weekly sermon. The objective will measure the effectiveness of connecting the devotions with the message.

### **Theological and Biblical Dimensions**

Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 that he had given them the authority to accomplish all that they were called to do in His name. The followers were to "go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything" that Jesus had

commanded.<sup>6</sup> Jesus' commission "involved one command, 'make disciples' which is accompanied by three participles in the Greek: going, baptizing, and teaching."<sup>7</sup> The idea that the church has an explicit command to make disciples is without much dispute. Many discussions arise, however, concerning how one goes about fulfilling Jesus' command.

In John 8:31, Jesus told the Jews who had believed in him, "If you hold to my teaching, you are my disciples." Seekers became his disciples because of what they believed and what they did. Jesus did not emphasize how the disciples had come to believe but accepted them because of what they believed. Later in 2 John 2:12, the author writes about two different forms of communicating with his preference on one over the other. "I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete." Even though John preferred face-to-face meetings, he used the writing technology of the day to communicate regularly with the church.

Writing may not seem like technology to the twenty-first-century mind, but what is now considered old technology was one day thought of as new and dangerous. John Dryer concluded, "Socrates was so worried about the damage that writing could cause

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6. Matt 28:19-20, (NIV). All following biblical references will use the New International Version.

7. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures Matthew 28* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 152.

that he never wrote any of his own ideas down.”<sup>8</sup> If not for his younger student Plato, there would be little record of his works. History indicates that what one generation considers as new and not to be trusted; the next generation grows accustomed to and integrates into their lives.

1 Corinthians 10:23 explores the great principle of Christian liberty, concluding with, “I have the right to do anything—but not everything is constructive.” Using the wisdom of God, one can enlist any aspect of godly life and put to use the Kingdom of God. However, C. J. Ellicott points out in his interpretation of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians “that its application must be limited by a regard to the effect which each action has upon ourselves, and its influence on the Church at large.”<sup>9</sup> Paul’s focus directs everything down to what is beneficial. Any discussion concerning merits of one form of communication or another, whether face-to-face, writings, telegram, phone, iPad, YouTube video, internet, or social media, comes down to only what can be used to edify. The edification of modern technological devices are not governed by the devices themselves but their use.

In Luke 6:45, Jesus teaches that “a good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart.” One can easily get lost in the “things” “stored up” and forget about the source of their creation. The world has stored up evil things that bring evil into the world.

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8. John Dryer, *From The Garden To The City; The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011), 30.

9. C. J. Ellicott, “1 Corinthians 10,” *BibleHub*, last modified 2018, accessed September 22, 2018, [https://biblehub.com/commentaries/ellicott/1\\_Corinthians/10.htm](https://biblehub.com/commentaries/ellicott/1_Corinthians/10.htm). C. J. Ellicott.

However, a good person takes the same things, and, because they come from a good heart, they bring good things to bear in society. The internet and social media with the evil it often contains might be redeemed by a good heart and bring forth redeemed things that are profitable for the Kingdom.

The integration of biblical use into technology may find its merit in Paul's ethos in 1 Corinthians 9:22: "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." Paul's declaration was not as much about the means but about his willingness to co-opt the means to create good for the Kingdom of God. Evil people did not create the internet for evil works. The internet was designed to help and to spread the ability to communicate in greater means. However, technology, especially the internet, has been used for evil purposes like human trafficking; cyber-bullying, phone, internet, and email scams. Still, if the apostle Paul found himself in the middle of a technology culture that thrives and communicates through social media, he would find a means to use it for God's glory.

According to Barna's research, "No single innovation changed the American way of life as dramatically as the internet."<sup>10</sup> The choice to reject technology and its possible theological uses places the Church in a position that does not only separate but alienates it from the world. Jesus said in John 9:5, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." The light of Christ has the power to shine in dark places even on the dark web, where the use of anonymity tools like Tor and I2P hide their web address and access can only be granted through specialized software and configurations of the internet.

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10. Barna, 93.

The Old and New Testament reveal a theological significance of “place.” Might the internet be considered just such an important place for theological advancement? Gorringe, in his book on the theology of environment, argues that the church should have “a discernment of God active in God’s world.”<sup>11</sup> The church is a local place found in the community of the world. The church can continue to be a local place positioned in the community of the internet, reaching and redeeming a lost world for the Kingdom of God.

### **Contemporary Literature**

In his book on how technology is shaping faith in the church, Shane Hipps stressed how today's society is growing a distaste for anything long or complicated. “If the Bible is anything, it is complex, so it should not surprise us to see a growing biblical illiteracy in the electronic age.”<sup>12</sup> Hipps does not believe the saying “the method changes but the message stays the same.” He thinks that the medium changes the message. For example, because books written in a logical form tend to interpret the Bible more through logic, the sense of the story is lost. As the message and the medium of technology are merged, he warns that close guard is required. However, logic does not have to damage the story. Every story contains threads of logical progression and thought. To dismiss

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11. T. J. Gorringe, *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7.

12. Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, the Gospel, and Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 146.

logic as a threat to biblical stories is to assume the stories have no logic. Since the biblical message has been exposed to numerous mediums over the centuries, to assume the medium changes the message is to conclude the contamination is already beyond repair.

In his work concerning the technological forces in society today, Kevin Kelly states that the technological advances are not coming but are already here. Since people collectively are the source of the inevitable change, there is not a fear of what the technologies are doing to us but what humankind is doing to them, meaning that “today most of us have become People of the Screen,” having grown away from being People of the Book.<sup>13</sup> Kelly’s understanding of technological advancement places the church and the advances at odds with each other. The two are competing forces in that only one will survive.

The use and interaction with the internet and technological forces have a complex nature that is often oversimplified. The generation growing up in current technology will avoid internet dangers due to their familiarity with social media, according to John Palfrey and Urs Gasser in their book *Born Digital*.<sup>14</sup> Based on an extensive research project, their work explored the tendency and interactions of the younger generation with the internet. However, “born digitals,” people who have grown up with the internet, are not guaranteed natural protection as they surf the technological web. A more recent book

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13. Kevin Kelly, *The Inevitable: Understanding The 12 Technological Forces That Will Shape Our Future* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2017), 87.

14. John Palfrey and Urs Gasser, *Born Digital; Understanding The First Generation of Digital Natives* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2008), 43.

by Danah Boyd, titled *It's Complicated*, warns that the born digitals are a myth.<sup>15</sup> A teen's use of social media does not mean he or she is competent to handle the complexities and dangers of the internet. Care must be taken to train and educate teenagers in the Church and not to assume that users have a high level of competency.

However, the religious bias of many in the technological world is genuine. Harari's book *Homo Deus* is a journey into a technological world where the advances of humankind have not only left God behind but where people claim to be a god.<sup>16</sup> The author conflates the advancement of technological gains with the concept of the need for theological understanding. The only logical outcome can be the eradication of technology or theology. No co-existence between the two can be accepted or tolerated. He believes evolution is connected to all progress or technological advancement and is seen as fact more than theory.

The technological world of the twenty-first century does not have to be at war with the Church. Tim Challies' book about life and faith in the digital explosion approaches the internet with caution, challenging the reader to ask questions about the integration of the Church and the social construct of the internet.<sup>17</sup> The author interacts with all aspects of the technology future by challenging presumed ideological underpinnings of the internet with sound theological truth. Challies is joined in his

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15. Danah Boyd, *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

16. Yuval N. Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (London, UK: Harvill Secker, 2015).

17. Tim Challies, *The Next Story; Life and Faith After The Digital Explosion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).



approach to technology by John Dyer, who does not dismiss the use of the internet but uses his work to offer a critique of technology. Dyer approaches the power of technology through a biblical and Christ-centered method that leaves room for hopeful integration. He ends his book with the hope that the Church “will become better stewards of the technological tools God has entrusted to us, as we seek to live lives that honor him and the work of his Son.”<sup>18</sup>

The influence of social factors on Christians from cultures that differ greatly from the values held by the Church are worth considerable attention. The Goldilocks effect is an example of human reaction when exposed to something new.<sup>19</sup> Over time what was new and different becomes old and then ignored. “Too novel and it's unfamiliar. Too familiar and it's boring. But in between and it's just right.”<sup>20</sup> When conducted with godly wisdom and biblical truth, the integration of discipleship with the current technologies of social media and the internet will produce a productive path.

The conglomeration of technology and discipleship does not merge only at the ease and productiveness of technical devotional habits. The very nature of the internet advances might work to more efficiently move forward social media discipleship. David Rock in, *Quiet Leadership*, suggests that recent discoveries in neuroscience provide a new picture into understanding how humans think and process habits. Leaving a habit

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18. Dryer, 179.

19. Jonah Berger, *Invisible Influence: The Hidden Forces That Shape Behavior* (London, UK: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 169.

20. Ibid.

“where it is and creating a whole new habit...turns out to be far more achievable.”<sup>21</sup>

Instead of working to remove bad habits, creating new through the convenience and ease of the internet could prove beneficial in the construction of online discipleship programs.

### **Research Methodology**

Four stages of the methodology will define the research question of whether current technological tools and platforms provide a productive means to encourage discipleship programs in a church plant. The first stage will consist of primary and secondary literary research utilizing library and internet sources such as the Southeastern University library databases, academic abstracts, related dissertations, bibliographic databases, and internet search engines. The study will focus on the four subcategories of the project: church planting, discipleship, technology, and other sociological ramifications to discipleship.

The second stage will be the preparation and promotion of the project. To ensure the highest level of participation possible, an extended period before the project begins will be required for proper notification and recruitment. The notification will begin at Core Church through a means of personal announcements and informational emails to the attendees. Anyone who wishes to sign up for the project will be able to do so in person at

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21. David Rock, *Quiet Leadership: Six Steps to Transforming Performance at Work* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2006), 21.

the church or through the church's website. The second level of recruitment will consist of invitations extended to internet participants from church members and friends.

The preparation stage will create and finalize the sermons, video devotions, and social media announcements for the project. The sermons for the project will be a series of messages from the book of Colossians. Each message will highlight critical passages from each of the four chapters in the book. From each delivery, four ten-minute video devotions will be used to enhance or explore additional thoughts delivered in the message. The video devotions will be posted to the participants and made available on the Church website. A short social media snippet will be extracted from each devotion and delivered through the social media platforms throughout the week.

The third aspect of the second stage preparation will be the finalization of the pre- and post-questionnaires. The pre-questionnaire will be sent out to all registered participants beginning one month before the commencement of the project. The polls will be published through SurveyMonkey and provide for the anonymous collection of information. See Appendix A and B for copies of the pre- and post-questionnaires.

The third stage of the study will consist of the implementation of the project. The project will be conducted over four consecutive weeks beginning on a Sunday. During the four weeks of the study, participants will be able to email the researcher with any questions or concerns. The study will apply no restrictions to anyone who wished to register for the project. The only personal information collected from the registrants will be their email. The emails will not be used or distributed for any reason outside of the project.

During the fourth stage of the study, the researcher will gather, evaluate, and analyze the information. The release of the post-questionnaire survey to the registrants will commence upon completion of the project. The participants will be asked to complete the post-questionnaire within ten days of the termination of the project. An email will be sent to all participants, seven days after the end of the project to remind them to submit their questionnaire and as the numbers require, another email reminder will be sent at the fourteen-day mark. The collected data from the two questionnaires provided to the participants will be compared and contrasted with the stated objectives. The participants will not receive financial remuneration for their participation in the project.

### **Evaluation and Conclusions**

Several components will be used to evaluate the analysis and data collected from the questionnaires. The first component of the evaluation will be the review and examination of the pre-questionnaire. The study of the pre-questionnaire will create a baseline of perceptions and present habits regarding the participants use of weekly biblical devotions. The second component will be the evaluation of the post-questionnaire. The data will be used to create a picture of the involvement, perceptions, and use of the weekly devotions. The third component will be used to compare and contrast information which then will be extrapolated to provide new data and insights.

During the sermon series, the researcher will record generalized information derived from the participants during the study. In the fourth component, the relevant information will be filed to gauge the participant's perceptions during the project. The information will be acquired by the researcher through email, or social media, and in person. The researcher's observations will comprise the fifth component. The comments of the researcher's perceptions will explore the project's overall effectiveness, insights, personal lessons, and conclusions.

## Chapter 2

### The Project in Perspective

#### Introduction

The pursuit of mature, growing disciples in the modern church should not be confused with churches filled with people. Growing disciples rarely mature by only attending church services. “Christians are not people who follow Christianity. Christians are people who follow and fall in love with Christ. The church spends more time trying to get people to follow Christianity than follow and fall in love with Christ.”<sup>22</sup> The ability to grow and mature in Christ will continue to fall short when the goal is to become more righteous by acting righteous. “Never in the four gospels was Jesus astounded by anybody’s righteousness. Never was he impressed with anyone’s education. But he was amazed by one thing: people’s faith.”<sup>23</sup> The path of discipleship is centered on the relationship between a loving God and a forgiven sinner.

The act of seeking a relationship with a loving God is expressed as the spiritual formation found within humankind. “Spiritual formation, then, is the ongoing process of the triune God transforming the believer’s life and character toward the life and character

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22. Leonard Sweet, *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 111.

23. Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Faith: What Happens When Real Faith Ignites God’s People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 40.

of Jesus Christ—accomplished by the ministry of the Spirit in the context of biblical community.”<sup>24</sup> Spiritual formation is the integration of the whole person into the life and person of Jesus Christ. Integration of the whole person requires connection and interactions that go beyond religious acts of service. The devotional habits of people seeking spiritual formation is a vital link for the success of the spiritual relationship.

The chapter provides a foundational perspective as to how current technological tools and platforms offer a productive means to implement an introductory discipleship program at Core Church through devotional internet videos. The project was grounded on four primary biblical and theological pillars. The first pillar, the state of devotional habits, examined the biblical foundation for regular devotions in the church today. The personal devotions of believers in the church should complement and connect to the congregation. Most devotional material is seen running parallel to the church and not created by the church for the local congregants. Scripture supports the active involvement of spiritual formation grounded with the church body. The current, somewhat low-use of devotional habits in the Christian church may not only reflect spiritual apathy but the disregard of more traditional expectations.<sup>25</sup>

The second pillar explores the paradox of Christian church planting and discipleship within the church. The missional objectives of church planting will usually focus on some form of personal spiritual formation. The priority and form of discipleship will vary depending on numerous theological objectives within the church plant.

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24. Pettit, 24.

25. Barna, 173.

However, when the objectives become inadvertent obstacles to the desired spiritual formation, the focus on discipleship will become opaque. Discipleship, although practiced in an individual context, is connected and integrated into the congregational corporate fabric of church body life.

The third pillar of the foundational perspective provides a bridge for technology to be integrated into the spiritual formation of individuals seeking Christian growth. Technological devices have become commonplace in almost every aspect of twenty-first-century living. The modern disciple of Christ interacts with digital interfaces with such regularity that the integration has become subconscious. Acute awareness of technology awakens the consciousness, not in technological use but its absence. The partnership of technology with spiritual formation accelerates access, and humankind's "appetite for the instant is insatiable."<sup>26</sup> Church-friendly technology provides a necessary means to bridge twenty-first-century digital methods with first-century biblical truths.

The final prospective pillar integrates the business model of platform thinking into the living matrix of platform discipleship. The business model of platform thinking challenges the currently accepted model of product thinking. Platform thinking does not create better products but better platforms that allow creativity and individual expression.<sup>27</sup> The platform business model was expressed as a metaphorical example for individual spiritual formation that focused on discipleship platforms producing creativity

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26. Kelly, 117.

27. Mark Boncheck and Sangeet Paul Choudary, "Three Elements of a Successful Platform Strategy," *Harvard Business Review* (2013): 1–6, accessed September 10, 2018, <https://hbr.org/2013/01/three-elements-of-a-successful-platform>.



expressed in the spiritual formation of Christian disciples. Platform discipleship avoids perfunctory steps or essential elements that create human focus and approaches spiritual formation through Spirit-empowered creativity and individual spiritual growth.

### **Pillar One: Devotional Habits**

Spiritual formation encompasses many different aspects of spiritual growth. Disciples of Christ grow not by the acts of religious fervor but by the hand of God and the guidance of his Spirit. In 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul confirms his and other's contributions toward planting Gospel seeds in the lives of believers and then quickly confesses that he did not cause the growth. He states that "neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."<sup>28</sup> Although God uses others to cause increase and spiritual growth in his people, in 1 Corinthians, "God" is emphatically last in Greek.<sup>29</sup> The efforts and labors of the apostles were tools in God's hand; only God creates growth in the heart of the disciple. The tool that God uses might be a person, apostle, or prophet. The instrument could be a program, discipline, or devotion. In each case, the means and measure of spiritual formation fall squarely in the purview of God.

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28. 1 Corinthians 3:7.

29. Robert Jamieson, Andrew Robert Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 267.

## Devotional Growth

God's call for every believer is to grow or increase in the spiritual formation he has for each disciple. God supplies the increase individually, and together the body of Christ grows corporately as his Church. The growth of individual disciples is grounded in the relationship of each believer with a personal and loving Savior. The interaction between the Savior and the saint is relational, personal, and intimate. The outgrowth of the interaction is devotional. Devotion is defined as the "state or quality of being devoted; ardent affection."<sup>30</sup> Devotion is not an act of religious demeanor but a state of being. The ardent affection felt by a disciple of Christ is devotional. Devotions cannot be a religious act to do but an act of who one is.

The psalmist's cry, "I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you," is not a call for devotions but a relational cry of devotion.<sup>31</sup> The psalmist describes the life actions of seeking God, studying his word, and resisting the temptations of sin that manifest his devotion to God. The psalmist describes devotions as a living and personal interaction between a person and God. Therefore, devotions are not a religious act that can be done but an outflow of an ardent love that one becomes.

The first covenant between God and his people was not only based on religious acts of sacrifice and tradition. Throughout the Old Testament, God continually interacted with his people through his great faithfulness and love. The faithfulness and mercy of

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30. Merriam-Webster.com, s. v. "devotion," accessed September 10, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/devotion>.

31. Psalms 119:10-11.

God are repeatedly identified with the Hebrew word *hesed*, as God interacts with followers who seek to know him. Occurring 247 times in the Old Testament, *hesed* describes God's mercy and loving-kindness in interacting with the needs of his people.<sup>32</sup> In Psalms 23, the psalmist is comforted by the understanding that God's relational *hesed* will not fail. "Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."<sup>33</sup> The *hesed* relational love of God will not fade in the length of human life. Later, the same psalmist, when caught in the snare of his sin, again relies on the devotional mercy of God. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions."<sup>34</sup>

The relational devotions described in the first covenant are expanded to include the understanding of increase and growth in the second covenant. Devotion becomes the act of loving and serving God while increasing and growing in relationship with God. The apostle Paul encourages his readers in Ephesus, *ἀυζήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα*, "to grow up in all aspects into him," where growth is the expected outcome of our devotion.<sup>35</sup> The aspect of growth is not a byproduct but an essential element for the disciple to become mature. "There is growth only in the spiritually alive, not in the

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32. Wilhelm G. Brown, Edward R. Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: With an Appendix, Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1974), 339.

33. Psalms 23:6.

34. Psalms 51:1.

35. Ephesus 4:15, SBL Greek New Testament 2010.

dead.”<sup>36</sup> New life is central to spiritual formation, which crescendos as growth is actualized as the disciple is continually transformed into the image of Christ. The growth found in the teachings of Jesus through his metaphorical use of the imagery of the seed and plant paint a picture of continued growth as the seed becomes mature into the full image of the harvest.<sup>37</sup>

A healthy human body grows naturally through the nourishment of daily sustenance. As the human body continues to grow and mature in its natural abilities, it will also increase in its capacity and strength. The evidence of spiritual growth in the heart of the disciple bears similar manifestations of human maturity. In his second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul notes that the growth in the disciples’ “faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.”<sup>38</sup> The devotional growth a disciple experiences cannot be contained within the heart but is manifested outward in increased unity and love for other believers.

The increase and growth in relationship with God are not only spiritual and emotional but also include a growing knowledge of God himself. Peter admonishes the disciples to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”<sup>39</sup> The devotional growth of a disciple will expand the spiritual mind into the knowledge and truth concerning Christ. The focus of the knowledge in 2 Peter is not general or

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36. Jamieson, 351.

37. Mark 4:27-28, Matthew 13:32.

38. 2 Thessalonians 1:3.

39. 2 Peter 3:18.

special gnostic revelation but specific growing knowledge of Jesus Christ. Devotional growth increases the disciple's love and desires not for knowledge itself but the knowing and presence of Jesus. Growing in the knowledge of the Lord is specific and directional. Spiritual Growth is much more than knowing more scripture, theology, or even relational insight. The book of 1 John declares that we know "that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life."<sup>40</sup> Devotional growth comes from Jesus himself so that the understanding He gives enables the believer to know him in truth and the eternal life He has provided.

Paul's heartfelt prayer for the people in the Colossae church was to be filled with the knowledge of God's will. The filling would result in the disciples "bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."<sup>41</sup> The disciple who is filled with the knowledge of God's will bears fruit. As the fruit is continually growing, the knowledge of God grows in the life of the believer. The devotional growth cycle is a perpetuating spiritual formation. The devotional habit that grows from a yearning heart for God is filled with the knowledge of his will. The knowledge of Christ within the disciple produces good fruit that continues to increase, manifesting in outward signs of love and maturity. The result of bearing fruit in every good work continues to activate the growth of the disciple in the knowledge of God.

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40. 1 John 5:20.

41. Colossians 1:10.

## Not Forsaken

The examination of the state of devotional habits is reduced if removed from the context of the local church. Individual devotional habits consist of smaller metaphorical wheels that only find meaning when they are moving together in unity within the body of Christ. Spiritual formation, although usually applied to the individual, is inexorably connected the church body as a whole. Devotional growth expressed in the love and care for others cannot find its fulfillment when separated from the body of Christ that supplies and supports its growth. The very nature of devotional growth turns the disciple's heart away from inward needs to others who are struggling in their faith. The focus of the outward turn is seen in the admonishment found in Hebrews 10:25 to "not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing." The Hebrews text provides a foundational connection between personal spiritual formation and the body of believers that influences the spiritual growth.

Examining the larger context of the passage in Hebrews reveals the interconnectedness of the believers in their spiritual formation. The author of Hebrews calls the readers to perseverance through the literary use of "let us" found in *προσέρχομαι*, let us draw near, verse 22, *κατέχω*, let us hold fast, verse 23, and *κατανοέω*, let us consider found, verse 24. The three words translated "let us" form a continual string of five interlocking exhortations: Let us draw near to God, let us hold fast to hope, let us spur one another on toward love and good deeds, let us not forsake meeting together with others, and let us encourage one another. The exhortation found in verse 25 to not give up meeting together does not stand alone but is connected to the previous exhortations. The author portrays an image of the redeemed believer who stands in the

righteousness of God. The readers “have now the privilege and standing of priests in approaching God, able to draw near, priest like” with clean a conscience before God.<sup>42</sup>

The believers are told they should not forsake meeting together, as well as the other exhortations because their righteousness is found in Jesus Christ. The foundation for the exhortations is listed in verses 19-21, “since we have a great priest over the house of God.”<sup>43</sup> The opening verse of the passage addresses the readers as *ἀδελφός*, brothers and by extension sisters. The Christians have the confidence to approach “the Most Holy Place” and make requests of God through the blood of Jesus.<sup>44</sup> “Drawing near could be sacrificial or moral language in the Old Testament; here it means entering the presence of God (10:19-20) and into a relationship with God (7:19, 25) through Jesus, the great high priest.”<sup>45</sup> The author is encouraging his readers who might be struggling in their faith not to draw back but enter with confidence before God where their sins would be completely cleansed.

Immediately following the exhortation not to give up meeting together but to encourage each other in love and good deeds, the author begins his fourth warning passage in Hebrews. The warning passage is the strongest among the five and warns against apostasy. Verse 26 states that “if we deliberately keep on sinning after we have

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42. Martin Vincent, *Vincent's Word Studies Vol. 4: Epistles* (Electronic Software, Parsons Technology, 1998), Ebook.

43. Hebrews 10:21.

44. Hebrews 10:19.

45. Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), Ebook.

received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left.”<sup>46</sup> There can be little doubt that anyone acting deliberately against the will of God and the Spirit of God has moved into apostasy. The act should be seen as “a deliberate sinning against the Spirit (Heb 10:29; Heb 5:2) such sinning, where a consciousness of Gospel obligations not only was but is present: a sinning presumptuously and perseveringly against Christ's redemption for us, and the Spirit of grace in us.”<sup>47</sup>

The connotation found in verse 26 indicates a deliberate and constant on-going sin. If the forsaking of the Christian fellowship became permanent and were not only a rejection of the fellowship but God's law as well, then the idea of apostasy would most naturally follow. F. F. Bruce in his *The Epistle of the Hebrews* believes the author has

something much more serious is in his mind than what Paul calls being “overtaken in any trespass” after all, he has pointed out more than once that in Jesus Christians have a high priest who can succor them when they are tempted, sympathize with them in their infirmities, and bear gently with them when they stray from the path through ignorance.<sup>48</sup>

However, some scholars see a close relationship in the author's strong warning found in verses 26-31 with the context of the preceding verses, specifically since the warning not to give up meeting together is too close not to be seen as connected. Lane in his commentary on Hebrews sees the “explanatory γάρ, ‘for,’ with which vs. 26–31 are introduced, show that the paragraph sustains an intimate relationship to the preceding appeals and especially to the pastoral admonitions in v 25, where the writer referred to

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46. Hebrews 10:26.

47. Jamieson, 469.

48. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1990), 261.



those who had deserted the community.”<sup>49</sup> In Lane's view, the struggle to not attend the Christians fellowships was more than fear or doubt but a clear and deliberate act of rejecting Christ as their savior. Lane states clearly that “the neglect of the meetings of the local assembly displayed a contemptuous disregard for the truth, which exposes hardened offenders to divine judgment.”<sup>50</sup>

Barry in his discussion on Hebrews 10:26 referred to “sins performed willingly or knowingly as...disdaining God’s Son, denying God’s Spirit, and regarding the blood of the covenant as ordinary (v. 29). Such sins indicate that one has fallen away from the living God (3:12).”<sup>51</sup> The struggle of weak believers to attend the regular fellowship, in and of itself, does not seem to rise to the level of disdaining God’s Son. The habit of not attending the meetings would indicate warning signs of a weakening of the faith, especially if the habit became permanent.

Understanding the meaning behind *ἐγκαταλείποντες*, forsaking the fellowship of believers, requires a clear view of who the believers were and why they might have been struggling with their attendance. The book of Hebrews was “written to a group of first-century Christians who were in danger of giving up. A casual reading of the letter reveals that the times were hard for Jewish Christians especially.”<sup>52</sup> The specific group or church

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49. William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13 Vol. 47B*, (Dallas, TX: Word, 1998), 290-291.

50. Ibid.

51. John D. Barry, et al. *Faithlife Study Bible Heb 10:26*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press. 2012), Ebook, 13.

52. Ibid.

the letter was written to is unknown. However, there is evidence that the letter was written to Christians with a Jewish background, maybe a fellowship or house church in Rome. A predominately Jewish Christian church in Rome might find it easier to not fully associate with the full Christian church in the area, especially if the church was enduring persecution from the Jewish community.

The book of Hebrews does not contain any references to the gentile community. The message of the book is directed to Christians who had come from a Jewish background and were being tempted to compromise their faith in Christ and return to their former beliefs, if not internally then at least outwardly. The letter contains several exhortations to its readers to not go backward but to keep holding on to their faith. The author encourages his readers that “Christ is faithful as the Son over God’s house. And we are his house if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.”<sup>53</sup> The author gives credit that Moses was a faithful servant, but Jesus was the builder of the house. Christians Hebrews who are struggling should not let go of the builder of the house for a servant of the house.

The idea of holding on to their faith is repeated throughout the letter. In 3:14 the readers are encouraged to hold to their original conviction to the end, in 4:14 they are to hold firmly to the faith they professed, and in 6:18 to the hope set before them, finally in 10:23 they are encouraged to keep holding to their faith because the one who promised is faithful. The language might indicate that the readers of the Hebrew letter were under

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53. Hebrews 3:6.

some level of distress or persecution. If it were not a struggle to hold on to their faith, it would make little sense to encourage them to do so continually.

The idea that the letter was written to Jewish Christians in danger of falling back into Judaism is strengthened by the author's rejection to follow only the old covenant. "The author's insistence that the old covenant has been antiquated is expressed with a moral earnestness and driven home repeatedly in a manner which would be pointless if his readers were not especially disposed to live under that covenant but which would be very much to the point if they were still trying to live under it."<sup>54</sup> The author seems to be speaking directly to Christians who would seek to return to the old covenant, "by calling this covenant 'new,' he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear."<sup>55</sup>

The ecclesiastical meaning of ἐγκαταλείποντες, not forsaking, in Hebrews 10:25 requires an examination of the entire passage, verses 19-25. The "verses 19-25 constitute a single sentence in the original Greek. Undoubtedly, then, what is in the latter verses is connected to all that precedes them."<sup>56</sup> The foundation for the final argument that concludes in verse 25 with not forsaking the meeting of believers is seen in two critical phrases: "since we have confidence" in verse 19 and "since we have a great priest" in verse 21. "The present participle ἔχοντες, 'since we have,' has two complementary

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54. Bruce, 6.

55. Hebrews 8:13.

56. Mark Allen Peters, *Hebrews 10:19-25, Interpretation* 53 no. 1 (1999), 62–64.

objects, *παρρησία*, ‘authorization,’ for access to the heavenly sanctuary (v 19) and *ἱερέα μέγαν*, ‘a great priest,’ in charge of God’s household (v 21).”<sup>57</sup>

The word translated as confidence, *παρρησία*, means “the freedom of access to God that is given in Christ's blood and grounded in his high-priestly ministry.”<sup>58</sup> It is important to note that all the following exhortations and encouragements are grounded in the believer’s ability in Christ to gain access to the very presence of God. Without the access and ability to approach God with confidence, we would not have hope to fulfill the exhortations to come. However, access is only a part of the great benefit. Without an advocate or great priest over the house, the entrance would be lost. Therefore, not only do believers have *παρρησία*, the right to enter, but we also have *ἱερέα μέγαν*, the Great Priest. Everywhere else in the epistle of Hebrews, the Greek word used for high priest is *ἀρχιερέα*. The believer's access is not through another high priest or even a great high priest but the Great Priest. The Great Priest is “one who is at once King and Priest on His throne; a royal Priest, and a priestly King.”<sup>59</sup> The difference is essential considering the audience was Christian Jews who were struggling with the thought of returning to their former religion. They now have been given a Great Priest who has provided a new and living way into the righteousness of God.

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57. Lane, 283.

58. Gerhard Kittel, et al. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 871.

59. Jamieson, 486.

Now that the foundation has been laid by which a believer may enter into the presence of God, the readers are given five explicit exhortations. They are encouraged to draw near, *προσερχώμεθα*, to God since the way is now open. Dahl suggested that drawing near also contains a clear commitment to accept whatever persecution that might entail. “To draw near means, at the same time, to ‘go forth to him [Jesus] outside the camp, bearing abuse for him’ (13:13). Christians should cling to the promise, be willing to endure suffering, live as strangers in ‘this world’ like the Old Testament heroes of faith.”<sup>60</sup> Drawing near to God in faith cleansed from a guilty conscience means embracing the momentary hardship that may accompany it.

The second exhortation is found in verse 23, let us hold fast, *κατέχομεν*, to the hope that we profess in God. The word for holdfast can be used in a nautical sense of one who holds fast in the steering of a ship. The word *ἀκλινη*, unswervingly, strengthens *κατέχομεν* to provide a picture of one who is steering true or straight, not willing to get off course. “It connotes swerving neither to one side nor to the other and so comes to mean ‘firm,’ ‘stable,’ ‘fixed,’ ‘steadfast,’ calling for the community to remain stable and to affirm its privileged status as the people who have been granted access to God through Christ.<sup>61</sup> The believers have not strayed away from the hope they have professed in Christ, believing that to return to their former beliefs would provide better access or hope in God.

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60. Nils Alstrup Dahl, “A New and Living Way: The Approach to God According to Hebrews 10:19-25,” *Interpretation* 5, no. 4 (1951, 401–412), 409.

61. Lane, 288-289.

The third exhortation, which is let us consider or *κατανοῶμεν*, turns the remaining exhortations from internal to external. The believer is to consider or think how to encourage others to love, to have good deeds in their life, and to meet regularly in their fellowship. The Greek word *κατανοῶμεν* is not to think about or consider but to completely immerse oneself in the task. The second half exhortations are about helping fellow believers achieve the task of drawing near to God and holding on to the hope one has in God. Of the five exhortations, three are about how one affects or influences others. In fact, *κατανοῶμεν* relays a sense of sensory perception. “In the NT, visual perception is usually the point, e.g., scrutiny of an object.... Christians are to focus on the moral example of Christ or to consider how they can stir up one another to loving actions that will demonstrate their faith.”<sup>62</sup>

The meaning of the phrase considering how, where believers are to encourage others, is found in what modifies *κατανοῶμεν*, to spur one another or *παροξυσμὸν*. The word is strong and can mean to incite or irritate. It is used one other time in the New Testament with a negative sense when Paul and Barnabas had a sharp contention. By using the word, the author is placing the strongest emphasis on a believer’s actions and responsibility toward his fellow Christian. The exhortation is for the believer to love, act, and encourage fellowship, provoking “in the sense of being stimulated in the lives of Christians by the considerateness and example of other members.”<sup>63</sup>

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62. Kittel, 973.

63. Bruce, 257.

The strong appeal in verse 25 for action on behalf of others is connected to “two participial phrases in the present tense, *μὴ ἐγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν*, ‘not discontinuing our meeting together’ and *ἀλλὰ παρακαλοῦντες*, ‘but rather encouraging one another.’”<sup>64</sup> The appeals are not to the one failing to attend the fellowship but to the faithful who are being called to encourage others who are struggling. The focused consideration, *κατανοῶμεν*, of the believer should be on how to *παροξυσμὸν* or encourage others to greater love, good deeds, and *μὴ ἐγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν*.

The readers are encouraged to act on behalf of converts failing in their love, good deeds and attendance, noting that regarding the meetings some had allowed their absence to become a habit or *ἔθος*. The custom or habit of not attending can be seen as normal but not complete since people who followed the custom were not removed from the church. In this understanding, Lane believes that “the reference to custom or habit (*ἔθος*) implies a situation of indifference and apathy.”<sup>65</sup> The final exhortation is surrounded and embraced by the appeal to encourage one another. It is an appeal to Christians in regular attendance to encourage and support others who attend rarely or occasionally.

The author concludes verse 25 with a warning of the urgency. The appeals to the church are all the more critical because of the “Day” approaching, a reference to last day events. The call for believers to act on behalf of and for the full restoration of their fellow Christians should not grow weak but increase as they become more aware of the predicted events, like the destruction of the temple. The use of the word *μᾶλλον*, which

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64. Lane, 289.

65. Ibid., 290.

means even more or to a greater degree, continued to add urgency to the author's use of *παροξυσμὸν*, spurring on to action the church on behalf of others.

With reference to the day drawing near, *ἐγγίζουσας τὴν ἡμέραν*, the author draws his readers to the ultimate height of the action. "The Church being in all ages kept uncertain how soon Christ is coming, the day is, and has been, in each age, practically always near; whence, believers have been called on always to be watching for it is nigh at hand."<sup>66</sup> The writer of the Hebrew epistle moves to the highest level of appeal for action on behalf of the church. The spiritual growth of the individual explicitly carries the calling to help and encourage others in the local Christian community.

Spiritual formation that is gratuitously removed from the local church creates inadvertent and unproductive alienation of responsibility of one disciple from another. The call for spiritual formation from and focalized in the local church does not diminish the value and role of external spiritual formation tools or platforms. The value of spiritual formation emanating out from the local church allows for spiritual growth that extends vertically in the disciple's relationship with God and horizontally to believers in the body of Christ.

### Modern Habits

Spiritual formation of a disciple that focuses on relational devotions, howbeit connected to the local church or from external sources, are rendered ineffectual when regular practice is non-existent. Recent research indicates that "only 20 percent of

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66. Jamieson, 468.



Christian adults are involved in some sort of discipleship activity—and this includes a wide range of activities such as attending Sunday school or fellowship group, meeting with a spiritual mentor, studying the Bible with a group, or reading and discussing a Christian book with a group.”<sup>67</sup> The lack of regular devotional habits among Christians in the church varies greatly regarding the church’s effectiveness. While only one percent of pastors believe they are doing well at discipling, “52 percent of those who have attended church in the past six months say their church definitely does a good job helping people grow spiritually and another 40 percent say it ‘probably’ does so.”<sup>68</sup>

As some spiritual leaders recognize the need for intentional efforts within the church for spiritual formation a growing number of church members regard spiritual growth as personal and not a community endeavor. “Among Christians who say spiritual growth is important, more than one-third say they prefer to pursue spiritual growth on their own (37%).”<sup>69</sup> Christians that seek spiritual growth through devotions often find personal need as acute motivation. “About one-quarter say they have been through a difficult experience that prompted them to turn to the Bible, and one in five report a significant change, such as marriage or the birth of a child, that inspired an increase in

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67. “New Research on the State of Discipleship,” Barna Group, last modified 2018, accessed September 18, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/new-research-on-the-state-of-discipleship>.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

Bible use.”<sup>70</sup> Personal need is not a new motivation for spiritual formation. A study from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland provided a unique project where the use of pages was examined from a fifteenth-century personal devotional prayer book. “The most popular passages in these books tended to be prayers related to indulgences (time off in purgatory for forgiven sins) and health benefits, such as protection from plague or St. Anthony’s fire. Self-interest was the most common theme.”<sup>71</sup> Although the need for devotional growth might arise from personal need, the focus remains on the relationship desire for spiritual growth with God.

Modern devotional habits have increasingly involved the use of technological media devices. “More than half of users now search for Bible content on the internet (57%) or a smartphone (55%), and another 42 percent use a Bible app on their phones. More than one-third listens to teaching via podcast (35%) or the audio version of the Bible (36%). Usage for all the formats continues to grow each year.”<sup>72</sup> The increased use of technological devices in the use of spiritual formation has become more than a preference from one form of communication to another, but in some disciples, it has increased the use of devotional materials. “Of adults who increased their Bible

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70. “Bible Reading in 2017: A New Year’s Resolution,” Barna Group, last modified 2017, accessed September 18, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/bible-reading-2017-new-years-resolution>.

71. Samir S. Patel, “Medevil Reading Habits,” *Archaeological Institute of America* 65, no. 5 (September-October, 2012), accessed September 18, 2018, [https://archive.archaeology.org/1209/trenches/books\\_of\\_hours\\_netherlands\\_optical\\_density.html](https://archive.archaeology.org/1209/trenches/books_of_hours_netherlands_optical_density.html)

72. “State of the Bible 2018: Seven Top Findings,” Barna Group, last modified 2018, accessed September 18, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-of-the-bible-2018-seven-top-findings>.

readership...one-quarter (26%) say it was due to having downloaded the Bible onto their smartphone or tablet. More than one in 10 (12%) credit their increased Bible reading to podcasts or streaming church services.”<sup>73</sup>

The relatively low use of devotional materials by disciples is a contrast to the growing number of Christians who are accessing devotional material through technological media. The use of technological materials does not guarantee greater participation in devotions. However, devotional materials found in media devices like Bible apps will increase interaction. Kevin Kelly in his book on understanding technology contends that interaction is a growing demand from today’s society. “Anything that can interact, including a smart hammer, will become more valuable in our interactive society. The future of technology resides, in large part, in the discovery of new interactions.”<sup>74</sup> The interaction of technologically smart devotional material and disciples yearning to discover devotional growth creates opportunity the church can access in today’s twenty-first-century society.

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73. “The State of the Bible: 6 Trends for 2014,” Barna Group, last modified 2014, accessed September 18, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/the-state-of-the-bible-6-trends-for-2014>.

74. Kelly, 236.

## Pillar Two: Church Planting and Discipleship

The heart of any church plant is centered in the leadership and talents of the church-planter. The strength of the discipleship endeavor for new and existing Christian converts within the church plant is linked to the church planting leader. However, alone the leader is not able to effectively institute productive spiritual formation programs for the people.<sup>75</sup> The paradox of church planting and discipleship is one of the most effective tools to gather new converts to the church is church planting.<sup>76</sup> However, church-planters often struggle to find and implement effective spiritual formation programs and adopted a strategy of only mass appeal. The discipleship deficit has “largely diminished being a disciple to making a profession of faith and receiving baptism. After that you’re on your own. The very American concept of rugged individualism has led Christians to act as if we do not need one another.”<sup>77</sup> An effective spiritual formation program in the church plant embraces a designed and organic discipleship approach. In each of the approaches embedded church planting obstacles are overcome through systematic and structural processes.

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75. George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership* (Colorado Springs, CO: Walter-Book Press, 2001), 18.

76. C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Growth* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1987), 168.

77. Dayton Hartman, “Lessons from Church History: Discipleship & Church Planting,” *Acts 29.Com*, last modified 2016, accessed September 24, 2018, <https://www.acts29.com/lessons-church-history-discipleship/>.

## Designed Discipleship

The designed discipleship approach requires establishing clear goals and direction. Without the designed approach to spiritual formation the church would descend into default discipleship. In default discipleship, spiritual growth occurs naturally over time by encouraging regular attendance to the church services. Thus, discipleship consists of whatever growth and maturity are gained from the Sunday morning service.

A default discipleship approach might produce results in a few, but many are missed without deliberate discipleship within in church. “One mistake church-planters make is not incorporating a comprehensive approach to discipleship from day one of the new church plant.”<sup>78</sup> Designed discipleship trains the church to develop a willingness to embrace a larger concept of discipleship, more than getting people to respond Sunday morning and encouraging them to return the next week. Discipleship becomes more than the responsibility of a few in the church but engineers the entire service toward spiritual formation. “The sermons may need to be simpler with less special effects. The band may need less programmatic direction and more relational investment with the pastor. At the end of the day, the core team and lead planter must personally invest heavily in the harvest.”<sup>79</sup> The investment by the entire team creates the designed discipleship that can

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78. Philip Hunt, “Church Planting: Discipleship From Day One, IBM Global,” last modified 2013, accessed October 31, 2018, <http://www.ibmglobal.org/blog/2013/01/09/church-planting-discipleship-from-day-one>.

79. Ed Stetzer, “7 Top Issues Church Planters Face,” *Christianity Today*, last modified 2011, accessed September 22, 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2011/january/top-issues-church-planters-face-introduction.html>

cast the widest net enabling more people to connect with the church and experience spiritual growth.

Designed discipleship means discipleship is not only the result of numerical growth but a major aspect of its cause. “Growing in Christ is the key to growing a church. Following up, teaching, and mentoring new as well as seasoned Christians are the keys to spiritual growth and the replication of the witness. When a church forsakes discipleship, its people will not grow.”<sup>80</sup> Numerical growth within the church flows out of a program of designed discipleship. The discipleship builds an authentic understanding of evangelism in converts who are being added to the church.

The New Testament church reflected a designed discipleship from the new believers. Many added to the church had little or no understanding of the mission of the church, yet the converts were quickly mobilized. The book of Acts records that “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”<sup>81</sup> The ones that were being added were not apathetic believers who did not embrace the mission and outreach of the church, but they were added “to the fellowship...toward the same thing or goal which conveys the idea of united purpose—fervent, collective unity.”<sup>82</sup> The early church converts adopted the mission of the church and embraced unity and outreach. The united

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80. Richard J. Krejcir, “The Importance of Discipleship and Growth,” *Church Leadership.Org*, last modified 2005, accessed September 24, 2018, <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=42814&columnid=4543>.

81. Acts 2:47.

82. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), Acts 2:47.

purpose in the new converts was achieved through an intentional and designed discipleship.

When discipleship is relegated to a director to create the spiritual formation the church perceives discipleship as a department that contends for resources and personnel like other church departments. Discipleship that is confined into a department of the church will not produce fervent, mission-minded converts that will make an impact on the numerical growth of the church. “It is not a ministry in which a few dedicated disciple makers work with a limited number of people who want to mature in their faith. It is a ministry of the church that seeks to make disciples of all its people.”<sup>83</sup>

Designed discipleship is not only a program or a department within the church; rather it is the contextualization of discipleship into every area of a believer’s life. Russell Huizing in his study on leadership and discipleship contends that discipleship can be identified in almost every area of life, from persecution to marriage. He explains that “rather than thinking that this suggests a scattered and unsystematic understanding of discipleship, it actually highlights the ever-present necessity of contextualizing discipleship into every phenomena, organization, and corner of life.”<sup>84</sup> Huizing’s concept of discipleship varies greatly from some views on discipling new converts. Understanding discipleship as a class to be completed within six to eight weeks is challenged by the view of the entire church in an ongoing designed discipleship program.

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83. Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Successful Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 67.

84. Russell L. Huizing, “Leaders from Disciples: The Church’s Contribution to Leadership Development.” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35, no. 4 (2011), 343.

All discipleship classes, even programs that have a three or more-year duration eventually come to an end. The view implies the idea that discipleship can be completed.

Discipleship should not be divided between recent converts in the designed discipleship program and the “regular attendees” who languish in the default discipleship of spiritual growth by osmosis. Scripture teaches that the power of Jesus Christ “enables him to bring everything under his control, and will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”<sup>85</sup> Spiritual transformation will change mortal bodies, which implies that hearts and minds are currently being transformed as well. Discipleship that is designed to reach new committed believers and at the same time encompass the entire church will create a greater impact on both spiritual and numerical growth.

Designed discipleship requires every person in the church to be connected to the spiritual formation effort. Jim Putman, pastor and discipleship author, explains that “Jesus’ mission is not to make converts; it never has been. His mission is to make disciples.”<sup>86</sup> Designed discipleship challenges the idea that evangelism and discipleship can be seen as two different branches in the church. “Why have we divorced these two biblical principles as if they’re mutually exclusive? We understand that the Great Commission tells us that as we are going about our daily lives, we must be working at the

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85. Philippians 3:21.

86. Rob Cizek, “Top 10 Quotes - Exponential Church Planting Conference,” *Rob Cizek - Practical Leadership* (April 27, 2013), accessed October 2018, <http://robcizek.com/top-10-quotes-from-the-exponential-church-planting-discipleship-conference>.



task of making disciples.”<sup>87</sup> Any discipleship program designed to impact and encourage congregational growth spiritually will embrace discipleship and evangelical outreach. No matter how effectively designed the discipleship program, the key to success is in the combination of the designed discipleship and the flexibility and authenticity of organic discipleship.

### Organic Discipleship

The very nature of a discipleship program can lend itself to a more rigid and intransient structure which works against the personal and intimate nature of devotional discipleship. In today’s pop culture, anything organic is seen as more authentic and natural. It is not surprising that the qualities and understanding of the word organic could also be expressed in spiritual discipleship. Organic discipleship is a personal and authentic method for raising believers into spiritual maturity. Winfield Bevins in his book on organic discipleship encourages churches that their “discipleship strategy must be structured enough to maintain order, but organic enough to change with the ongoing needs of the church as it grows or it will hinder its growth. Therefore, the church’s discipleship strategy must be organic.”<sup>88</sup> The organic discipleship program is first and foremost culturally relevant to the church that is implementing it. Pre-packaged, one-size-

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87. Steve Doerksen, “Church Planting Equals Discipleship,” (2016) accessed October 31, 2018, <https://swchurchconnection.org/blog/2015/09/16/church-planting-equals-discipleship>.

88. Winfield Bevins, *Grow: Reproducing Through Organic Discipleship* (Winfield Bevins, 2009), 10, accessed September 13, 2018, <https://idcraleigh.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/grow-bevins.pdf>.

fits-all programs can be effective but may leave many behind in their spiritual formation. The organic nature of any program means that each aspect of the program has been customized to render the outreach as contextually relevant as possible to the church while retaining authentic biblical principles.

Designing an organic discipleship program requires a genuine effort to understand and embrace scriptural means of discipleship. Jesus' discipleship program for his disciples and others he encountered always focused on the person. He did not have a one-size-fits-all, classroom-like program but was able to apply universal spiritual principles to individual circumstances to both impact and challenge the spiritual maturity of each person. After Jesus' resurrection, he had a discipleship moment with some of his disciples who were struggling with understanding his death and resurrection. When Jesus had finished his instructions to Peter, Peter "turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them...When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?'"<sup>89</sup> Jesus' answer to Peter is a clear model to follow when designing an organic discipleship program. Jesus said, "What is that to you? You must follow me."<sup>90</sup> Jesus' concern was focused on each person; the path for their spiritual growth was not identical. Jesus' discipleship methods for Peter and John was not about a program or process by which a certain goal could be attained but concerned each disciple and his path to the spiritual maturity God planned for them.

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89. John 21:20-21.

90. John 21:22.

The Gospel of Mark records a tender moment in Jesus' discipleship approach. Jesus travels up the mountainside and takes with Him "those he wanted, and they came to him."<sup>91</sup> Organic discipleship is based on relationship. It is not about filling up a class of new converts but about being wanted and wanting to make an investment in the lives of others. The next verse in Mark records that Jesus appointed the disciples "that they might be with him."<sup>92</sup> The heart of organic discipleship is focused on the connection by which life and truth can be passed to another. The disciples were undoubtedly sent out for ministry and to spread the Gospel, but first, they were called to be with Jesus. The nature of organic discipleship is building connection within the disciple so the follower might be closer to Jesus, the ultimate instructor.

Organic discipleship is more than a process or means to reach an end since the end is encompassed in the means. Discipleship is an ongoing process that will never come to an end in this life. The depth of commitment a church should have regarding discipleship must remain at the deepest level. In his article about making leaders from disciples, Russell Huizing demonstrates that "the life of discipleship is not simply a programmatic self-help curriculum. Instead, it should be seen primarily as a covenantal commitment."<sup>93</sup> A difficulty arises when communicating the cost of discipleship to a young disciple when the cost is poorly reflected in those making disciples. People will

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91. Mark 3:13.

92. Mark 3:14.

93. Russell L. Huizing, "Leaders from Disciples: The Church's Contribution to Leadership Development." *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35 no. 4 (2011), 338.

respond to the priorities and emphases, along with the care and passion, that is evident in the organic discipleship.

Understanding discipleship in this authentic organic manner means seeing beyond the group or class and focusing on the individual. Church plants might be tempted to only apply discipleship and discipleship training to the Sunday morning service. The Sunday service should be a part of the overall discipleship outreach. However, it should not be the only means by which people can encounter discipleship principles; otherwise, the church is casting a large net with big holes. The study guide of J. D. Payne about discipleship in church plants warns that “there is a real temptation for church-planters to concentrate their efforts on discipleship at the corporate level first, assuming growth in Christ will trickle down to the individual level. While sanctification does happen at the corporate level, it is not healthy to see this area as the primary means by which people are to grow in the faith.”<sup>94</sup> It is incumbent on church plant leadership to create the organic discipleship that reaches people at both the corporate and individual levels.

An essential element found in organic discipleship is its ability to reproduce itself in the lives of those committed to the ministry. Organic discipleship should produce disciples that make other disciples. The organic means of discipleship will have the effect of creating “reflected love, where the love shown to others begins to be reflected. In essence, people are divinely loved into the Kingdom. As people participate in the community of believers, they find loving acceptance that, in time, they begin to

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94. J. D. Payne, *Discipleship in Church Planting: Some Guidelines to Move Us Forward*, (J.D. Payne, 2011), 30.

reciprocate.”<sup>95</sup> Disciples of Christ are known by their love for others; authentic organic discipleship should be centered on the love for others.

Finally, organic discipleship should not be measured and quantified solely by the number of people who have completed a set course of study. Numbers and statistics can be helpful as a tool to measure outcomes; however, statistic tools are not able to assign value or worth. The value of any set of numbers is set by the perceptions and goals of those who interpret the numbers. Some, like Seth McBee, have come to the point of rejecting all the numbers. In his article *Why I’m Tired of Church Planting*, McBee warns that “we are more concerned with seeing the fruit that only God can give (drawing, conversions, etc.), instead of being concerned with the very thing he has empowered us to do: to make disciples.”<sup>96</sup> The New Testament does proclaim the increasing numbers that resulted from the early church in making disciples. The church plant should not discount numbers and statistics in their evaluation of organic discipleship. A balanced approach using numbers and statistics along with value-based observations should be practiced. The discipleship that comes from a mix of organic and designed methods of building spiritual maturity within the body of Christ can be a natural fit for church plants. Adaptive programs can be created to easily embrace people in the church on both corporate and individual levels. Both the organic and designed methods provide a strong foundation for inventive formats when implementing an effective discipleship program.

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95. Samuel Lee, “Can We Measure the Success and Effectiveness of Entrepreneurial Church Planting?” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 40, no. 4 (2016), 342.

96. Seth McBee, “Why I’m Tired of Church Planting,” *Gospel Centered Discipleship.Com*, last modified 2016, accessed September 25, 2018, <http://gcdiscipleship.com/2013/09/11/im-tired-church-planting>.

## Discipleship Obstacles

The biblical mandate from the risen Christ to make disciples has been the bedrock foundation for the Church from the beginning.<sup>97</sup> Yet, spiritual leaders have faced mounting obstacles in the attempt to encourage spiritual formation. Although many obstacles can hinder the spiritual growth of congregants in the church, three substantial obstacles have proved acute.

The implementation of designed and organic discipleship expresses the structure and direction of the spiritual formation but does not distract from the foundation of discipleship. Discipleship is creating committed followers of Christ, therefore following Christ cannot be removed from the process. “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea, a myth that has a place for the Fatherhood of God, but omits Christ as the living Son.”<sup>98</sup> The first obstacle to discipleship is found in the temptation to focus spiritual growth on external arbitrary human factors and goals. Some spiritual leaders have invested their “time and efforts in encouraging and producing converts, church-goers, or even a culture of being ‘churched’ without an ongoing living, obedient relationship with God.”<sup>99</sup> Spiritual formation is not about process alone but about relationship, a relationship centered in Christ. The spiritual growth does not occur through human efforts apart from a Spirit-empowered relationship.

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97. Matthew 28:19.

98. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2015), 64.

99. Dan Yarnell, “The Spirit Says ‘Yes’: Exploring the Essence of Being Church in the 21st Century,” *Evangel* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 11.

“We have received from God the Holy Spirit, who knows the depths of God. So we have a direct connection with God through the Holy Spirit in our human spirit. This is basic to how the power of the Holy Spirit...works to transform our human spirit.”<sup>100</sup> External goals that overwhelm the need for spiritual growth will become an obstacle to spiritual formation within the church.

The second obstacle, found in the shift from making disciples to recording decisions, can easily distract the spiritual leader from the important desire of growth in the new convert. The church-planting pastor’s desire for numerical growth and stability might foster a type of “hit and run” evangelism, where converts are recorded with little thought of discipleship.<sup>101</sup> A church-planter’s primary goal is church growth. If the new church plant does not experience growth in the first few years the static data indicates the church may not survive.<sup>102</sup> The movement from a simple focus on decisions and the aversion away from discipleship is rarely intentional or by design. However, the effect on the spiritual formation of the new convert is the same. Church growth specialist Richard Krejcir believes that when spiritual leaders “neuter the power and purpose of the Church to which Christ called us...where discipleship and instruction are ignored, He [Jesus] is

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100. Pettit, 61.

101. Mark Allan Williams, “4 Obstacles to Church Planting and the Myths Behind Them,” last modified September 2014, accessed September 26, 2018, <http://www.markalanwilliams.net/2014/09/04/4-obstacles-to-church-planting-and-the-myths-behind-them/>.

102. “State of the Church 2016,” *Barna Group*, last modified 2016, accessed September 26, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016/>.

ignored!”<sup>103</sup> Ironically, the obstacle to back away from spiritual formation within the church does not lessen as the church begins to grow. Spiritual leaders who are “unwilling to call people to discipleship because they are too concerned that some will ‘fall away’, which is code for ‘attendance will drop,’” might experience church growth but not necessarily Kingdom growth.<sup>104</sup>

The third obstacle is not a new hurdle for the church, since legalism and ritual customs were present from the early church.<sup>105</sup> Traditionalism is accepted in the hearts and minds of spiritual leaders conveying the idea that the traditional approach for discipleship should be the only acceptable method. Rick Warren explains that “traditions are actually rooted in success. Something becomes a tradition because it works in the first place... Unfortunately, the tradition then begins to drive us. There are two dangers with traditionalism. The first danger is when we make the methods sacred. The second danger is when we forget why we do things.”<sup>106</sup> Traditionalism in discipleship occurs when new ideas are disregarded on the grounds they are new or different. In his article on church

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103. Richard J. Krejcir, “Statistics and Reasons for Church Decline,” *Church Leadership.Org*, last modified 2007, accessed September 26, 2018, <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=42346&>.

104. J. R. Miller, “8 Obstacles to Making Disciples,” *More than a Cake.Org*, last modified 2013, accessed September 26, 2018, <https://www.morethancake.org/archives/2818>.

105. Apostle Paul warned of legalism in Colossians 2:20-23.

106. Rick Warren, “Ten Common Barriers to Growing Your Church,” *ChurchPlantingWiki.Com*, accessed September 26, 2018, [http://www.churchplantingwiki.com/index.php/wiki/Ten\\_common\\_barriers\\_to\\_growing\\_your\\_church/](http://www.churchplantingwiki.com/index.php/wiki/Ten_common_barriers_to_growing_your_church/).



planting discipleship DeVries believes that “while God has used traditional-model churches, traditionalism can be a significant obstacle to embracing more effective methods that would accelerate disciple making.”<sup>107</sup> The introduction of new and creative discipleship methods through technological advances faces the obstacles of eternal goals, surface discipleship, and traditionalism. Each of the obstacles can be overcome in the application of technological discipleship methods.

### **Pillar Three: Discipleship and Technological Integration**

The technological advances in the twenty-first century have influenced and shaped almost every aspect of the modern world. Kevin Kelly believes that change is inevitable, specifically technological change. “At the center of every change in our lives is a technology of some sort. Technology is humanity’s accelerant. Because of technology everything we make is always in the process of becoming... All is flux. Nothing is finished. Nothing is done.”<sup>108</sup> The evolution of technological forces is changing the reality and perceptions of life in the world today. However, the church that is rigid and fixed against the influences of technology will experience difficulties in communicating to today’s technologically saturated world. “All dimensions of church life

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107. Dave DeVries, “6 Obstacles to Church Planting Movements,” *Missional Challenge*, accessed September 26, 2018, <https://www.missionalchallenge.com/6-obstacles-to-church-planting-movements/>.

108. Kelly, 6.

are influenced by technology, and not to engage with our hi-tech age... would simply mean the church will be left behind.”<sup>109</sup> Yet, the church has not been left behind. From the inception of the church in Acts 2 until modern day, the church has interacted with the emerging technologies. The church has been in a constant technological communication revolution, “starting with the invention of writing, jumping to the mechanical writing of the printing press, to the electrical communication of the telegraph, and finally to our electronic world. At each stage, humans encoded communication in ever more complex symbolic and technical systems.”<sup>110</sup> The church internet and web-based communications used today in new discipleship methods is simply another stage in the encoded communication.

### The Technological Disciple

The spiritual formation of today’s disciple will involve to some degree technological integration in the believer’s devotional habits. The mainstreaming of technology into almost every facet of modern life creates an opportunity for a productive cohabitation of spiritual growth and modern communication means. Carey Nieuwhof believes that technological “cultural change has been underway for decades, but the

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109. Russell Pollitt, “Are We On-Board?: Technology and the Church,” *Grace & Truth* 25, no. 3 (June 20, 2008): 82.

110. Paul A. Soukup, “Technology, Theology, Thinking, and the Church,” *Grace & Truth* 25, no. 3 (June 1, 2008): 4.

church has been slow to adapt.”<sup>111</sup> The life of the growing disciple in church has become both analog and digital. The line between the two has become blurred and almost indistinguishable. While hesitation concerning the integration of new technology lingers in the church, technological forces have been involved in God’s work from the beginning.

The English word *technology* is derived from the Greek word *τέχνη*, which is translated as a skilled tradesman or craftsman.<sup>112</sup> The word is found in Acts 18:3 where the apostle Paul is identified as one who works in the trade of a tentmaker, a *τέχνη* working to build tents. In the Septuagint the word is used in 1 Chronicles 28:21 in the building of the Temple where “every willing person skilled in any craft will help you in all the work.” In this sense technology should be understood to mean a craftsman applying current skill to a particular work. Paul understood the technology of tentmaking because he knew his way about the task of building tents. Thus, Paul used the technology of tentmaking to generate income for his ministry.

In the Old Testament the stone craftsman applied skills utilizing the technology of stone mason to build the temple. Drawing from the understanding of Aristotle and Heidegger, Ernst Wolf in his article on the aspects of technicity defines *τέχνη* as “the

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111. Carey Nieuwhof, “7 Disruptive Church Trends That Will Rule 2018,” last modified 2018, accessed October 5, 2018, <https://careynieuwhof.com/7-disruptive-church-trends-that-will-rule-2018>.

112. Felix Wilbur Gingrich, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 814.

knowing-your-way-about something, in a particular manner of concern.”<sup>113</sup> The disciple that understands the technology of the internet, computer, email, or social medias as applied to devotional growth is employing the learned skill utilizing current technology. The technological disciple integrates discipleship formats into practical and relevant twenty-first century lifestyles.

### Discipleship Formats

A format is defined as the manner in which something is arranged. Discipleship formats are arrangements built on the foundation of designed and organic methods used within a discipleship program. The format is critical to embrace as it is the discipleship framework and sets the direction for the program. As the methods act as the foundation, the structure of the program behaves as the walls, which provides partitions and organization as the program is implemented. “Comprehensive discipleship planning begins with an end in mind. What kind of disciple are we seeking to make?”<sup>114</sup> The structure of the program is built up from the foundation, to the walls and frames, and finally to implementation, which is the understanding of what the church desires to accomplish in the program. The program’s results and successes are not about the program but about the spiritual maturity of the disciples. The “objective of discipleship

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113. Ernest Wolff, “Aspects of Technicity in Heidegger’s Early Philosophy: Rereading Aristotle’s *Techné* and *Hexis*,” *Research in Phenomenology* 38, no. 3 (2008), 324.

114. Chris Shirley, “It Takes a Church to Make a Disciple: An Integrative Model of Discipleship for the Local Church,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 50 no. 2 (2008), 223.

curriculum is not to indoctrinate individuals into a specific religious system, but rather to help the individual grow to be an intentional follower of Jesus.”<sup>115</sup> The complexity and instrumentality of the program should not be allowed to overshadow the individual growth of each believer. Five different formats can be used when designing a spiritual formation program within the church. Each format provides strengths and weaknesses depending on the individual church and the contextualization of the format. The five formats are integrational, inclusive, invitational, interrogative, and individualized.

### ***Integrational Format***

The integrational format is utilized when the desired discipleship approach is better suited for a methodical and intentional assimilation of the material. This format is sensitive to the growth of each person in the program and seeks to move the disciple to the next level of discipleship teaching, based not on a time element or completion of the program, but on each disciple’s spiritual maturity. Bill Hull, in his book *The Disciple Making Pastor*, provides an example of integrational format by dividing the discipleship program into four phases. The first phase is called *Come and See* and introduces the disciple to the very basics of making disciples. The phase is an outreach oriented and discipleship phase where believers are exposed to Christ and the salvation that he

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115. Andrew Burggraff, “Developing Discipleship Curriculum: Applying the Systems Approach Model for Designing Instruction by Dick, Carey, and Carey to the Construction of Church Discipleship Courses,” *Christian Education Journal* 12 no. 2 (2015), 406.

offers.<sup>116</sup> The disciple remains at this phase until maturing to the point of desiring a greater level of discipleship.

At completing of the first phase, the disciple advances to the second phase, *Come and Follow*. The phase commences when people who have come to believe in Christ are instructed to pray and study the word with a greater dedication than found in phase one. Disciples are moved past the basic elements of “should they be a disciple” and arrive at the question “what kind of disciple do I want to be?” The third phase of the discipleship is *Come and Be with Me* where the discipleship program focuses on developing the leadership skills of the disciple. The final phase provided by Hull’s example is *Remain in Me and Go*, which is the highest level of discipleship and directs the disciple to go and replicate the training with others, to fulfill the great commission and make disciples. The nature of the integrational format narrows and intensifies the training at each level to encourage strength and spiritual growth in the disciple.

### ***Inclusive Format***

The inclusive format begins with the largest group possible and works down to smaller active groups. The format encompasses an entire church congregation and, as the program progresses, breaks the congregation down into smaller discussion groups. In

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116. Bill Hull, *The Disciple - Making Pastor*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H Revell) *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost, accessed October 5, 2018, [http://assets.bakerpublishinggroup.com/processed/book-resources/files/Excerpt\\_Hull\\_DiscipleMaking.pdf?1356647007](http://assets.bakerpublishinggroup.com/processed/book-resources/files/Excerpt_Hull_DiscipleMaking.pdf?1356647007)

discussing step six of the 10-step approach model, Andrew Burggraff provides a discipleship inclusive-strategy of “large-group interactive lectures with small-group Q&A follow-up” to establish the proper sequencing of discipleship material.<sup>117</sup>

The strength of utilizing the inclusive format is how it reaches and includes the entire church in the spiritual formation program. The small-group discussions and activities provide the opportunity to continue the discipleship for those willing to participate. The format ensures that basic discipleship teachings will not be limited to the few that are involved in the program. The inclusive format reaches everyone with broad teaching and allows for follow-up to delve deeper with more thorough interaction in small groups. The format is easily adapted to accommodate a third level which would narrow the groups down to individualized attention or smaller groups that handle more directed or specific teachings.

### ***Invitational Format***

The third format moves in a different direction from the previous discussed formats and is called invitational. The format provides the discipleship and teaching in the informal setting of congregants’ homes. Home-based groups encourage the use of invitations to draw friends and neighbors relationally into the discipleship program. William Van Doodewaard in his article on discipleship and church planting refers to this program as *gracious hospitality*. “People use their homes, their meals, their evenings, as a

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117. Andrew Burggraff, “Developing Discipleship Curriculum: Applying the Systems Approach Model for Designing Instruction by Dick, Carey, and Carey to the Construction of Church Discipleship Courses.” *Christian Education Journal* 12 no. 2 (2015), 410.

ministry base to neighbors, co-workers, friends, and newcomers to the church. This is a characteristic of the congregation as a whole, and many of its individual members, especially the eldership.”<sup>118</sup>

Such a format encourages the entire congregation to be involved in making disciples and does not limit the discipleship to a few leaders or teachers. Van Doodewaard explains that “the church body acts as a family, with a warm and winsome character. They love and know each other...and at the same time, these churches do not ignore or excuse sin. Necessary exhortation, rebuke, and warning take place, but in the context of this evident, existing relationship of Christian love.”<sup>119</sup> Although this format engages the members of the church in a greater fashion than other formats it reduces the direct influence of the leadership in the care of those in the program. A systematic means to follow up for the disciples would be required to monitor the spiritual principles taught.

### ***Interrogative Format***

The interrogative format is a discipleship system that challenges and encourages the disciple’s personal relationship with God through a series of interrogative questions. The program is overlaid with four fundamental questions, which are, what is God teaching us, what is God rebuking, what is God correcting, and finally what would God

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118. William VanDoodewaard, “Discipleship and Planting Churches,” *Reformation 21*, (2010) accessed October 5, 2018, <http://www.reformation21.org/articles/discipleship-and-planting-churches.php>.

119. VanDoodewaard.



have us apply in our training of righteousness. The four-set format takes the disciple through an understanding of these four “right questions,” what’s right (the teaching), what’s not right (the rebuking), how do I get right (the correcting), and how do I stay right (the training).<sup>120</sup> Each week the disciple is encouraged to interact with key biblical passages while applying the four questions.

The strength of the format is that the disciple is continually encouraged to interact with the Bible in a hermeneutical routine. On a regular basis the disciple learns what the Bible has to say about an aspect of Christian life and is engaged to explore, apply, and implement the principles in the disciple’s life without compromise. The interrogative format reinforces the authority and preeminence of God’s word in the life of the disciple. The emphasis is on what the teacher or leader thinks and what God has to say about the subject through the foundation of the Bible. The format guards against “making disciples” that might be more like products of a twenty-first century thinking instead of biblical thinking applied in the modern world.

### ***Individualized Format***

The final format is an individualized format. Individualized format narrows the discipleship to between a mentor and a disciple. The strength of an individualized format for discipleship is seen in the quality and interaction between the mentor and the disciple. However, the weakness in implementing such a format in the church involves the same element as the strength; a large amount of time and energy would be required of the

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120. Hull.

mentor. Research continues to show that students or disciples make greater gains through mentorship compared to those in a more structured class. Academic studies indicate that “the average tutored student outperforms 98 percent of the students in the class.”<sup>121</sup> Mentorship is not foreign to the biblical model in Jesus’s ministry. Jesus’ relationship with the disciples is a powerful model for spiritual formation in disciples. “Though the term ‘mentor’ is never used in Scripture, the Greek term *meno* (enduring relationship) does occur in Scripture. The term occurs one-hundred eighteen times in the New Testament and thirty-three times in the Gospel of John.”<sup>122</sup> The enduring relationships of mentor and disciple was common in the early church.

The assimilation of technological methods influences the effectiveness of each of the five discipleship formats. The integration format relies on an individual pacing that would benefit from online access providing measurable means to mark progress. For the inclusive format interactive phone or tablet apps could be available to the congregation to provide personal interaction. Invitational formats that meet in homes connect to online material ensuring support for each small group. The interrogative format is built on a personal interaction with the disciple with each question. An internet social app would provoke thought and reflection and create the means for the interaction. The individualized format built on a web-based platform allows the mentor to interact

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121. Benjamin S. Bloom, “The Search for Methods of Group Instruction as Effective as One-to-One Tutoring,” *Educational Leadership* 41 no. 8 (1984), 5.

122. Ron Belsterling, “The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13,” *Journal of Youth Ministry*, 5 no. 1 (2006), 77-78.

personally with multiple disciples. An internet-based video discipleship program creates personal intimacy and provides a means for feedback and further discussion.

### The Technological Church

The church's integration of discipleship formats to current internet technologies finds stability in philosophical and theological perspectives of change. Shakespeare's Hamlet ponders the continuation of his existence in the question of being or not being. Hamlet's musing on pain of life versus his fear of the afterlife is similar to the challenge the church faces with change.<sup>123</sup> The church that fears life after technological change struggles with being culturally relevant or not being. Changing the foundations of biblical belief threatens the very life of the church. However, the rejection of all change positions the church on the edge of cultural irrelevance. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus in the 6th century BC proclaimed "the only thing that is constant is change."<sup>124</sup> "Heraclitus insisted that the essence of existence is that everything changes and nothing stands still.

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123. Ryan Long, "Is Hamlet Afraid of Death? If so, Does He Conquer This Fear by the End of the Play?," *Quora.Com*, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://www.quora.com/Is-Hamlet-afraid-of-death-If-so-does-he-conquer-this-fear-by-the-end-of-the-play>.

124. Wikiquote Contributors, "Heraclitus," *Wikiquote*, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://en.wikiquote.org/w/index.php?title=Heraclitus&oldid=2379976>.

To be a living entity is to experience change.”<sup>125</sup> Society will not wait for change to occur, it expects it and even demands change.<sup>126</sup> Today’s generation is connected continuously to the web, which has created a world that desires novelty by the second.<sup>127</sup> Culture is being driven to change by need. The need is not from the desire of the next best phone, gadget, or medical breakthrough but the rapid dissatisfaction of the present. No matter the coming changes, the endless appetite for change causes the potential benefits of the new to become discarded at an exponential rate.

A church that rejects all forms of cultural change will experience increasing irrelevance and “drift toward unhealthy or misaligned culture.”<sup>128</sup> The Bible continually confirms that God does not change. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”<sup>129</sup> God, who does not change, desires to save and reach a culture that is continually evolving. God's message of love is spread through a church that embraces the

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125. Leonard Sweet, “Binge-Live,” *Preachthestory.Com*, last modified 2018, accessed October 11, 2018, <https://preachthestory.com/binge-live>.

126. Janet Singer, “The Only Constant Is Change,” *Psych Central*, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-only-constant-is-change>.

127. Christopher Bergland, “The Perils of Novelty Seeking,” *Psychology Today*, last modified 2013, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-athletes-way/201311/the-perils-novelty-seeking>.

128. Angie Ward, “Diagnosing and Changing Church Culture,” *Womenleaders.Com*, last modified 2016, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/women-leaders/2016/january/diagnosing-and-changing-church-culture.html?paging=off>.

129. James 1:17.

immutableness of God with one hand while reaching a lost and dying world with an ever-changing hand of compassion. The missional strategy of the church is established with the design to reach a “now” culture, changing in method and means yet grounded in unchanging biblical principles.

A Church that becomes a cultural bridge to reach society with God’s grace will encounter inherent dangers. The church cannot become a bridge of compromise from accepted biblical norms. Nor can the church become intransigent, fixed to human-made religious ideas irrelevant for modern times. The early church was accused of betraying fundamental Jewish beliefs while being rejected by society as fundamental and judgmental.<sup>130</sup> The founding church became an important cultural bridge that grew in size and influence in its first-century culture.

The technical marvels the church faces today are exciting in many aspects. However, no matter how overwhelming the societal forces, they cannot dictate the course and direction of the church. God is the force that shapes the church, and his people are the force that shapes the world. God has a place in his purpose for the church to adopt a connected internet method to reach an increasingly online culture. An online spiritual formation method would have the potential to reach Christians who have a minimal biblical world-view perspective. The method connects nominal believers to the church, who would not otherwise have an opportunity for spiritual growth. “Discipleship is as

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130. Acts 21:21.

much about belonging as much as believing and behaving.”<sup>131</sup> Internet communities meet a need that goes unserved if not for online campuses or web-based programs.

Online church communities are a bridge, reaching “fringe” believers who are fearful or reluctant to attend a church in person. The online church community is growing because of a new generation’s acceptance of being wired. Pew Research found that “people who report going to church less now than they used to said the logistics of getting there are the biggest deterrent.”<sup>132</sup> With the growth of the church, the task of developing effective discipleship programs is increasingly critical. The spiritual background of those added to the church varies considerably, from people who have had a healthy relationship with Christ for many years, to those who recently rededicated their commitment to Christ, to those who have decided for Christ for the first time. With such a wide range of believers’ spiritual formation, identifying and implementing an effective discipleship program is a challenge.

The traditional approach to creating an effective discipleship program for the various believers requires either providing several small groups or building one-on-one mentorship to those involved in the discipleship program. A key concern in implementing a traditional approach to a discipleship program is the low response and participation of those willing to commit to the program. The results of pursuing only common

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131. Sue Greener and Asher Rospigliosi, *ECSM 2014 European Conference on Social Media ECSM 2014*, (University of Brighton, UK: Academic Conferences and Publishing International Limited, 2014), 282.

132. Pew Research Center, accessed, October 15, 2018  
<http://www.pewforum.org/2016/08/23/choosing-a-new-church-or-house-of-worship>.

discipleship programs create the undesirable effect of discipling only a small number of those committed to attending the program.

A non-traditional media approach addresses the critical need for systematic discipleship training by integrating useful media discipleship. The method utilizes social media technology for engaging discipleship within the church. The technological church increases the use of social media and technology, merging the new approach with biblical discipleship programs. One atypical media-integrated discipleship method utilizes Sunday sermons as the foundation in the program. After the sermon is delivered, internet video devotions are made available on the web to participants in the program. The disciples are encouraged to view the internet devotions throughout the week.

The new approach which utilizes social media apps and web connections provide a stronger foundation for internet-based discipleship. Internet apps and social media connectors cannot replace the physical, interpersonal relationships of church members. However, “globally, more than 2 billion people use at least one of the top five social apps each month, on average.”<sup>133</sup>

The construction of a social media church app would build to the connection between the cyber world and the physical small groups. Social media apps provide the ability to create “soft landing” spaces. The assimilation of new people is a crucial component of any church growth, and the church app allows the new person to join a

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133. Brandy Shaul, “Over 2 Billion People Use at Least One of the Top 5 Social Apps Each Month,” accessed October 9, 2018, <http://www.adweek.com/digital/over-2-billion-people-use-at-least-one-of-the-top-5-social-apps-each-month>.

group and become familiar with the church. The app becomes a bridge connecting the new person to the members and teachings of the church.

One of the most popular websites on the internet today is called Reddit.<sup>134</sup> Reddit is a simple site that is made up of thousands of subsites that specialize in any interest imaginable and is often called the "front page" of the internet. The motto for Reddit is "Where a community about your favorite things is waiting for you."<sup>135</sup> Most churches today are focused on having a modern and relevant information-driven website. However, the internet has moved away from the static website to an interactive and connection-based experience. Adapting to modern technology that is already outdated reinforces typical irrelevant church stereotypes.

Seeking to remain culturally appropriate in the new millennium is a biblical mandate for the church. However, societal change is not neutral in a world filled with decay and rebellion. While most of the cultural internet modifications seem harmless, the church must guard against the subtleties of these technological changes. Most technologies are neither positive nor negative and are added to the church without concern. The cultural changes in technologies need to be monitored since the interpretation of current changes influences the thinking of the disciple. In *Homo Deus*, Yuval Harari describes the human race as moving unalterably toward exaltation of data climaxing in the religion of Dataism. The author's goal is not to explain the rise of new

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134. Chuong Nguyen, "Reddit Beats out Facebook to Become the Third-Most-Popular Site on the Web," *Digital Trends*, last modified 2018, accessed October 12, 2018, <https://www.digitaltrends.com/computing/reddit-more-popular-than-facebook-in-2018>.

135. <https://www.Reddit.com>.



technologies but the birth of new religions. In the author's opinion, these religions must, if not already, completely replace all current views of God and the supernatural. He points out that "when modern humans discovered that they evolved from reptiles, they rebelled against God and stopped listening to him, or even believing in his existence."<sup>136</sup> He is inferring that the pursuit of cultural, technological advancement cannot coexist with the thought of an all-knowing and loving God who controls all movements. In Harari's view, Christ and today's culture clashes. However, his technological perspective is not sustainable. The church stands against this type of untenable choice and should guard against the all or nothing apparition. The battle for the soul and conscience of the church is not won with easy compromises. Paul admonishes the church to "join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus."<sup>137</sup>

To stay technologically relevant the church needs to accurately portray the picture of God's love for a lost world. The apostle Paul walks into Athens with the mission to share about Jesus Christ to a people who served many gods. Paul notices the altars built for the polytheistic Athenians and focuses on one altar dedicated to the unknown God.<sup>138</sup> Paul had some familiarity with the story behind the altar as he quotes the Cretan philosopher connected to the story. Paul did not change the Gospel story to fit the Athenians belief in many gods but was culturally aware of using the altar already in their history. The technological church is not changing the Gospel story to accommodate

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136. Yuval Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2017), 78.

137. 2 Timothy 2:3.

138. Acts 17:23.

today's society rather the church is accessing the technological cultural tools already present.

### **Pillar Four: Platform Discipleship**

In today's business world the new model of platform thinking has challenged the traditional view of "pipeline" structures. "A traditional business model is a single-sided model focused on bringing goods or services along a linear value chain, a pipeline, with clearly defined suppliers and customers."<sup>139</sup> The platform business model has gained acceptance and popularity as five of the world's most profitable businesses are now platform companies, when in 2007 there was only one.<sup>140</sup> Platform thinking is a new problem-solving business approach that moves beyond better products to better building means by which people are empowered to be more creative. The goal is to engage people on the platform the business provides, connecting creativity, and ingenuity to the present business structure. Bonchek and Choudary in their article from *Harvard Business Review* explained that the increase of platform thinking "is being driven by three transformative technologies: cloud, social, and mobile. The cloud enables a global infrastructure for production, allowing anyone to create content and applications for a global audience.

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139. Frederik Brandt, "Platform Thinking," *PAconsulting.Com*, last modified 2018, accessed October 12, 2018, <https://www.paconsulting.com/insights/platform-thinking/>.

140. Brandt.

Social networks connect people globally and maintain their identity online. Mobile allows connection to this global infrastructure anytime, anywhere.”<sup>141</sup> The technologies of the cloud, social media, and mobile access crossed business boundaries impacting culturally relevant aspects of today’s society.

The matrix of platform thinking does not provide for a product that is mass produced but a platform that enables productivity with creativity and flexibility. The matrix is a foundational shift from products to platforms.<sup>142</sup> Platform thinking design is to enable others to create value. The understanding of platform thinking is not about building a better “mousetrap” but building a better platform so others will build the mousetraps. Applying this concept to a living matrix of platform discipleship moves the church from attempting to produce disciples to providing biblical foundations, platforms by which disciples are to produce other disciples.

Platform discipleship is built on the biblical foundation of Christ. Disciples are not created by replicating specific measurable tasks. Disciples are grown from the foundation of Christ who is the only one that causes the growth. The apostle Paul reminds us that the disciple is connected “with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.”<sup>143</sup>

Platform discipleship removes the emphasizes from the means and methods of spiritual

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141. Sangeet Paul Choudary and Mark Bonchek, “Three Elements of a Successful Platform Strategy,” *Harvard Business Review*, last modified 2013, accessed October 12, 2018, <https://hbr.org/2013/01/three-elements-of-a-successful-platform>.

142. Ibid.

143. Colossians 2:19.

formation and focuses on the mediator. Jesus taught the idea of platform discipleship, mixing the metaphors of foundations and producing fruit. “Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore, I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.”<sup>144</sup> The growth or fruit produced by the disciple is attributed to the cornerstone or foundation of Christ. Discipleship programs that are rooted in platform thinking provides greater flexibility for individualized growth, the allowance of greater diversity of methods, and the ability for genuine connection to Christ and others.

### Individualized Growth

Applying the concept of platform thinking to discipleship programs within the church deemphasizes the form and format of the program for the flexibility and freedom of the disciple. Measuring successful growth in spiritual formation is problematic at the least and unquantifiable at the most. Structured rigorous programs that measure success through the completion of accomplished steps, levels, or classes create an image of pipeline production than pious people. Platform discipleship thinking stresses the growth of inward markers as much as outward goals. “Spiritual formation involves attention to both inside ‘heart work’ and outside ‘mouth work.’”<sup>145</sup> The complexities of spiritual growth require greater attention to viewing the disciple as an individualized user on the

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144. Matthew 21:42-43.

145. Pettit, 126.

platform of Christ than a production of a product. When discipleship concentrates on the goal it will lose sight of the person. Reid Kisling asserts that “there is something extremely wrong with the perspective that it’s all about the end and not the means.”<sup>146</sup>

Platform discipleship provides the tools and structure for spiritual growth while empowering the disciple to grow from the strong biblical foundation of Christ and his redemption. The greatest motivation for spiritual formation must be found in the disciple. The inward motivation becomes the disciple’s strongest tool in spiritual growth. Platform discipleship individualizes spiritual formation away from a one-class-fits-all to a creative process of unique spiritual growth. Leonard Sweet states that “creative is not some slavish paint-by-numbers process, or some prefab fill-in-the-blanks blueprint, or a predetermined step-by-step mapping out, or even some random rabbit-in-the-hat trick.”<sup>147</sup> Individualized spiritual growth opens the disciple to a multitude of discipleship approaches and methods as each awakened heart draws life from Christ’s foundation.

### Diversity of Methods

Platform discipleship builds discipleship on Christ as the supplier of life and spiritual enhancements. The methods of the spiritual user empowered by the biblical foundation are as diverse as the disciples seeking spiritual fruit. The use of technological devices did not create the diversity of discipleship methods. Even a traditional approach to discipleship allows for a multitude of methods like small groups, one-on-one

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146. Ibid., 143.

147. Sweet, *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church*, 203.

mentorship, large teaching groups, formalized class settings, and congregational teachings. The advent of additional technological and internet methods of discipleship only adds to the diversity of programs available to the seeking disciple.

Platform discipleship allows the technological advances to create greater access to disciples and strengthen the wide range of methods available to the church. “There are many things that go into effective disciple-making. One thing technology allows you to do is create the solid processes and systems to truly be effective and measure the impact and discipleship that happen as a result.”<sup>148</sup> The employment of technological methods is not only for user access interfaces but technological tools that improve traditional non-internet programs. The diversity of technological tools available to the church ranges from providing better access and building better structures to traditional programs to disciple making through internet video, social media apps, responsive platform websites, and various mobile apps.<sup>149</sup> The listed internet tools each contain numerous individual apps and mobile applications for disciple making.

### Genuine Connection

Platform discipleship provides for genuine connection between the disciple and the platform provider. Technological spiritual formation tools are not designed to

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148. “Technology’s Role in Making Disciples,” *Ministrylabs.Com*, last modified 2017, accessed October 16, 2018, <https://resources.churchcommunitybuilder.com/articles/technologys-role-in-making-disciples>.

149. Adam Weber, “How Tech Leads To Deeper Discipleship,” *Church Tech Today*, last modified 2015, accessed October 16, 2018, <https://churchtechtoday.com/2015/10/12/tech-deeper-discipleship>.

separate or create distance between the disciple and the Christian leader, instead they provide bridges for greater connection. “It’s the job of the church leader to cultivate the resources God has already provided in the membership to accomplish the vision he has given the leader. Technology gives the leader the information he or she needs to challenge others to take the next step of commitment.”<sup>150</sup> Connection is enabled by relevant and current information. Technological disciple making utilizing platform discipleship provides information at the speed of the internet. Web-based methods of discipleship puts the access of the internet into the hands of church leaders connecting to multiple disciples in a direct and efficient manner. Today’s church is more connected through technology than ever before. “Churches have the opportunity to connect with people and congregants in a unique way both remotely and instantaneously.”<sup>151</sup>

## Conclusion

Leonard Sweet believes that “for Jesus, the essence of discipleship is to ‘live up’ to the ‘live down’ directive. It is the ongoing failure of every generation of disciples’ to ‘live up’ to Jesus’ ‘live down’ demand, to put service to others ahead of our own needs

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150. Ben Stroup and Lauren Hunter, “Technology and Discipleship,” *Church Executive*, last modified 2010, accessed October 16, 2018, <https://churchexecutive.com/archives/technology-and-discipleship/>.

151. Tony Morgan, “4 Ways Technology Influences and Improves Disciple Making,” *Tonymorganlive.Com*, last modified 2016, accessed October 16, 2018, <https://tonymorganlive.com/2016/10/12/technology-improves-disciple-making/>.

and desires.”<sup>152</sup> The spiritual formation of disciples for Christ is not the completion of programmatic checkboxes or external performances. Discipleship is an individualized process that must be contained in the whole. The goal of the disciple “is not to be one glorious part of the body but a part of one glorious body.”<sup>153</sup> Discipleship is the new and fruitful life within the growing and blooming tree of the body of Christ. The methods and means necessary to achieve the glorious body of Christ must be renewed and fresh through the Spirit’s eternal direction.

The assumption that proven and accepted traditional discipleship methods is God's only will for spiritual formation for his people ignores the Spirit's renewing presence in the life of the church. The twelve spies sent to spy out the promised land for Israel traveled the entire land and returned undetected. The two spies that entered Jericho at Israel's return to Canaan were exposed and threatened capture. God allowed their passage into Jericho to become known. "God does not act uniformly, varying His methods as seems best in His sight. That not only exemplifies His sovereignty but keeps us in complete dependence upon Him, not knowing whether His interposition on our behalf will come in one way or in another, from this direction or from that."<sup>154</sup> The introduction of technological discipleship programs and tools should not be seen as diluted or compromising human endeavors, but Spirit empowered opportunities for continued and greater reliance on God.

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152. Leonard Sweet, “Fire Proof,” *Preachthistory.Com*, last modified 2018, accessed October 17, 2018, <https://preachthistory.com/fire-proof/>.

153. Pettit, 272.

154. Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings In Joshua*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1964), 54.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will present the structure and design of the project to explain how the data will be gathered and the methodology that will be utilized. The researcher will delineate the systematic approach to procuring the data; organizing the populations; and using the research design, timelines, project instruments, and protocol. The purpose of the analysis and explanation is to guide the reader through the planning, preparation, implementation, and evaluation of the project while maintaining the significance of the project. The methodical approach for this study will use a mixed approach combining quantitative and qualitative aspects drawn from a pre- and post-questionnaire.

The study will be framed and outlined by the research question: To what extent can current technological tools and platforms provide a productive means to implement discipleship programs in a church plant through the use of internet video devotional materials? The current technological tools that will be used include the internet platforms of YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, websites, and email. The discipleship program will be derived from sermons from Core Church, a recent church plant located in Central Florida. The devotionals will be videos developed from the sermons delivered at Core Church. Analysis and conclusions will be drawn from the comparison and contrasts of the questionnaire responses.

## The Methodology

The mixed method will use the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data with analysis from the questionnaire responses. The research questions provided to the participants will be constructed to provide both open-ended and closed-ended responses. Open-ended responses are answers that are not provided to the participant. The responder will be allowed to provide whatever response they desire. The closed-ended response will list a series of answers that must be chosen from the list. The data collection procedures for both qualitative and quantitative will be conducted under rigorous controls providing anonymity of respondents and ensure reliability. The methodology of this study will be a mixed-method approach; the responses will be gathered from quantitative and qualitative answers and analyzed sequentially.

The mixed-method approach will be used to better measure the participants' views and perceptions derived from the project. The quantitative questions will allow the researcher to create reliable datapoints from the participants to determine the effectiveness of the study. The qualitative questions will provide the researcher deeper insight into the feelings and emotions the participants experienced during the project. The responses from the mixed-method approach will be evaluated by the researcher through the use of the independent and dependent variables.

Independent variables are treatments “that cause, influence, or affect outcomes” in the project.<sup>155</sup> The purpose of the research will be to find how technology and spiritual

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155. John W. Creswell, *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mix Methods Approaches*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 52.

devotions can be utilized in church plants to promote the greater use and practice of daily devotions in the lives of the congregants. The two agents of “devotions” and “technology” will be used in the project as independent variables. The participants’ current use of technology in the implementation of devotions will be measured and contrasted with answers from the post project questionnaire.

The dependent variables are those elements that react to the independent variables. Thus, they are “the outcomes or results of the influence of the independent variables.”<sup>156</sup> The dependent variable criteria for this project are “spiritual formation” and “discipleship.” The dependent variables will allow the researcher to examine and draw conclusions on the type and nature of change, both objective and subjective, that will be created from the independent variables of devotions and technology. The observed changes noted by the participants will be drawn from definitive data on the increase, decrease, or static change in the devotional habits. The subjective changes will be derived from the personally perceived changes in the participants' spiritual growth.

The project will also introduce a third variable into the results of the study. A moderating independent variable of church attendance at Core Church may affect the project conclusions, since the moderating variable affects “the direction and/or strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.”<sup>157</sup> The project participants who attend Core Church during the duration of the study should have a

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156. Creswell, 52.

157. Ibid., 53.

stronger attachment to the devotional material as it will be drawn from the church's weekly sermons delivered at Core Church.

### **Populations**

The participants in the project will be categorized into two primary populations. The first population will consist of regular attendees at Core Church. Each week during the four-week study, the sermon at Core Church will focus on spiritual formation and devotional habits. Since the video devotions will include small snippets from the sermon, the attendees at Core Church will find the video devotions reinforcing and expanding on spiritual concepts they recently heard in the sermon. The connection between the devotional videos and the Sunday sermons will be a crucial component when the results and perceptions of the post-questionnaire are analyzed. The researcher hypothesizes that the connection between the sermon delivered on Sunday and the video devotions uploaded during the week will lead to an increased use of the devotional material.

To test the hypothesis, a second population that has not heard the Sunday sermon will be introduced into the study. The second population will consist of participants in the project who do not attend Core Church and in most cases have only a nominal familiarity with the church. This population will be invited to participate through the use of the internet. They will have access to all the video devotions without having heard any previous sermons or attended Core Church. They will be exposed to the study through the invitation of friends or family who attend the Church. The use of internet platforms like

Facebook and Instagram will provide the researcher with the ability to reach participants who have little to no knowledge of Core Church. The results of this population will be contrasted for the differences and compared for the similarities to the Core Church participants to confirm or disprove the hypothesis.

A subset population from the internet population is possible. This subset will be internet individuals in the study who do not attend Core Church but have listened to the sermon via the church's weekly sermon podcast. The internet population will not be informed of or encouraged to listen to the podcast. However, a small number of participants may choose to access the podcast which will create the internet subset. The internet subset, if any, will be identified through the post-questionnaire and their responses contrasted and compared to the other populations.

### **Research Design**

The project will consist of four primary phases: planning, preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The goal of the project is to determine to what extent, if any, the use of technology, and by extension social media platforms, might contribute to the devotional habits of the church community. The primary population for the study will be the congregants at Core Church. Core Church is a recent church plant that is stable but has not experienced rapid numerical growth the leadership had expected. The church is currently focused on outreach that leads to numerical growth and spiritual growth. Numerical growth will not be the focus of the project; instead, the project will explore the

spiritual formation of the current congregants by examining their habits and perceptions of regular devotional discipline. The addition of another population, those who do not attend Core Church, will be used to examine similarities and differences from the results of the Core Church population.

### Planning

As previously explained, the use of regular biblical devotions for spiritual formation is relatively low in the American church today.<sup>158</sup> However, at the same time, although the use of printed material is the most accessed, the use of devotional materials through internet platforms has risen to the second most utilized media.<sup>159</sup> With over two-thirds of the Core Church attendees under the age of forty, the project will explore the use of modern technology and internet access with the application of devotional material.

To explore the spiritual formation of the Core Church congregants, the researcher determined that the measurement of individual spiritual growth should be connected as close as possible to the teaching and ministry of the church. To effectively expound the connection of the church's teaching and the spiritual growth of the members, the researcher will tie together the sermon delivered at the church to the video devotions that will be offered. In this manner, each devotional thought will be a derivative of the sermon teaching. The four devotions will not be a repetition of aspects of the sermon but

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158. "State of the Bible 2018: Seven Top Findings," *Barna Group*, last modified 2018, accessed January 7, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-of-the-bible-2018-seven-top-findings/>.

159. *Ibid.*

devotional ideas taken from the sermon and discussed with a practical application. For the goal of achieving the use of modern technology in the use of the devotionals, the researcher chose to offer the material in a video format, which will be accessed through the internet. The video format will be provided through various internet portals but primarily through YouTube.

### Preparation

In preparing for the project, the researcher will concentrate on the mechanics and human resources necessary to implement the study. The use of human resources will require careful attention to ensure the protections and rights of those participating in the project. A request of the Institutional Review Board of research involving human subjects will be made to secure proper authorization and create the appropriate procedures when human subjects are included. Written consent forms will not be utilized since the only documents connecting the participants to the responses would be the form itself.

The human subjects for the project will be recruited from two primary resources. Active participants from Core Church will be encouraged to join the study as well as anyone on the internet who is made aware of the project. The church participants will be invited to the study through the use of church announcements, an email invitation, and social media announcements. During the project, a four-week sermon series on spiritual growth will be promoted to remind the church members of the project during the month. The recruitment of the internet participants will be made through the relationships and connections of Core Church members via their social media contacts and platforms.

Before the implementation of the project, access to the pre-questionnaire survey will be made available through Core Church's website (see Appendix A).

### Implementation

The implementation of the project will begin on Sunday, January 13, 2019, with the delivery of the first sermon in the project series. The four sermons that will provide the foundation for the video devotions will be based on teachings from the book of Colossians. The first sermon will be drawn from chapter one and each following message from chapters two, three, and four. The text of Colossians was chosen for the project to draw from the book's strong teachings on spiritual formation (see Appendix C). The sermons will be video recorded to facilitate the connection between the Sunday sermons and the devotions. The recording of the sermons will allow the researcher to locate and edit a short video from the sermon to be used with the video devotion.

The creation of each video devotion will follow a primary formula. The opening of the devotions will have a story, metaphor, or illustration to set the direction of the devotion. The second part of the devotion will transition from the opening to a short video clip from the sermon. Following the sermon insert, the researcher will make a general connection between the opening illustration and the sermon clip. The third and central part of the devotion will concentrate on the heart of the devotional teaching and the practical application. The final section of the devotional will list a specific scripture the viewer will be encouraged to read and study.

The length of the video devotions will run from five to eight minutes. Studies from YouTube videos indicate that the most successful presentations do not exceed ten



minutes. Minimatters, a video production and marketing company, have found that "in the top ten most popular YouTube videos, the shortest was 42 seconds, and the longest was 9 minutes and 15 seconds. The average video length was 4 minutes and 20 seconds."<sup>160</sup> The videos will be recorded to conform to the following goals:

Opening Illustration:	1 to 2 minutes
Sermon Snippet:	1 to 2 minutes
Main Idea:	2 to 3 minutes
Application Scripture:	1 to 2 minutes

Each video devotion will be uploaded to Core Church's YouTube channel. The participants will be encouraged to subscribe to the YouTube channel and allow notifications. When the devotions are uploaded each week on Tuesday through Friday, the subscription will serve as a reminder for the viewers to watch the devotion.

### Evaluation

The evaluation for the project will be created from the comparison and contrast of the pre- and post-questionnaires, personal feedback from the participants, and general observations by the researcher. Each source of data will be filtered through the primary research question of examining the use of devotions as a means of spiritual formation in the use of modern technology. The evaluation of the project will also be driven by a

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160. "The Best Video Length for Different Videos on YouTube," *Minimatters*, last modified 2017, accessed January 9, 2019, <https://www.minimatters.com/youtube-best-video-length/>.

subset of research questions and the grounding hypothesis that the use of technology can improve devotional habits.

Research Evaluation Questions:

1. Did the participants find the use of video devotions beneficial for their devotions?
2. Was the use of internet platforms convenient or helpful to access the devotions?
3. Was there any difference in video viewing between the different populations?
4. Do the participants at Core Church believe the use of video devotions improved their devotional habits?
5. Do internet participants believe the use of video devotions improved their devotional habits?

Project conclusions will be derived from the observations and perceptions drawn from the analysis of the post-questionnaire. The researcher expects that some of the Core Church participants will reflect a natural bias toward a favorable or positive outcome they perceive the researcher might desire. The anonymity afforded the participants should mitigate some of this influence.

## Research Timeline

Project timelines and procedures will be created to provide sufficient data and proper participation for the research project and analysis. The following provides a brief overview of the construction, implementation, and evaluation of the study:

### Preparations:

June 2018:	Finalize project structure, variables, and plan for implementation
July 2018:	Establish the need or purpose of the project
August 2018:	Submit and gain IRB approval for human subject research
September 2018:	Research and write theological and philosophical foundation for the project
October 2018:	Set goals and founding hypothesis for the project
November 2018:	Advertise and recruit participants to complete pre-questionnaire
December 2018:	Write and gain approval for project methodology and approach

### Project

January 6, 2019:	Pre-week, finalize signup for Core Church and internet participants
January 13, 2019:	Week One, Sermon 1, Colossians 1 Tuesday through Friday, Video devotions 1 to 4 uploaded
January 20, 2019:	Week Two, Sermon 2, Colossians 2 Tuesday through Friday, Video devotions 5 to 8 uploaded
January 27, 2019:	Week Three, Sermon 3, Colossians 3

Tuesday through Friday, Video devotions 9 to 12 uploaded

February 3, 2019: Week Four, Sermon 4, Colossians 4

Tuesday through Friday, Video devotions 13 to 16 uploaded

February 9, 2019: Release the post-questionnaire through YouTube, emails, website

February 13, 2019: Send reminder notices to collect post-questionnaire surveys

March 2019: Analyze the data and finalize evaluations and conclusions

### **Research Instruments**

The primary tool for collecting the research data will be the pre- and post-questionnaires created by the researcher (see Appendices A and B). The surveys will be made available online through SurveyMonkey. The researcher will be collecting demographic information from the participants to facilitate data analysis concerning the ease of use of internet material. The data collected will help the researcher conclude the extent to which different age groups interacting with internet devotions. The questionnaires will be used to measure the effects the independent variables have on the dependent variables. For example, the participants will be asked how the technology of the video devotions (independent variables) may have affected the viewers' spiritual growth (dependent variable).

The two questionnaires will consist of a total of twenty questions, ten questions for each survey. The items will be constructed so as to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The pre-questionnaire will be used to establish a general baseline to

measure any real and perceived spiritual growth during the month of video devotions. The benchmark will also chart the current willingness of the participants to use the internet for devotional material and how, if any, desire might have changed over the course of the project. The post-questionnaire will create an opportunity for the participants to provide comments and feedback on the project.

### **Research Protocol**

The following facts have been provided should the need arise for further research or studies.

- The researcher is the senior pastor of the church plant. The project will be conducted within five years of the church's creation.
- The ministry board for the church agreed to the church's involvement in the study.
- The researcher will announce the project during a church service and send emails informing the congregants of the plan and requesting their participation.
- Any involvement by the church members in the project will be voluntary.
- The use of SurveyMonkey will allow for all the questionnaire responses to be kept anonymous.

- The church congregants will be encouraged to invite anyone they wish to join the project through the internet portal. The randomness of the invitations offered through the internet should provide a more diverse internet population.
- The data collected from the surveys will be tabulated by hand by the researcher.

### **Conclusion**

The researcher believes that following the methodology in the above chapter will result in an accurate and successful project regarding the viability of internet technology with devotional habits. The mixed-method approach that will be used in this project will provide quantitative responses as well as qualitative measures of perceived outcomes. Although the perceptions of the participants concerning their spiritual growth during the course of this project will be a subjective conclusion, the summation of the data will be drawn from objective responses. Time restraints will force the study to be limited to one month of video devotions. Future researchers might find extending the project duration to up to three months beneficial when determining possible progress in the participants' spiritual formation. Additional studies on the topic of video devotions might be greater served with strong video expertise to enhance the final products.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Project Analysis**

#### **Introduction**

The primary research question implemented for the project explored the correlation of modern technology with the practical application of spiritual devotional habits. The researcher specifically examined the correlation with the devotional videos through the use of internet devices with the goal of increased participation in the practice of the devotions. The instruments of the pre- and post-questionnaire were analyzed and data extrapolated to determine which, if any, of the research goals were achieved.

The chapter has been divided into five functional sections to explore the success or failures of the project goals, the technological use of the devotions, a comparison between Core Church and internet populations, YouTube metrics, and various general demographics. The researcher examined the primary project goal from the data to determine how the participants viewed the practical use of video devotions. Two secondary goals were also measured for effectiveness, including the ease and accessibility of incorporating devotions into modern technology and the comparison and contrast of the populations of Core Church attendees and the internet participants. The questions from the pre- and post-questionnaire were grouped into the five main sections, and the data points from the questions were analyzed with a general observation, the presentation of supporting data, and the interpretation of the data by the researcher.

## Primary Research Goal

The primary research goal was to measure the effectiveness and impact the video devotions had on the participants. The participants were asked three specific questions to measure the goal. The three questions were designed to measure the participants' views on the value, usefulness, and the degree to which the video devotions influenced the spiritual formation of the participants.

The value of the video devotions to a participant's spiritual walk was seen as very positive (see Table 4.1). The participants' responses indicated that 68 percent of them felt the devotions were very or extremely valuable. While everyone indicated that the devotions were of some value, only 4 percent thought the value was low.

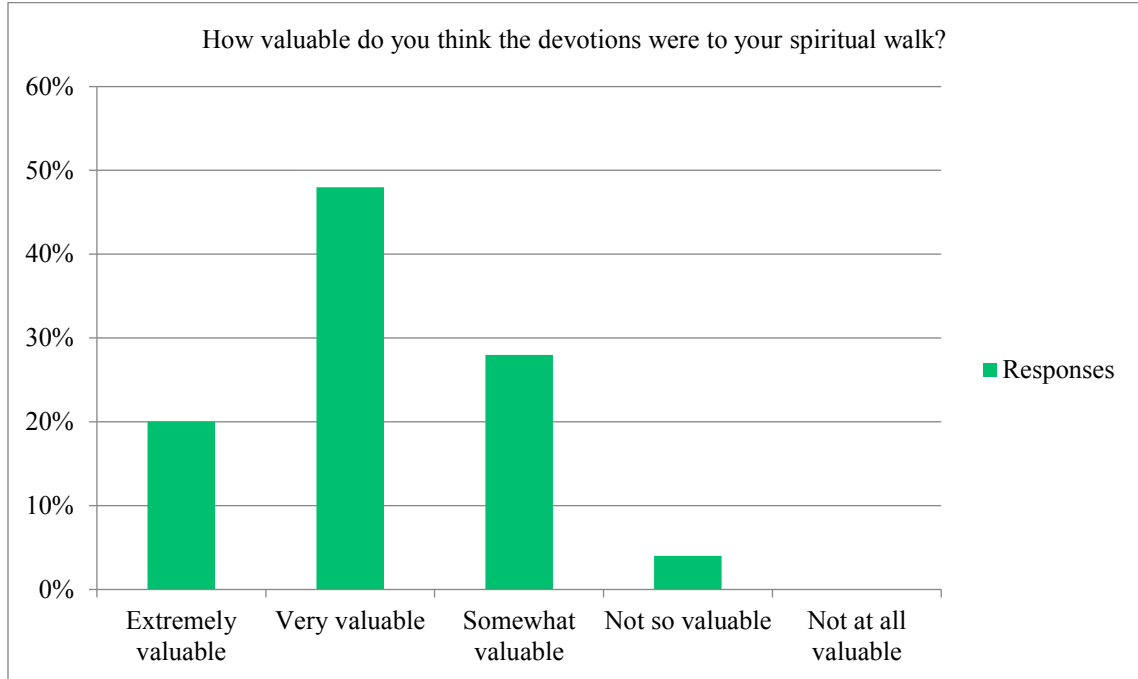
Table 4.1. Value of video devotions

<b>How valuable do you think the devotions were to your spiritual walk?</b>		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely valuable	20%	5
Very valuable	48%	12
Somewhat valuable	28%	7
Not so valuable	4%	1
Not at all valuable	0%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

Even though the value of the video devotions was considered high for the spiritual walk of the participants, this question did not explore any change the devotions might have had on those that responded. The value of the responses measured the general acceptance of the video devotions as a positive contributor to the spiritual formation of each (see Table 4.1.1).



Table 4.1.1. The value of video devotions



The video devotions were seen as relevant regarding the spiritual insight the participants were able to gain (see Table 4.2). All of the respondents indicated that the spiritual insight provided in the devotions was somewhat useful to extremely useful. The question on spiritual insight drew an overwhelming response, with 80 percent believing the devotions were very to extremely useful.

Table 4.2. The usefulness of the devotions

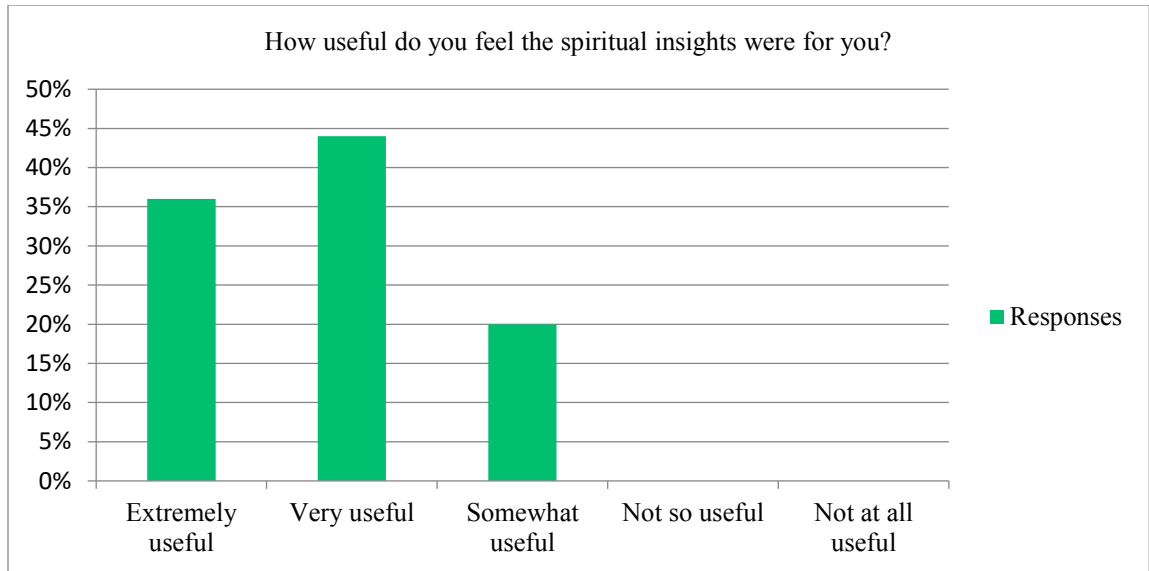
How useful do you feel the spiritual insights were for you?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely useful	36%	9
Very useful	44%	11
Somewhat useful	20%	5
Not so useful	0%	0
Not at all useful	0%	0

Answered

25

The question, which concerned the spiritual insights from the devotions, was designed to measure the emotional response of the participants. The use of the word “feel” was a deliberate attempt to elicit an emotional response (see Table 4.2.1).

Table 4.2.1. The usefulness of devotions



The spiritual insights the participants were able to gain had a practical aspect that involved their walk with God (see Table 4.3). The personal nature of this question created a wider diversity in responses as opposed to the previous questions of spiritual formation. Although a high number of people (72%) were able to gain spiritual insights for their lives, the responses indicated that 28 percent felt like the gain was only moderate.

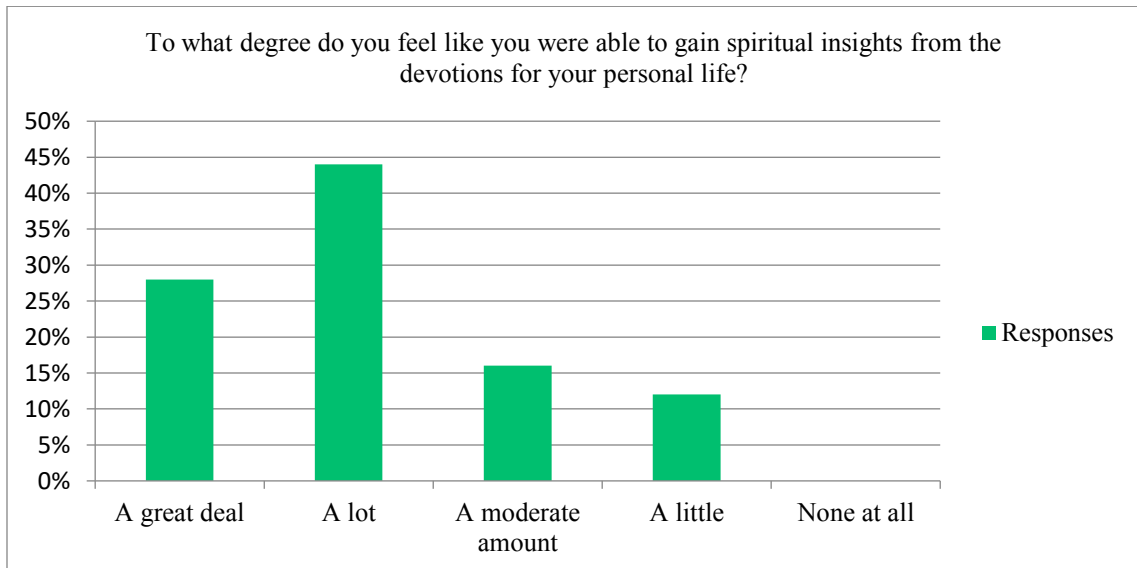
Table 4.3. The gain of spiritual insights

To what degree do you feel like you were able to gain spiritual insights from the devotions for your personal life?

Answer Choices	Responses	
A great deal	28%	7
A lot	44%	11
A moderate amount	16%	4
A little	12%	3
None at all	0%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

The researcher hypothesized that the use of video devotions would create a positive increase in the devotional habits of the individuals. The collective responses of the three questions indicate that participants were considerably more positive than not, with an average of over 73 percent gaining spiritual formation in their spiritual walk (see Table 4.3.1).

Table 4.3.1. The gain of spiritual insights



## Technological Use of Video Devotions

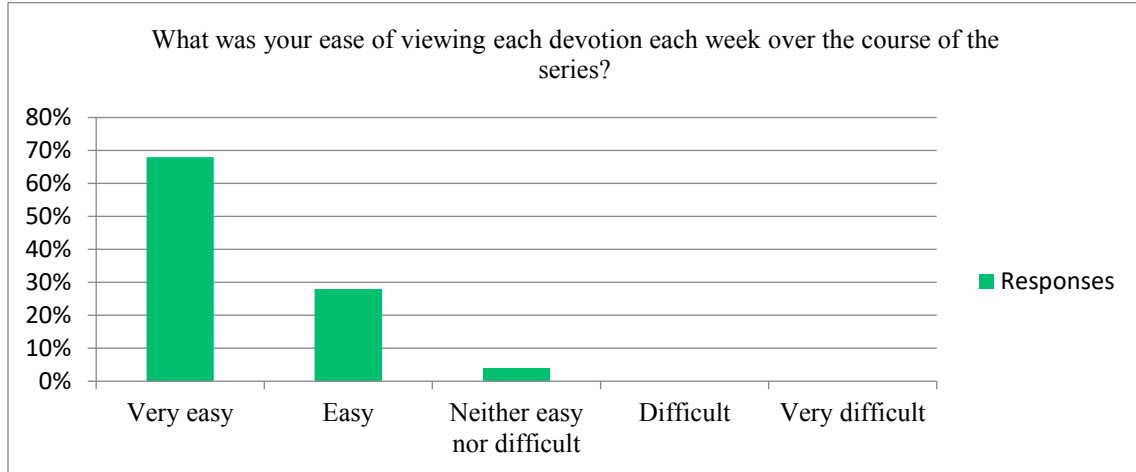
A secondary goal of the project was to measure the effectiveness and ease of use of internet technology in the practice of daily devotions. To ensure the success of the video devotions, the videos needed to be accessed and viewed with as much ease as possible. The video devotions were uploaded each day at six in the morning on the church’s YouTube channel. The number of views each video received was charted in the YouTube section. The following series of questions were designed to determine if the use of internet tools created a hindrance or enabled the videos for viewing.

The ease and access of the video devotions received high marks. During the four-week program 96 percent of the responses found no difficulty in viewing the sixteen different video devotions. Of those that responded, only 4 percent were neutral concerning accessing the videos (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Ease of viewing devotions

<b>What was your ease of viewing each devotion each week over the course of the series?</b>		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very easy	68%	17
Easy	28%	7
Neither easy nor difficult	4%	1
Difficult	0%	0
Very difficult	0%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

Table 4.4.1 Ease of viewing devotions



The participants indicated that accessing the devotions and watching them over the course of the project did not present a measurable obstacle. The ability to access the videos without problems did not seem to be dependent on the ages of the participants since over 20 percent of the individuals were 55 years and older (see Appendix A). The ease of viewing the devotions was highlighted by a question that focused explicitly on any technical trouble experienced in viewing the videos.

The respondents recorded very little technical trouble when viewing the devotions. Since 96 percent of the respondents experienced no difficulty viewing the devotions, the YouTube platform proved a reliable means of watching the videos and indicated sustainability for future access (see Table 4.4.2).

Table 4.4.2

<b>Did you have any technical trouble finding and viewing the devotions?</b>		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	4.00%	1
No	96.00%	24
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

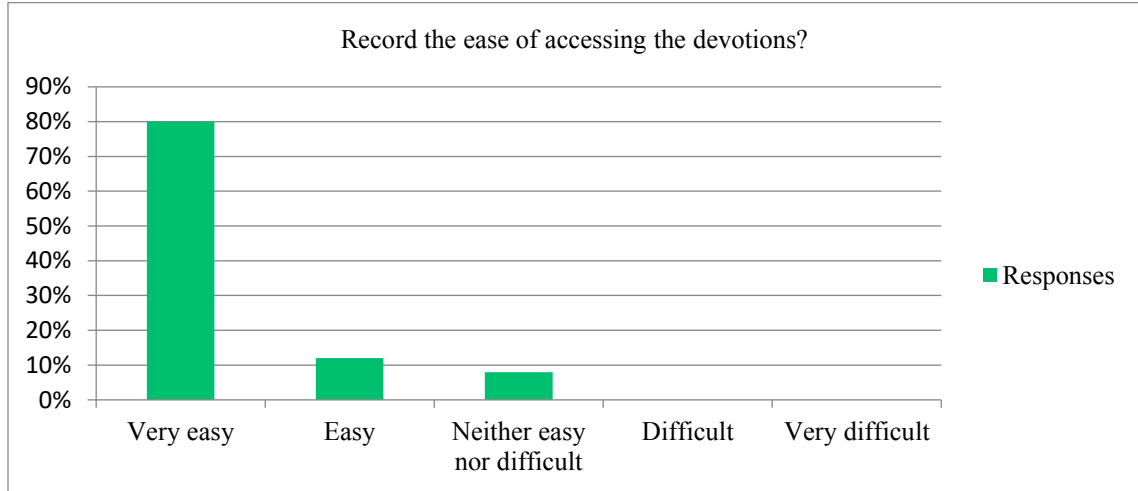
As the ease of viewing the videos was considerable so also was the ease of accessing the devotions (see Table 4.5). The questions in table 4.4 and 4.5 were placed separately in the questionnaire to reinsure the accuracy regarding the matter of viewing and accessing the videos. Both tables confirm a lack of any technical issues with viewing or obtaining the information. Table 4.5 records 92 percent of the viewers with easy to very easy access.

Table 4.5. Ease of accessing devotions

<b>Record the ease of accessing the devotions?</b>		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very easy	80.00%	20
Easy	12.00%	3
Neither easy nor difficult	8.00%	2
Difficult	0.00%	0
Very difficult	0.00%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

The ability to access and utilize video devotions with the ease of a few clicks on a mobile phone or computer removes potential technological issues relative to distributing the information to the viewers (see Table 4.5.1).

Table 4.5.1. Ease of accessing devotions



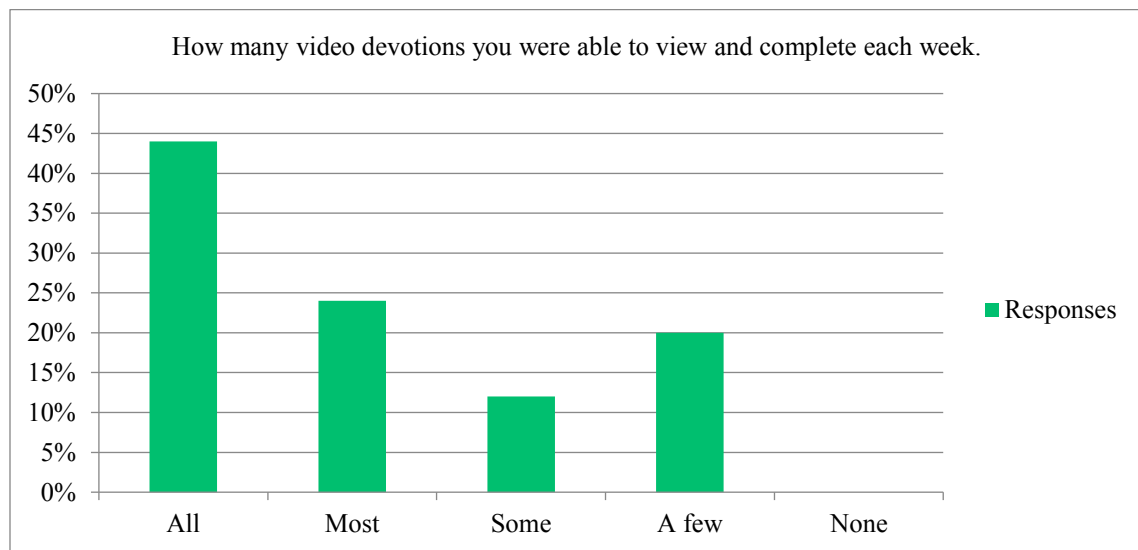
A measure of consistent viewing is vital in the evaluation of possible spiritual formation in the respondents (see Table 4.6). Each week four video devotions were uploaded on four consecutive days. Nearly half of the participants, or 44 percent, were able to watch all four of the devotions each week. When the second response is added to the top answer, 68 percent of the viewers were able to watch most of the devotions each week. However, 32 percent indicated they only viewed some or a few of the videos.

Table 4.6. Consistency in viewing videos

How many video devotions you were able to view and complete each week?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
All	44%	11
Most	24%	6
Some	12%	3
A few	20%	5
None	0%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

The relatively high number of those who viewed only one or two videos revealed the fact that about a third of the participants did not view up to 75 percent of the devotions. The 32 percent of non-views stood in contrast to the 73 percent who indicated a gain in spiritual formation (see Table 4.6.1).

Table 4.6.1. Consistency in viewing videos



Video devotion retention was a critical goal for building spiritual formation through the use of internet devotions (see Table 4.7). Devotions that were not entirely viewed to the end compromised the impact of the spiritual formation. Most of the participants, 84 percent, were able to complete each devotion fully. The 16 percent who only completed some or a few, usually four to six, of the devotions might have reflected the 28 percent who felt like the spiritual gain was only moderate or little.

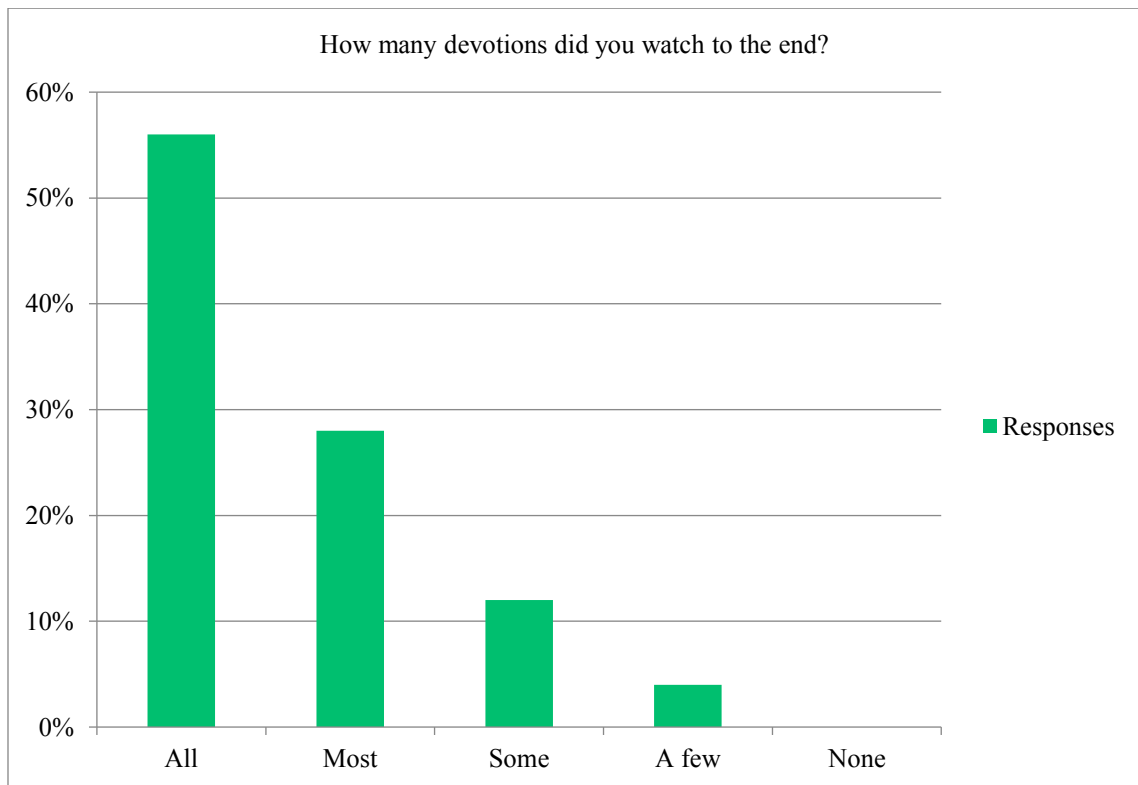


Table 4.7. Video devotion retention

How many devotions did you watch to the end?		
Answer Choices		Responses
All	56%	14
Most	28%	7
Some	12%	3
A few	4%	1
None	0%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

Video retention from the participants served as a critical mark in the goal for spiritual growth (see Table 4.7.1). The average view duration revealed a strong individual retention rate for each devotion, with 4 percent who completed only a few.

Table 4.7.1 Video devotion retention



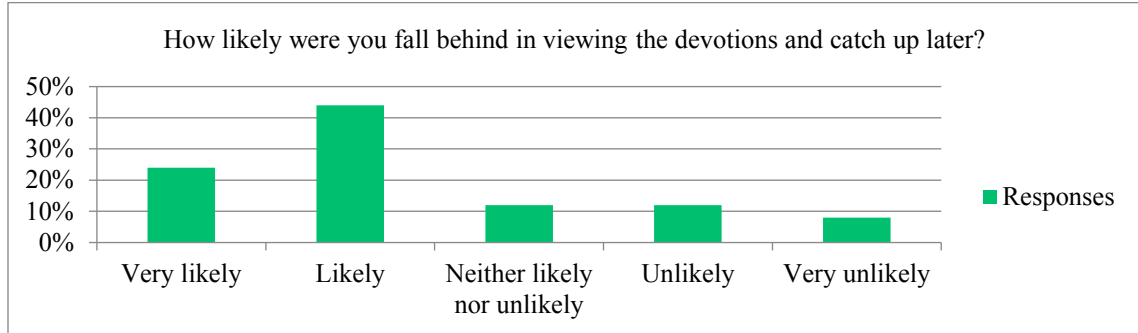
A large number of participants, 56 percent, found it difficult to consistently watch the video devotions as they were uploaded, falling behind and then attempting to catch up (see Table 4.8). The goal of encouraging greater participation in regular daily devotions was challenged by the viewers' consistency in their habit of watching the devotions. Many participants regularly fell behind their viewing, with 68 percent indicating they were likely or very likely to miss a devotion and attempt to catch up later. Only 20 percent were able to keep up with their daily devotions.

Table 4.8. Video devotion consistency

<b>How likely were you fall behind in viewing the devotions and catch up later?</b>		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very likely	24%	6
Likely	44%	11
Neither likely nor unlikely	12%	3
Unlikely	12%	3
Very unlikely	8%	2
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

The survey results of 68 percent not able to have a regular daily devotion indicated the video devotions might have been viewed as a task to be completed rather than a tool to aid in their regular devotion (see Table 4.8.1).

Table 4.8.1. Video devotion consistency



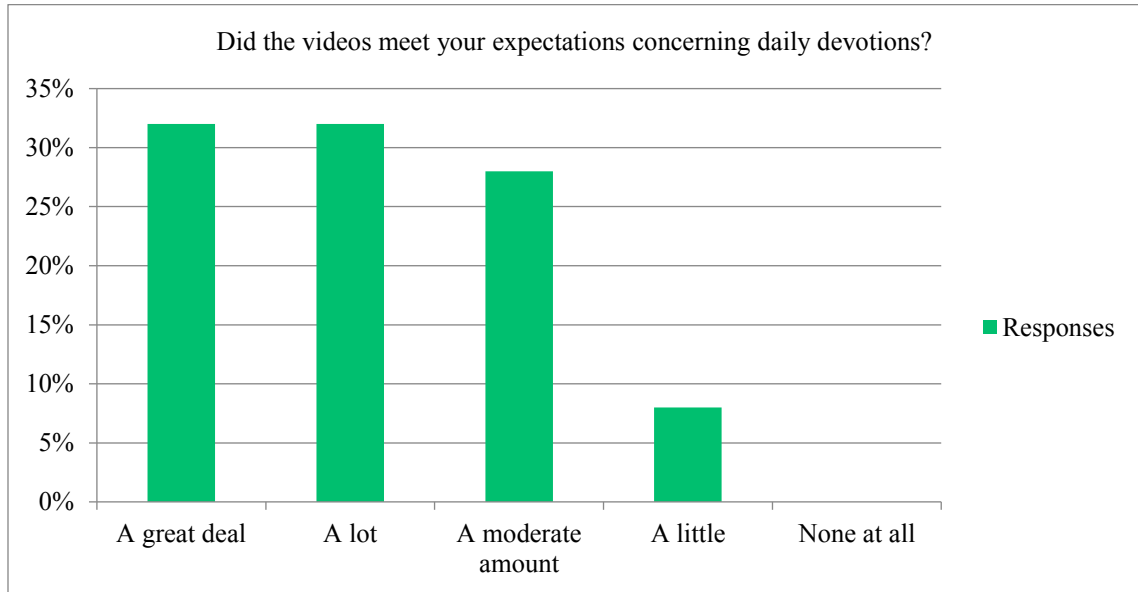
The expectations of the participants were generally met by the video devotions (see Table 4.9). The participants had a very positive view of the devotions, with 64 percent indicating that the videos matched their expectations considerably. Eight percent of the viewers noted that the devotions met expectations only a little.

Table 4.9. Devotion expectations

Did the videos meet your expectations concerning daily devotions?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
A great deal	32%	8
A lot	32%	8
A moderate amount	28%	7
A little	8%	2
None at all	0%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

The moderate or low expectation found in 38 percent of the viewers is noteworthy, since it reflected over a third of the participants (see Table 4.9.1). This question does not reveal the specifics of the respondents' low expectations. The low expectations of the individuals or negative response to the devotions would have an affect in the degree of increased spiritual formation in the viewers.

Table 4.9.1. Devotion expectations



An overwhelming number of the respondents believed that the duration of the video devotions was an appropriate length (see Table 4.10). When asked about the length of each video, 84 percent believe it was about the right length. A smaller number, 12 percent, thought the videos were too long or too short, with only 4 percent believing the videos were much too long. Of note is the fact that no one felt the videos were much too short.

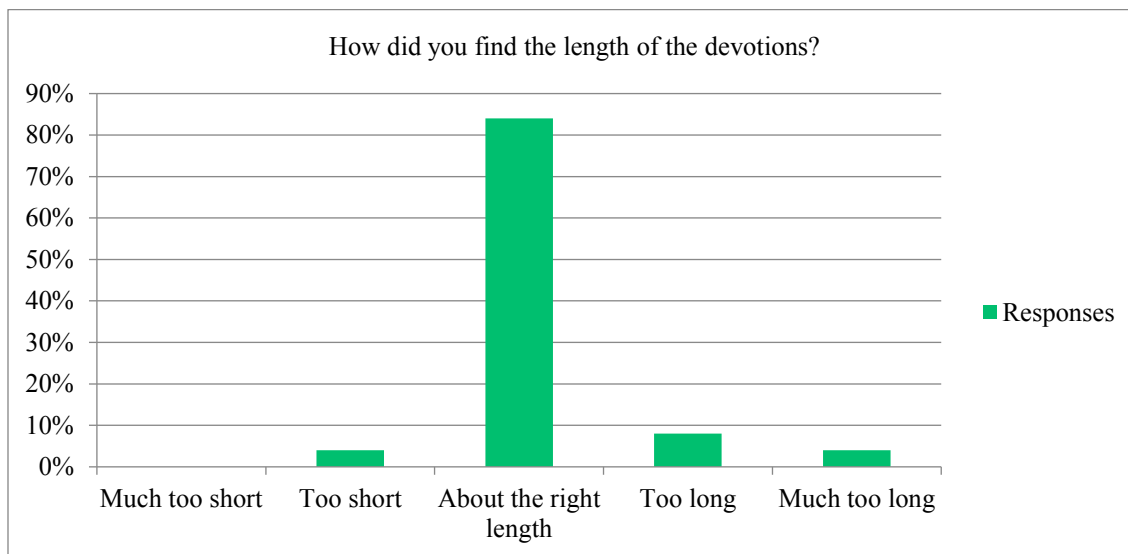
Table 4.10. Video devotion length

How did you find the length of the devotions?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Much too short	0%	0
Too short	4%	1
About the right length	84%	21
Too long	8%	2
Much too long	4%	1
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

The video devotions averaged about eight minutes in length (see Table 4.10.1).

While a substantial majority thought the videos were an appropriate length, nearly one in ten thought the videos should have been shorter. The videos were designed to complement and add to the devotional time of the participants.

Table 4.10.1. Video devotion length



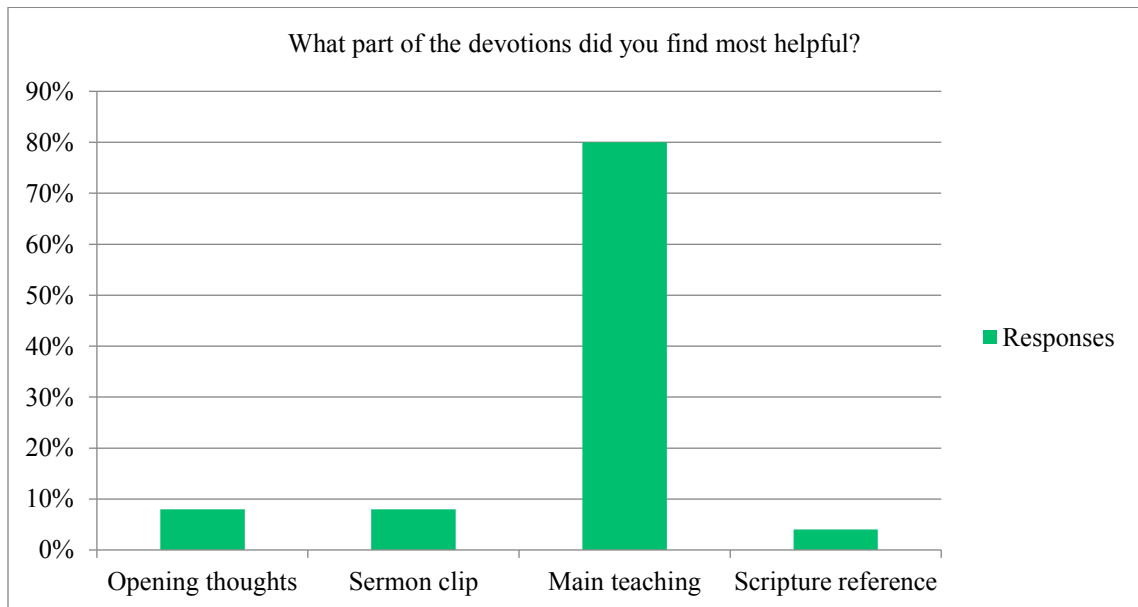
The most popular section of the devotions was the main teaching or thought presented in the videos (see Table 4.11). Between the four parts of the videos, the main teaching was overwhelmingly favored, with 80 percent indicating the teaching section as preferred. The other three sections of opening thoughts, sermon clip, and the scripture reference each received from four to eight percent preference.

Table 4.11. Video devotion sections

What part of the devotions did you find most helpful?		
Answer Choices		Responses
Opening thoughts	8%	2
Sermon clip	8%	2
Main teaching	80%	20
Scripture reference	4%	1
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

While the main teaching was the heart of the devotion, the sermon clip was designed to serve as a meaningful connection to the Sunday sermon (see Table 4.11.1). With only eight percent acknowledging the sermon clip as noteworthy, the goal of inserting the sermon clip to the devotions to create a greater connection to Core Church was not proven.

Table 4.11.1. Video devotion sections



## Core Church and Internet Populations

A secondary goal of the project was to compare and contrast different perceptions and results between those who viewed the Sunday sermon at Core Church and those who had not seen the sermon. The sermon clip that was a part of each video devotion was the core thought or idea that was expounded upon in the main teaching section of the devotion. The clip was inserted into the devotion to remind the participants of the sermon and build a connection between the teaching and the sermon. The participants were asked if they were currently attending Core Church to measure the different results that might occur between the two populations.

Seventy-two percent of the participants actively attended Core Church. The remaining 28 percent consisted of those who were invited to participate in the project by friends and or family through the internet (see Table 4.12). No one was excluded from joining the project, and the internet participants had little to no knowledge of Core Church or the Sunday sermon. Several questions were compared to measure any discernable differences between the two populations, with “yes” representing Core Church attendees and “no” representing respondents who do not attend the church.

Table 4.12. Core Church attendance

<b>Do you currently attend Core Church?</b>		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	72%	18
No	28%	7
<b>Answered</b>		<b>25</b>

The two populations recorded only a minor difference in the value the devotions had on their spiritual walk (see Table 4.13). While over 66 percent of the Core Church attendees believed the devotions were very or extremely valuable, the internet viewers recorded a similar 71 percent as very or extremely valuable to their spiritual formation. The Core Church attendees were higher by eight percent in the extremely valuable category, but the difference was effectively erased when the valuable data point was added to the totals.

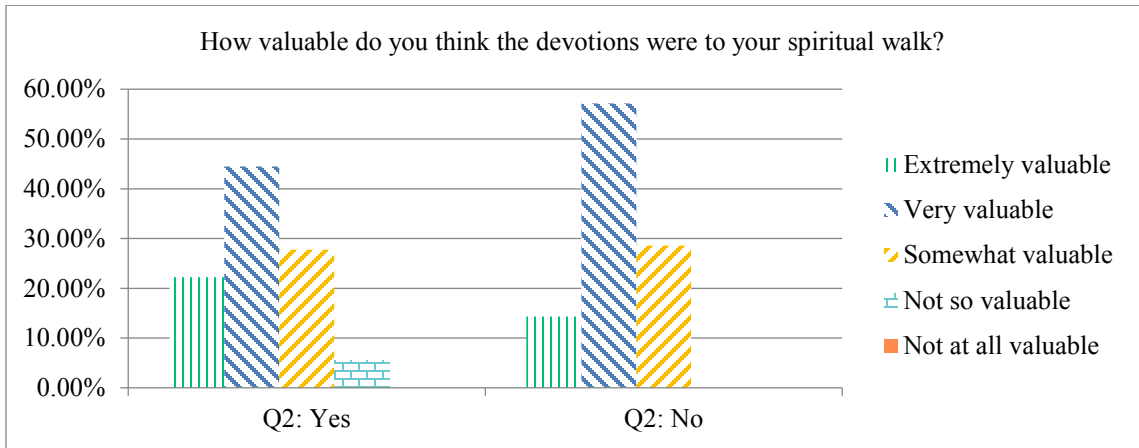
Table 4.13. Comparing the value of video devotions

<b>How valuable do you think the devotions were to your spiritual walk?</b>								
	Extremely valuable		Very valuable		Somewhat valuable		Total	
Q2: Yes	22.22%	4	44.44%	8	27.78%	5	72.00%	18
Q2: No	14.29%	1	57.14%	4	28.57%	2	28.00%	7
Total	20.00%	5	48.00%	12	28.00%	7	100.00%	25
<b>Answered</b>								<b>25</b>

The comparison of the two populations, where the “yes” responses were from Core Church attendees and the “no” responses were from people who did not attend the church, indicated that the spiritual impact the video devotions had on the participants was similar (see Table 4.13.1). The fact the Core Church attendees viewed the sermon in person did not affect or aid in the influence the devotions had on them.



Table 4.13.1. Comparing the value of video devotions



The internet group who did not attend Core Church scored the usefulness of the video devotions as valuable, while the Core Church group felt the devotions’ usefulness was less (see Table 4.14). The internet participants recorded the usefulness of the devotions at over 85 percent, while the Core Church participants consider the combined categories of very or extremely useful at nearly 78 percent.

Table 4.14. Comparing usefulness of video devotions

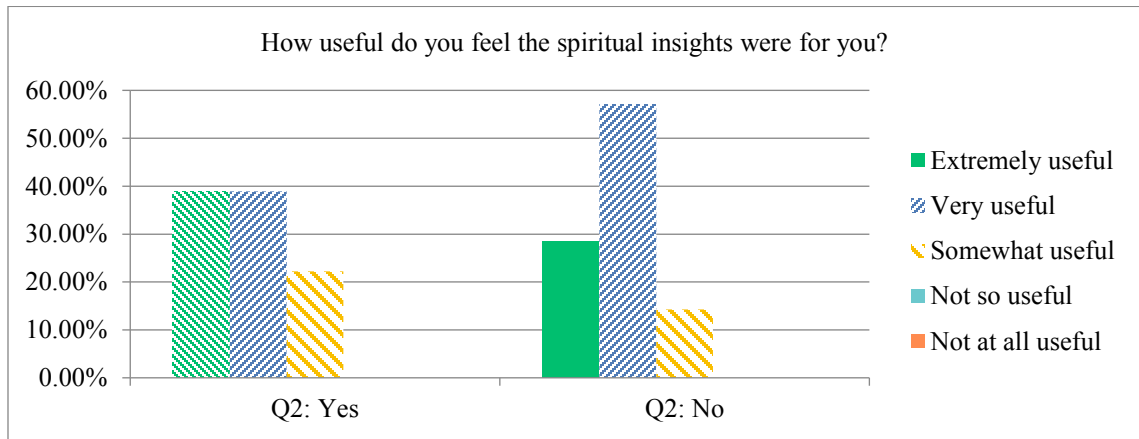
How useful do you feel the spiritual insights were for you?								
	Extremely useful		Very useful		Somewhat useful		Total	
Q2: Yes	38.89%	7	38.89%	7	22.22%	4	72.00%	18
Q2: No	28.57%	2	57.14%	4	14.29%	1	28.00%	7
Total	36.00%	9	44.00%	11	20.00%	5	100.00%	25

**Answered 25**

Table 4.14.1 supported the findings in table 4.13, which stated there was very little difference between the two populations concerning the impact the devotions had on

the spiritual formation of the participants. Both charts show that the internet viewers saw greater value and usefulness in the videos than the attendees of Core Church.

Table 4.14.1. Comparing usefulness of video devotions



The spiritual insights gained from the devotions were the same in both populations (see Table 4.15). Both Core Church attendees and the internet viewers noted their gain of spiritual insight from the devotions at approximately 72 percent.

Table 4.15. Comparing the degree of gain

To what degree do you feel like you were able to gain spiritual insights from the devotions for your personal life?

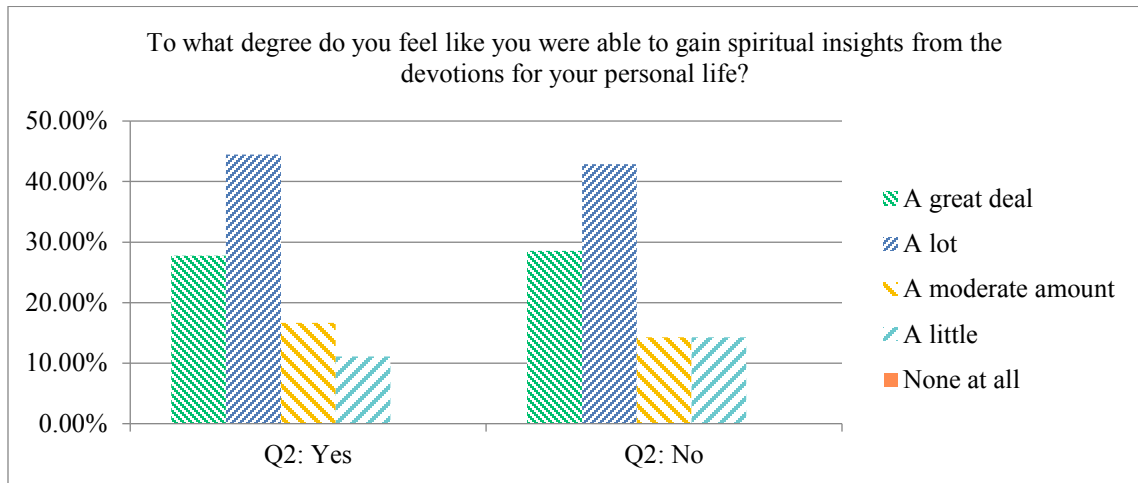
	A great deal	A lot	A moderate amount	A little	Total
Q2: Yes	27.78% 5	44.44% 8	16.67% 3	11.11% 2	72.00% 18
Q2: No	28.57% 2	42.86% 3	14.29% 1	14.29% 1	28.00% 7
Total	28.00% 7	44.00% 11	16.00% 4	12.00% 3	100.00% 25

Answered 25

The question of spiritual gain or insight was asked three times in three different questions, and all three showed little difference in outcome from the Core Church

attendees, who attended the sermon in person, and the internet participants, who only viewed the short sermon clip inserted in the devotions (see Table 4.15.1).

Table 4.15.1. Comparing the degree of gain



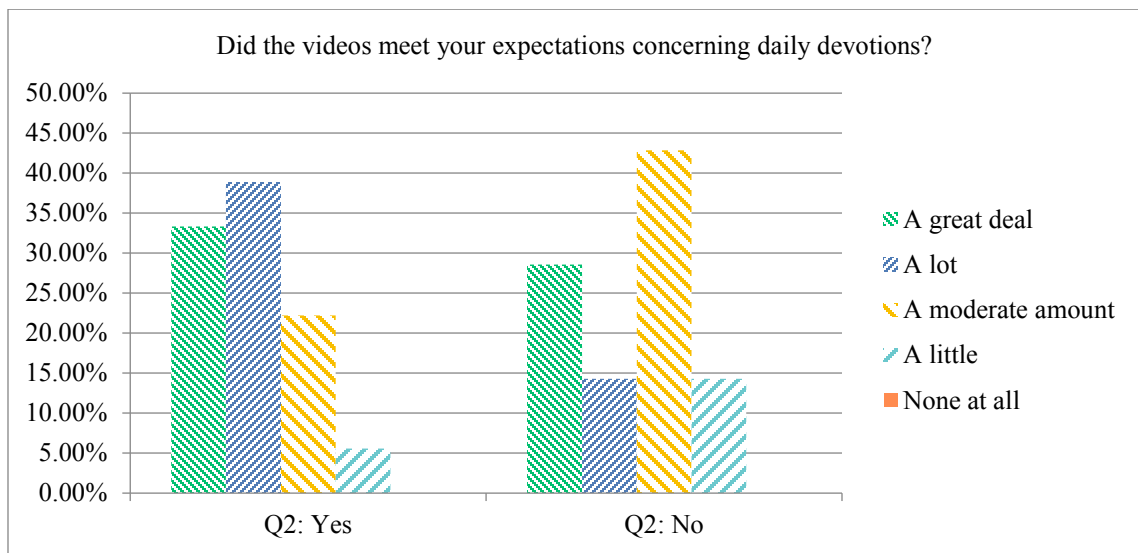
The expectations of the populations diverged in their views of the devotions (see Table 4.16). The Core Church attendees believed their expectations were met a lot to a great deal by over 72 percent. However, when asked the same question, the internet viewers concluded their expectations were met a lot or a great deal only by 43 percent.

Table 4.16. Comparing expectations

Did the videos meet your expectations concerning daily devotions?						
	A great deal		A lot		Total	
Q2: Yes	33.33%	6	38.89%	7	72.00%	18
Q2: No	28.57%	2	14.29%	1	28.00%	7
Total	32.00%	8	32.00%	8	100.00%	25
<b>Answered</b>						<b>25</b>

Even though the spiritual impact of the devotions seemed to be identical between the two populations, the expectations were not. The internet viewers who had higher expectations from the videos believed their expectations were not met. The internet participants recorded that their expectations were met a little to moderately at 57 percent (see Table 4.16.1).

Table 4.16.1. Comparing expectations



The likelihood of internet viewers not consistently watching the devotions was over 24 percent higher than the Core Church participants (see Table 4.17). The Core Church attendees recorded that their likeliness or very likeliness of falling behind in viewing the devotions was 61 percent, while the internet participants' lack of consistency was as high as 85 percent.

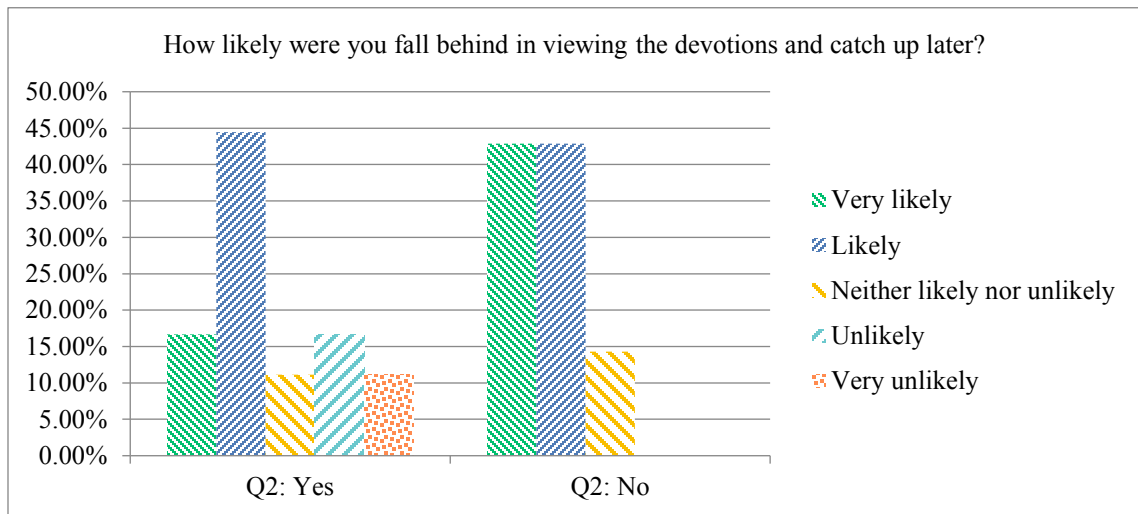
Table 4.17. Comparing devotion consistency

How likely were you fall behind in viewing the devotions and catch up later?						
	Very likely		Likely		Total	
Q2: Yes	16.67%	3	44.44%	8	72.00%	18
Q2: No	42.86%	3	42.86%	3	28.00%	7
Total	24.00%	6	44.00%	11	100.00%	25

**Answered 25**

The consistency of viewing the devotions each day without falling behind was stronger among the Core Church participants, with nearly 28 percent of them responding that they were unlikely to very unlikely to fall back (see Table 4.17.1). The difference in consistency was one of the few data points that differentiated the two populations.

Table 4.17.1. Comparing devotion consistency



The internet population who gave the “no” response was generally unsuccessful in viewing and completing the devotions each week (see Table 4.18). Of the Core Church participants, 83 percent were able to finish all or most of the videos. However, the

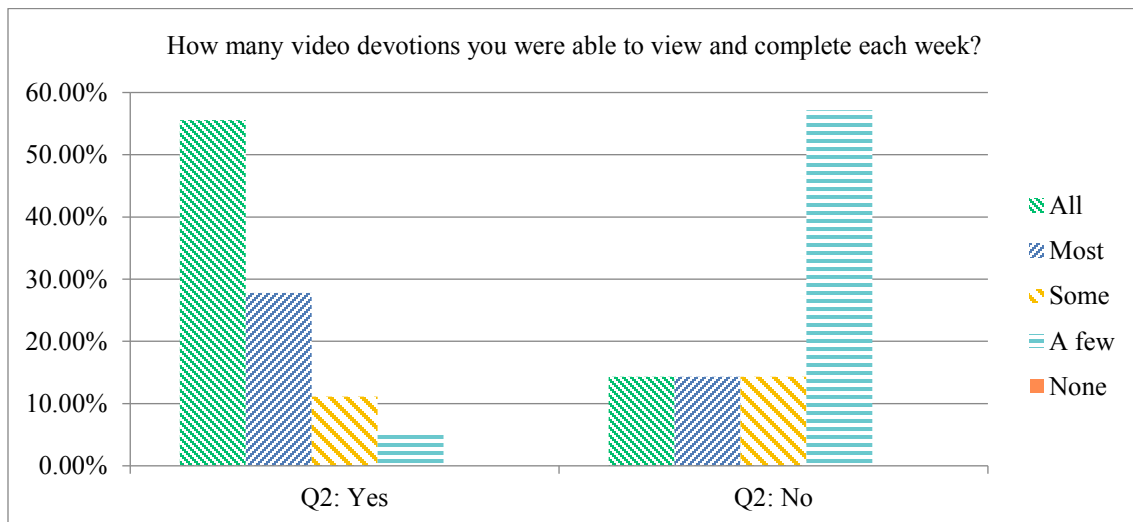
internet participants viewed all the videos each week at a much lower rate. Only about 29 percent of the internet viewers recorded that they watched all the videos each week.

Table 4.18 Comparing completed devotions

How many video devotions you were able to view and complete each week?										
	All		Most		Some		A few		Total	
Q2: Yes	55.56%	10	27.78%	5	11.11%	2	5.56%	1	72.00%	18
Q2: No	14.29%	1	14.29%	1	14.29%	1	57.14%	4	28.00%	7
Total	44.00%	11	24.00%	6	12.00%	3	20.00%	5	100.00%	25
<b>Answered 25</b>										

The question reveals the lack of consistency the internet participants were able to achieve when watching the video devotions (see Table 4.18.1). Over 57 percent of the internet individuals in the project noted that they were only able to view a few of the videos each week.

Table 4.18.1. Comparing completed devotions



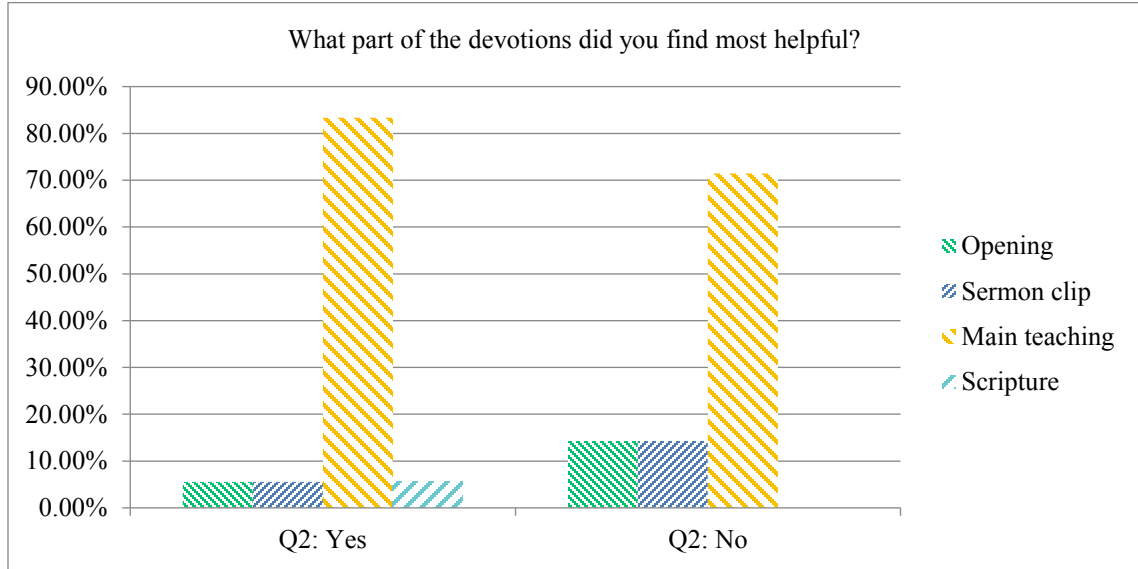
In both of the populations, the most visible aspect of the devotion was the main teaching (see Table 4.19). Both groups marked the teaching as the most important; Core Church participants recorded it at 83 percent and the internet viewers at 71 percent. Notably, both groups did not consider the sermon clip as impactful. Those who had not viewed the sermon in person marked the sermon clip higher, at 14 percent, while the Core Church attendees saw it as only five percent valuable.

Table 4.19. Comparing devotional sections

What part of the devotions did you find most helpful?										
	Opening		Sermon clip		Main teaching		Scripture		Total	
Q2: Yes	5.56%	1	5.56%	1	83.33%	15	5.56%	1	72.00%	18
Q2: No	14.29%	1	14.29%	1	71.43%	5	0.00%	0	28.00%	7
Total	8.00%	2	8.00%	2	80.00%	20	4.00%	1	100.00%	25
<b>Answered</b>										<b>25</b>

A comparison of the two populations showed very little difference in their responses to the video devotions (see Table 4.19.1). The small difference was immaterial and did not demonstrate relevancy to spiritual formation in the viewers. The internet-only viewers, found that the scripture section of the devotions had no impact on their reflections of the video devotions.

Table 4.19.1. Comparing devotional sections



### YouTube Metrics

The video devotions were uploaded on YouTube each week for four consecutive weeks. The devotions were made public for viewing at six in the morning. YouTube recorded the metrics of each video that was uploaded into the public domain. A total of 60 participants signed up to view the video devotions in the project. However, because the YouTube platform was open to any viewer, there was a possibility of viewers who did not register for the project viewing one more of the videos.

The viewing of the video devotions had a steady decline throughout the project (see Table 4.20). The most watched video was the first one, with 71 views, which is 116 percent of the recorded participants. The lowest recorded videos were numbers 9 and 12,



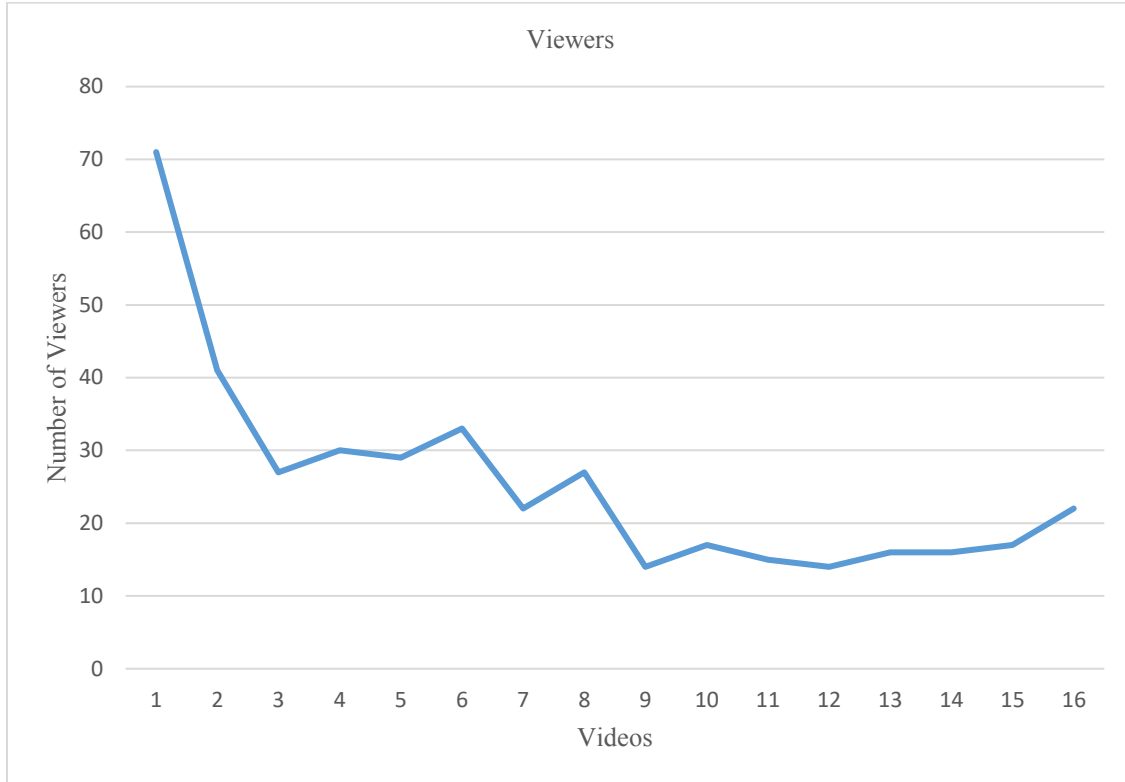
with 14 views each, which is about 23 percent of those who register for the project. On average, only about 43 percent of the participants watched any one of the devotions.

Table 4.20. YouTube viewers

Video #	Viewers
1	71
2	41
3	27
4	30
5	29
6	33
7	22
8	27
9	14
10	17
11	15
12	14
13	16
14	16
15	17
16	22
Total	411

The YouTube data points indicated a lack of consistency in the participants' viewing habits (see Table 4.20.1). A primary goal of the project was to determine if the use of modern technology could aid or increase the regular devotional habits of believers. As the four-week course progressed, the devotions continued to receive a smaller number of views. However, Table 4.20 indicates that the lowest number of views for the devotions was not week four, but week three. In the third week of the project, an average of 25 percent of the participants viewed the devotions, which was down from 70 percent in week one. In the fourth and final week of the project, the viewers averaged 30 percent in viewership, which was a small increase of five percent from week three.

Table 4.20.1. YouTube viewers

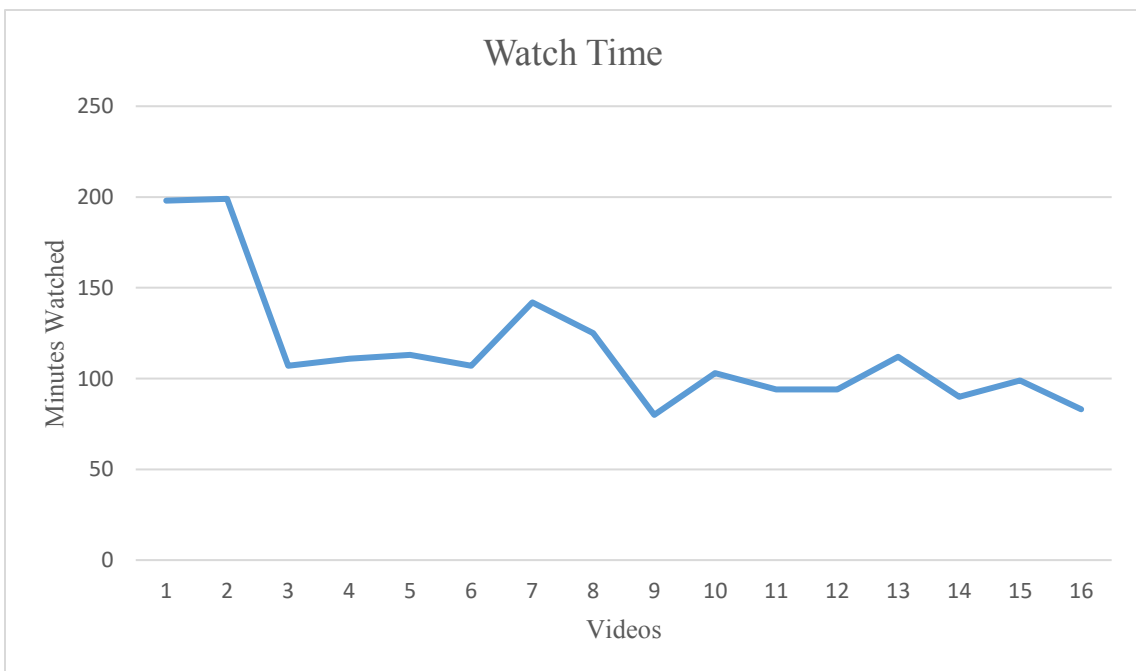


The watch time for each video devotion included the total amount of minutes viewers watched each particular video (see Table 4.21 and Table 4.21.1). In the first week, viewers spent the most time watching the second video, with 199 total combined minutes. In the second and third weeks, the high for minutes watched declined, with 142 combined minutes in video 7 and only 103 combined minutes in video 10. The final week of the project had an increase in the minutes observed, with 112 combined minutes, which was a 56 percent drop in minutes watched from the first week.

Table 4.21. Viewer watch time

Video #	Minutes watch
1	198
2	199
3	107
4	111
5	113
6	107
7	142
8	125
9	80
10	103
11	94
12	94
13	112
14	90
15	99
16	83
Total	1857

Table 4.21.1. Viewer watch time



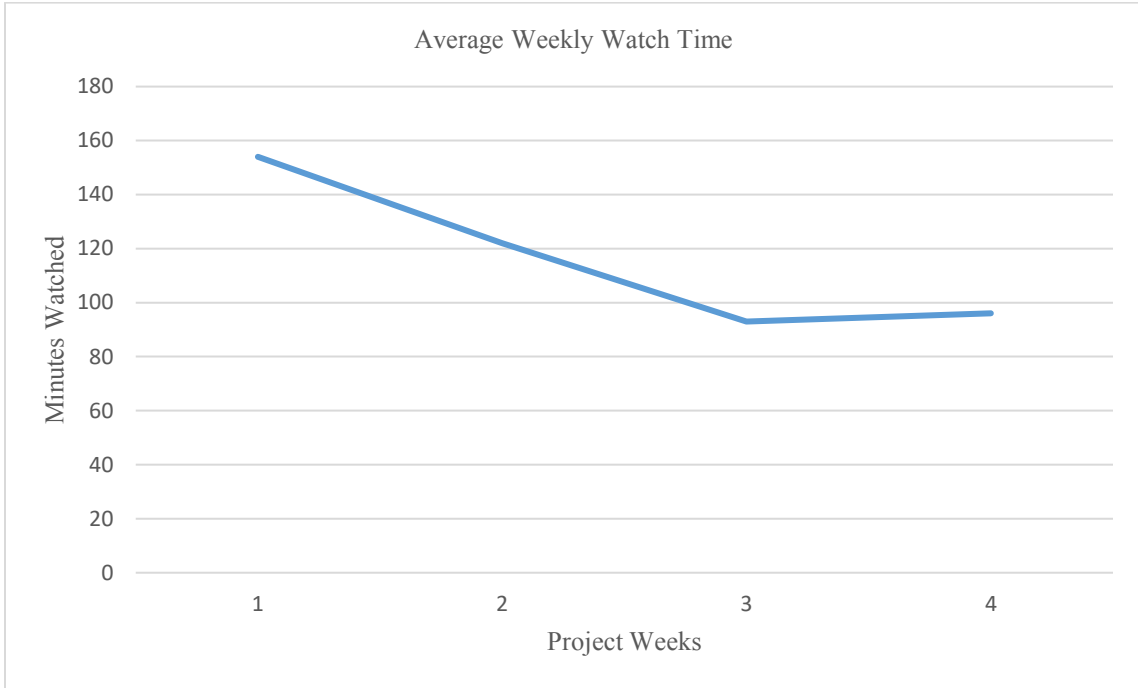
The average weekly watch time of the video devotions illustrated the substantial decline of minutes watched by the participants (see Table 4.22). In week one, the average amount of watch time in the videos was 154 combined minutes, while in the fourth week, the average time was 96 combined minutes. This drop represents a 62 percent decline in average minutes watched from the first week to the last week of the project.

Table 4.22. Viewer weekly average watch time

Weeks	Average Watch Time
1	154
2	122
3	93
4	96
Average	116.25

The decline in the average watched time mirrored the decrease in the overall viewership of the video devotions (see Table 4.22.1). Although the final week had a small increase of three percent from week three, the increase did not meaningfully impact the downward trend.

Table 4.22.1. Viewer weekly average watch time



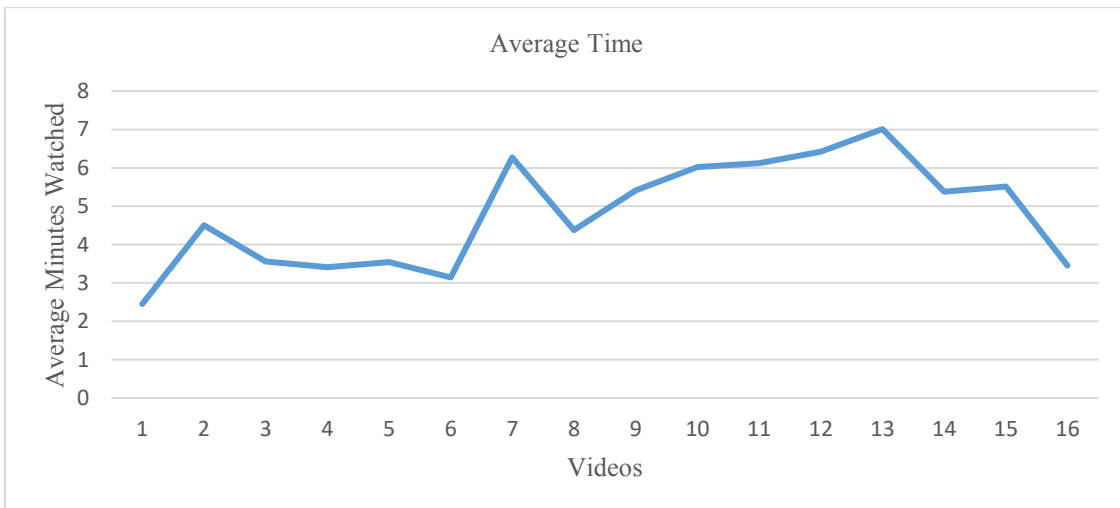
Although the video viewership declined throughout the project the average time each video was viewed did not reflect the decline (see Table 4.23). Even though 71 viewers watch some or all of video one, the most of any devotion, it had the smallest retention rate of only 2 minutes and 45 seconds. The most substantial retention rate was in week four, where video 13 averaged 7 minutes and 1 second in viewership.

Table 4.23. Video retention rate

Video #	Average Time
1	2:45
2	4:50
3	3:56
4	3:41
5	3:54
6	3:14
7	6:27
8	4:38
9	5:41
10	6:02
11	6:12
12	6:42
13	7:01
14	5:38
15	5:51
16	3:45

During the project, as fewer participants viewed the devotions, the retention rate began to increase over the course of the project (see Table 4.23.1). Although the viewers were fewer, they were more consistent in their viewing habits.

Table 4.23.1. Video retention rate



## General Demographics

### Participants' Spiritual Status

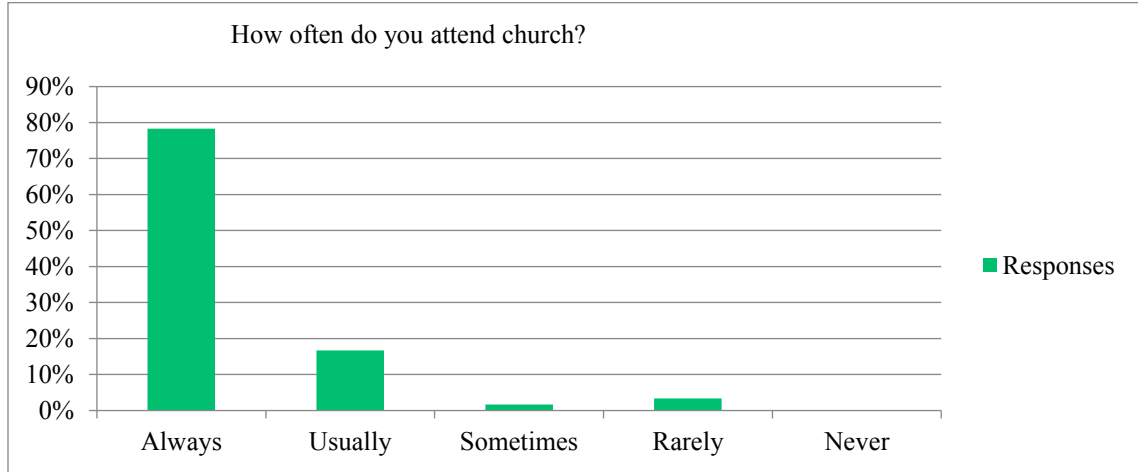
Although church attendance is not always a clear indication of spiritual status, a high number, 78 percent, of the participants in the project noted that they always attend church. In fact, the project individuals recorded that they usually or always attend church 95 percent of the time (see Table 4.24).

Table 4.24. Church attendance

<b>How often do you attend church?</b>		
Answer Choices		Responses
Always	78%	47
Usually	17%	10
Sometimes	2%	1
Rarely	3%	2
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>

The regular attendance of church by the participants provided insight into the familiarity of the viewers with devotional habits (see Table 4.24.1). Because only five percent of the video viewers attended church sometimes or rarely, the researcher concluded the respondents' awareness of devotional habits was at least equal to or higher than the occasional church attender.

Table 4.24.1. Church attendance



A majority of the video devotion viewers have been Christians for seven years or more. Only a few responders were new or young Christians, with two percent marking their Christianity at one to three years and two percent at less than one year (see Table 4.25).

Table 4.25. Years as a Christian

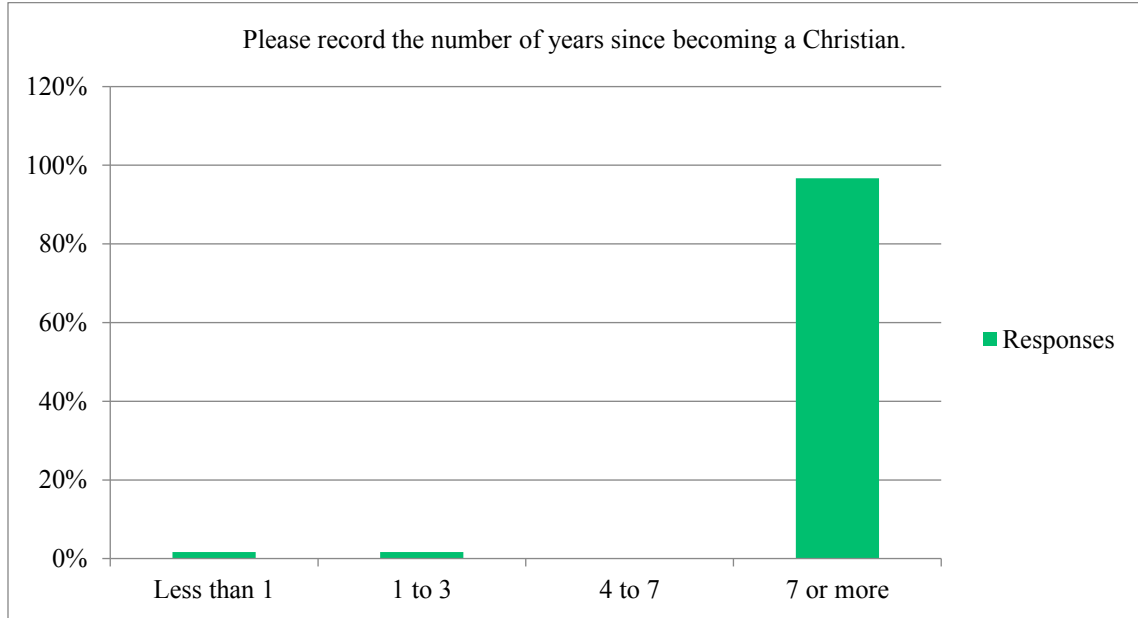
**Please record the number of years since becoming a Christian.**

Answer Choices	Responses
Less than 1	2%
1 to 3	2%
4 to 7	0%
7 or more	97%
<b>Answered</b>	
<b>60</b>	

In the questionnaire, 97 percent of all the respondents answered that they were a Christian for seven or more years (see Table 4.25.1). The high percentage of participants as established Christians correlates with table 2.24, where 95 percent responded that they attend church usually or always.



Table 4.25.1. Years as a Christian



The number of daily devotions the participants practiced each week was generally evenly divided (see Table 4.26). The highest number of participants marked that they practice daily devotions five to seven days a week 48 percent of the time. However, seven percent of the viewers indicated that they did not have any daily devotional habits.

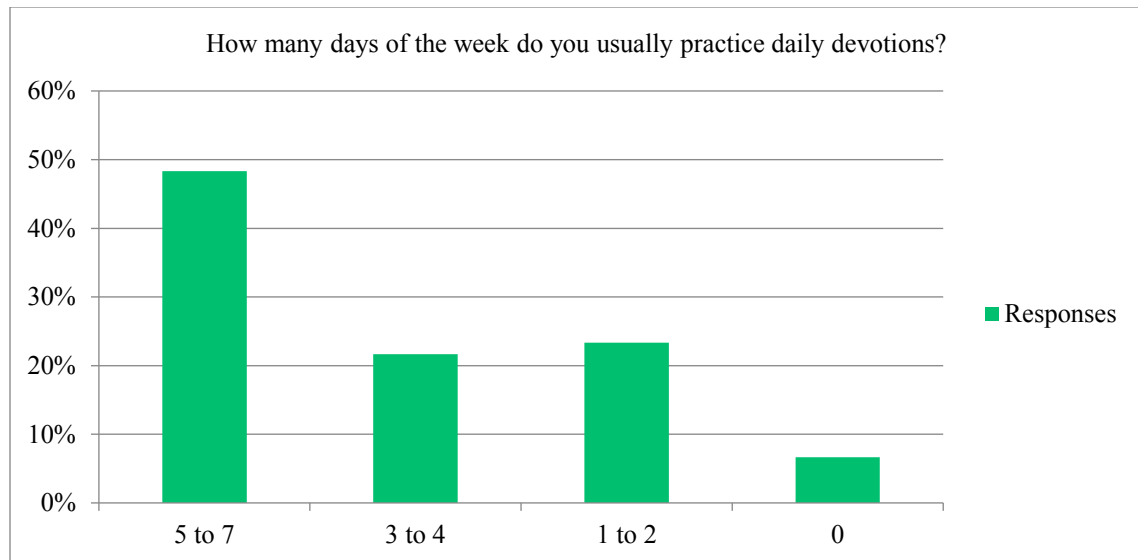
Table 4.26. Number of daily devotions

How many days of the week do you usually practice daily devotions?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
5 to 7	48%	29
3 to 4	22%	13
1 to 2	23%	14
0	7%	4
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>

The question revealed that about one third, 30 percent, of the devotional viewers did not have any previous spiritual habit of a daily quiet time (see Table 4.26.1). Table

4.26 is contrasted with table 4.25 where 97 percent of the non-devotional viewers were Christians for over seven years and table 4.24 where 95 percent of them almost always attended church.

Table 4.26.1. Number of daily devotions



### Technological Devices

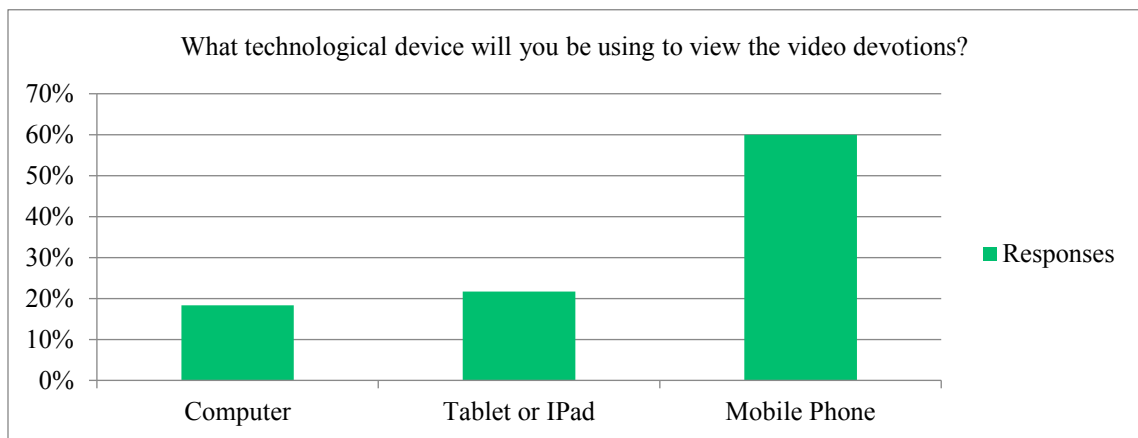
The mobile phone was the most common general device used to view the video devotions (see Table 4.27). In fact, the mobile phone was more than twice as likely to be used to access internet information, with 60 percent of the respondents preferring it over a computer or electronic tablet. The computer was the least favorite device, where it was used only 18 percent of the time.

Table 4.27. Common internet device

What technological device will you be using to view the video devotions?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Computer	18%	11
Tablet or iPad	22%	13
Mobile Phone	60%	36
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>

The use of the mobile phone and tablets to access videos on YouTube, 82 percent of the time, suggests a relative ease and access to the internet (see Table 4.27.1). The participants preferred the mobile phone when viewing the devotions in various sets of surroundings over that of the computer or even laptop computer.

Table 4.27.1. Common internet device



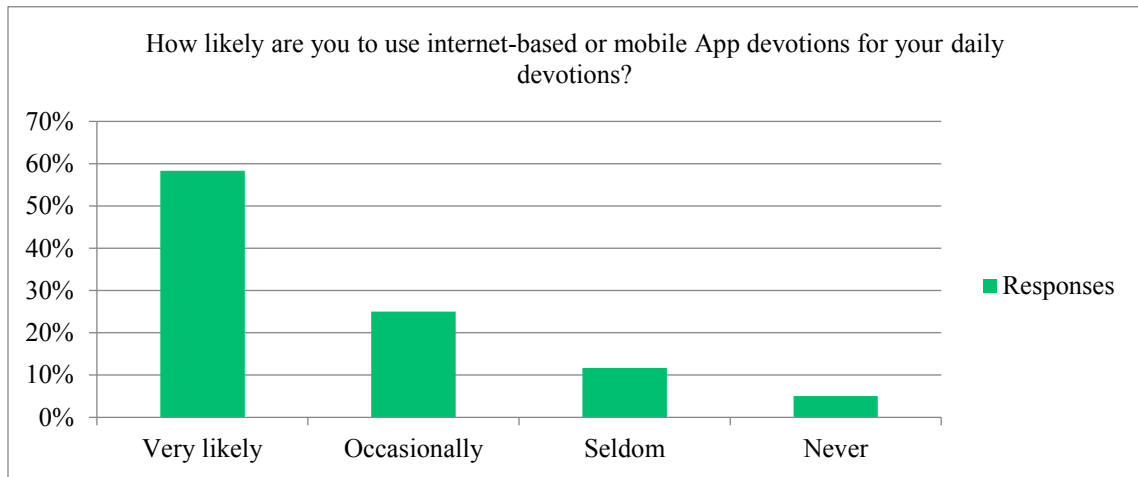
The participants were very likely to use an internet-based devotion in their daily spiritual habits. Fifty-eight of the respondents were very likely to use the internet in some form for their devotions (see Table 4.28). The remainder of the viewers were more unfamiliar with internet type of devotions, with 37 percent using online devotional material occasionally or seldom and with five percent not at all.

Table 4.28. Internet-based devotions

How likely are you to use internet-based or mobile App devotions for your daily devotions?		
Answer Choices		Responses
Very likely	58%	35
Occasionally	25%	15
Seldom	12%	7
Never	5%	3
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>

The relatively high number of individuals that had previously used the internet for their devotions may indicate the growing acceptance of online devotions (see Table 4.28.1). However, the lingering 42 percent with occasional to no online use, presents substantial obstacles for potential future internet-based devotionals.

Table 4.28.1. Internet-based devotions



The most popular internet devotion currently utilized among the participants was You Version (see Table 4.29). About 77 percent of the devotional viewers indicated they used internet devotional materials previous to the video devotion project. Of those that

had some experience with online devotions, two-thirds were actively using You Version. The 23 percent that noted none or no use of internet programs was higher than the 17 percent in table 4.28, which recorded seldom or no current use of internet devotional apps.

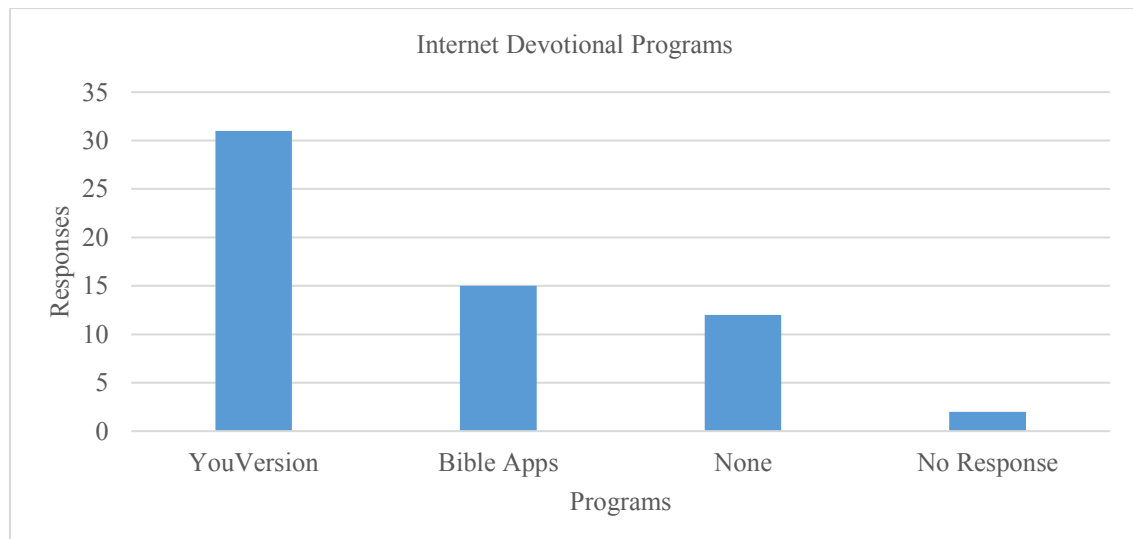
Table 4.29. Current technological programs

**Currently used internet devotional programs.**

Answers	Responses	
You Version	52%	31
Bible Apps	25%	15
None	20%	12
No Response	3%	2
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>

While internet devotional programs were common among three-fourths of the participants who viewed the video devotions, their experience was primarily limited to only one predominate program, which was You Version (see Table 4.29.1).

Table 4.29.1. Current technological programs



## Devotional Habits and Challenges

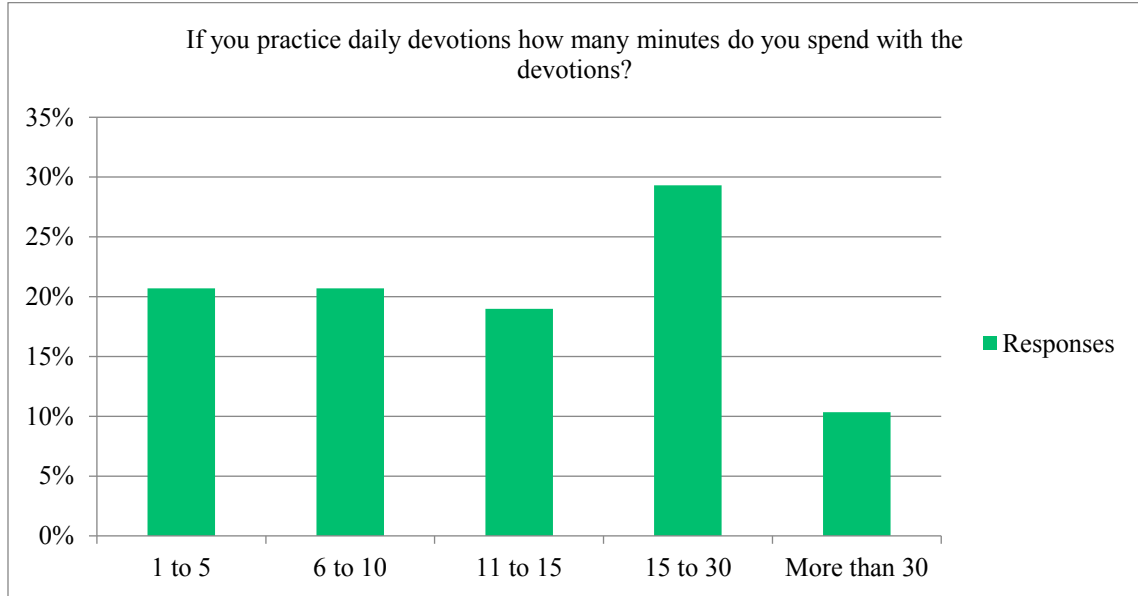
The number of minutes the participants usually spent in daily devotions varied greatly. Just under a third of the viewers spent from 15 to 30 minutes in their daily devotions, with a total of 58 percent practicing their devotions 11 minutes or more (see Table 4.30). The respondents who spent ten minutes or less in their devotions closely matched the nine minutes or less in the length of the video devotions.

Table 4.30. Minutes spent in devotions

<b>If you practice daily devotions how many minutes do you spend with the devotions?</b>		
Answer Choices	Responses	
1 to 5	21%	12
6 to 10	21%	12
11 to 15	19%	11
15 to 30	29%	17
More than 30	10%	6
<b>Answered</b>		<b>58</b>
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>2</b>

The diversity of times in the durations of devotions indicated differing views in the understanding of appropriate devotional durations (see Table 4.30.1). Even though the video devotions ran for about 8 minutes, no one commented they were too short. Future devotions that exceed the ten-minute mark would challenge the 42 percent of viewers who normally spend less than that amount in any daily devotion.

Table 4.30.1. Minutes spent in devotions



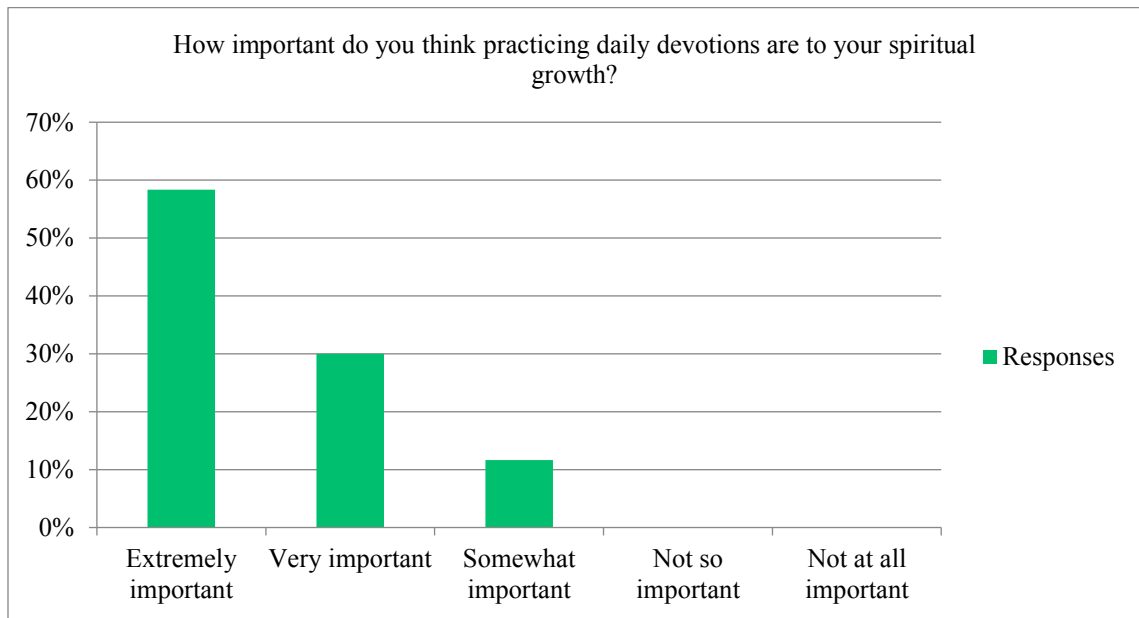
Most of the respondents believed that the habit of daily devotions was essential to their spiritual growth (see Table 4.31). A majority of 58 percent marked that the daily devotions were extremely important for their spiritual formation. Only 12 percent believed that the devotions were somewhat important to grow spiritually.

Table 4.31. Importance of daily devotions

How important do you think practicing daily devotions are to your spiritual growth?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely important	58%	35
Very important	30%	18
Somewhat important	12%	7
Not so important	0%	0
Not at all important	0%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>

The firm belief, about 88 percent, that their daily devotions were essential to growing in God was not matched with their ability to maintain the devotions (see Table 4.31.1). Table 4.8 revealed that 68 percent indicated they were likely or very likely to miss a devotion and attempt to catch up later.

Table 4.31.1. Importance of daily devotions



The most challenging aspect of daily devotions was the ability to find or make time for the practice of devotions. Close to 35 percent listed the time issue as their highest devotional challenged (see Table 4.32). Closely related to the challenge of time, were the problems of distraction and consistency, which totaled 43 percent of the list.

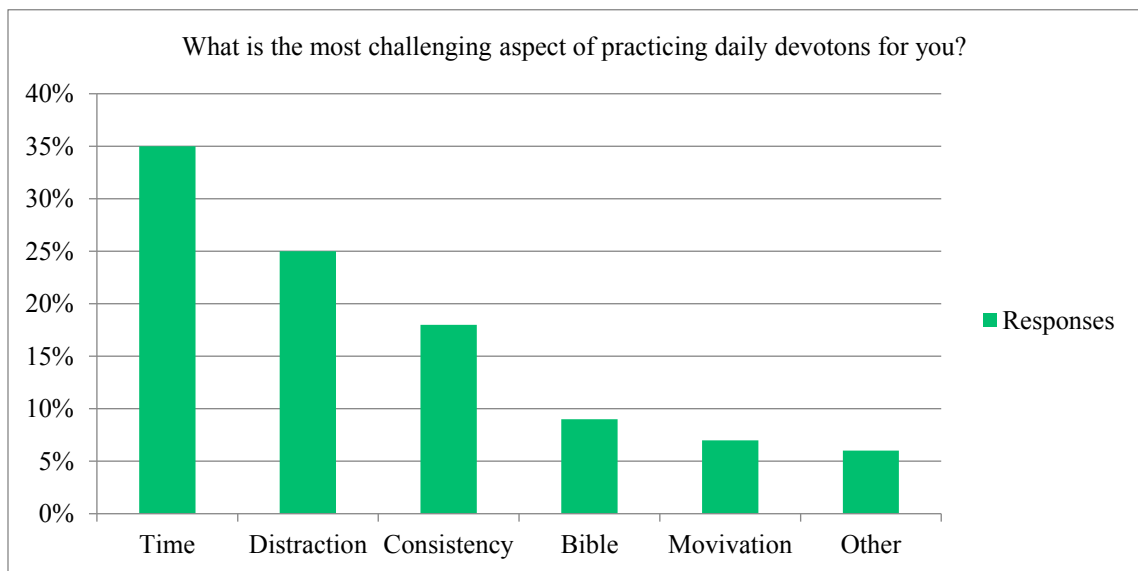


Table 4.32. Devotional challenges

What is the most challenging aspect of practicing daily devotions for you?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Time	35%	21
Distraction	25%	15
Consistency	18%	11
Bible	9%	5
Motivation	7%	4
Other	6%	4
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>

Although five outstanding problems were listed as challenges in practicing devotional habits, four of them were very similar. The challenges of time, distraction, consistency, and motivation were similar in priorities (see Table 4.32.1). The problem of understanding the bible only consisted of about 9 percent of the challenges.

Table 4.32.1. Devotional challenges



## **Project Analysis Summary**

The project examined the research question of whether the use of modern technology in the practice of daily devotions would increase or aid in the habits of the devotions. The examination of the project utilized the two instruments of a pre- and post-questionnaire. The pre-questionnaire was completed at the beginning of the project by sixty participants. After the four-week project, the post-questionnaire was distributed to the participants. The post-questionnaire was submitted by thirty of the participants.

After reviewing the responses to the ten questions in the pre-questionnaire and the fifteen questions from the post-questionnaire, the researcher identified meaningful tactical data points for analyses regarding the primary goals of the project. The outcome of the project goals was further explained and elaborated in the chapter to follow. The results are explored and conclusion extrapolated with the final implications, limitations, and applications delineated in the project conclusions.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Project Conclusions**

#### **Introduction**

The researcher's evaluations and observations extracted from the participant's information gathered in the project explored the goals, possible outcomes, and noteworthy lessons garnered from the process. The conclusions were framed by the limitations of the project, the devotional habits of the participants, and the integration of technology with spiritual formation. Finally, deductions submitted by the researcher were directed toward future studies, the implications on the Core Church congregation, and the theological impact of modern technology in personal spiritual devotions.

The foundational underpinning of the project was the research question exploring the use of current technological devices to build stronger devotional habits in Christians. The substance of the research question was directly connected to the theological influence in the mandate for discipleship discussed in the literary review. The great commission found in Matthew 28 contained one single command. As a church, Christians were commanded to make disciples in life's journey. The project did not attempt to identify the complete imperative of the command, but only one aspect of the application in the command. The "how" of the theological directive was explored through the use of the practical integration of technology and discipleship.

## **Goals and Outcomes**

The primary goal of determining the practical use of technology with devotional habits was applied through the use of video devotions distributed over a four-week course, where the devotions were uploaded and viewed through the internet platform of YouTube. The primary goal was examined through the practical use of four supporting secondary goals. The four goals endeavored to increase participants' consistency in their use of weekly devotions, increase the personal reflection of spiritual growth in the participants, measure the effectiveness of the technological integration of the devotions, and gather information from the responses to determine the most effective means to create and distribute future devotions.

### **Goal: Increase Devotion Consistency**

The first goal of the project will be to increase participants' consistency in their use of weekly devotions. The goal was measured by two objectives, to have at least 50 percent participation from the regular attendees at Core Church and to have at least 60 percent of the participants successfully view at least 80 percent of the weekly devotions. The objective of 50 percent participation was successful, with over nearly 60 percent of active members involved in the project and over 70 percent of the total participants as Core Church attendees.

The second objective of viewing at least 80 percent of the devotions, (twelve of the sixteen videos), by a majority of the participants was not successful. Table 4.6 indicates that only 68 percent of the viewers were able to watch from twelve to all of the

devotions. The relatively high number of those who viewed only one or two videos revealed that about a third of the participants did not view up to 75 percent of the devotions. Although 84 percent of the respondents did view most of the devotions to their conclusion, as Table 4.8 shows, participants regularly fell behind their viewing, with 68 percent indicating they were likely or very likely to miss a devotion and attempt to catch up later.

The failure of the second objective of adding greater consistency through the platform of internet devotions, was also not achieved. Even though an extremely high number of participants believed that accessing the videos through the internet platform created greater ease and accessibility to watch the devotions, their consistency was not considerably increased by its use. The devotional challenges and impediments that plague other devotional programs seem to be just as prevalent in the internet devotions.

#### Goal: Spiritual Growth

The goal of spiritual growth was measured by the objectives of at least 60 percent of the participants acknowledging an increase in spiritual growth from devotions and at least 50 percent participation from the internet population. The participants' responses indicated that 68 percent of them felt the devotions were very or extremely valuable. The respondents acknowledged that spiritual growth was a result of their experience with the video devotions. Despite the failure of the consistency objective the spiritual growth goal was successful.

The second objective, which was the internet population measuring the spiritual significance of the devotions at 50 percent, was also successful. The question of spiritual

gain or insight was asked three times in three different questions. All three of the questions show little difference in outcome from the Core Church attendees who attended the sermon in person and the internet participants who only viewed the short sermon clip inserted in the devotions. Although spiritual growth from the devotions is very subjective, the high spiritual value placed on the videos by the participants marks the spiritual growth as a successful goal.

#### Goal: Technological Integration

Two objectives were employed to measure the success of the integration of technology with personal devotions. The first objective was to measure the success in utilizing the YouTube platform with the devotions. Throughout four weeks in the attempt to view sixteen different videos, 96 percent of the responses found no difficulty in observing the devotions. Table 4.5 records that 92 percent of the viewers felt they had easy to very easy access to the devotions. The objective of the access and ease of technological integration was highly successful.

The second objective focused on the effectiveness of the integration. Table 4.7 reveals that video retention from the participants served as a critical mark in the goal for spiritual growth. The average duration view revealed a strong individual retention rate for each devotion, with only four percent indicating they completed only a few of the devotions. The integration of the devotions with the internet proved successful and offered no hindrance to the individuals' spiritual formation. However, the overall goal of the technological integration was more than removing hinderances, but offering motivation and increasing the spiritual significance of the devotions. Table 4.9 indicates

that almost 40 percent of the expectations that the participants had were not met. The unmet expectations affected the devotions goal to promote and encourage any level of spiritual formation. From this observation the researcher concluded this goal as neutral, neither highly successful or unsuccessful.

#### Goal: Future Devotions

The goal of accessing future devotions through the internet was measured with two specific objectives. The first objective was to determine if the video devotions were of the sufficient length and attraction to foster continued use and interest in internet accessed devotions. Second was to have the sermon content in the devotions build stronger connections and ties to the sermon presented at Core Church. An overwhelming number of the respondents believed that the duration of the video devotions were an appropriate length. When asked about the range of each video 84 percent thought it was about the right length. The first objective of devotional length and attraction was successful.

The second objective focused on the use of a sermon clip into the devotions. Although the entire message of each devotion was drawn from the sermons, specific clips were used to encourage the connection of the devotion to the Sunday sermon. Table 4.11 indicates that between the four sections of the videos, the main teaching was overwhelmingly favored, with 80 percent reporting that section as preferred. While the main teaching is the heart of the devotion, the sermon clip was meant to serve as a meaningful connection to the Sunday sermon. With only 8 percent acknowledging the sermon clip as important, the goal of connecting the Sunday sermon to the devotion was

not achieved. Since each devotion was derived from the sermons it was concluded that the connection was generally substantial. However, the low acknowledgment of the sermon clip indicated the sermon theme was meaningful, but not the actual video clip.

The project's primary goal presented mixed results. The technological integration of devotions and the internet was successful on several levels. The devotions were easy to view and access when the participants desired to see them. The teaching and impact of the devotions seemed to have a positive spiritual effect on the participants. However, the use of the internet and video presentation did not have a sizable bearing on the consistency or discipline of viewing the devotions. The method of the video devotions in future programs would have a positive impact on the spiritual formation on those who would commit to the program. However, the technological tools for devotion did not demonstrate a vivid increase in the use or practice of the devotions.

### **Lessons Learned**

The video devotional project has demonstrated that the use of technology with devotional material is a valued and useful means of disseminating spiritual teaching. The openness and acceptance of the internet devotions by the participants indicated the people were ahead of the church in their willingness of technological integration in their spiritual lives. The lesson was not about whether the people were ready for online assimilation, but how quickly the church would catch up to society's use of internet programs.



The incorporation of internet technology with existing church programs was not a smooth or easy process. The creation and dissemination of the video devotions for online viewing was not a major project. However, even the most basic use of today's technology required knowledge of the various platforms. Each of the devotions had to be recorded, edited, and transferred to a suitable format for use on YouTube. The use of the software required learning curves before the information could be made available to online users. The use of the sermon clips needed several individuals from the church's tech to ensure the message was recorded, merged with the sound recording, and transferred to a format that could be used for editing.

After the final video devotion was produced, it was uploaded to YouTube. The use of YouTube was not complicated but required a working knowledge of that communities' rules and requirements. For example, the sermon may have contained recordings or music that was not allowed on YouTube for copyright issues. If these regulations are not followed in detail the video could be marked and not allowed to be viewed. The researcher experienced this complication on one of the videos. The result was that the video was delayed for several hours before it could be seen online. The video devotion had to be re-edited before its rerelease.

A valuable lesson gained from the project demonstrated that the lure of technology might draw attention to a devotional program, but will not create discipline. The project had sixty participants register for the program. The first video devotion uploaded recorded seventy-two viewers. The devotion was watched by twelve additional viewers over the sixty registered participants. However, the last video devotion had only

twenty-two views. The videos could not create the discipline to maintain the program; spiritual hunger had to come first.

The use of YouTube created a level of expectation and professionalism that was difficult for the researcher to reach. Almost anyone can upload a video on YouTube, but a video that is expected to draw and keep the attention of many viewers must adhere to certain standards in the YouTube community. The videos the researcher produced compared to the expectation of video quality often viewed on YouTube created a high expectation for the program. Several participants commented that the quality of the last few video devotionals was substantially higher than those of the first week.

### **Limitations of the Project**

The project was limited to the regular attendees of Core Church and the various internet contacts generated from the church's connections. The current attendance of Core Church severely limited the size of the population available for research. The project enlisted the participation of sixty respondents with about thirty percent of the individuals drawn from the internet population. Therefore, the conclusions and analysis of the data were narrowly confined to the views of this population. A larger community might have provided a more diverse set of data points and conclusions.

The four-week project length provided an adequate time to measure the responses of the populations. However, a program that was able to span a more extended period would be able to explore more detail aspects of the viewer's habits and the overall success

of the video devotions. A study of greater longevity could investigate the consistency and gains in individual's spiritual formation.

The video devotions were not intended to limit the individual's devotions to the six to eight minutes of the videos. It was hoped that the devotions would challenge and encourage the viewers to further personal interactions in their devotions. However, feedback to the researcher found that almost all of the viewers limited their devotion time to merely watching the video. Some of the respondents coupled the videos with other current devotional programs where they were currently involved. Additionally, the scriptures provided in the devotions did not cause further reading in the Bible.

### **Devotional Habits**

The importance of regular spiritual devotional habits in the body of Christ is essential for the growing health of the Church. The result of studies that indicate a shockingly small number of believers actively participate in regular devotions should not deter the promotion and advancement of inventive devotional habits. The project revealed weakness in the idea that merely because a devotional program is integrated with current technology, it will enhance spiritual formation. However, the study also highlighted positive attributes of a devotional program like online video devotions.

With a program's utilization of technology many common excuses for not keeping regular devotions might be rendered irrelevant. According to the project the most common challenge people face in their attempt to maintain regular devotions is their lack

of time. A program of online video devotions would offer the most flexibility in the participant's use of time. The video devotion can be accessed at any time with essential ease and provides practical teaching with a minimal amount of distraction. The ease of access is important since distraction was the second most noted challenge listed by the participants. The online devotions can present the primary teaching in a manner that can reach even the shortest of attention spans. Within about eight minutes, the devotions gave a biblical thought, connected that thought to the teaching of Core Church, and applied the teaching with a biblical reference. Feedback provided to the researcher indicated that the daily presence of the pastor in the videos reminded some members of the previous week's sermon. One participant said, "Pastor, it was like seeing you every day this week." However, generally the sermon clip seemed to have little effect on the spiritual formation of the participants.

### **Technology and Devotions**

Although the critical message of God's Word does not change, how the message is expressed is in constant change. The focus on the project was not to open up the possibilities of internet video devotions, but the understanding that technology should be examined for the possibility of creating new and inventive ideas that encourage and support regular spiritual devotions. Technology is changing at such an incredible speed that it is entirely possible that current technology explored in this project might be rendered obsolete within in a few years.

At the time of the project, the use of uploading video devotions online to be accessed by anyone willing to watch was the most practical and accessible format. However, as technology changes, so do the means and methods best suited for devotional material. In ten years, a new and inventive method for devotional material might surface. The goal is not to become locked into internet video devotions uploaded on YouTube, but maintaining a current and relevant interface with any new product platform.

### **Recommendation for Future Study**

The project provided a solid foundation for exploring the integration of technology with the use of regular devotional habits. Future study and projects could investigate the correlation of more precise targeted populations. The project could conduct a cross-sectional research that compared and contrasted the responses of communities consisting of new Christians who do not have any regular devotional habit and Christians who do not attend church. The diversifying of the people might reveal undiscovered insights.

Future studies that had access to larger population groups and expanded the research over a longer duration could build more productive analyses from the respondents. Larger population groups that extended over two or more congregations, especially from differing theological backgrounds, could attempt to find common theological perspectives in the issue of devotions and use of technology. A project of ninety to one hundred and twenty days would test the limits of devotional consistency.

## **Final Thoughts**

The research and video devotion project has explored the realistic integration of modern technology with individual personal devotions. The success and failure of the goals have demonstrated the complexity and challenge of encouraging increased use of devotional habits in the church. The biblical-theological review established the essential need and diverse approaches needed to incorporate the daily devotional practices into the everyday lives of Christians believers. The church without the continuing abiding presence of Christ is not only inadequate but irrelevant.

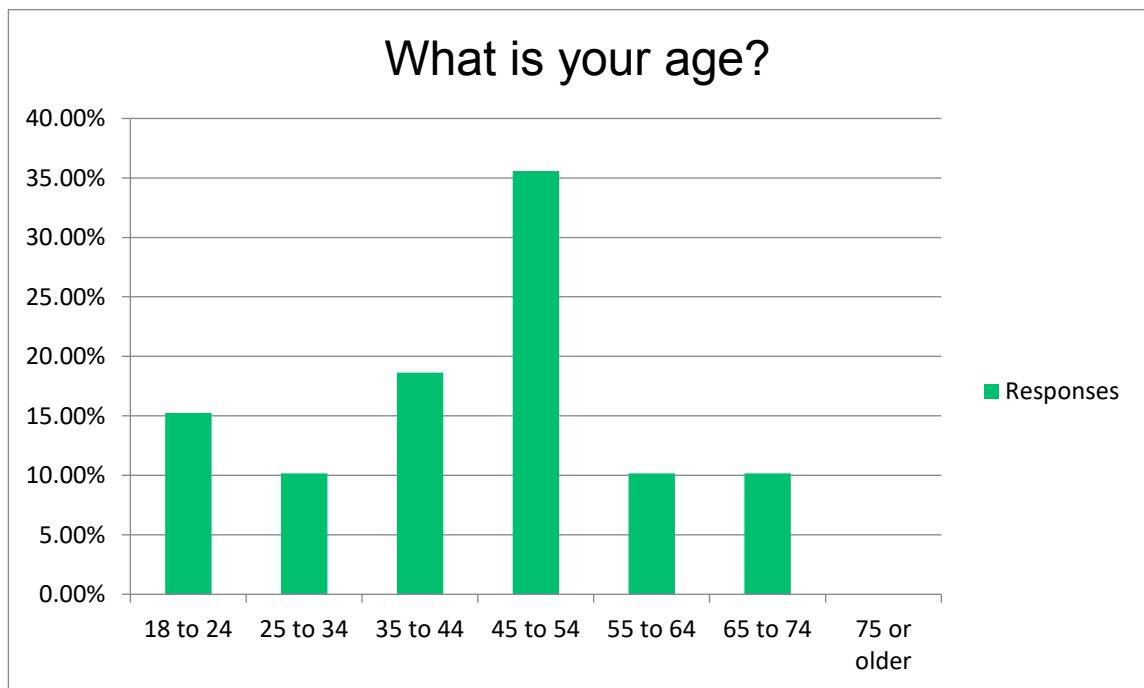
Scripture teaches that the church is in the world, but not of the world. The church is in a technological world. The church is not of technology but must learn to live within technology. The individual Christians in the church are surrounded and engaged with today's technology. A church that separates itself from technology and the integration of modern devices in the church has separated itself from the very people in the church. Society has moved from a TGIF, thank God it's Friday mentality, to a new TGIF perspective of Twitter, Google, Instagram, Facebook.

The regular practice of devotional habits has fallen on hard times, especially in America. The loss of devotional habits has occurred while the rise of technology use has exploded in the hearts and minds of the people. The project has demonstrated the blending of technology with the use of devotions can stimulate, even invigorate what many might see as irrelevant to the spiritual formation. I am convinced the use of creative online devices will prove a positive impact on the church's spiritual growth.

## Appendix A Pre-questionnaire

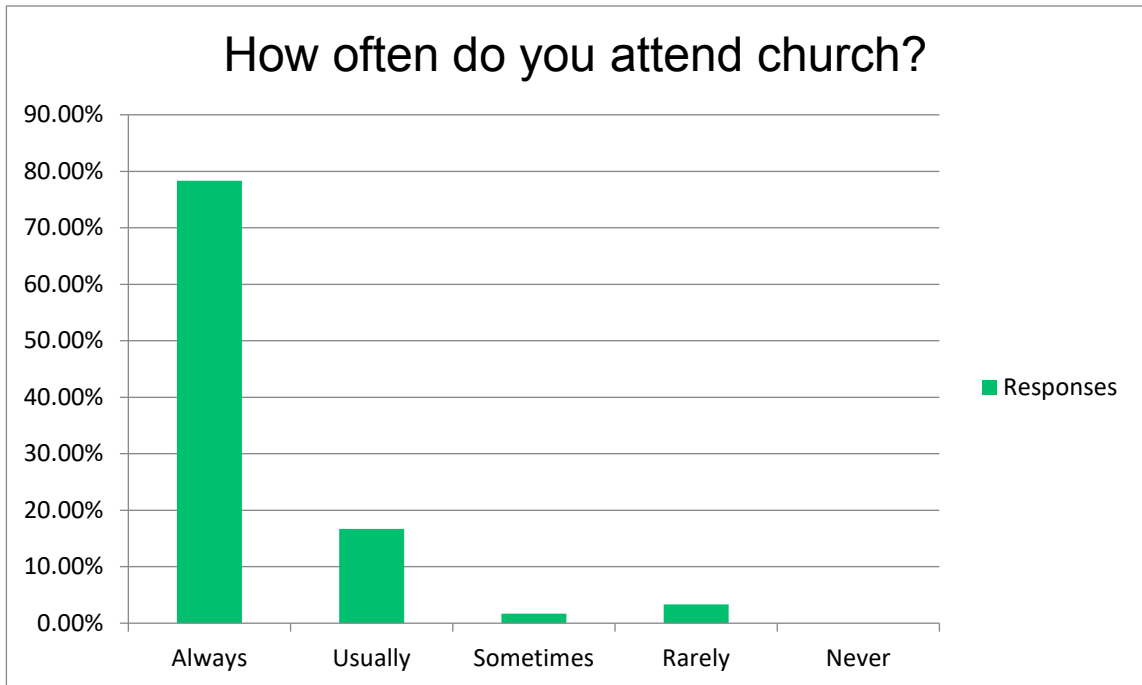
### Q1. What is your age?

Answer Choices	Responses	
18 to 24	15.25%	9
25 to 34	10.17%	6
35 to 44	18.64%	11
45 to 54	35.59%	21
55 to 64	10.17%	6
65 to 74	10.17%	6
75 or older	0.00%	0
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>59</b>



## Q 2. How often do you attend church?

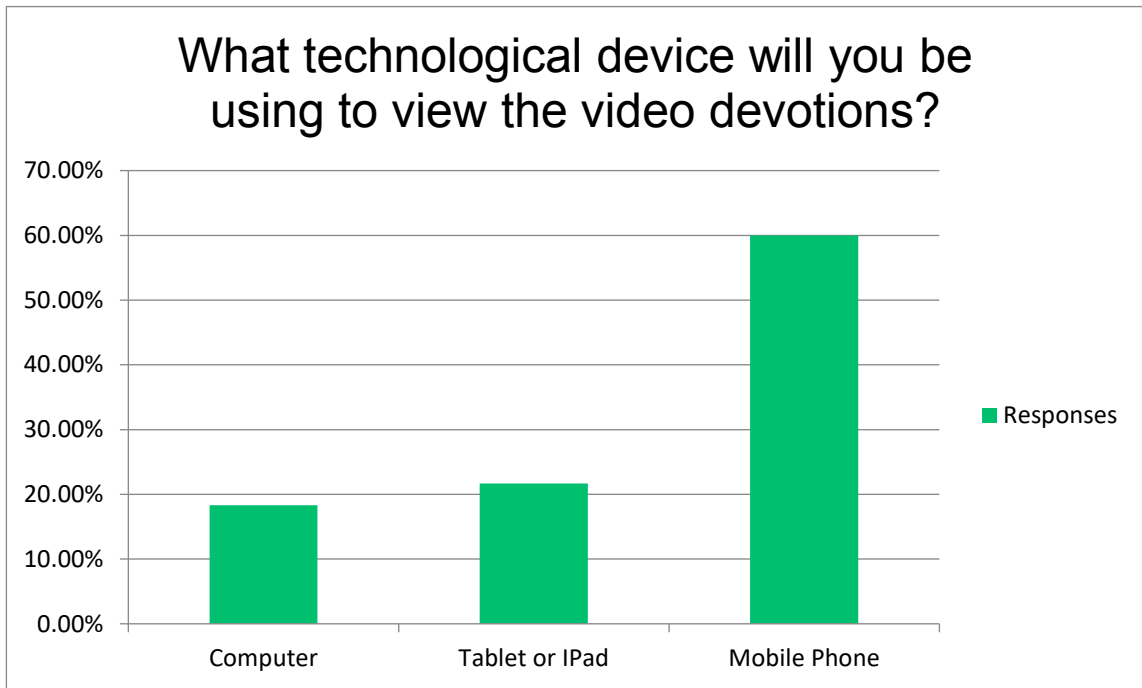
Answer Choices	Responses	
Always	78.33%	47
Usually	16.67%	10
Sometimes	1.67%	1
Rarely	3.33%	2
Never	0.00%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>





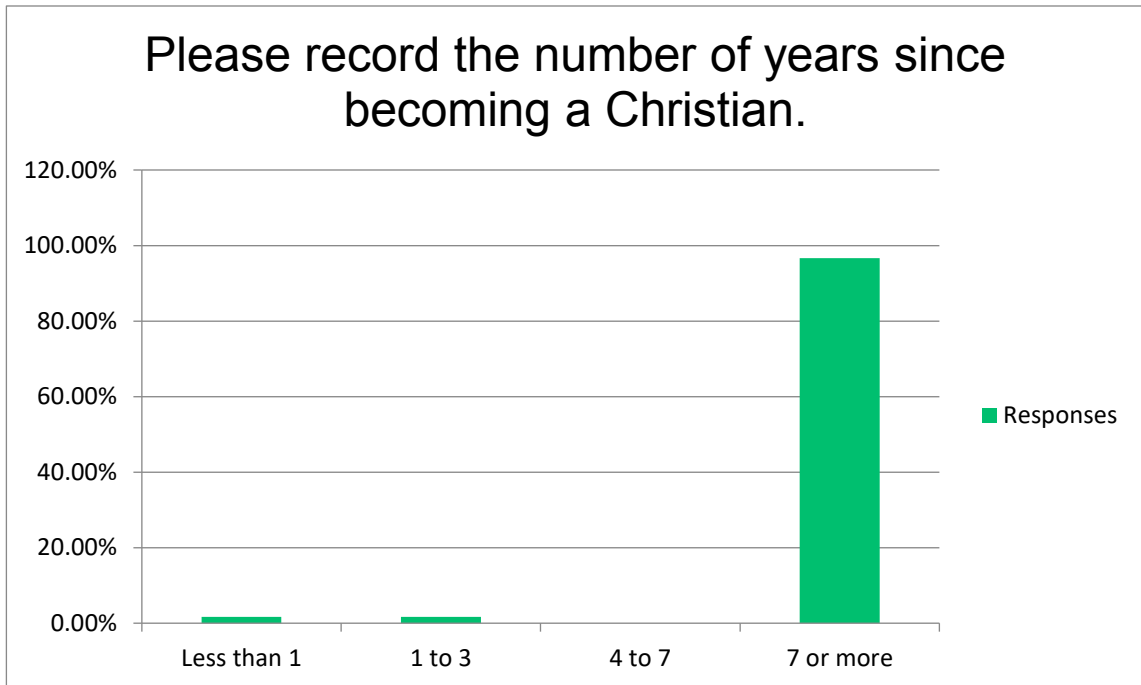
**Q3. What technological device will you be using to view the video devotions?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Computer	18.33%	11
Tablet or iPad	21.67%	13
Mobile Phone	60.00%	36
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>



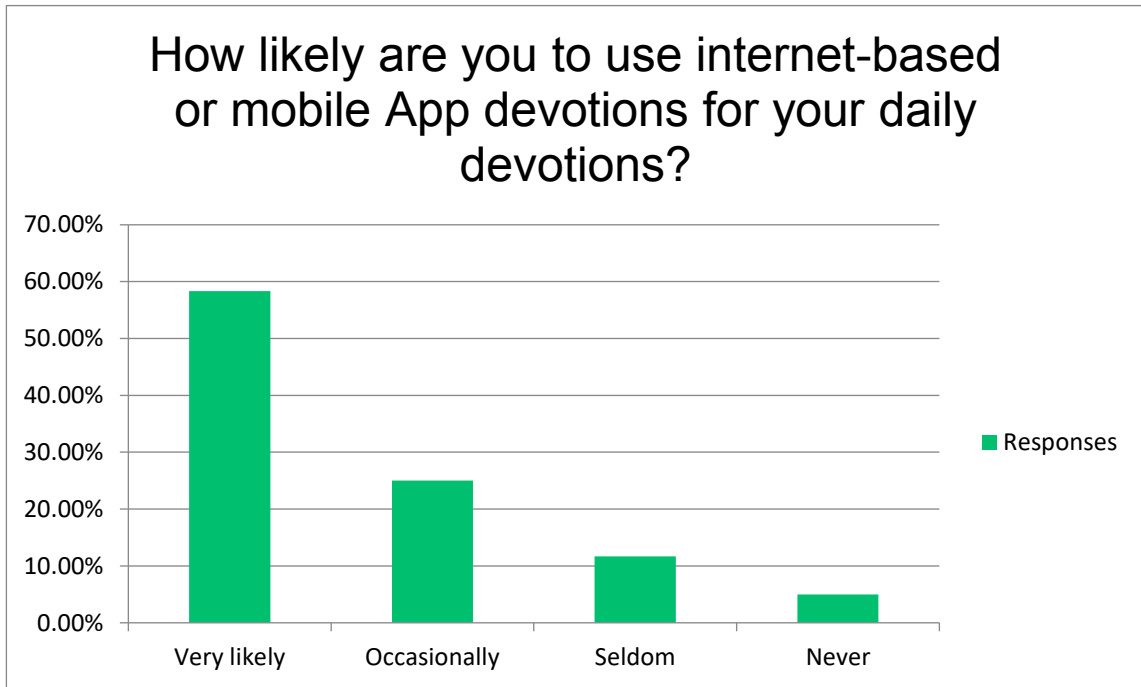
**Q4. Please record the number of years since becoming a Christian.**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than 1	1.67%	1
1 to 3	1.67%	1
4 to 7	0.00%	0
7 or more	96.67%	58
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>



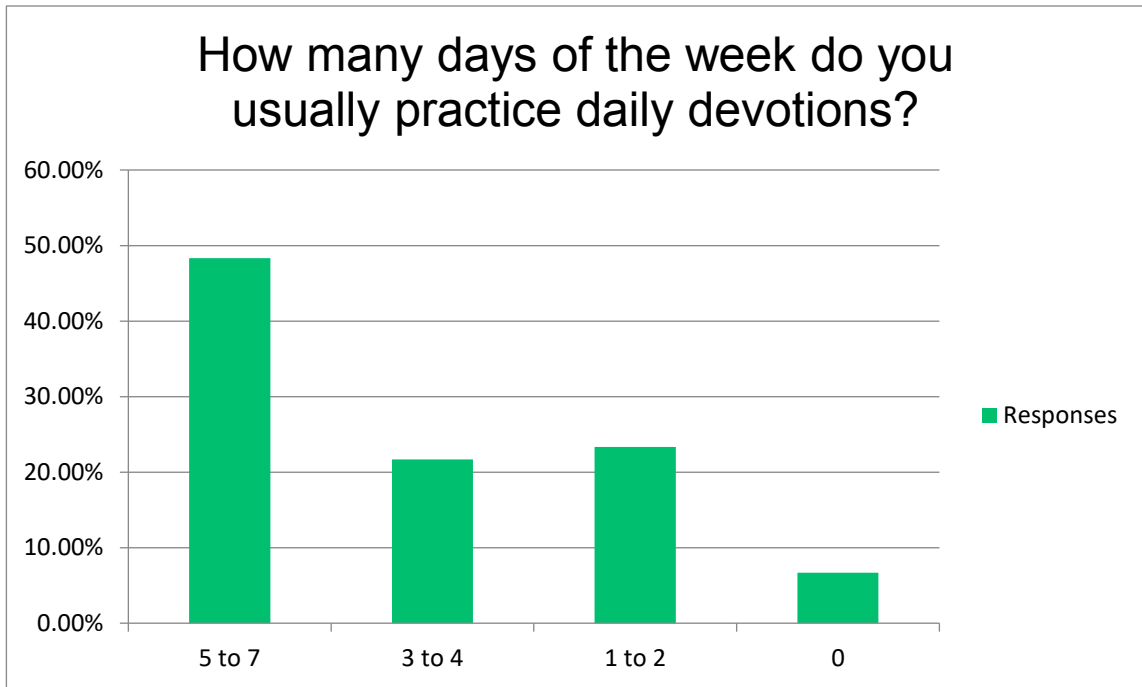
**Q5. How likely are you to use internet-based or mobile App devotions for your daily devotions?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very likely	58.33%	35
Occasionally	25.00%	15
Seldom	11.67%	7
Never	5.00%	3
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>



**Q6. How many days of the week do you usually practice daily devotions?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
5 to 7	48.33%	29
3 to 4	21.67%	13
1 to 2	23.33%	14
0	6.67%	4
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>



**Q7. List any technological or internet devotional system you currently use. For example, You Version, IDisciple or none.**

Answered 58

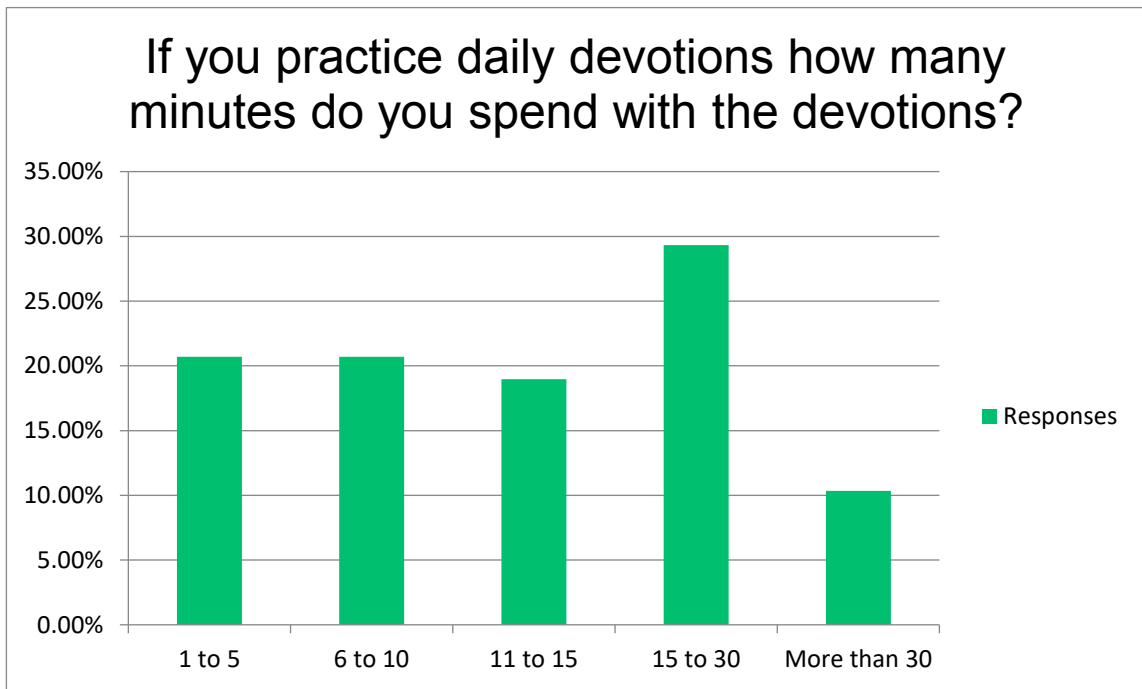
Skipped 2

Respondents	Response Date	Responses	Tags
1	Jan 26 2019 08:01 AM	YouVersion	
"			
2	Jan 23 2019 12:39 AM	YouVersion	
3	Jan 20 2019 11:12 AM	The holy bible (mobile version)	
4	Jan 18 2019 12:22 PM	internet based Christian programs	
5	Jan 18 2019 05:14 AM	YouVersion	
6	Jan 16 2019 12:54 PM	YouVersion	
7	Jan 15 2019 09:47 AM	Tecarta Bible, Blue Letter Bible	
8	Jan 13 2019 07:30 PM	None	
9	Jan 13 2019 07:17 PM	YouVersion	
10	Jan 13 2019 05:42 PM	YouVersion	
11	Jan 13 2019 07:56 AM	YouVersion, Bible Gateway	
12	Jan 12 2019 08:22 PM	None	
13	Jan 12 2019 07:08 PM	Bible app	
14	Jan 12 2019 07:03 PM	-	
15	Jan 09 2019 05:55 PM	YouVersion	
16	Jan 07 2019 11:54 PM	YouVersion	
17	Jan 02 2019 10:52 AM	Bible App	
18	Dec 31 2018 10:22 PM	None	
19	Dec 31 2018 10:08 PM	YouVersion	
20	Dec 31 2018 10:04 PM	I don't take any devotions but I'm looking forward	
21	Dec 31 2018 09:48 PM	Currently I use none but am very anxious to get my devotions through the core church YouTube site	
22	Dec 30 2018 12:02 PM	mobile	
23	Dec 30 2018 11:49 AM	YouVersion	
24	Dec 29 2018 01:35 PM	none	
25	Dec 28 2018 12:31 PM	None	
26	Dec 27 2018 06:56 PM	none	
27	Dec 22 2018 10:32 AM	YouVersion	
28	Dec 21 2018 08:30 PM	YouVersion	
29	Dec 21 2018 05:51 AM	YouVersion	
30	Dec 20 2018 10:20 AM	YouVersion	
31	Dec 19 2018 11:45 PM	YouVersion	
32	Dec 19 2018 10:11 PM	Online educational Bibles	
33	Dec 19 2018 09:30 PM	NA	
34	Dec 19 2018 06:43 PM	YouVersion	
35	Dec 19 2018 06:22 PM	None	
36	Dec 18 2018 11:18 AM	YouTube	
37	Dec 18 2018 11:07 AM	YouVersion	

38	Dec 18 2018 09:50 AM	bible app
39	Dec 15 2018 09:26 AM	YouVersion
40	Dec 12 2018 11:39 AM	Touch Bible
41	Dec 12 2018 09:39 AM	You Version Bible App
42	Dec 10 2018 11:43 AM	No devotionals, but online Bible.
43	Dec 09 2018 11:09 AM	YouVersion
44	Dec 06 2018 08:59 PM	Blue Letter Bible for research
45	Dec 05 2018 09:02 PM	Bible App
46	Dec 05 2018 11:17 AM	YouVersion
47	Dec 04 2018 05:01 PM	Emailed daily devotion
48	Dec 04 2018 04:42 PM	YouVersion
49	Dec 04 2018 02:20 PM	Tecarta Bible App
50	Dec 04 2018 02:19 PM	YouVersion and She reads truth
51	Dec 04 2018 02:16 PM	YouVersion; Daughters of the King
52	Dec 04 2018 12:53 PM	YouVersion
53	Dec 04 2018 12:31 PM	YouVersion
54	Dec 02 2018 05:11 PM	YouVersion
55	Nov 27 2018 01:33 PM	YouVersion and texts from my last church
56	Nov 25 2018 07:57 PM	Various devotionals emailed to me.
57	Nov 25 2018 04:19 PM	YouVersion
58	Nov 20 2018 04:06 PM	YouVersion

**Q8. If you practice daily devotions how many minutes do you spend with the devotions?**

Answer Choices	Responses
1 to 5	20.69% 12
6 to 10	20.69% 12
11 to 15	18.97% 11
15 to 30	29.31% 17
More than 30	10.34% 6
<b>Answered 58</b>	



## Q9. What is the most challenging aspect of practicing daily devotions for you?

Answered 60

Skipped 0

Respondents	Response Date	Responses	Tags
1	Jan 26, 2019, 08:01 AM	Staying focused on Christ and not getting tripped up in the worldly day to day things.	
2	Jan 23, 2019, 12:39 AM	Discipline	
3	Jan 20, 2019, 11:12 AM	Staying in schedule	
4	Jan 18, 2019, 12:22 PM	not getting busy and forgetting. best to set time first thing n the am	
5	Jan 18, 2019, 05:14 AM	Concentration	
6	Jan 16, 2019, 12:54 PM	Finding the time to tune the world out.	
7	Jan 15, 2019, 09:47 AM	Keeping my mind quiet and focused	
8	Jan 13, 2019, 07:30 PM	N/a	
9	Jan 13 2019 07:17 PM	consistency	
10	Jan 13, 2019, 05:42 PM	Making sure to not squeeze it in but to keep that time free of other things.	
11	Jan 13, 2019, 07:56 AM	Time	
12	Jan 12, 2019, 08:22 PM	It takes away time away from me reading God's word	
13	Jan 12, 2019, 07:08 PM	Timing, patience	
14	Jan 12, 2019, 07:03 PM	time management	
15	Jan 09, 2019, 05:55 PM	Finding time to fit it in my schedule	
16	Jan 07, 2019, 11:54 PM	Not enough scripture	
17	Jan 04, 2019, 05:45 PM	Focusing without distractions	
18	Jan 02, 2019, 10:52 AM	Busyness	
19	Dec 31, 2018 10:22 PM	Schedule	
20	Dec 31, 2018, 10:08 PM	Discipline	
21	Dec 31, 2018, 10:04 PM	Remembering	
22	Dec 31, 2018, 09:48 PM	Remembering to continue to do them	
23	Dec 30, 2018, 12:02 PM	taking time to do so.	
24	Dec 30, 2018, 11:49 AM	Making time	
25	Dec 29, 2018, 01:35 PM	Getting them done.	
26	Dec 28, 2018, 12:31 PM	Finding a passage in bible to focus on.	
27	Dec 27 2018 06:56 PM	interruptions	
28	Dec 22, 2018, 10:32 AM	Motivation to follow through	
29	Dec 21, 2018, 08:30 PM	Making time.	
30	Dec 21, 2018, 05:51 AM	Weekends or when off schedule	
31	Dec 20, 2018, 10:20 AM	Making the time in the day	
32	Dec 20 2018 09:09 AM	being consistent.	
33	Dec 19, 2018, 11:45 PM	Time of day	
34	Dec 19, 2018, 10:11 PM	Making it a habit	
35	Dec 19, 2018, 09:30 PM	Finding the time	
36	Dec 19, 2018, 06:43 PM	Spacing the devotions out. Currently doing three, so	



		it's a challenge to time it out during the day so I'm not overwhelmed with what God is speaking to my heart about
37	Dec 19, 2018, 06:22 PM	Discipline to follow through with my plan
38	Dec 18, 2018, 11:18 AM	Consistency
39	Dec 18, 2018, 11:07 AM	Finding quiet time
40	Dec 18, 2018, 09:50 AM	actually following through
41	Dec 15, 2018, 09:26 AM	Committing the time
42	Dec 12, 2018, 11:39 AM	Too many distractions.
43	Dec 12, 2018, 09:39 AM	spending the time
44	Dec 10, 2018, 11:43 AM	Finding time alone. Sometimes I read and then pray in my car while I'm driving or before I go in to work.
45	Dec 09, 2018, 11:09 AM	distractions and making time
46	Dec 06, 2018, 08:59 PM	my flesh
47	Dec 05, 2018, 09:02 PM	Having more time to meditate and reflect on what God is trying to teach me through His word.
48	Dec 05, 2018, 11:17 AM	Time
49	Dec 04, 2018, 05:01 PM	None
50	Dec 04, 2018, 04:42 PM	Dedication to something bigger than what I think is important right now.
51	Dec 04, 2018, 02:20 PM	Being consistent, keeping them fresh
52	Dec 04, 2018, 02:19 PM	Being consistent or not becoming distracted
53	Dec 04, 2018, 02:16 PM	Remembering what I read and putting it into practice
54	Dec 04, 2018, 12:53 PM	Sharing
55	Dec 04, 2018, 12:31 PM	Doing it
56	Dec 02, 2018, 05:11 PM	Follow the Word
57	Nov 27, 2018, 01:33 PM	Time
58	Nov 25, 2018, 07:57 PM	Making time for them.
59	Nov 25, 2018, 04:19 PM	Taking the time to get away and spend the time needed to do them.
60	Nov 20, 2018, 04:06 PM	Consistency

**Q10. How important do you think practicing daily devotions are to your spiritual growth?**

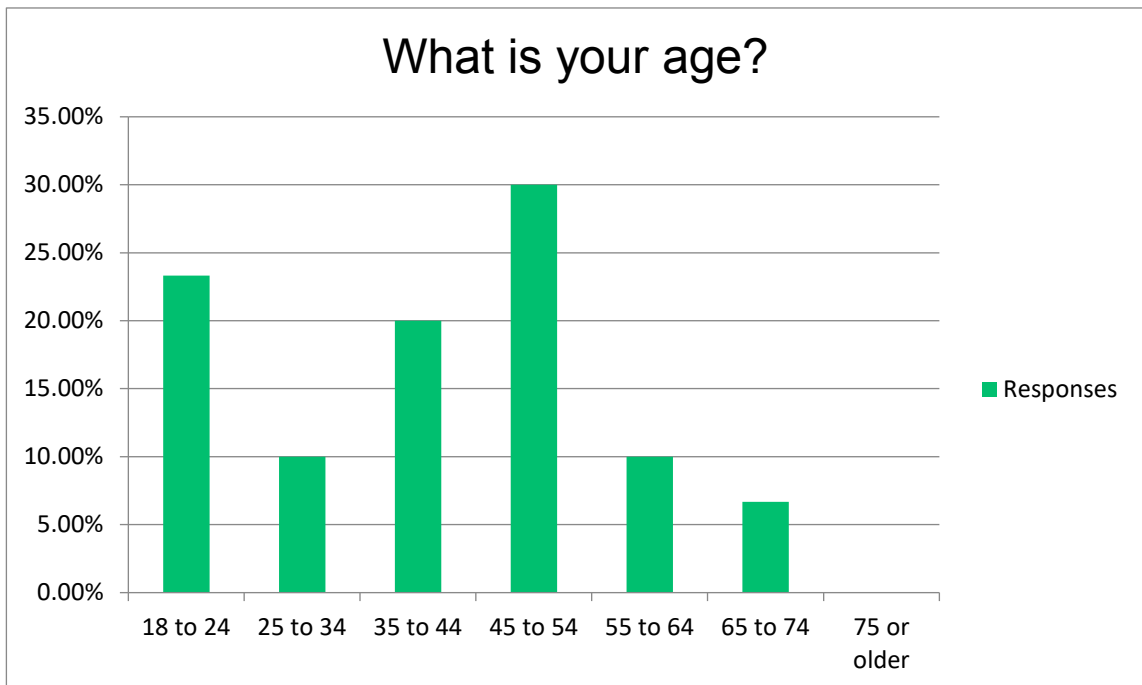
Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely important	58.33%	35
Very important	30.00%	18
Somewhat important	11.67%	7
Not so important	0.00%	0
Not at all important	0.00%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>60</b>



## Appendix B Post-questionnaire

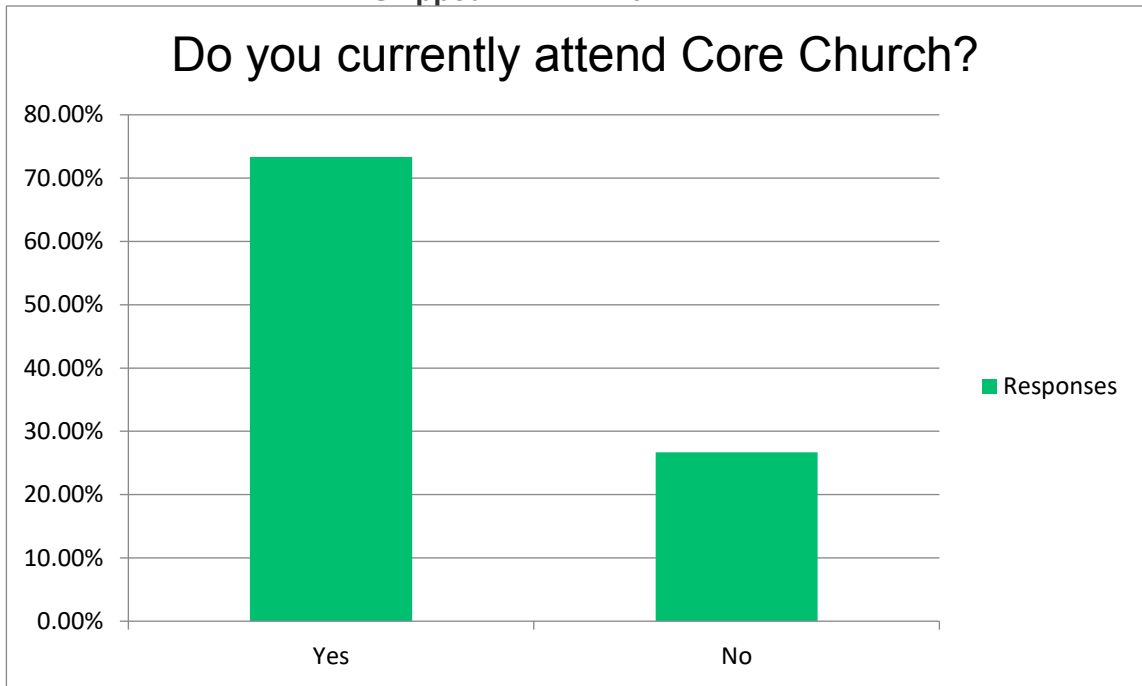
### Q1. What is your age?

Answer Choices	Responses	
18 to 24	23.33%	7
25 to 34	10.00%	3
35 to 44	20.00%	6
45 to 54	30.00%	9
55 to 64	10.00%	3
65 to 74	6.67%	2
75 or older	0.00%	0
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>30</b>



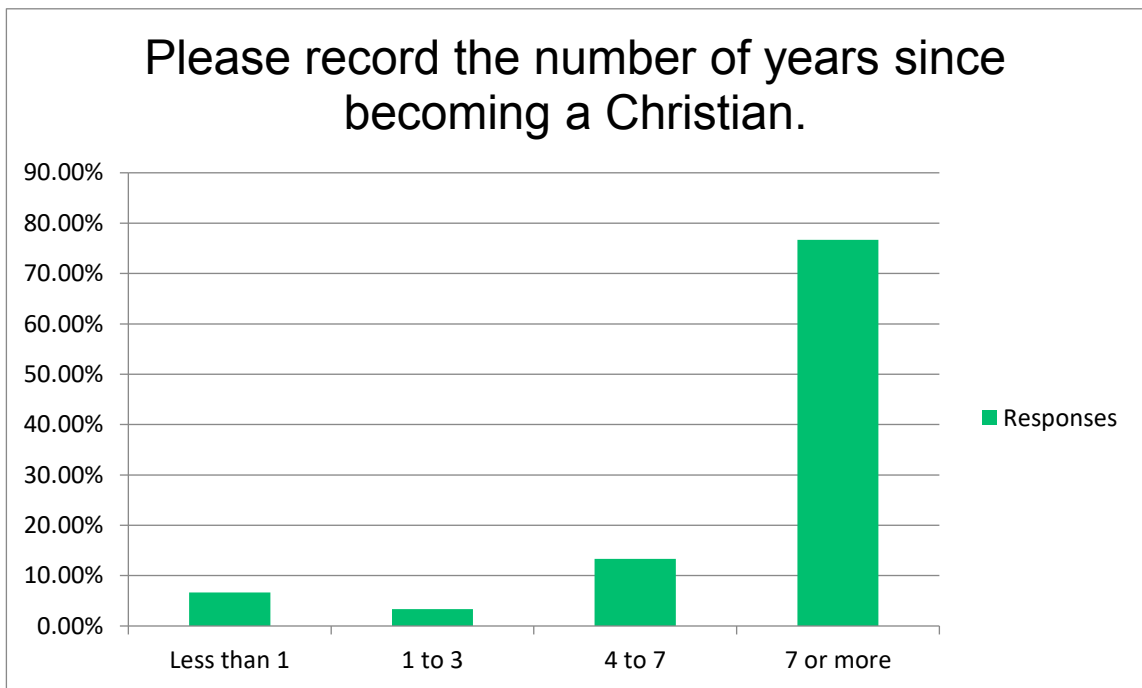
**Q2. Do you currently attend Core Church?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	73.33%	22
No	26.67%	8
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>0</b>



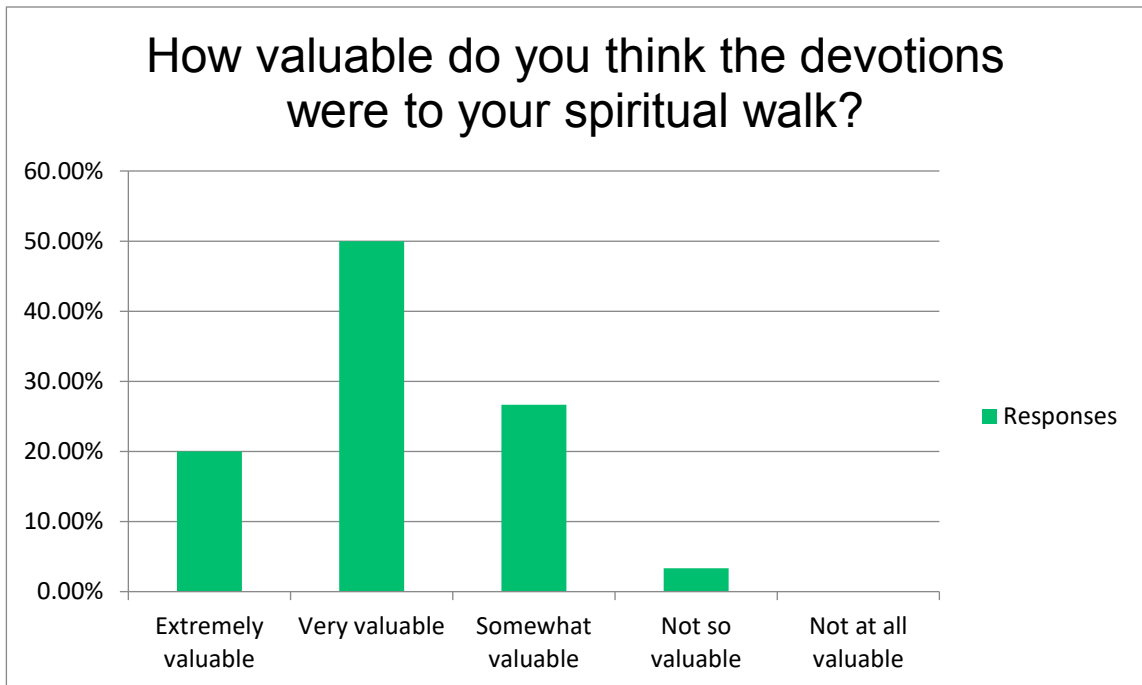
**Q3. Please record the number of years since becoming a Christian.**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than 1	6.67%	2
1 to 3	3.33%	1
4 to 7	13.33%	4
7 or more	76.67%	23
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>



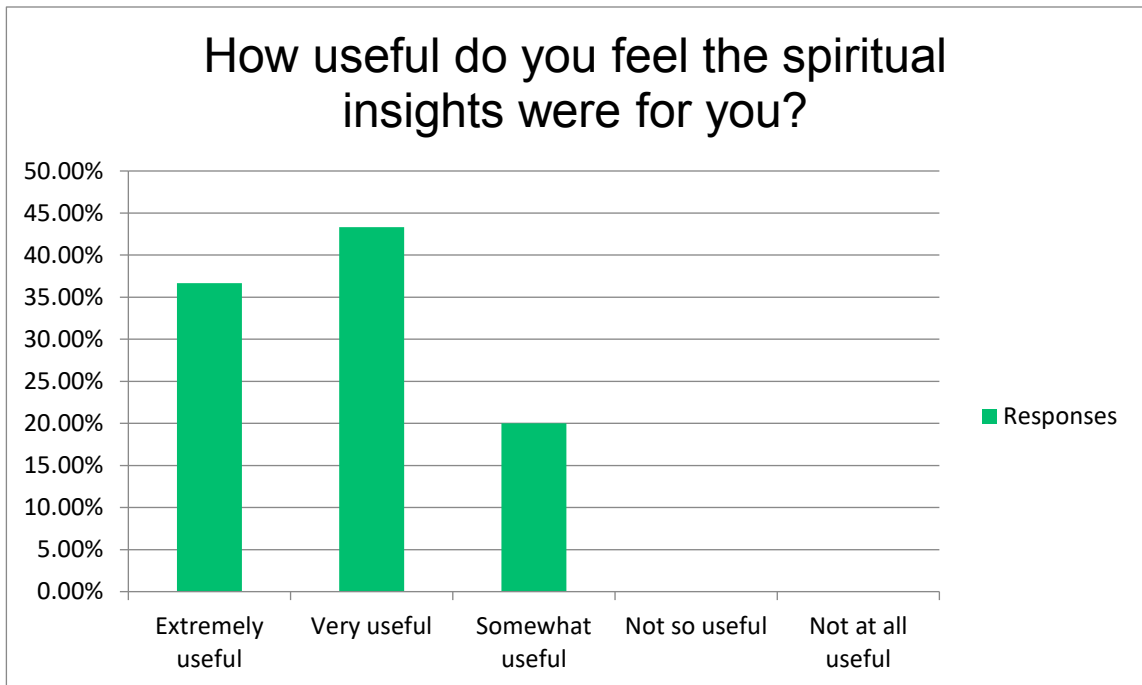
**Q4. How valuable do you think the devotions were to your spiritual walk?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely valuable	20.00%	6
Very valuable	50.00%	15
Somewhat valuable	26.67%	8
Not so valuable	3.33%	1
Not at all valuable	0.00%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>



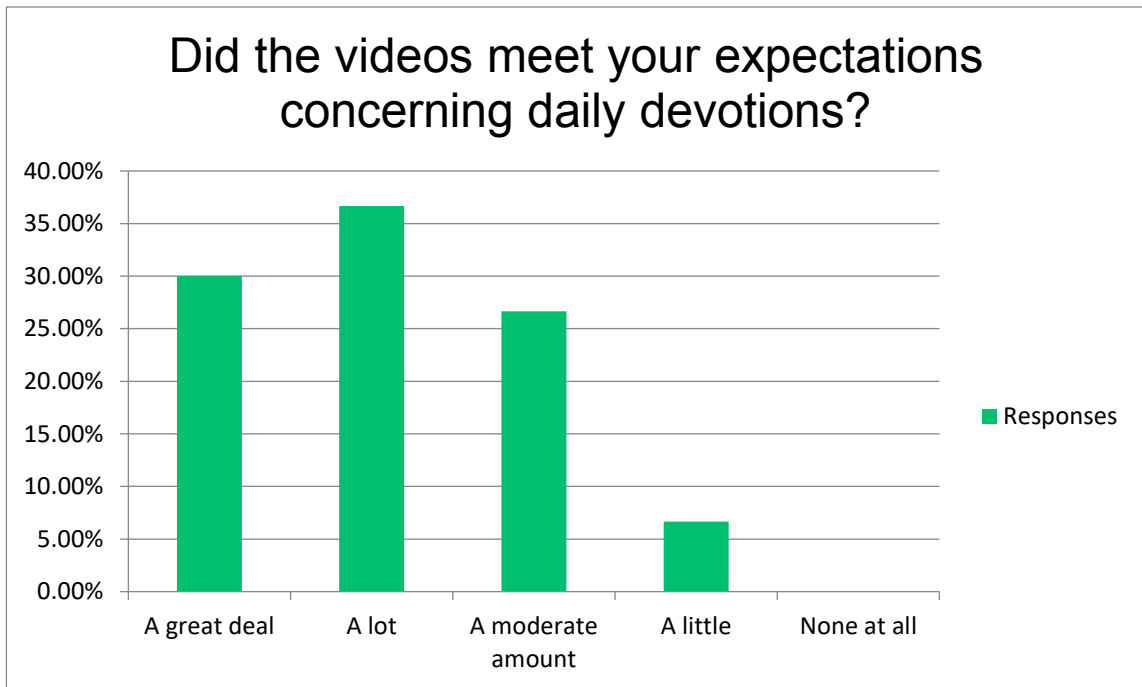
**Q5. How useful do you feel the spiritual insights were for you?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely useful	36.67%	11
Very useful	43.33%	13
Somewhat useful	20.00%	6
Not so useful	0.00%	0
Not at all useful	0.00%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>



**Q6. Did the videos meet your expectations concerning daily devotions?**

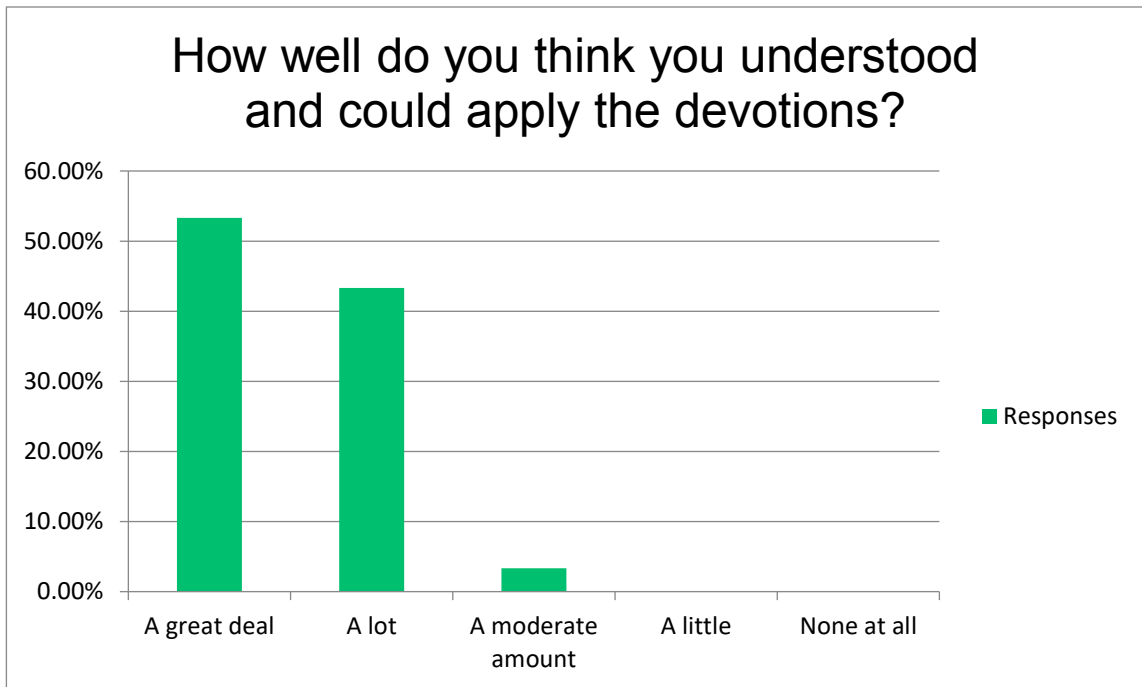
Answer Choices	Responses	
A great deal	30.00%	9
A lot	36.67%	11
A moderate amount	26.67%	8
A little	6.67%	2
None at all	0.00%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>





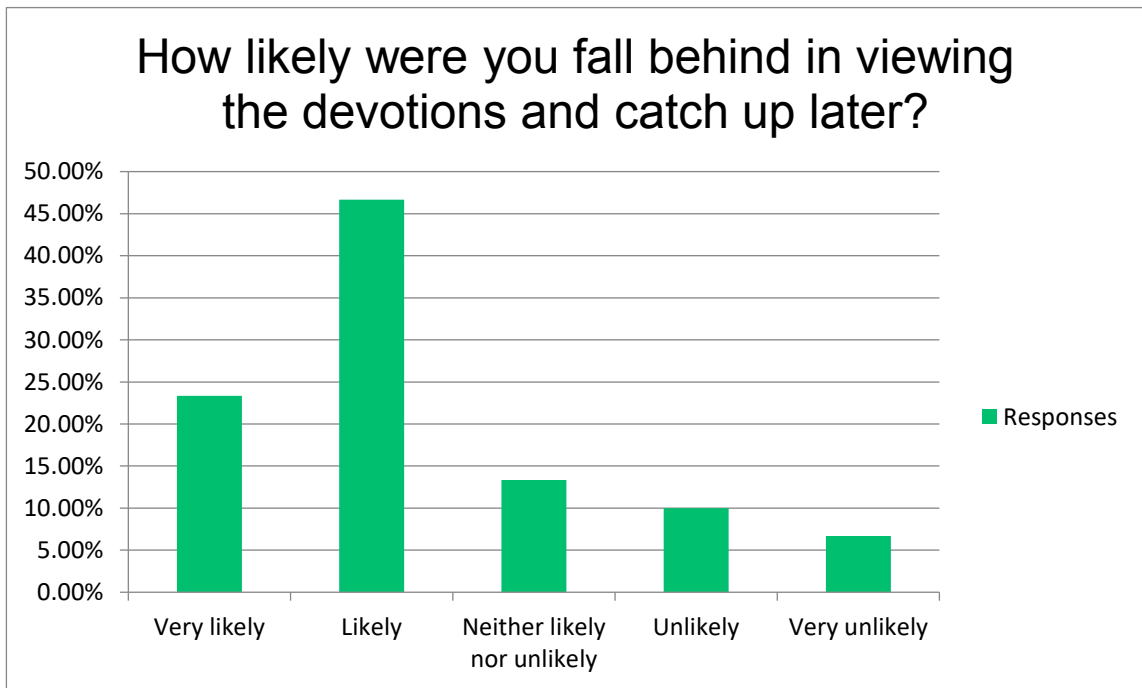
**Q7. How well do you think you understood and could apply the devotions?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
A great deal	53.33%	16
A lot	43.33%	13
A moderate amount	3.33%	1
A little	0.00%	0
None at all	0.00%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>



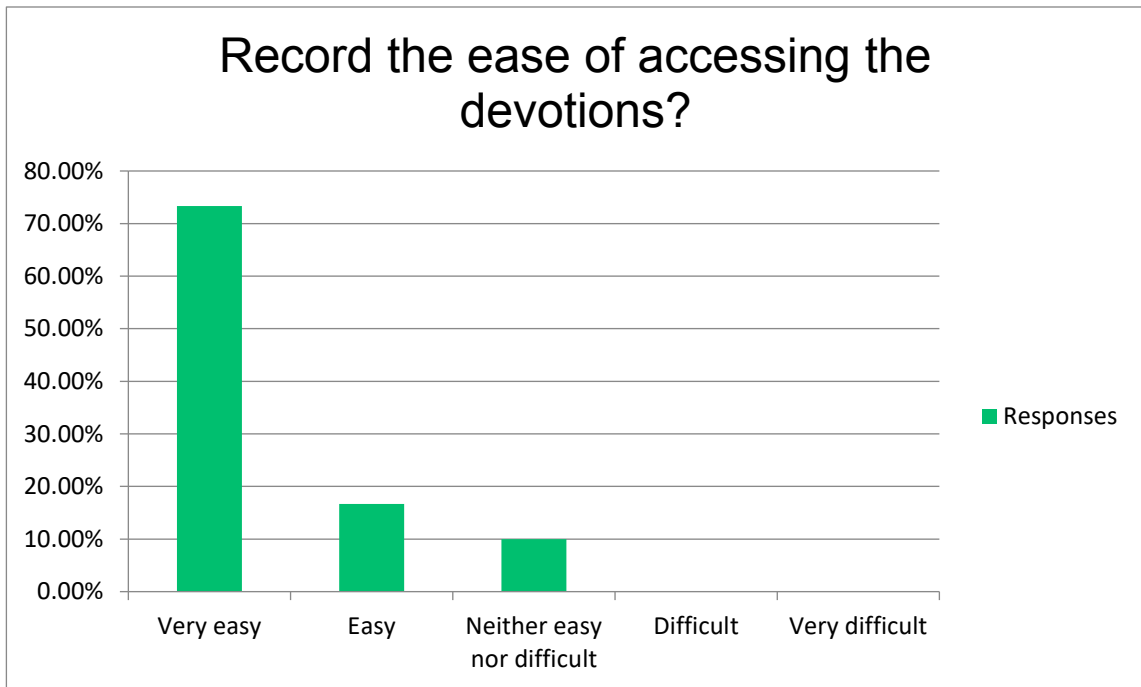
**Q8. How likely were you fall behind in viewing the devotions and catch up later?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very likely	23.33%	7
Likely	46.67%	14
Neither likely nor unlikely	13.33%	4
Unlikely	10.00%	3
Very unlikely	6.67%	2
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>



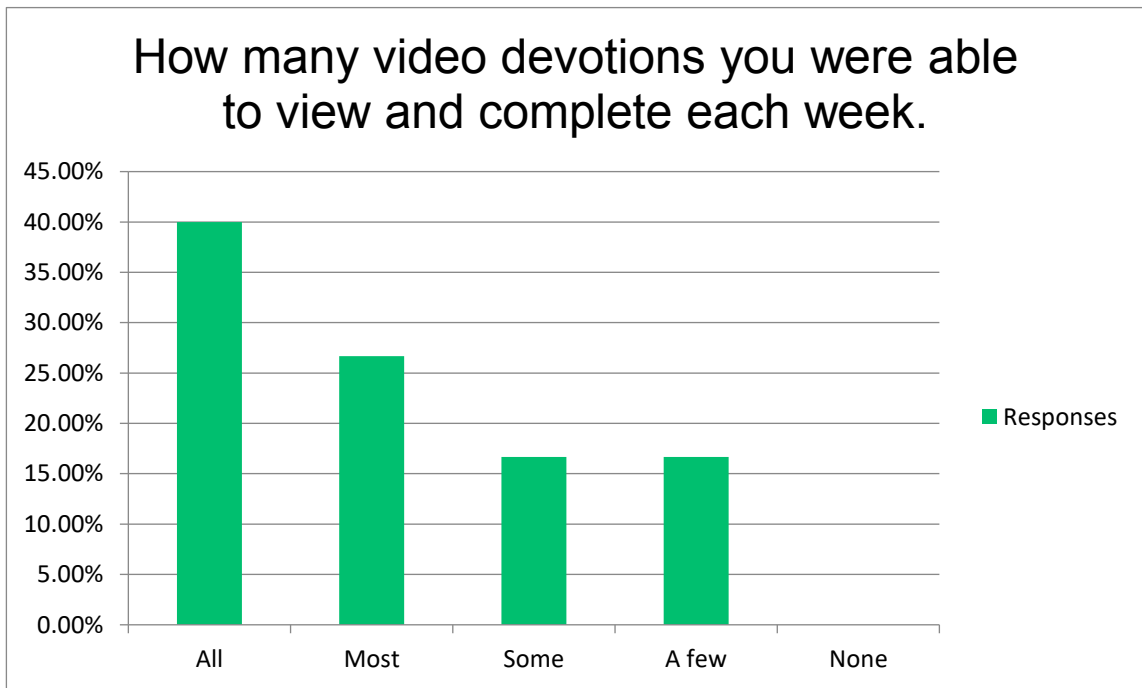
**Q9. Record the ease of accessing the devotions?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very easy	73.33%	22
Easy	16.67%	5
Neither easy nor difficult	10.00%	3
Difficult	0.00%	0
Very difficult	0.00%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>



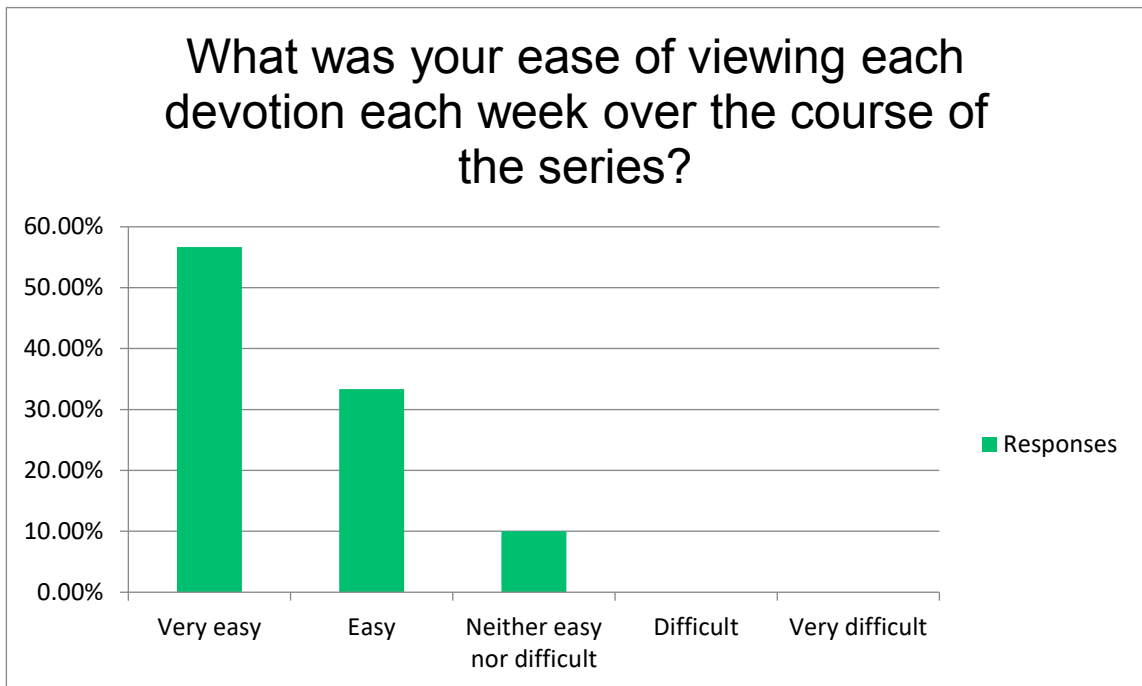
**Q10. How many video devotions you were able to view and complete each week?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
All	40.00%	12
Most	26.67%	8
Some	16.67%	5
A few	16.67%	5
None	0.00%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>



**Q11. What was your ease of viewing each devotion each week over the course of the series?**

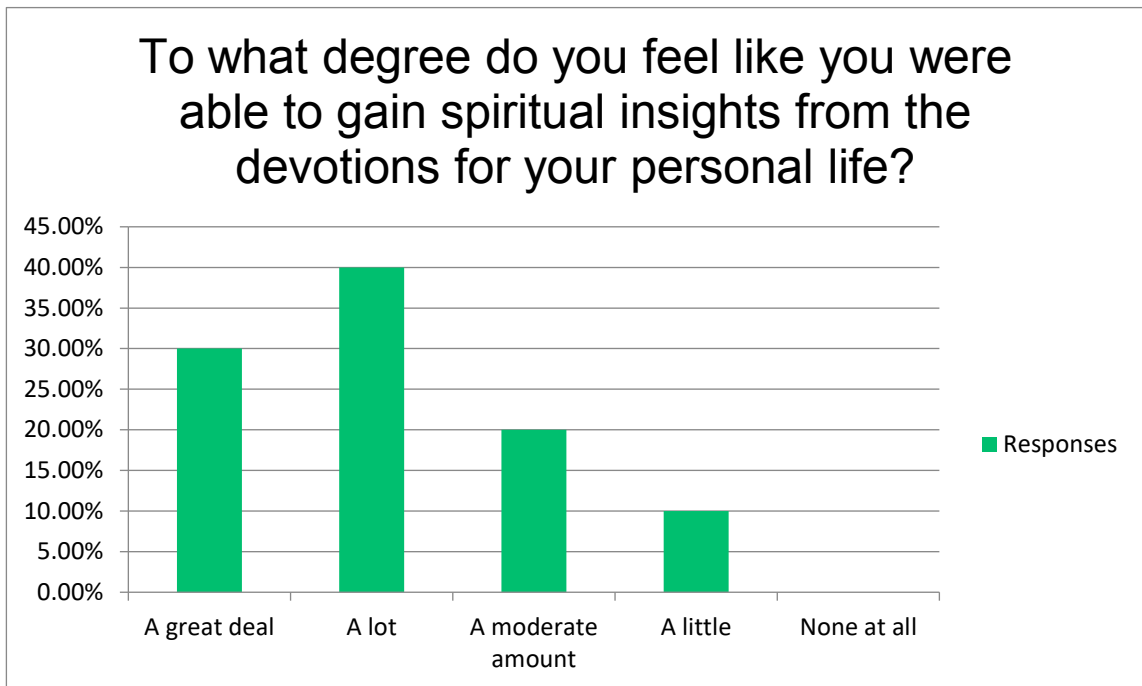
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very easy	56.67%	17
Easy	33.33%	10
Neither easy nor difficult	10.00%	3
Difficult	0.00%	0
Very difficult	0.00%	0
		<b>Answered 30</b>



**Q12. To what degree do you feel like you were able to gain spiritual insights from the devotions for your personal life?**

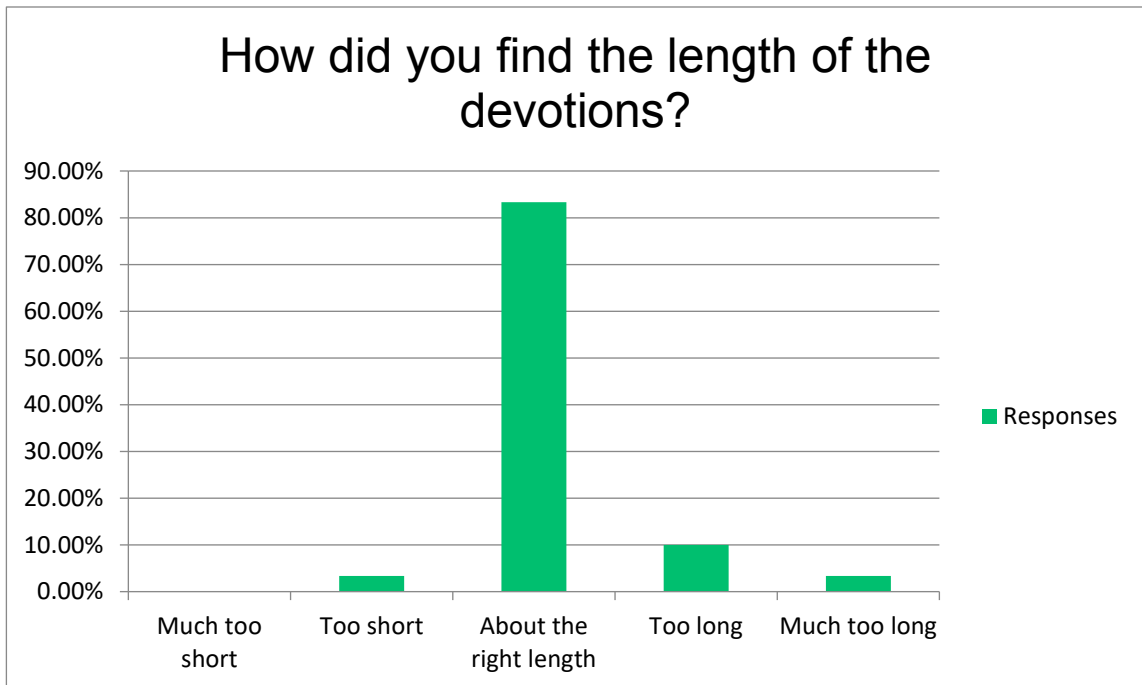
Answer Choices	Responses
A great deal	30.00% 9
A lot	40.00% 12
A moderate amount	20.00% 6
A little	10.00% 3
None at all	0.00% 0

**Answered 30**



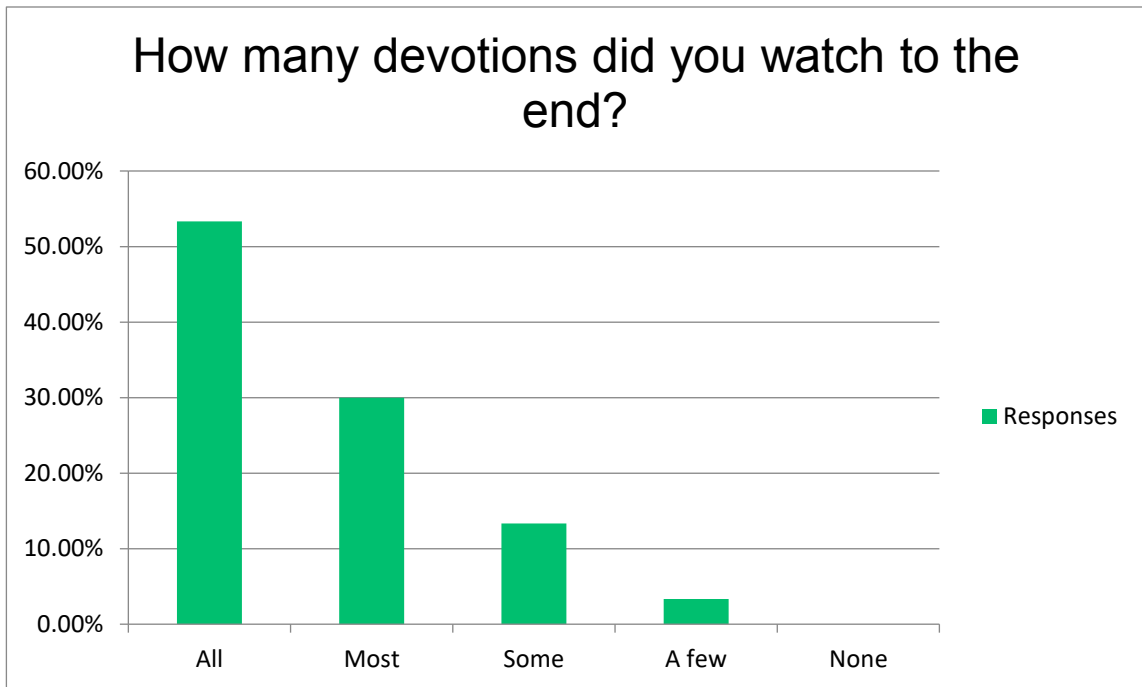
**Q13. How did you find the length of the devotions?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Much too short	0.00%	0
Too short	3.33%	1
About the right length	83.33%	25
Too long	10.00%	3
Much too long	3.33%	1
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>



**Q14. How many devotions did you watch to the end?**

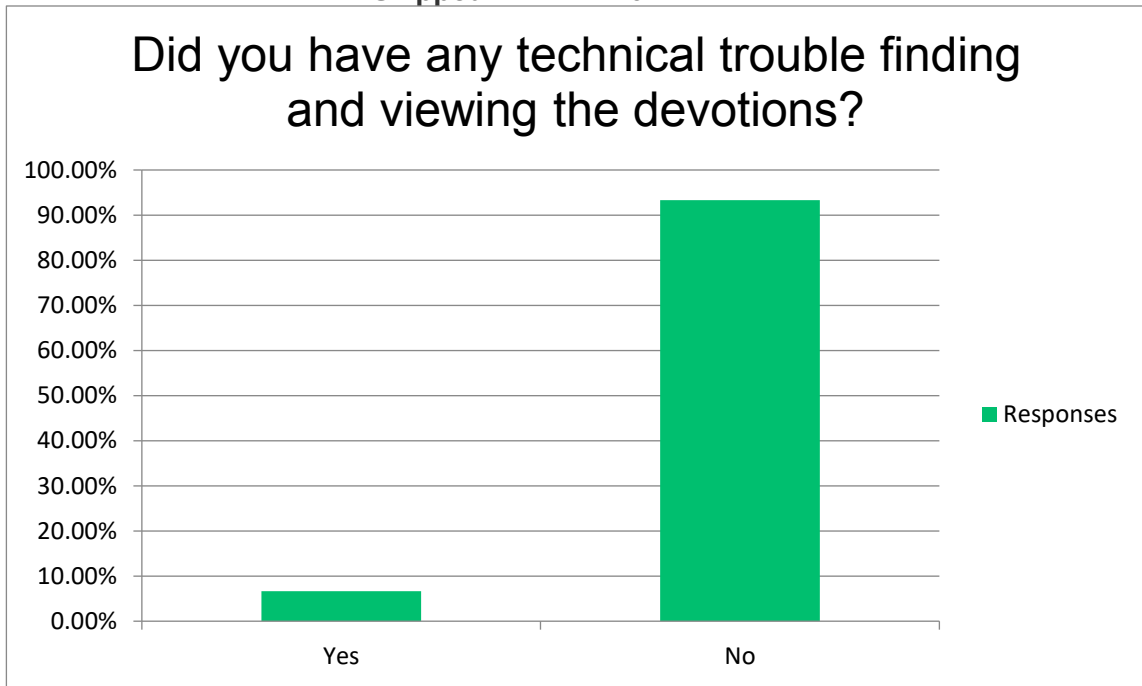
Answer Choices	Responses	
All	53.33%	16
Most	30.00%	9
Some	13.33%	4
A few	3.33%	1
None	0.00%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>





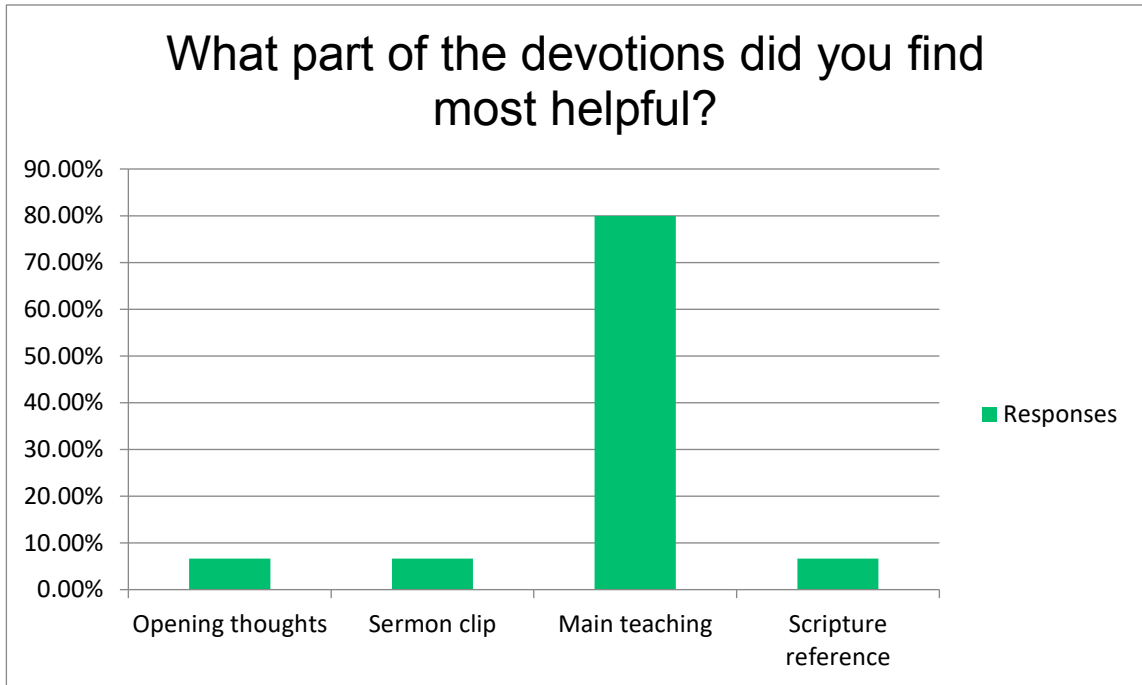
**Q15. Did you have any technical trouble finding and viewing the devotions?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	6.67%	2
No	93.33%	28
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>0</b>



**Q16. What part of the devotions did you find most helpful?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Opening thoughts	6.67%	2
Sermon clip	6.67%	2
Main teaching	80.00%	24
Scripture reference	6.67%	2
<b>Answered</b>		<b>30</b>



**Q17 Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?**

Answered: 11 Skipped: 19

1. Trying to locate the devotions on YouTube was not always easy find each time. However, the length, presentation and production of the devotionals were well done.

3/3/2019 7:16 AM

2. I would love to continue having Pastor Greg devotions due to his great incite of the Scriptures and their comprehensive life applications.

2/24/2019 1:37 PM

3. NA 2/24/2019 1:27 PM

4. Great speaker with good timely insight. Impactful on my daily walk with Christ.

2/20/2019 10:20 PM

5. I have found that shorter devotions tend to work best for me. I like to watch the short devotion and then spend some time in the quiet with God so he can speak his word into me in support of that devotion. But I find that when the devotion is longer, I spend less time in the quiet. Also, in the past when I have been sent daily devotions from a prior church, they were sent to me by text. It allowed me to wake up to the text and just have the devotion right there on my phone without having to search for it, or click. I think that would be helpful in increasing viewership. It's a great reminder each day plus it makes it really easy to get in the habit of Viewing

2/20/2019 9:18 PM

6. This is a great start. The longer you do these types of videos, the better they will become. The better they become, the bigger the reach will become.

2/18/2019 11:42 PM

7. Super easy to use and a great way to encourage devotions

2/17/2019 10:32 AM

8. The volume level going from opening thoughts to the sermon clip were extreme. The volume needed to be increased for the clip but then lowered when returning to the devotion in order to be heard easily.

2/12/2019 2:49 PM

9. Well done, and good thoughts

2/9/2019 1:59 PM

10. I thought the presentation matured as the sessions progressed. I live them.

2/9/2019 10:14 AM

11. Well done, Dr. Greg! When do you start preaching in your cap and gown?)

2/8/2019 10:03 AM

**Appendix C  
Sermon Outlines**

**Wearing Hope!  
Colossians 1:5  
Sunday, January 13, 2019**

**Introduction**

1700 Alexander Pope Essay on Man, Hope Springs eternal, Man

This is a battle still fought today, trust in God or humankind

Do you believe you're God's masterpiece or masters of our peace?

Is your hope in this world or God who made the world?

Hope is not weak or weary faith

Got beat up for hoping ORU would work out

Hope is the foundation of faith; faith is the evidence hoped for...

If hope is the foundation then where, does hope come from?

God spoke to my heart creating hope, stirring faith

I don't know if I have faith; How do I get the hope?

**Romans 5:5** Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts...

Hope flows from God's love for us!

This is how we grow, God speaks, Hope flows, Faith grows

How does God speak, through his word, accepting the hope

What if I did not wear what God said about ORU?

Members Only jacket, love wearing it

**Wearing Hope!**

God says I'm going to heal the body, change marriage, job wear that

The church at Colossae fading city, in decline, reflecting fading hope

**Col 1:4-5** We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus...the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven...

Told them to wear hope, that is where their faith and love comes

Are you wearing your hope? How does it help?

### **Wearing hope grows you!**

The bible lays out how we grow wearing hope

**Vs. 6** gospel is bearing fruit and growing...as it has among you

**Vs. 10** you may live a life worthy of the Lord...growing

**Vs. 11** strengthened with all power according to his...might

**Vs. 12** has qualified you to share in the heritage...

Wearing hope brings fruit, worthiness, power, and qualification

Qualified means to equip with adequate power to perform duties

Time to walk over to God's member-only Jackie of hope put on

### **Wearing hope shields you!**

Russia supersonic rocket there is no shield or protection

We go through life thinking; nothing can help or shield me pain

The church was feeling those rockets of guilt and shame

**Col 1:21** Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

They were being bombarded with accusations of guilt shame

How can I hope when I know I failed?

**Vs. 22** But now he has reconciled you by Christ...without blemish and free from accusation.

Free from accusation means cannot be called into to account

**Col 1:23** ...do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

Disney thought didn't need coverings, then it rained

**Wearing hope changes you!**

Wearing hope is more than an outward covering; that's religion

**Vs. 26-27** the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages, but is now disclosed...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Christ is more than covering that hides sin, in us means changed

We do not just wear hope we have become the hope in Christ

This critical because becoming the hope in Christ means sharing

If I take off members only jacket and give away, I have nothing

**Vs. 28** ...so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ

God's jacket of hope has become a part of us, we share

Walk into your world wearing hope and share it with hopeless

**Stepping Up!**  
**Colossians 2:8**  
**Sunday, January 20, 2019**

Uber driver who keeps cross on the mirror for protection

Paul: church I'm fighting with all might for you to understand?

What did Paul think was so important, he used all his might?

Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive...

Gasparilla mayor, playing games, captive means take the treasure  
The enemy not playing games, steal your relationship, peace, growth  
Col. 2:8 ...through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition  
and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.  
Must be taken captive, you choose world or Christ, no middle  
Elemental spiritual forces Greek earth, air, water, fire, humor  
Life is more than believe in what we see touch, in superstitions  
Someone feels overwhelmed it usually means life is complex  
Superstition reduces complexity to the simple input-output equation  
Cross mirror-no crash; AM devotions-good day, beehive hair  
Not hanging the mirror, us hanging, not AM but presence God  
Move from basic superstition to stepping up to spiritual growth  
Jackie making muffins for the first time  
It is time to make some spiritual muffins, step up to life

### **Stepping Up to Greater Growth!**

How can I step up?

#### **By becoming wiser than your knowledge!**

The church was being tempted by the accumulation of knowledge  
1 Cor 8:1 ...knowledge puffs up while love builds up.  
Bible says, if I know God but does not do His will; he is a liar  
Thomas Jefferson, knowledge, Unitarian, Jesus not God  
Vs. 4 Let one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.  
Take knowledge to its logical conclusion, deny Jesus is God

Don't grow because allow human knowledge to replace wisdom

Don't be captivated by knowledge be captivated by the presence

**By seeing life more than tradition!**

Weren't just superstitions but the traditions they had always done

Vs. 17 ...shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

The shadow was not bad, but it was not the whole picture

Jesus synagogue Isaiah, as custom, but revealed a deeper truth

Lk 4:20 eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him

Why were they staring at Jesus? He brought life to the tradition

Not saying chunk all tradition, but tradition without life is dead

Easy to grow accustomed to the traditional and lose the life

Theater speeches, great orator Ps 23, janitor, one Ps, one God

**By seeking others more than yourself!**

Paul explains the greatest harm of being captivated worldly

Vs. 19 They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Paul fought traditions and supers so hard because of stunts growth

If have knowledge don't need others, church, the body I'm good

Vs. 20 if you're in Christ why act like you belong to this world?

Belong means life, are you seeking life in the body or in the world?

Jesus teaching about growth, fruit, ends with an important thought

John 15:17 This is I command you that you love one other.

Jesus not just quoting a command, he is giving us a direct order



A military order to commit a crime is unlawful.

An order to perform military duty, no matter how dangerous, is lawful

It might be dangerous to love and be connected to others

But Jesus said that is the only way you will bear fruit and grow

Spiritual isolation from the body causes smallness lack growth

**Chose Life!**  
**Colossians 3:2**  
**Sunday, January 27, 2019**

What makes you come alive, what really gets you going?

Life is what you are alive too, Jesus come to bring life

Jesus came to dinner, teaching he comes alive, Mary came alive

But Martha was distracted not sinful, rebellious, selfish, by good

Distracted means she was drawn away, pulled away from life

Many think about personality, Martha worker, Mary emotional

What's crazy, Jesus said Mary has chosen, not personality

So did Martha, she chose,

The opposite of choosing life is not choosing death, but good

Martha's choose lead her to; "Don't you care!"

When you choose good over the life you lose intimacy, relationship

**It's Time to Choose Life!**

The church at Col was struggling with this choice, How I know?

**Vs. 2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

They were choosing wrong! Earth means dirt, not evil

What did you choose last week?

How Greg, how do I choose life in my everyday life?

**Choosing life means riding it down to live it up!**

Jesus asleep in the boat, a great storm came up, the boat was sinking

Disciples yelled out, "Don't you care!"

Jesus calms storms with a shush; the waves like to a child

Then he rebuked disciples? Were they in trouble asked help?

What did they do wrong? They chose the wrong

What should they have done, go down with the boat?

They missed great ride, going down to waves of fear, up in faith!

**Col 3:3** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ...

Hidden is crypto, secret, unbreakable, true Bible code

When you ride God's waves down, they always lead up!

Ride they sickness down, that pain, hurt, That's crazy!

Star Trek, Wharf, Today is a good day to die!

three in the fire, armorbearer, Stephen

Do you want to really grow, don't whine-ride!

**Choosing life means less of you for more of life!**

Ask church; you want to grow how others treat?

**Col 3:5** Put to death...sexual immorality, impurity, lust...

Sins exploitation: it's about our needs, but it is just using others

**Col 3:8** rid yourselves...anger, rage, malice, slander...

Sins of abuse; hurting others because of your insecurities

**Col 3:11** there is no Gentile or Jew...barbarian, Scythian...

The sin of rejection; Scythian cruelty, choose forgiveness

To grow in Christ, choosing not to exploit, abuse, no biases

**Choosing life means trusting the call to live like Christ!**

**Col 3:15** Let...Christ rule in your hearts...

Rule means to make the call like a referee makes the call

NFL refs make bad calls; it is a part of the game

God never makes a bad call, but sometimes it seems like it

Have you ever tried to throw a red flag on God?

God wrong: riding waves, Lazarus dead,

God kept me in HS, but a time it was close

You can trust the call; God never gets it wrong

You can trust him with your life; he will not get it wrong

What call have you thought God got it wrong?

**Get Involved!**  
**Colossians 4:2**  
**Sunday, February 3, 2019**

Counselor plants kiss on a woman to show husband get involved

Husband missed the point, not the kiss, but his involvement

Church not about things need to be done, but your involvement

Real growth not about just doing things but how you're involved

Doing the right things do not create growth, growth creates them

Colossians 4 ends with the greatest tools that will help you grow

Greg, there must be something I do to grow, yes,

This understanding may bring the greatest growth you have had!

How many want to grow?

**Col 4:2** Devote yourselves...

Who is to devote themselves? The church, not just leaders

What does it mean devote?

Be consistent, not perfect, if fail, keep asking forgiveness

Be intense, narrowly focused on your purpose

What about? **READ Col 4:2-6**

We're to be consistent/intense in our involvement with others

**Get Involved!**

What does it really mean to be involved in the lives of others?

**Risk going to create attraction.**

Heard about the person on the road to destruction, no one praying

Do you understand it is your mission in life?

Visions and missions are easily confused add "ary"

Visionary, one who sees Missionary, one who goes

Pastor a visionary, person a missionary

Easier to think I look good to attract instead of risking going

Male birds attract females, plumage, weight, colors, can't fly

Male bird weaker than female, become easy prey for predators

Growth is not about becoming so attractive we forget to go

Girl lord's prayer, thy kingdom come, thy kingdom go

Some stop, don't feel attractive enough, going is growing

**Don't look for the way be The Way.**

Apple play in car, comforting, God is not a holy GPS!

Stopping on the way means you just get in the way

Acts believers called Christians once, but 6 X as The Way

Why Christ-like once but six times The Way?

**Vs. 5** Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders...

Literally the way you walk, progress, the way you go,

Jesus told disciples not just go, but as you go, manner of going

Problem not nonchurch goers, but really the non-going church

**Going is not about leading but following.**

Golden rule not until the 17th century, someone picked this one vs.

**Matt 7:12** ...do to others what you would have them do to you...

Golden Rule: Do unto others what you would have done to you

Jesus last lesson, washes disciples' feet, do you understand?

Jesus told them since I washed yours you should wash others

This was not about washing feet, humbling, or even servanthood

**John 13:15** I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Growth Rule: Do unto others as I have done unto you.

Love others, act for others like I have acted for you

Get involved by acting toward them like Jesus has for you

Greg, I will just live for God make sure I'm ok

Rev seven churches, well know Laodicea, for being lukewarm

How did this church get there, so that Jesus is outside knocking?

**Col 4:17** Tell Archippus: See to it that you complete the ministry...

Church get involved to help this young pastor

Maybe they didn't want to get involved

## **Appendix D Video Devotion Script**

### **Video Devotion 1 God's Love**

#### **Introduction**

Welcome to our first video devotion. This morning I want to talk about your story  
Everyone loves a good story, whether in a movie, book or news we connect to the story  
Mona Lisa was stolen, gone for two years, people came because of the story, not the wall  
Our life is about the story of God's love for us.

#### **Sermon clip**

#### **Main Teaching**

The problem with my golf game is in the head I'm thinking I am going to choke  
This is the same with many when hoping for different aspects of our lives  
This week I will be focusing on hope and how that hope helps us grow stronger  
First, we need to understand, where our strength comes from, Jesus is your strength  
Romans 5 6 teaches us that while we were powerless, Christ died for us  
Powerless means feeble; like someone who has had a stroke and can't move  
You were powerless to move to God, so Christ moved to you

#### **Scripture Application**

God, I can't move, it's ok I will come to you. When you are struggling, I can't  
breakthrough, remember God comes to you  
When he does you are given hope, the hope of Glory, Christ is you  
What is the one thing today that you're thinking, I don't think I have hope?  
Christ walks in the room, so you can have hope to believe for that very thing in your life  
Every time you think I can't, it won't, remember I can hope, Christ came to me!

### **Video Devotion 2 Qualified**

#### **Introduction**

Have you ever struggled with the feeling you didn't belong?  
Visiting cathedral with brother  
Closed walked in the middle of the wedding, didn't belong  
Feeling not qualified affects every area of your life  
Col 1:12 teaches us that we are qualified to share the inheritance. We have hope in Christ  
that we belong

#### **Sermon clip**

#### **Main teaching**

Qualified means equipped with enough power to perform the duties of one  
Have you felt like you didn't have enough?  
Col teaches qualified for inheritance  
2 Cor 3:6 qualified to minister  
They are not as separated as we think. If qualified for inheritance then qualified for ministry  
Did Peter and John feel qualified to have enough power to heal the lame man?  
They did not have enough gold, but they had enough of what it took to see healing.  
The enemy works against us on two levels. First works to not qualified for inheritance  
Then works to not qualified for the minister  
You have enough

### **Scripture Application**

Read 2 Cor 3:4-6

We are qualified for the new covenant. Qualified in the Spirit that brings life

## **Video Devotion 3 Shifting**

### **Introduction**

Football fan, the crowds roared to get the other team to jump offsides  
The slightest movement can be enough to draw a penalty. What are the things in your life that distract and cause you to move away slightly?  
It is easy to excuse things in our life as, not too bad, or not so wrong  
But the slightest move away can be the beginning that ends in a major shift  
Col 1:23 teaches us to not move away from the hope we have in Christ

### **Sermon Clip**

#### **Main teaching**

Move means to displace, but passive meaning move away  
It often is not the big dramatic events that displace us from hope but our movement  
Hebrews 2 teaches us to be careful not to drift away  
Two words; be carefully used of sailors tying up a ship  
Drift used of a ship that slips past the docks where it is to be tied up  
Picture not of an ignorant or rebellious sailor but a careless one  
What is causing you to shift slightly away from the hope?  
Circumstances, fear, doubt, sin  
This morning tie yourself to the hope that gives us the protection of God's harbor

### **Scripture Application**

Read Hebrews 2:1-4

God testified to our hope by miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.  
As God today, to release his HS in your life as you hold securely to His hope  
Today allow God's gifts to move in your life.



## **Video Devotion 4 Changed**

### **Introduction**

This week we have been looking at the hope we have in Christ, Col puts it, the Hope of Glory. What does that mean? This is not just a saying or a nice religious phrase; it is your promise

The promise is that in spite of your weaknesses your hope is in Christ's promise to change you. Your hope this morning is that God has the power to change you

Colossians 1 calls this the hidden mystery that's now revealed

But how does Jesus change us?

I talk about that in Sunday's sermon, watch

### **Sermon Clip**

### **Main Teaching**

So how are we changed by what Jesus did?

2 Cor 4 reminds us not to lose heart, do not lose hope

On the outside things might seem unmovable, unchanged or unstoppable

But our hope promises that every day we are being renewed, changed into his likeness

The struggles we see on the outside are working the change on the inside

You are being changed by Christ, but to understand it we must focus on what God is doing inside. If you only see the outside you will lose hope, see inside, see the eternal

Every day God is changing you, that means this day God is changing you

### **Scripture Application**

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Go through this day reminding yourself God is changing me today!

I have the hope of glory; Jesus in my life is changing me into his amazing life.

## **Video Devotion 5 Too Busy**

### **Introduction**

This morning I want you to think about what you believe that is hurting you. What does that mean? Colossians 2 talks about hollow and deceptive philosophy that try to take us captive. Philosophy isn't just an abstract idea; it is part of a story, the story of what you believe about God.

I talk about that in Sunday's sermon, watch

## **Sermon Clip**

### **Main Teaching**

What are some of the deceptive philosophies that are holding you back today? In the early 1930s, Sidney E. Cox, a Major in the Salvation Army and composer of numerous popular hymns, wrote and published “Deep and Wide.” “Deep and Wide” is a description of how God connects with God’s children and all of creation.

Do you believe that God’s love for you is deep and wide? That his fountain of love flows for you? A common deceptive philosophy is an idea that God is too busy for you. To see you, to hear you, to care about what is going on in your life and intervene in your life.

Do you ever feel that way? Don’t let this deceptive philosophy capture your heart.

Ephesians 3:18 says I pray you “grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.”

What philosophy has captured your heart this morning? God’s too busy for me or God’s love is so wide so long so high he sees everything I do!

### **Scripture Application**

Read Ephesians 3:14-21

As you read this passage, I want you to think about some of the deceptive philosophies that are going against the truth that God loves us and cares about everything that is going on in our lives. Do you believe God is interested in everything that is happening in your life?

## **Video Devotion 6 Seeing**

### **Introduction**

This morning if you are going to make through the day and know what God has for you, you must see through more than one set of eyes. I had surgery where one eye sees long other short.

Eph teaches us that we must see through the eyes of our heart if we want to see God in our lives. This means understanding seeking after more than just the right words but seeking him, the presence of God. Listen to this:

## **Sermon Clip**

### **Main Teaching**

What does get us there? According to the bible seeing life through the eyes of our hearts. The rich young man had done all the right things, but he could not see what all the right things were about, giving up everything and following Jesus. What are you looking at? What do you see? Do you see people who need Jesus or people you would rather avoid? Do you only see the natural things around you or do you see something more? This video reminds us that we need to see through the eyes of our heart.

### **Scripture Application**

Read Ephesians 1:18-23

The dog saw something greater. What about us? We should see something more. If we are looking through the eyes of our hearts, then we will seek the presence of God in our life.

Our passage today is in Eph 1:18-23

## **Video Devotion 7 Beyond**

### **Introduction**

My first real Broadway play was a new twist on the wizard of Oz. In the new play the audience saw a new side to the traditional wicked witch of the west. Everyone just thought they knew the story completely until they realized they didn't. It is easy to go into a situation and think no answers. We think we know the facts and often fall into the traditions we have been taught.

But maybe there is something more beyond what we thought it was all about. In this sermon clip, I talk about the need to see beyond the tradition to the life that is there. Listen to this:

### **Sermon Clip**

#### **Main Idea:**

Jesus had a way of seeing beyond what was expected in a person. The woman at the well was held in disrepute. She was divorced five times and living with a man, not her husband. We have the longest conversation recorded in the NT someone, not his disciple. Why was she divorced five times? Divorce came by two things adultery and barrenness. Men kept marrying her so she must have been barren. Rejected by all men, and yet Jesus saw beyond He saw life in her. Today see life in those who this world has rejected and cast aside.

### **Scripture Application**

Read Titus 3:1-5

The gentleness and mercy of God saved us. So, we are to be gentle with everyone. Not just the ones we like, but everyone. See beyond today with the gentleness and mercy of God and watch how it changes everything in your life.

## **Video Devotion 8 Connected**

### **Introduction**

Recently I saw a video of an overturned car lifted and turned over. One officer could not do it. But while it burned several men ran over and together, they lifted the car and turned it over. What one could not, the connection of many did. This week I have been talking about ideas that keep us from taking the next step in God. In Col 2 talks about people who isolated themselves because of these wrong ideas. Growth comes from connection. Your enemy will try to stop your growth by isolating you from the body of Christ. Listen to some thoughts from the sermon.

### **Sermon Clip**

#### **Main Idea**

There are three areas of isolation that prevent our growth in God. First, when you are isolated from God. This happens when you feel unworthy. Second, when you are isolated from the church. This happens when you do not see the importance of the church. Third, when you are isolated from sharing the gospel. This happens when you feel superior or when you feel it is hopeless. Each one of these keeps us from stepping up into the growth God has for us.

#### **Scripture Application**

Read: Romans 12:1-5

What does it mean to be connected? Romans 12:5 in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. What an amazing thought we belong to one another. As you go through your day remember you belong to Christ, to the body of his church, I belong to the message of life. Live connected live as you belong!

## **Video Devotion 9 Choosing**

### **Introduction**

As a young man sitting in church, I was amazed and moved by the story of Dave Roever. Dave was in Vietnam when a grenade exploded in his hand. He was badly disfigured, in spite of his injuries Dave decided and lived and share a message of hope. There were many times he could have given up, but he chose life. Today's devotion is about choosing life. We often feel locked into our life, by disabilities, family, personalities, finances or even our old wrong choices. In the sermon, I talked about how Martha was not locked into a personality but had a choice.

### **Sermon Clip**

### **Main Teaching**

Mary chose and so can you today. Choose the life that God has for you. Colossians 3:2 tells us to set our minds on things above, not on earthly or everyday things. To set your mind means to think carefully about your direction. Today it may seem there is not the way to break through your personality or even your problems. But you have a choice just like Martha and Mary. Allowing yourself to be distracted always creates a lack of relationship. Martha blamed Jesus of not caring because she chose things of this world. Proverbs 3:31 tells us not to choose the ways of this world. You have a choice today; don't be distracted and pulled away from God's love.

### **Scripture Application**

Read: Phil 1:27-30

Philippians 1:27 tells us that no matter what happens to live your life worthy of Christ. This means to live your life today with your mind set on heavenly things, on the good things God has for you and wants to do in our life. If we live not distracted by this world but with the mind of Christ, then we will see God do amazing things in our life.

## **Video Devotion 10 Faith Ride**

### **Introduction**

This morning I am sitting in my car to make a point. Sometimes when you are in the back seat it is not easy to just sit back and trust the drivers. From the backseat, you might feel like the driver is going too fast, too slow, or at least not driving as you would. When I am in the backseat, and one of my children are driving, I have to work hard to trust them to drive, even though they are very good drivers. We can feel the same way when God is driving, and we are not sure we can trust him to drive as we would want him too. In the sermon, the disciples were in the boat, and the storm was about to sink it. So, they woke Jesus from his sleep. He calmed the waters and then rebuked them for their lack of faith. I discuss this story in my sermon, watch...

### **Sermon Clip**

### **Main Teaching**

Colossians 3:3 teaches us that we have died to our life so that it can be hidden in Christ. The word hidden means to encrypt to put into code. In other words it is secure, behind an unbreakable wall of Christ powered security. You need to have faith to believe that when your life is hidden with Christ know one or nothing is strong enough to break in. Instead what often happens is that we open it from the inside because we are not sure God has things in control. Some might ask if God is in control why does he allow the storms at all? God is in control, but he wants you to exercise your faith to trust him in the storms. Ps. 32:9 says don't be like a mule that has to have a bit in your mouth to be controlled. Have faith and trust God even in the storms.

### **Scripture Application**

Read: Psalms 32:1-11

Today I want you to read Psalms 32. In verse 7 God says, “You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.” You are secure in his hiding place. It does not matter if you are in a sinking boat or a body that is broken; we have a secure hiding place in God. Then Verse 8 teaches us that God will watch over us; he will keep his loving eyes on us.

## **Video Devotion 11**

### **Less**

### **Introduction**

Driving to work, I saw one car cut off the other. The other honked the horn to express his displeasure. The other car didn't like to be honked at, so she honked back. They then proceeded down the road honking back and forth trying to get the last honk in. In chapter three of Colossians, we find a list of sins that easily distract us. Sins of exploitation, of abuse and sins of rejection. In the sins of rejection, we refuse to forgive others because they are different or they have hurt us. The chapter mentions the Scythians who were very cruel and hateful people. I discuss them in the sermon...

### **Sermon Clip**

### **Main Teaching**

Several years ago, I heard of a man in my town who lived in a very dangerous corner. He complained for many years for the city to do something about it, but they never did. Every time there was a wreck, he would run out his door to do what he could. He even brought the wounded into his home until the emergency workers arrived. Finally, he became so frustrated he refused to even look out the window at the crash. One day he heard a wreck and refused to help. He eventually heard a knock on the door, and the officer asked him if he knew a man's name. He said yes that is my son. His son was in the one in the wreck. It is easy to justify why we will not forgive someone. But in the end, it only hurts you. If we are going to grow, we must be willing to be willing to have less of us and more of Christ so that we can help as he has empowered us to do.

### **Scripture Application**

Read: Matthew 6:9-13

Today for our scripture I want you to read the most well known prayer in the bible. You might even have this prayer memorized. But the prayer is more than just words; it is a way of live. Verse 12 teaches us that we are to forgive others as God has forgiven us. Imagine if you lived your life today with this verse in mind.

## **Video Devotion 12**

### **The Call**

#### **Introduction**

I grew up playing football. Now I love watching it, the NFL, college even going to a good high School game. One thing I learn from football is that when the call goes against you can't dwell on it. If you do, it will consume you, and you will not be able to play the rest of the game. I think sometimes people feel like the call, in life, has gone against them. And instead of moving on from the call it cripples them. As believers, we have to believe that God is making the calls in our life. Col 3:15 tells us to let Christ rule in our hearts. What does that mean, I talk about that in the sermon...

#### **Sermon Clip**

#### **Main Teaching**

Proverbs 19:23 says "The fear of the LORD leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble." In other words, you can trust God, and when you do, you will be unmoved by any evil that comes your way. We can pass through the night and know no matter what we face evil will not overcome us. In the book of Philippians, the Apostle Paul reminds us what it means to trust God to make the call. He tells us that he has learned what it means to be content in every situation. I am struck with the thought that Paul had to learn this. So, can you! Learn to trust God to make the right calls in your life. When you don't understand, focus on the next play, because here is the secret, the game is fixed we win.

#### **Scripture Application**

Read: Phil 4:10-13

## **Video Devotion 13**

### **Consistently Passionate**

#### **Introduction**

I watched the Super Bowl like many of you did. If you didn't, you might be wondering about why many people didn't enjoy the game. It was not a low score. From my point of view, it was the lack of passion I saw on both sides. The Patriots finally won, but the passionate, extraordinary plays you would expect from the Super Bowl just weren't there. I believe if you are going to see spiritual growth in your life it will come from being consistently passionate about serving God. Col 4:2 tells us that we need to devote ourselves. I talk about that word in the sermon...

#### **Sermon Clip**

### **Main Teaching**

Has your life become stagnate? Proverbs 28:14 says “Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble.” This does not mean we always fear God, but it does mean that your heart controls your ability to be consistent in serving God. Your spiritual growth flows out of your consistent passion for God. I am convinced we fall into trouble when our heart becomes stagnant. We find ourselves in trouble when our passion has been exchanged for a hardened heart to the things of God. Here is your test today. Are you passionate about what God can do in your life or have you hardened your heart to God’s plans? What excites you, what God can do or what you want to do today?

### **Scripture Application**

Read: Proverbs 28:13-14

As Proverbs 28:14 reminds us to be passionate about the things of God; verse 13 shows us how we can live in that passion. Verse 13 teaches us that if we are willing to confess our sins to God, He is quick to show us mercy. Our spiritual growth begins with a heart of confession before God. Nothing will cause our lives to become stagnant like a heart that is unrepentant. Today, confess your sins and renew that passion for God.

## **Video Devotion 14**

### **Risk**

#### **Introduction**

When I lived not far from the Grand Canyon, I would take visiting family out to see it. Before we arrived, I would tell them I was going to jump the Grand Canyon. After arriving I would slip under the fence and jump a small three-foot edge that was cut into the side. It was not much of a risk to jump it. We Christians might talk big about risking for others, but really, they are not risking much. If we are going to grow in God, we must be willing to risk getting involved in the lives of others. But that is not always easy to do. I talked about risk in the sermon, watch this...

#### **Sermon Clip**

#### **Main Teaching**

Do you want to grow in the things of God? Growth comes from being willing to risk your life, your comfort, your desires for those who do not follow God. There is an amazing story in the book of Numbers. The people of God were in rebellion against Moses and Aaron. So, God destroyed those who were rebelling. But somehow even after seeing this the people still rebelled and tried to attack Moses and Aaron. So, God said stand back I am going to punish them. He sent a plague that was wiping them out. But Moses told Aaron to get some coals from the altar and run to the middle of the plague. Numbers 16:48 says, “He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped.” The same ones that were trying to kill them Aaron ran in the middle of the plague to stop it



for them. Are you will to run into the middle of this world's pain and hurt and bring healing and wholeness? That is what will bring real growth in your life today.

### **Scripture Application**

How can I get involved in someone's life? Ephesians 4:29 says, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what helps build others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." This verse says that we are to speak encouraging words to build people up according to their needs. This means you need to know what their needs are. You will not know their needs unless you get involved in their lives.

## **Video Devotion 15 The Way**

### **Introduction**

I read an article that talked about a growing concern with this next generation because they are constantly viewing some screen. Some have labeled this current generation as people of the screen. So, we are watching our screens so much we are known as The Screen People. In Acts the believers were called Christians once, but they were calling people of The Way six times. That was not just because they taught the way, but they were constantly going the way. Col 4:5 tells us to be wise in the way in the way we act toward others. Watch this short sermon clip.

### **Sermon Clip**

### **Main Teaching**

One of the most common questions I get asked is about how do I know I am going the right way. How do I know I will have the right words or go to the right place to help someone? In John 14 Jesus' disciples had a very similar concern. Jesus told them that he was going away to prepare a place for them. Then he told them that they know the way. The disciples protested that they did not know the way. But Jesus told them in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." He was assuring them that they would always know the way as long as they remembered that he was the way. When they went on their way as long as they kept Christ in their hearts and lives, the way would lead to blessing and life for themselves and others.

### **Scripture Application**

Read: John 14:1-6

For your scripture reading, today read John 14:1-6. Is something troubling you today? Then remember the words of Jesus, don't let your hearts be troubled. It is going to be all good because Jesus is not just a destination you are trying to get to. He is the journey; he is the very way that you are going. That means that as he promised he will always be with us in the way.

## **Video Devotion 16 Growth Rule**

### **Introduction**

A few years ago, a popular phrase swept the Christian world. What would Jesus do? These four simple words were used to help believers stop and think about how they should respond in life. The point was that they should think about what Jesus would do if he were there in their situation. As good as this was, I think it falls short of our true response. Instead of what would Jesus do if he was here, it should have been what has Jesus already done in my life. Jesus has already responded and what he did is touch and change your life. Think about not what he would do but what he has already done. Jesus illustrated this when we washed the disciples' feet. But what was it about?

### **Sermon Clip**

#### **Main Teaching**

I want you to add the growth rule to the golden rule. The golden rule says treat others like you want to be treated, and we should do that. But if you want to grow in God then follow the growth rule, treat others like Christ has treated you. This is not something new; Jesus taught this over and over again. John 13:34 says, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." We are commanded to love others with the template of how Christ loved us. Not just loving as I want to be loved, but love others as Jesus loved us. Then Jesus gives the full weight and power behind this growth rule. This is how everyone will know you are my disciples. There is your key to spiritual growth. Treat everyone with the love, compassion, and sacrifice that Jesus gave to you.

#### **Scripture Application**

Read: John 13:34-38

For your scripture reading read John 13:34 to the end of the chapter. Because he was trying to help, Peter understand the trial he was to face and how he could grow even in the middle of it.

## **Appendix E Video Devotion Links**

### **Video Devotions YouTube link:**

Devotion 1 “God’s Love” <https://youtu.be/tJnxmL6y9r4>

Devotion 2 “Qualified” <https://youtu.be/vYHAH7uYv7E>

Devotion 3 “Shifting” <https://youtu.be/3bAIZfJhSy8>

Devotion 4 “Changed” <https://youtu.be/HUpXRfXHxbc>

Devotion 5 “Too Busy” <https://youtu.be/O0gio6pOjBg>

Devotion 6 “See” <https://youtu.be/QbXE5ny4oQQ>

Devotion 7 “Beyond” [https://youtu.be/V-04\\_8yHJKQ](https://youtu.be/V-04_8yHJKQ)

Devotion 8 “Connected” <https://youtu.be/2nNWUZXTpgw>

Devotion 9 “Choosing” <https://youtu.be/gH8ZpNAZkR4>

Devotion 10 “Faith Ride” [https://youtu.be/\\_n\\_5ir3P2nY](https://youtu.be/_n_5ir3P2nY)

Devotion 11 “Less” <https://youtu.be/sZkRkK6CDg8>

Devotion 12 “The Call” <https://youtu.be/TskmrrbUNNk>

Devotion 13 “Passion” <https://youtu.be/XZfRMgtfwFY>

Devotion 14 “Risk” <https://youtu.be/U8Ayvh0YFGU>

Devotion 15 “The Way” <https://youtu.be/XacEW9hp6PU>

Devotion 16 “Growth Rule” <https://youtu.be/8i4Cdy5foc4>

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