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Understanding the Complexity of Family: Examining Family Systems and the Process of Relationship for Families and Congregation of First Baptist Church Woodbury, TN

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UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF FAMILY: EXAMINING
FAMILY SYSTEMS AND THE PROCESSES OF RELATIONSHIP FOR FAMILIES
AND CONGREGATION OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
OF WOODBURY, TENNESSEE

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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WILLIAM H. HAY V

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UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF FAMILY: EXAMINING
FAMILY SYSTEMS AND THE PROCESSES OF RELATIONSHIP FOR FAMILIES
AND CONGREGATION OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
OF WOODBURY, TENNESSEE

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To my Creator and His gift of Grace to me.

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the Complexity of Family: Examining Family Systems and Processes of Relationship for Families and Congregation of the First Baptist Church of Woodbury, Tennessee is a project designed to share family systems theory with families and church. Through six didactic sessions (triangulation, anxiety, self-differentiation, over and under functioning, crucial conversations, projection) and reflective journaling, families are encouraged to recognize the processes of being family and the parallel processes of family that are present in the life of a congregation. Using quantitative and qualitative instruments, results show that family and congregational functioning can be improved through raising awareness of systems process.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

How does our family tradition shape the emerging narrative of family? Can recognizing our own family tradition create an opportunity for change in the emerging narrative of family and congregation? Individuals enter into new family systems with existing patterns of interaction and behavior drawn from their nuclear family. These patterns of interaction, operating just below the surface of our consciousness, shape the processes of relationships that we establish with both family and congregation. Recognizing the significant events and dynamics of our family tradition can have a positive impact on the emerging narrative of our lives and provide the clarity and vision to be intentional in the shaping of family interaction and relationships.

Processes of family and congregational interaction are the focus of this project. This project raised the awareness of the processes of family and congregational relationships through didactic sessions and a sermon series to create the opportunity for family and church to explore behavior patterns. Recognition of existing behavior patterns was the first step to equip families and congregation with new tools and insights to address traditional processes of interaction and how they shape the emerging narrative of family and church. According to Edwin Friedman, “emotional process in religious organizations not only mirrors emotional processes in personal families, but also, both types of family systems plug into one another.”¹

¹ Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York, NY: Guilford, 1985), 195.

Equipping families with better ways of relating to one another will improve the health of the families within the congregation. The resulting increase in the health of family interactions will have a direct, positive effect on the interactions of families within the congregation. Helping families improve their patterns of interaction will directly impact congregational patterns of interaction in a positive manner. By focusing on processes of interaction, rather than content, the long-term goal of this project will be to bring about enduring change in the relationship patterns of congregants and congregation.²

The research design for this project incorporated a six-week study for the target group of First Baptist Church, Woodbury, on family systems theory and the family traditions of nuclear and extended family. The six weeks of didactic sessions occurred from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary of First Baptist Church, with the target group beginning August 31, 2014. Didactic sessions taught the concepts of triangulation, patterns of family anxiety, self-differentiation, over and under functioning in family, crucial conversations, and projection. Concurrent with the didactic sessions was a six-week sermon series on family relationships. This sermon series provided additional time for reflection by the target group while offering an opportunity for the entire church to encounter a particular application of systems theory to family. Further opportunity for reflection was given by providing a guided journal for the process of diary and reflection. The journal entries provided an excellent source of qualitative data from the course participants.

² Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 202.

Recognizing the possible resistance that can accompany a discussion of family, case studies and fables were utilized to create a non-threatening atmosphere for participants to engage in a discussion of family systems application to family without an overt, direct, public application in their lives. It is often less threatening in life to have discussions about the lives of others than to reveal the intimacies of our own lives.

The target group for the didactic sessions was self-selecting from the membership of First Baptist Church. All members of First Baptist Church Woodbury were provided the opportunity to participate in this group process. An open invitation was made through the church bulletin, and respondents received a letter outlining the content of the sessions and the request to commit to the complete process of sessions and reflection. Utilizing this method of selection helped to insure that the members who attended the didactic sessions were committed to the process of learning and would seek to apply systems thinking to family and congregational interactions.

Evaluative instruments were administered to the target group to survey the existing knowledge of family systems theory and corresponding learning that occurred as a result of the didactic sessions. Data gathered from these instruments provided a way to assess the effectiveness of this project with respect to each family's development of skill in recognizing the processes in family systems. The survey process determined how effectively the target group was able to correlate the process of family function and congregational process through questions and journal reflection.

Ministry Setting

First Baptist Church of Woodbury, TN was the ministry location for this project. First Baptist is an established congregation that traces its history back to 1810. There were two initial attempts to organize a church in the area of Woodbury on the East Fork of the Stones River that failed. Reasons for the failure of these two attempts to organize a church are not known. The present church was organized in 1844 as the Woodbury Baptist Church of Christ and has been a part of Woodbury since that time. In 1850 the church was admitted to the Salem Baptist Association, and there was an amicable separation with the Church of Christ. The pile of coal that was used to heat the church was equally divided, and the Church of Christ went up 'on the hill' to High Street, and First Baptist remained at the present location on Main Street.

Early pastors in the church were itinerant preachers who rode a circuit and conducted 'preaching' at the church. Early periods of the church, as noted in minutes of business meetings, include the enforcement of church discipline to errant church members for public intoxication, dancing, poor behavior as a Christian, and one instance of cussing a mule 'excessive'. During the Civil War, church services were canceled on occasion as the Stones River area was a point of contact between Confederate and Union forces.

The lore of the early settlement of Cannon County provides stories of subsistence farming, families keeping to themselves as they scratched out a living in the Short Mountain area, and family clans making moonshine. Families were close, being described as clannish, as they made a living in subsistence farming. The significance of

being a native in Cannon County still has weight in the area to this day. The conservative nature of the agricultural development of Cannon County has shaped the town and the membership of First Baptist Church.

First Baptist Church is a church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention which is traditional in worship style with choir and organ. The present staff of the church consists of the fulltime pastor, part time combination music director and youth leader, a part time secretary and custodian. My tenure at First Baptist began in October of 2009 as Interim Pastor with a call to be Pastor of First Baptist in February of 2010. Worship attendance rose steadily from an average of 205 in 2009 to an average of 228 in 2012. Worship attendance has declined since June of 2013 to an average of 198 for 2014. Some of the factors beyond our control for the decline in membership include the splitting of families through divorce, death, and the resignation of a long-term youth minister. Factors within our control that have contributed to declining worship attendance are the failure of a concurrent worship service in the fellowship hall to alleviate overcrowding and the resistance to supporting small group activities for the church.

Change takes place slowly in First Baptist Church, as is true of Cannon County. Resistance to change has been characteristic of our congregation for the past forty years, and the adherence to tradition has limited innovative leadership that will be necessary for the future of First Baptist Church. The decline in worship attendance has been noted by several longer term church members but has not caused enough internal dissonance to prompt initiatives to change.

The Ministry Question

First Baptist Church is an established, traditional congregation, with a diverse membership with respect to socio-economic positions, education levels, and theological views. First Baptist has experienced episodes of conflict with pastoral leadership for approximately twenty years. Significant in the recent history of the church is the dismissal of a pastor, in 1996, for initiating a second worship service that was contemporary in music style. This conflict caused a split of about fifty members, including some division within families in the church. In 2001, a young pastor was dismissed for viewing and printing inappropriate images in the church office. Some families reached out to this young minister in grace and forgiveness while other church families sought to force him out of the county for his moral failure. Division in the church was apparent in the responses to this pastor and his family. Since the retirement of a well-loved pastor in 1988, who had served the church for eighteen years, the longest tenure of a pastor of First Baptist Church Woodbury has been five years.

In examining the recent history of the church, the path of least resistance is to lay the entire burden of fault on pastoral leadership for the cycles of growth, loss, and change. Pastoral leadership, however, does not function in a vacuum. Through didactic sessions and sermon series, this project has increased awareness of the processes of family and congregational relationships and created an opportunity for the church to examine behavior patterns that have contributed to church conflict in recent years. Have the leadership processes of the church contributed anxiety to pastoral leadership so that the pastor becomes symptomatic in leadership styles and behaviors? Does the congregation become reactionary when presented with innovation in worship and retreat

into patterns of tradition and rigidity in response to unresolved grief from previous conflict? Recognizing behavior patterns has been the first step in equipping families and congregation with new tools and insights to address traditional processes of interaction and how they shape the emerging narrative of family and church.

Reviewing the history of the church reveals cycles of growth and loss, anxiety concerning change and the assimilation of new members, and the loss of pastoral leadership. The indicators of the parallel processes that take place between family and church are evident. Anxiety enters the relationship processes of the church when certain members sense that change is being proposed. Sensing coming change, individuals function as anxiety amplifiers and amplify the anxiety present in the systems of the church causing heightened levels of reactivity in the congregation.³ Reactivity, in response to proposed change, peaks and triggers other members of the congregation to step up as anxiety dampeners to dissipate the new anxiety that is being introduced into the system.⁴ Unresolved grief, from previous church conflict, surfaces in the midst of anxiety and reactivity. Pain from the unresolved grief functions to shut down meaningful dialogue concerning innovation in any particular area of the church life. Opposition to change, fueled by unresolved grief and reactivity, solidifies to keep the homeostasis of the church on course.⁵ Family and congregational processes parallel one another in function with respect to anxiety, pain, fear, and resistance to change. Understanding the connection between family function and congregational process has been a positive effect upon the congregation and church leadership.

³ Murray Bowen and Michael Kerr, *Family Evaluation* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1988), 142.

⁴ Ibid., 142.

⁵ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 23.

Critical to this project is the definition of family. Normative definitions of family focus upon the family unit as a noun. The shift that was important for the success of this project was the family and church recognition of the definition of family as a verb.⁶ Recognizing family and congregation as a verb provides a new point of view with particular attention to the process in which relationship occurs. The application of systems theory to the process of family can be life changing for family and church as the focus of family life shifts from ‘why’ family members act, to the different focus of ‘how’ family members relate to each other as family.

Families in this church, as in all churches, have experienced internal struggles and external pressures. Families cope with varying degrees of dysfunction to exist in relationship without receiving sufficient guidance on family systems, interactions, and spirituality from the church. External pressures on the family to ‘save face’ in the church with respect to family functioning inhibits the seeking of assistance for family dysfunction. Church should be a place of healing for families and relationships. This project has prepared the church to be a place of healing and grace for families by raising awareness of family functioning and showing particular care to family through grace and works.

The real and perceived pressures to perform in academic, church, and social settings are high for adults and children in the congregation. The presentation of church members for pastoral help regarding anxiety and issues related to panic attacks has been on the rise for the last twelve months. For others, emotional cutoff and the corresponding

⁶ Dennis B. Guernsey, “Family Ministry and a Theology of Family: A Personal Journey,” *Direction, A Mennonite Brethren Forum* 19, no. 1 (1990): 3.

alienation of family that are a part of nuclear family are beginning to have a significant impact on newly formed family. This project has provided a clearer understanding of family systems theory for the congregation. An increased awareness and understanding of family dynamics will further the ministry of First Baptist Church and increase our ability to care for one another.

Project Goals

The first goal of this project was to teach the target group of First Baptist Church six fundamental concepts of family systems theory so that they will become aware of the way their families function. Fundamental concepts necessary for a basic understanding of family systems theory include triangulation, anxiety, self-differentiation, over and under functioning, crucial conversations, and projection. This goal was attained through the didactic sessions as they offered family systems theory in an environment that allowed the target group to engage freely in the material presented and overhear the application of systems theory to their lives. Gaining a working knowledge of these six concepts of family systems theory has equipped the target group to be able to identify these concepts in daily interaction and start the process of reflection on family interaction.

The second goal of this project, for those participating in the target group, was to encourage reflection on family interaction so that the target group can make incremental improvements in the way they function as family. Once the working concepts of systems theory were established, the target group was challenged to continue engaging the concepts through survey instruments and a guided journal. Reflection and interaction are crucial to the success of this project as the lever for systems theory to move from

knowledge to action. As target group members have increased their ability to reflect on family interaction they are better able to recognize windows of opportunity to influence change in family process.

A third goal of this project included the development of the concept of differentiation for individuals in the target group. For those who participated in the didactic sessions, there was significant exposure to the concept of differentiation. More highly differentiated people are less reactive than less differentiated people. Reflective action for this group occurred as the individual family members are able to recognize their particular level of differentiation and find ways to improve their level of differentiation. According to Friedman, being differentiated while remaining connected is the key to gaining the ability to make lasting change in family and congregational systems.⁷ When the knowledge of how family functions is combined with differentiated leadership, significant emotional growth is possible for the family. As light is shed on the processes of family, through knowledge shared in the didactic sessions, family members can begin to live in the new light of insight. The light of Christ transforms family; “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:5 NRSV)

A fourth goal of this project was to challenge the congregation to recognize existing patterns of behavior in the church and examine ways to improve our functioning as a church. Unresolved grief from the conflict over worship style and a blended service continue to inhibit innovation in the area of worship for the church. The fear of losing control through change serves to empower tradition and weaken flexibility. Processes of interaction in the congregation continue to perpetuate the resistance to and the fear of

⁷ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 29.

change. The accompanying sermon series as part of this project, provided the entire church with opportunities to be exposed to family systems theory.

There were two additional professional goals I attained through this sermon series. First, I have enhanced my communication skills through consultation with a collaborative partner in the area of preaching during the project. Reverend John Hembree, pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Woodbury, has agreed to serve as my collaborative partner for sermon review. Second, the sermon series has provided the opportunity for the congregation to encounter the parallel functioning of family process and congregational process. By using fable and scripture, the congregation was able to encounter the behavior processes that exist in family and were encouraged to reflect on how these processes of family influence the congregation.

Literature Review

Literature related to family systems theory can be traced to the significant work of Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*. Bowen develops his application of systems thinking to family in this work after a decade of practice as a psychiatrist. System application is used by Bowen to describe the complex and interdependent behavior of family.⁸ Further development of family systems theory and intergenerational application is in the work by Bowen and Kerr; *Family Evaluation*. *Family Evaluation* provides the nuts and bolts for the application of systems theory thinking to family by addressing family as a multigenerational emotional system. *Family Evaluation* uses the Bowen Theory as it addresses anxiety, togetherness, differentiation, and triangles in

⁸ Murray Bowen, MD, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), xvi.

family. The Bowen theory of systems process, as applied to family, easily transitions to the life of the congregation because of the ‘Multigenerational Emotional Process’ approach of Murray Bowen.⁹ Functioning of both family and congregation are directly related to the level of functioning of the previous generation. Accordingly, any attempts to understand the present functioning of a family and congregation must take a multigenerational approach to be valid.

Building on the work of Bowen, Edwin Friedman applies Bowen’s systems theory to the family processes of church and synagogue in *Generation to Generation*. Friedman’s work has been germinal for my study as Friedman’s application of Bowen systems theory to the congregation has caused me to reconsider how leadership takes place in the church. In place of the consideration of one person, event or single family bringing lasting change to the congregation, Friedman’s attention to process finds the heart of leadership in differentiated leadership that works through webs of family relationships.¹⁰ This project was undergirded by this premise, that changing the processes of families within the church can eventually bring change in the processes of the congregation. The congregation functions as extended family and the generational processes of family are applicable to the church. *Generation to Generation* was a catalyst for pursuing this project with relation to family and church.

Knowledge of group process was helpful as sharing the concepts of family systems occurred in a group setting. In *The Theory and Practice of Group*

⁹ Bowen and Kerr, *Family Evaluation*, 222.

¹⁰ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 229.

Psychotherapy, Yalom offers extensive insight in the processes of groups.¹¹ This insight proved important as the group learning about the processes of family occurred in the process of becoming a group. Yalom's chapters on group cohesiveness, transference, and interpersonal relationship were helpful in leading the target group.

An earlier application of Bowen's Family Systems Theory and congregational life is in the Doctor of Ministry project, "Transformational Leadership Through Collaborative Ministry: A Process of Using Systems Theory and Paul's Theology of the Body of Christ" by Regina Hendrickson, Drew University, 2006. Hendrickson's work examines decision making processes and member care in the church. She writes of her own overfunctioning with respect to leadership and recognizes that an overfunctioning style of leadership cannot be supported theologically. Utilizing family systems theory and the theology of the body of Christ, Hendrickson seeks to transform broken leadership styles within the church. An important part of her work is the fact that she recognizes the influence her leadership style has on the leadership systems of the church.

Leadership style and method have a direct influence on the health of a congregation. In the Doctor of Ministry project, "Healing the Congregation: Using Family Systems Education to Understand Congregational Life," Drew University, 1993, William McFarland speaks to the issue of the abuse of power by clergy and the consequential damage to congregational life. Using Bowen's theory of systems, he outlines how poor boundaries, lack of trust, and sexual abuse by clergy have changed the dynamics of process for a congregation. Healing for the congregation comes from crucial

¹¹ Irvin D. Yalom, *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*, 5th ed. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2005), 141-142.

conversations that seek to purge the system of secrets and expose problems of trust. McFarland uses systems theory to teach the concepts of triangulation, anxiety, differentiation, emotional systems, and multigenerational emotional process.

Leadership style, anxiety, and the non-anxious presence are also found in the Doctor of Ministry project, “A Study of the Effects of Family Systems on the Staff, Leadership and Congregation of First United Methodist Church of Paulsboro,” Asbury Seminary, 2011, by John Paul Wallace. Wallace writes of differentiated leadership in the church that first seeks to do no harm. Conflict will exist when people are gathered together. Differentiated leadership uses influence to seek positive resolution to conflict without causing emotional harm to leadership or those being led.

Daniel Ross Lord’s dissertation, “Church as Family: Exploring a Perspective of the Local Church and Parish Ministry through Metaphor and Family Systems Theory,” Boston University, 1984, states that the local congregation is worthy of efforts to better understand its nature. He advocates for local parish ministers to be trained in family systems theory so that the minister can be a therapeutic presence in the system of the church. Parish ministers as therapeutic presence in local ministry is difficult, if not impossible, without a working knowledge of systems theory.

A minister as a therapeutic presence in the congregation is further explored in the dissertation by Michael Gillen, “Conceptual Similarities: Responsibility, Self, and Systemic Thinking in the Family Systems Theory of Murray Bowen and the Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr,” Union Theological Seminary, 2006. His dissertation is a theological examination of family systems theory. Gillen draws comparisons between the

points of contact in Bowen's systems theory and Niebuhr's theology. This work is important, as it takes the conceptual basis of understanding the church through systems theory and raises the question of the compatibility of systems theory and theology. I appreciate the attention given by Gillen to the marriage of psychology and theology that is taking place as ministers increasingly seek to use systems thinking in church leadership.

Rationale

Throughout my time as pastor of First Baptist Church I have had an increasing burden for families. In observing family process I have recognized patterns of behavior that take place just below the surface of family interaction. I have chosen to use family systems theory as a way to increase awareness of these processes for families and then through this awareness help families find more effective patterns of being family. The church should be one of the best places for families to receive support and instruction on what it means to be family.

Research Design

As with most faith communities, in First Baptist there is a reluctance to discuss family issues in the presence of community. Recognizing the passionate feelings associated with a discussion and reflection on family, the didactic sessions will be formed using fables and case studies drawn from Edwin Friedman's *Friedman's Fables* and Murray Bowen's and Michael Kerr's *Family Evaluation*. Fables will be used to form the guiding image of the sessions with case studies providing additional clarifying insight. During the didactic sessions and sermon series, there was a strong potential for

transference. Given the potential for transference, the possible surfacing of latent anger and anxiety, and the inherent reticence to share about personal family issues, fables and case studies provided neutral ground to illustrate specific scenarios for the application of family systems theory to family.

The first teaching session focused on triangulation as triangles are the basic way people relate in family emotional systems. Anxiety was the topic of the second teaching session because anxiety is mapped throughout relationship systems in interlocking triangles. The third teaching session was centered on differentiation and reactivity. Anxiety, reactivity, and differentiation interact proportionally in system processes, with differentiation being the key to managing anxiety and reactivity. Week four of the teaching sessions addressed over and under functioning. Over and under functioning in relationship are symptomatic of anxiety, poor differentiation, and reactivity. These process behaviors could be addressed appropriately after the foundational work of the previous teaching sessions. Crucial conversations were the topic for the fifth week teaching session, and projection was the topic of week six. The concepts of crucial conversations and projection require the previous teaching sessions as foundation and are reflective thinking about the process of family.

In addition to the group sessions, a journal was provided to each target participant. The most significant and enduring changes to family will take place as a result of the personal reflection of target group members. As target members progressed through the six weeks of teaching sessions, they utilized guided journal questions for reflection. Journaling was included as a part of the project process as it promoted

individual reflection and provided a rich additional source of qualitative data regarding the participants' reflection on information received during the six weekly sessions.

Worship emphasis for a six-week period beginning September 7, 2014, was related to the teaching sessions topics and included a sermon series delivered during the morning worship services of First Baptist Church. The sermon series provided an opportunity for congregational learning as the congregation was exposed to the processes of family through biblical texts and fable. As the congregation heard family systems theory in sermons, they were encouraged to reflect on the parallel processes of family and congregation. Benefits for the target group are through reinforcement as they heard the concepts of family process in sermon.

CHAPTER 2

DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Target Group

Self-selection of the target group began August thirteenth and ended August twentieth with informational inserts placed in the church bulletin to provide church members with an overview of the didactic sessions and an invitation to attend the sessions. Members who responded with interest to the didactic sessions were sent a letter on August 27 advising of the content of the course and a request to faithfully attend the sessions as a participant.

Implementation of the didactic sessions began on August 31 with the administration of the pre-course survey, description of the content of the six week sessions, distribution of journal materials, teaching session, and administration of the post-course survey. This initial session was approximately one hour and 45 minutes with the remaining sessions scheduled for one hour and thirty minutes. Each week session was divided with the initial fifteen minutes given to pre-course instrument completion, one hour for the didactic session and the remaining fifteen minutes for completion of the post-course survey. The six sessions took place on Sunday evenings in the sanctuary of First Baptist Church from August 31 through October fifth.

Running concurrently with the didactic sessions, a sermon series began September seventh and ended October twelfth. The target group was encouraged to complete journal entries as the sermon series progressed. Participants were also

encouraged to include any reflection or syntheses that occurred as the sessions progressed with the understanding that learning from one week may surface at a later date.

Final group reflection from the target group occurred on October twelfth with the administration of the post course survey and opportunity for members of the target group to share concerning their experience in the course. During this session participants were offered an opportunity to participate in interviews that were to be conducted on October 29 at 6:30 in the fellowship hall. Interviews were offered for an opportunity for participants to share qualitative data in a confidential setting. Participation in the interview process was voluntary and guided with the same interview inventory administered to each family.

DIDACTIC SESSIONS AND SERMON SCHEDULE

Week One	August 31, 2014	A Look at Interlocking Triangles
Fable:	A Nervous Condition ¹²	Sermon: Tension in the House Genesis 16:1-6
Week Two	September 7, 2014	A Look at Anxiety and a Non-Anxious Presence
Fable:	Panic ¹³	Sermon: Hannah's Prayer 1 Samuel 1:3-20
Week Three	September 14, 2014	A Look at Self-Differentiation and Reactivity
Fable:	The Bridge ¹⁴	Sermon: Lost in Jerusalem Luke 2:41-52
Week Four	September 21, 2014	A Look at Over and Under Functioning
Fable:	Net Results ¹⁵	Sermon: Over and Under, How did Jesus Love? Mark 10:17-22

¹² Edwin Friedman, *Friedman's Fables* (New York, NY: Guilford, 1990), 17-21.

¹³ Ibid., 175-178.

¹⁴ Ibid., 9-13.

Week Five September 28, 2014 A Look at Crucial Conversations

Fable: Jean and Jane¹⁶ Sermon: Getting it Out in the Open Mark 9:33-37

Week Six October 5, 2014 A Look at Projection, The Identified Patient

Fable: Projection¹⁷ Sermon: Who Sinned, this Man or His Parents? John 9:1-34

Means of Evaluation

Effectiveness of this project was determined through quantitative and qualitative means. Thirteen instruments were administered to the self-selecting target group.

Quantitative data was drawn from surveys that were developed with a mixture of Lickert scale items to address the cognitive and affective domains of learning.¹⁸ Qualitative data was secured in the form of reflective journal entries and post course interviews. The journal entries and interviews allowed assessment of data from the psychomotor and interpersonal domains of learning.¹⁹

Pre-course surveys were given to assess the cognitive and affective level of understanding of family systems theory before the didactic sessions. A post-course survey was given to all course participants to gain insight into the impact of the learning experience. The post-course survey was similar to the pre-course survey in order to provide a measure of comprehension from course sessions. Journal entries were prompted

¹⁵ Ibid., 75-80.

¹⁶ Ibid., 129-132.

¹⁷ Ibid., 39-43.

¹⁸ Cindy Vinson, Ed. D, "Learning Domains and Delivery of Instruction," [cited 22 March 2014]. Online: <http://pixel.fhda.edu/id/learningdomain.html>=1.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2.

with open-ended questions focused on the sermon series. This provided an opportunity for reflection on the previous didactic sessions and sermons to promote synthesis and reflection. Target group participants were encouraged to include reflection upon course content without regard to the chronology of the course as the learning process was ongoing and insight from didactic sessions may occur at later dates. Responses to the instruments and journal were recorded, analyzed, and reported as part of the final evaluation of this project.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Broken Relationships

Biblical support for the rationale of this project begins in the third chapter of Genesis. Adam and Eve walk in the Garden of Eden without any shame related to their nakedness. The relationship that exists between God and humanity is pure with Creator and creature freely interacting in Eden. There is no need for clothing for Adam and Eve as the relationship they have with God has not been broken.²⁰ Sin enters creation with the serpent casting doubt on Eve's trust in God.²¹ At this time relationship is broken between God and humanity as the serpent tempts humanity to break the boundaries of knowledge and existence that have been established by God.²²

Everything involved in relationship and life is more difficult after the entry of sin into creation.²³ Simple conversations between God and humanity are no longer possible. As God walks in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, the man and woman hide themselves from the presence of God. Simple conversations between man and woman are no longer possible. Blame for eating the fruit travels through the family as neither man nor woman accept responsibility for failure. Family relationships have been forever changed.

²⁰ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, Old Testament Library (trans. John H. Marks; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1961), 83.

²¹ Terrence E. Fretheim, *The Book of Genesis*, New Interpreter's Bible (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 1:361.

²² von Rad, 87.

²³ Fretheim, 364.

God is the author of relationship and, in creative activity, made humanity for relationship. Humanity was created in the image of God, different from all other beings and material that were created. Barth's exegesis of Genesis 1:26-28 speaks to the "I, Thou" relationship that is inherent to the creation of humanity.²⁴ The most direct consequence of the breaking of the "I, Thou" relationship with God has been the corruption of relationships that exist in family.

Intergenerational Sin and Family

Intergenerational sin and the resulting effect on family are powerfully evident in the life of David as presented in the book of II Samuel. From one sin comes the downfall of David and his family. David's attention to self-interest and the exploitation of others sets the stage for broken relationships in the closeness of family and in the reaches of his kingdom.²⁵ The intergenerational effects of sin are apparent as David's family relationships deteriorate with secrecy, incest, rape, and murder becoming a part of his extended family life through his children. Incest takes place as Tamar is raped by her half-brother Amnon. Though David is the father of Tamar and Amnon, and is furious about this act, he does not speak or act in relation to this heinous event. Absalom murders Amnon. Absalom then leads a revolt to secure the throne from his father. David's silence on the sin of the rape of Tamar eventually leads to the death of Amnon and Absalom. Both Amnon and Absalom possess free will, but become casualties of the violence David has brought to the family.²⁶ Though opportunities surfaced for the renewal and

²⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation* (ed. G.W. Bromily, and T.F. Torrence; trans. J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey, and H. Knight; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1958), 184.

²⁵ Bruce C. Birch, *The First and Second Books of Samuel*, New Interpreter's Bible (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 2:1288.

²⁶ Birch, 1303.

restoration of relationship within David's family, no reconciliation was ever forged.

The power of generational sin can be broken through grace and reconciliation. The story of David's family stands in stark contrast to the parable of Jesus concerning family and the prodigal son.²⁷ Fred Craddock's referral to this parable as that of the 'Loving Father' is most appropriate in contrasting the story of David's family with this parable of family from Jesus.²⁸ In Jesus' parable the father remains connected to the younger and the elder son, looking for them and speaking to them. Opportunities arise for David to reconcile with his sons after each crisis in relationship, but he does not choose to do so.

Freedom of Choice and Family

One decision can have enduring impact on generations of family. That which is viewed as tragedy in life can be viewed theologically as the guidance of God.²⁹ In Ruth 1:15, Naomi speaks to Ruth and urges her to return to her sister-in-law. Ruth 1:16-17 recount the decision of Ruth to remain with Naomi in a rich combination of "religious devotion and human love."³⁰ The emerging narrative of this new family that is formed as a result of Ruth's decision to remain with Naomi is guided by God as Ruth becomes the wife of Boaz and the mother of Obed. Generational influence continues as Obed becomes the father of Jesse, the father of David. God's activity in the life of Ruth demonstrates that no facet of life is beyond the redemptive activity of God as God gives meaning to

²⁷ Ganse Little, *The First and Second Books of Samuel*, Interpreter's Bible (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1953), 2:1120-21.

²⁸ Fred B. Craddock, *Luke*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (ed. James Luther Mays; Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1990), 186.

²⁹ A.S. Herbert, *Ruth*, Peake's Commentary on the Bible (ed. Matthew Black; Berkshire: VanNostrand Reinhold, 1962), 317.

³⁰ Ibid.

that which can be viewed as having no meaning.³¹ As God has been active in the history of family, God continues to be actively involved in the continued redemption of family in the present. God's continued redemptive activity within family provides hope for possible enduring change that can take place in the future generations of family.

Generations of family are bound together by blood and decision. While family cannot separate itself from the consequences of the sin and behavior of the previous generation, personal responsibility is recognized and accounted by God. Ezekiel proclaims in chapter 18,

“What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel.” (Ezekiel 18: 2, 3).

Though God has the authority to handle any person as He chooses, God announces through Ezekiel that He will judge each person with respect to his or her own sin.³² Eichrodt states, “Ezekiel rather proclaims a decision made by God for the present situation, to help those whose faith is in difficulties, and give them strength to face life afresh.”³³ This word of prophecy spoken to the exiles is full of truth for family today. The generational impact of action on family is undeniably present, but there is always hope in the redemptive activity of God with individual members of family. Consequences withstanding, there is a particular hope given by God that decisions made to be faithful to

³¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1941), 82.

³² Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, Old Testament Library (trans. Cosslett Quin, Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1970), 237.

³³ Ibid.

God and for the good of family can begin a new chapter for family. The future of family does not have to be shackled to the past.

Jesus and Family

Jesus honors family with his presence and the first miracle recorded in the Gospel of John in a wedding at Cana. One of the pinnacles of life for Jewish family is the wedding feast. This event would have been planned in advance and the entire community would look forward to the festival.³⁴ Jesus' mother comes to him out of concern for the lack of wine. In the midst of the conversation between Jesus and his mother, Jesus says to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." (John 2:4) In addressing his mother as woman, Jesus is "formally redefining their relationship."³⁵ Jesus, the Messiah, places distance between his mother and himself, as he refers to her as woman and begins a redefining of family relationship that also will be recorded in the synoptics and continue throughout the New Testament. This use of the word woman by Jesus is not characteristically Jewish or human, and in it we hear the Word of God spoken through Jesus about the true nature of family.³⁶ This reference to his mother as woman is not a minimization of his love for her, as seen in John 19:26 where Jesus speaks with care to his mother and her new son, the loved disciple.³⁷ Instead, Jesus is using huge, sweeping strokes to begin to speak about family relationships and who are his true mothers and brothers.

³⁴ William E. Hull, *John*, Broadman Bible Commentary (ed. Clifton J. Allen; Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1970), 9:230.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ D. Moody Smith, *John*, Proclamation Commentaries (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1976), 43.

³⁷ Hull, 360.

Jesus redefines family in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 8:19-21. Jesus uses the coming of his family in this pericope to instruct the disciples concerning the nature of family in the Kingdom of God. The real family of Jesus, the Kingdom of God, is comprised of those who hear the words of Jesus and follow the will of the Lord.³⁸ Being a member of God's family is not gained through birth but with the acceptance of Christ and doing the will of God. The picture, given by Jesus of his mothers and brothers, includes those who choose to enter the Kingdom of God through a relationship of obedience. Appropriate relationship with God and family is found in the consistent reaffirmation of the choice to love. This revelation of the true family of God has significant implications for the church and this project. Since Christ has identified his family as those who are obedient and do his will, the church has an inherent responsibility to promote the health and healing of family within the body of Christ.

The most tender representation of family that Jesus provides in Luke is found in the parable of the Loving Father. A family setting forms this parable of Christ where the loving father forgives a son and the great joy and love that are a part of that process. This parable is easily a part of our memory due to our knowledge of family and the stark representation of undeserved love.³⁹ In this parable the narrative of family carries the freight of grace. The profound sharing of grace in the parable calls family members to an environment where grace can have enduring impact, the family. Given Christ's declaration that his family are those who are reconciled to him, the church is called to extend grace to families that are hurting and seek to provide an environment of healing for all of the adopted sons and daughters of God.

³⁸ Craddock, 113.

³⁹ Ibid., 186.

Boundaries and Family

Following Jesus' sweeping recognition of true family as those who hear and obey the will of God, Paul addresses boundary issues of family throughout the first letter to the church at Corinth. The church at Corinth is a classic example of the way family and church relationships overlap and influence each other. Paul implies family as he uses the word ἀδελφοί to address the members of the church. The Greek meaning of ἀδελφοί is brethren, and Sampley relates that the translation in the NRSV as 'brothers and sisters' is true to the intention of Paul.⁴⁰ In referring to the members of the church as brothers and sisters, Paul is reminding the church of their true family and unity in the Lord as the appeal is made 'by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Unity in God's family, for Paul, must come first. The quarrels that were reported by Chloe's people that developed as some stated that they belonged to Apollos, some to Cephas, some to Paul, and others to Christ, were divisive and a threat to the unity of the family of God in Christ at Corinth. As new Christians are recognized as God's adopted children, new boundaries for relationship are established. Christ and the cross are the new boundary of unity that transcend any human relationship and is the mark of what it means to be a Christian.⁴¹ To declare that one belongs to anyone other than Christ is to violate the unity of God's family and to declare boundaries within the family that do not exist.

Paul further addresses family boundaries in I Corinthians, chapter 5. In verse 1, Paul writes that within the church there is sexual immorality as is not found among the pagans, that "a man is living with his father's wife." Brown writes that the Old

⁴⁰ J. Paul Sampley, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The New Interpreter's Bible (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998) 10:806.

⁴¹ Ibid., 807.

Testament and Roman law prohibited a sexual relationship between a man and his stepmother.⁴² Paul continues by writing that the Corinthians are not mourning the knowledge of this relationship but are boasting concerning the issue. This violation of a sexual boundary that should exist in a family has an effect on the body of Christ. There is significant “moral damage such an undisciplined act brings upon the church.”⁴³ The calling for the discipline of the man involved in this relationship is a call to restore boundaries within nuclear family and the family of God. The broken boundaries of this family, as a result of unchecked sin, will influence and damage the boundaries of relationship within the church. For Paul the existence of this immoral sexual relationship in the church threatens the unity of the family of God in Christ.

Paul seeks to maintain the unity of the church family by addressing the way the members of the church are resolving conflict in I Corinthians, chapter 6. Conflict resolution for the members included filing lawsuits against one another.⁴⁴ Two boundaries that were being violated are recognized by the apostle. First, unbelievers outside of the family of God are ruling on conflict between believers. This is the boundary between the world and the family of God. Second, that Christians should prefer being defrauded over seeking justice through the law. In the same thought of boundaries within the family of God, that unity of the family of God is greater than the desires of self, Williams notes that as Paul writes with respect to meat sacrificed to idols, “Love must be allowed to settle the problem.”⁴⁵ The unity of the family of God, with Christ as

⁴² Raymond Bryan Brown, *I Corinthians*, Broadman Bible Commentary (ed. Clifton J. Allen; Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1970) 10:318-19.

⁴³ Brown, 319.

⁴⁴ C.S.C. Williams, *I and II Corinthians*, Peake's Commentary on the Bible (ed. Matthew Black; Berkshire: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1962), 956.

⁴⁵ Williams, 958.

the center, is above all for Paul in the letter to the church at Corinth. Every boundary issue in the church at Corinth from human loyalties, lawsuits, meat and idols, the Eucharist, worship, and spiritual gifts, was to be resolved so that the family of God did not lose their unity as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul and Family

In the book of Galatians, Paul uses the imagery of family to further explain our relationship to God in Christ. In Galatians 4:5, Paul writes of those who are Christians being heirs in Christ, who came, “in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.” Paul continues by stating that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying “Abba, Father!” This adoption into the family of God as heirs signifies the end of our slavery to that which is against God.⁴⁶ Liberated by virtue of adoption from that which once enslaved our lives, we are set free to function as family with one another.

As family in the Kingdom of God, we are to “work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.” (Galatians 6:10) Just as Christ extended grace to our lives we are to extend grace to others, yet our duties do not cease at grace. Working for the good of the family of faith necessarily includes the use of our spiritual gifts for the building up of the family of God. Though we are individually responsible for our lives before Christ, the actions of the family of God are further guided by Galatians 6:2, where we are called to bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. This is a pure representation of family. In place of the broken relationships of the

⁴⁶ Georg Werner Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. Howard Clark Kee, 17th ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984), 294.

first family in Genesis, the body of Christ, united by God's love, is the place of connection for the bearing of one another's burdens.

Paul speaks of being brothers and sisters while working for the good of the Kingdom of God in Romans. Paul declares that Christians are brothers and sisters, members of one body in Christ. (Romans 12:1-8) According to Manson, being the family of God is "a new human community called the body of Christ."⁴⁷ This new human community is restored to God through Christ and is provided with different gifts for building the body. New family is not worldly but is self-sacrificing for the good of the new community.

Restoration of Broken Relationships

The restoration of the broken relationships of family and congregation is found in believing that Jesus is the Christ. Biblical and theological defense of this project necessarily includes the 'circuit of love' in the first Johannine epistle.⁴⁸ 1 John 5:1-5 traces the flow of love in the restored relationship between God and humanity. The first verse of this pericope declares the identity of Christ, that those who believe in Jesus are children of God and that the way believers relate to one another is in love.⁴⁹ Recognition of the flow of love in this relationship circuit reveals the way Christ has restored the relationship that was lost in Eden. Christ's death on the cross has allowed humanity to have relationship with God as adopted children. This relationship comes through belief that Jesus is the Christ and is evidenced as the children of God obey his commandments.

⁴⁷ T.W. Manson, *Romans*, Peake's Commentary on the Bible (ed. Matthew Black; Berkshire: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1962), 949.

⁴⁸ C. Clifton Black, *The First, Second, and Third letters of John*, The New Interpreter's Bible (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 12:436.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 434.

The focus on obedience in this scripture carries forward the thread that was encountered as Christ redefined family as he spoke in Luke 8:22b, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.” Through belief and obedience, a new relationship is restored between God and humanity which then allows the restoration of relationships within family and congregation.

With the love and Spirit of God, it is possible to have healthy family relationships. The broken relationship between God and humanity has been restored by the resurrection of Christ. Although the generations of our family have made an impact on who we are and how we relate, we have the word of God that we do not have to follow in the footsteps of the previous generations. This truth undergirds the process and content of this project. Our God continues to be active in the lives of His people to redeem them from cyclical brokenness.

CHAPTER 4

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Family Relationships Study and Journals

Initial plans for implementation of the family relationships study included utilizing the church fellowship hall as a workspace for the study on Wednesday evenings. In finalizing the process and location of the study it was determined that the time selected on Wednesday evening would limit the flexibility of extending the teaching and survey session times if necessary. Recognizing that families feel the need to return home quickly after church on Wednesday evening, teaching session dates were modified to use Sunday evenings so that necessary lengthening of the sessions for teaching and survey would have less impact on families. An additional decision was made to move the location of the study from the fellowship hall to the sanctuary in order to provide a more relaxed atmosphere. Previous experiences in facilitating teaching sessions in the fellowship hall revealed a pattern of a decrease in attendance when the fellowship hall was announced as the location for a study. Church members candidly expressed that they felt ‘on the spot to perform’ when sitting at the circular tables in the fellowship hall and therefore declined to attend previous times of study.

Modifying the times and location of the study appears to have been an appropriate decision related to attendance. The bulletin insert for the study was distributed on August 17, 2014, with 179 attending morning worship. Fifty-three respondents expressed interest in attending the study. Grouping respondents by family, 34 letters were sent to the

respondents explaining the study in greater detail and requesting that they commit to faithfully attend the six week study. Initial attendance for the Family Relationships Study was overwhelming with 83 respondents present. Each respondent received a numbered journal for reflection during the study. All interaction with respect to survey data and journal entries was coded according to the assigned journal number provided to the respondents to maintain the complete anonymity of the subjects. Demographic information in the form of age, sex, education level, and years of association with First Baptist Woodbury were collected for statistical purposes only.

Attendance throughout the study ranged from a high of 83 for the initial session to a low of 53. The average for attendance of the teaching sessions and final review session was 68.

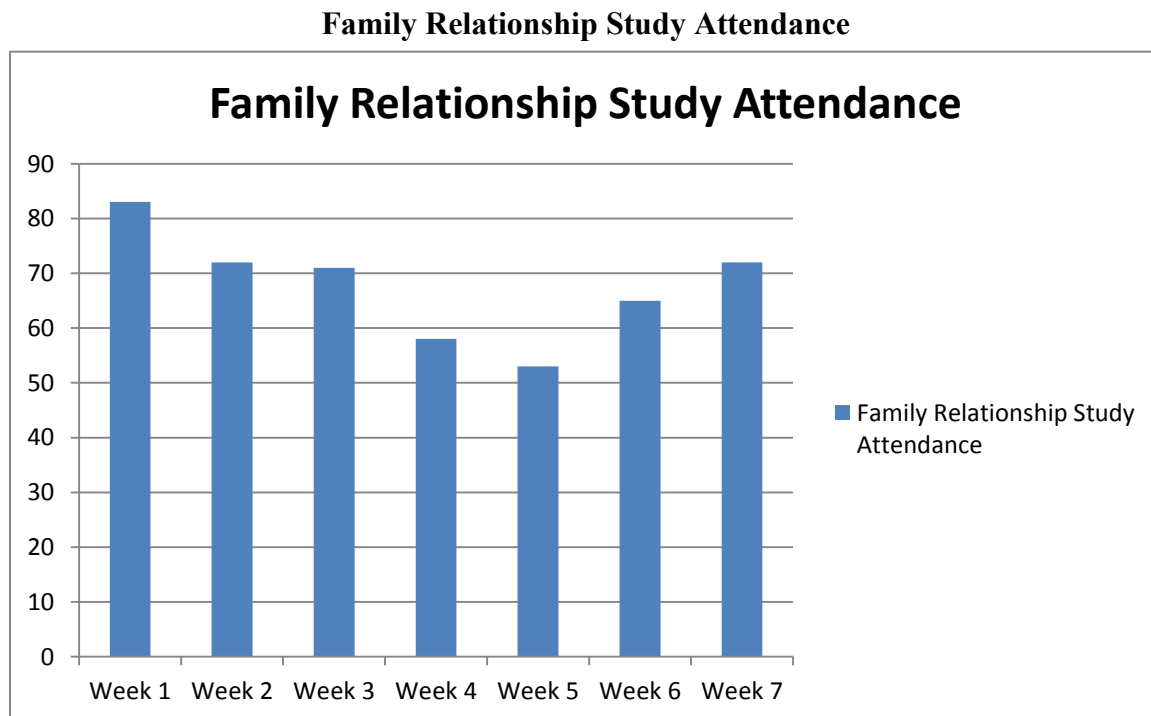


Figure 1

Average attendance for all sessions was 82% of the highest total attendance, statistically demonstrating a strong commitment to faithful attendance of the study. Data indicates the respondents found the study worthy of their time. Given the average worship attendance of 199 during the study period, 34% of the average morning worship attendance of the church participated in the study. This average attendance of 68 is much higher than anticipated for this project and is one point seven times higher than the average of forty participants for evening worship for Southern Baptist churches reported in a recent NAMB survey.⁵⁰

Demographics for the first teaching session were wide spread across age, sex, education levels, and time associated with First Baptist Church. Age forty and up accounted for 63% of the initial demographic for age with 15% in the nineteen year old and down range, with an average age of 42 years. This number shifted significantly, with the age range trending up, during the teaching sessions as the majority of youth initially involved in the study chose to return to their Sunday evening small groups. The average age for the survey data analysis was 54 years of age. Sex demographics for the initial survey indicated a population of 41% males and 59% females. This ratio remained fairly consistent for the duration of the study. Demographic breakdown for the survey data analyzed found the distribution to be 44% male and 56% female. Education levels for the initial survey included forty percent completing high school, 35% completing college, six percent with a graduate degree, with the remainder currently enrolled in elementary or high school. Education levels for the survey data that was analyzed found a downward trend with respect to education level as age level of the group increased. Average

⁵⁰ North American Mission Board Survey, "Southern Baptist Congregations Today," [cited 5 January 2014]. Online: <http://www.namb.net/namb1cb1col.aspx?id=8590001122>.

education level for the survey data analyzed was between high school and college. The average years of association with First Baptist Church trended upward during the duration of the study as the attendance of those in the age range of 29 and down decreased. Average years of association with First Baptist Church for the survey data analyzed was twenty point three years.

The Challenge of Success

The results of permitting the target group to self-select proved to be very successful. Church members expressed an interest in the family relationships study and remained committed for the duration of the study. The premise for permitting self-selection for the purposes of this project was to provide family educational opportunity to the broadest group possible. Due to the interest in the study and the consistent attendance of the participants, the amount of quantitative data collected grew exponentially. The initial survey for the family relationship study and the pre and post survey for the study on relationship triangles yielded 3,569 data points. Recognizing this trend after the initial session, consultation was made with my faculty advisor to address the large data yield. I provided a projection of the possible amount of data for the course by computing the average attendance of 69 to project the data yield for the remaining five teaching sessions and the 72 participants in the final course survey, for a total probable yield of data points for the course to be 12,025. The original intention of this project included analysis of all of the data of those who self-selected to attend, but the amount of data being generated was beyond the scope and need of this project.

In keeping with the desire to provide exposure to family systems theory for the broadest group possible, the decision was made to continue the study with all subjects committed to attend. Data from all participants was collected and securely stored until the completion of the study. After a preliminary examination of the data, the decision was made to take a data sample using the respondents that completed the family relationship study. In order to analyze data from the group, cluster sampling was selected as the method to choose the sample population.⁵¹ The age divisions of the study were utilized to select the subgroups for the narrowing of the population for the sample. The age groupings of 1-19 and the 20's did not produce a survey set that was adequate for sample, therefore, these age groupings were not included in the sample set. Adequate survey sets were present for the age groupings of thirty years old and above, and these sets were utilized for the survey sample. This sample size of eighteen respondents represents 26% of the average study attendance. With respect to sex, the sample set approximates the existing demographic of the church with a breakdown of 44% male and 56% female.

⁵¹ StatTrek.com, "Survey Sampling Methods," [cited 2 January 2015]. Online: <http://stattrek.com/survey-research/sampling-method.aspx>.

A Look at Interlocking Triangles – Session 1

Interlocking Triangles - Pre and Post Survey Results Comparison

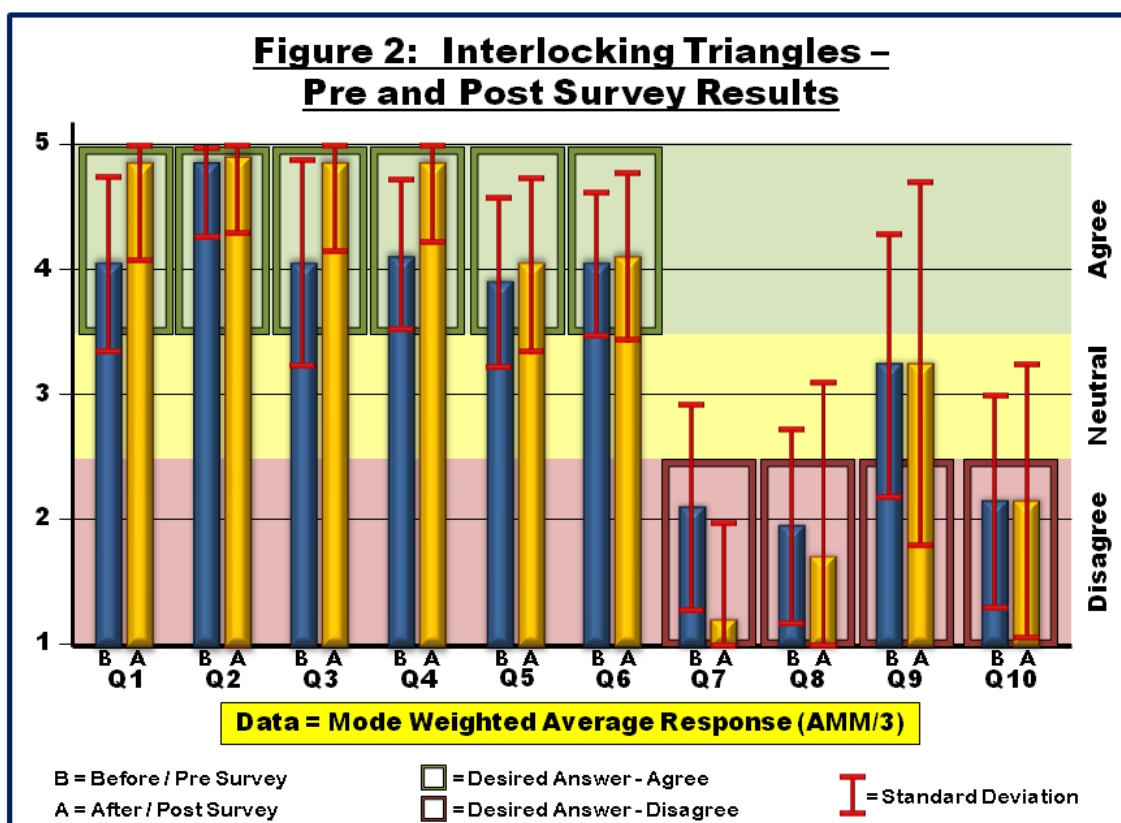


Figure 2

Comparison of the pre and post surveys for the session on Interlocking Triangles indicated an understanding of the family process of triangulation and how anxiety travels in families. The trending for surveys was positive and supports success for project goals one, two, and three; which include the recognition of triangles, interlocking nature of triangles, flow of anxiety in triangles, the power of those who compose the triangle, and the meaning of self-differentiation. Questions concerning these elements of family relationship demonstrated a mode shift of one point in a positive direction from pre survey to post survey. Question four of the survey, which asked if one party in a triangle can change the flow of anxiety in the triangle, was particularly important. Respondents

shifted from agree to strongly agree, indicating a working knowledge of the concept of self-differentiation and the movement of anxiety in a triangle. The data analysis for question four supports goal three of this project, that the target group will develop the concept of differentiation. Median and mode measurements for questions one, four, and seven shifted to the positive by one point. Responses to question seven of the survey indicated that the sample group was able to identify the anxiety that accompanies people who are overly sensitive and the parallel relationship between the reactivity and power of the overly sensitive person in an emotional triangle. The positive trending of responses to question ten, concerning goal three, can indicate an increase in the ability of respondents to handle anxiety generated in a relationship as they discern the differences between disregarding the thoughts of others and self-differentiation.

One interesting result was found in the analysis of the data for questions three and eight. Question three, related to the intergenerational interlocking of triangles, demonstrated an increase across the average, median, and mode measurements, indicating an increased understanding of the influence of generations on family. Question eight confirmed the responses to question three by the mode increasing by one point from disagree to strongly disagree concerning generational influences not being important for family. This positive data shift for questions three and eight supports success regarding goal two of this project regarding reflection on intergenerational family function. Standard deviation for this question was elevated for the post survey, indicating greater confusion with the way the question was phrased after participants participated in the study.

Relationship triangles are the building blocks of relationships. It was important for the participants to comprehend triangles and the relationship between anxiety and triangles in a family in order to move forward in the study of the way family members relate to each other. Data analysis confirms the success of the initial study session.

Journal entries from this initial session support the indications of the quantitative data. One respondent, providing a diagram of the emotional triangle of Abraham's house, stated that the only way to avoid or lower the anxiety in family is to take personal responsibility for one's own actions within the family. This insight represents a distillation of the subject matter of the first session on emotional triangles. Included in this response is a deeper understanding of triangles that speaks to boundaries in healthy relationships. Reflecting on the main thought that was taken from this initial session, the respondent stated that he realized that when someone is reactive with him, he "would attempt to remember that I may not be the root cause of their reaction, that I might be experiencing transfer anxiety from the reactive person." In response to the same question, another respondent added that it was important to remain connected to family members and to God while experiencing anxiety and reactivity in relationships. Multiple journal entries identified remaining connected while being a non-anxious presence as the most productive ways to avoid the "quick fix" mentality that accompanies most attempts to better family relationships.

Review of journal entries for the first teaching session indicates that goal one for this project has been attained. The respondents were able to understand terminology and concepts related to family systems theory. Respondents were able to identify systems process in scripture as well as their own lives. Journal entries reflect engagement of the

subject material as well as process and application of the knowledge of triangles in relationships.

A Look at Anxiety and the Non Anxious Presence – Session 2

Anxiety and a Non-Anxious Presence - Pre and Post Survey Results

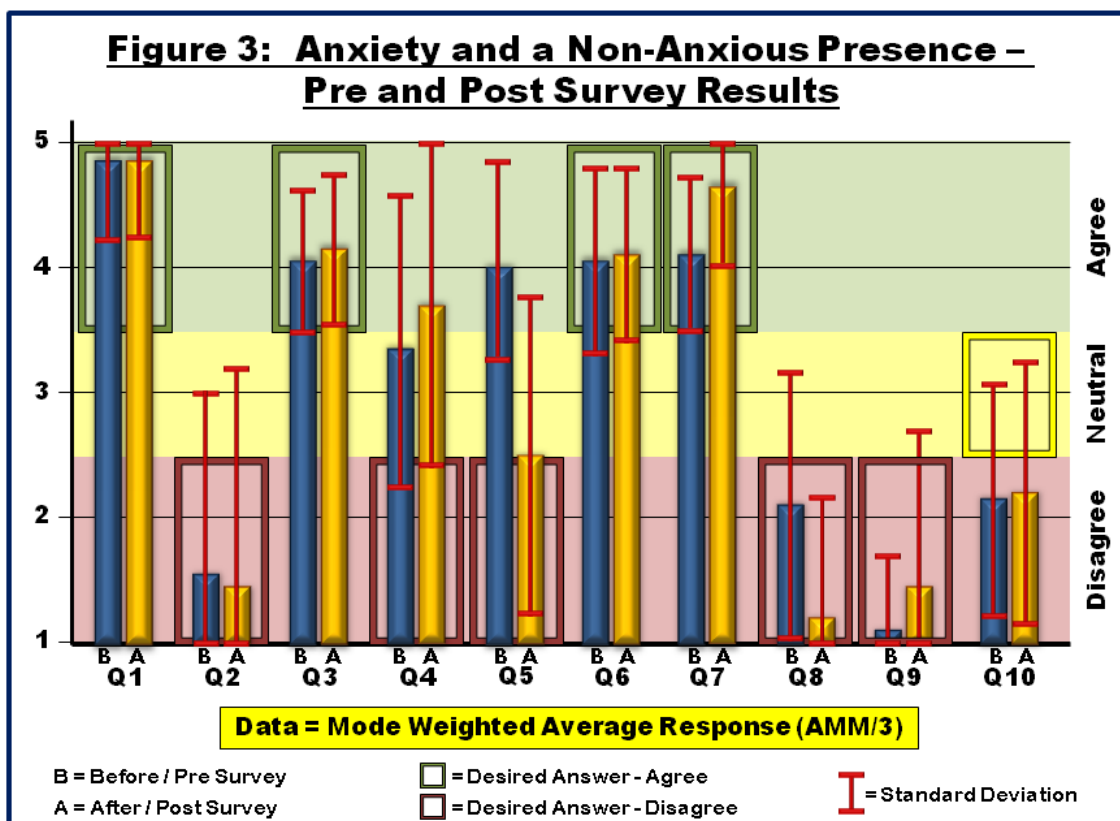


Figure 3

The session titled “A Look at Anxiety and the Non-Anxious Presence” proved to be quite lively. Anxiety is a buzzword for society and most participants connected to the subject matter, as was observed through facial expressions and interaction during the study. Participants identified with the effects of anxiety on family and appeared eager to learn. Data analysis for survey three demonstrates attainment of goals one, two, and three of this project and agreement within the sample population: all families have anxiety in their systems; differentiation levels affect the processing of anxiety; physical distance decreases anxiety levels in a family; anxiety affects physical health; and handling anxiety in family systems is not easy.

In reviewing the data, the responses for the post survey, question four, trended toward agree, with a one point shift to agree in the median. Standard deviation tightened slightly, indicating greater agreement among the respondents. The data represents the opposite of a desired response to the question. This study session included a discussion of physical distance and anxiety in family relationships. Emphasis on anxiety and physical distance stressed that regardless of distance, anxiety is easily triggered in the resumption of relationship. When asked to respond to the statement that anxiety is not emotionally contagious, the trend indicated an increase of one point from disagree to strongly disagree for median and mode analysis, as well as an increase in the average. Respondents were able to recognize that anxiety is contagious in a family system, but continued to believe that physical distance lowered anxiety in relationships. Respondents appeared to interpret that a decrease in interaction indicates less anxiety in a system. A decrease in the symptoms of anxiety is not a true indication that anxiety has decreased.

Questions four and five of the survey demonstrated a consistent shift in thought as participants responded to questions related to boundary issues in family and emotional fusion. Respondents were able to understand the concept of emotional fusion and recognize the negative impacts of a lack of boundaries in family relationships. The responses to these questions show the largest shift for the survey with a two point shift from agree to disagree. Data analysis for questions four and five verify success in meeting goals two and three of this project concerning reflection on family interaction and development of a concept of differentiation. This shift is significant because it is not in agreement with the cultural premise that family problems are often related to family not being close enough. Respondents were able to see the connection between

differentiation and the resulting issues that arise as fusion inhibits differentiation of the self. Success of this teaching session was evident as respondents were able to recognize the parallel relationships between anxiety, fusion, and differentiation in family interaction.

Journal entries for the teaching session on anxiety support the attainment of the first goal of this project as the sample population was able to understand the concepts of relationship triangles and the non-anxious presence. All journal entries included the correct response when respondents were asked to diagram the emotional triangle of 1 Samuel 1:3-20. When asked if Elkanah were a non-anxious presence in this scripture passage, seventeen respondents did not view him as a non-anxious presence. Several entries elaborated that the reason they determined Elkanah did not demonstrate being a non-anxious presence was due to the fact that he added to Hannah's anxiety by not hearing her pain concerning childlessness.

In response to the question, "is it possible to be a non-anxious presence?" three respondents stated "no" while the remaining fifteen advised that it is possible to be a non-anxious presence. This data indicates that the majority of respondents in the sample understood the relationship between being a non-anxious presence and differentiation of self. One respondent advised "It is possible to be a non-anxious presence; one person can make a difference while remaining connected. Don't be in control of everything." Two stated, "Yes, but it is not easy. It is easier to react and lash out," and "Yes, but it will not be easy." These journal entries demonstrate that the respondents have been able to hear and understand that they are responsible for being a self. The way meaningful, long-term change occurs in a family system is through a willingness to take responsibility for self.

Look at Self-Differentiation and Reactivity – Session 3

Self Differentiation and Reactivity - Pre and Post Survey Results

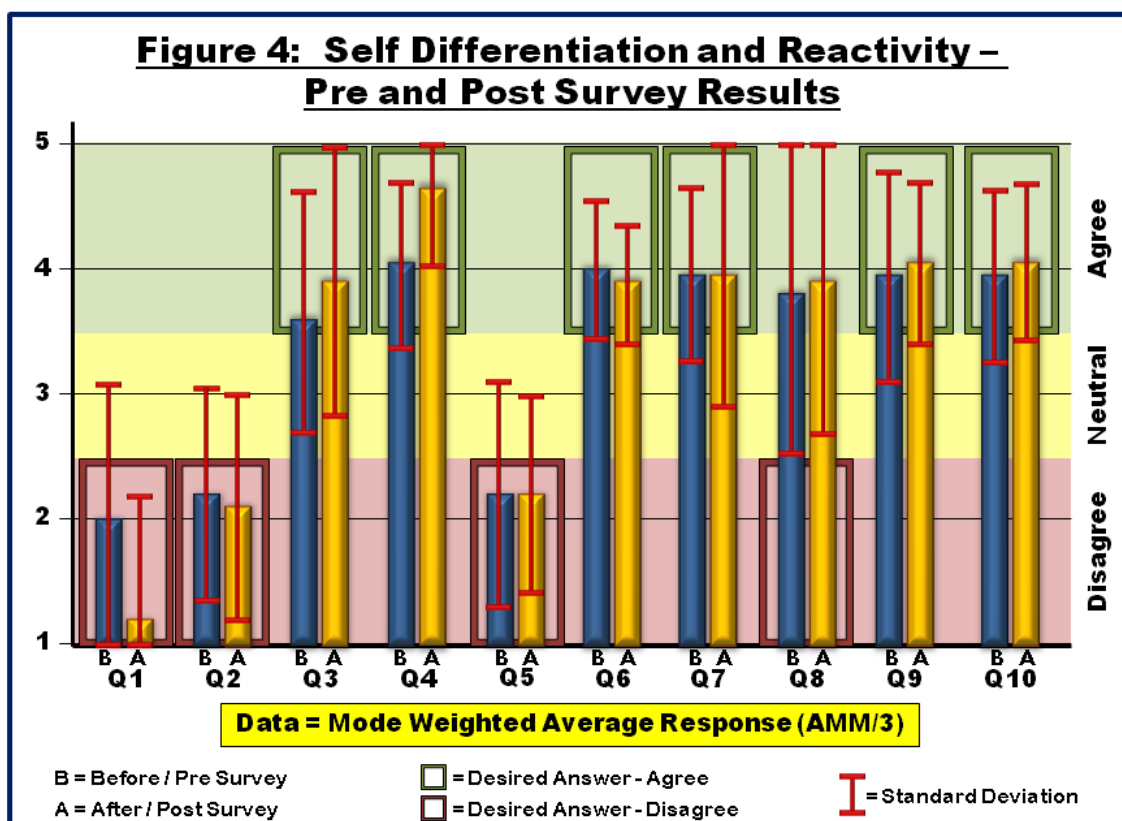


Figure 4

Data results for survey four, Self-differentiation and Reactivity, indicate the continued building of a base of knowledge regarding family systems process. The pre-survey for the session revealed a solid understanding of self-differentiation before the study session began. Pre-survey data indicates strong success in achieving project goal three, the development of the concept of differentiation in the target group. Respondents answered 'disagree' across the average, median and mode measurements of the survey to the idea that self-differentiated people wait to get the response of others before making a decision. Post-survey responses demonstrated a trend toward strongly disagree with a one point shift in the median and mode measure. The responses to question two further

demonstrate an appropriate understanding of self-differentiation as the respondents disagreed with the statement that self-differentiated people are not sensitive to others feelings. Given the complexity of family process terminology and concepts, the data results indicate strong retention and understanding by the respondents.

With respect to self-differentiation and reactivity, respondents agreed that better differentiated people are less reactive with an increasing trend toward strongly agree with the statement that individuals choose to be reactive. Responses to question seven show further agreement in the sample population as they agreed with the statement that there is a definite place where “I” stop and others begin.

One negative trend was noted in the analysis of the data results for questions eight and nine. These questions asked for responses concerning an individual’s ability to transfer responsibility for his actions to another person. All respondents in the sample population agreed that individuals could transfer responsibility for their actions to another person and that some people are “skilled” in this ability. These data results are not congruent with data of the sample population concerning their understanding of self-differentiation, boundaries, and taking responsibility for self. One thought for the reason behind this data result could be that the sample group was confusing the terms “transfer anxiety” and the act of transferring responsibility for actions. Transfer anxiety was a topic discussed in session two, and the use of the word “transfer” in questions eight and nine could have caused confusion. Word choice for the questions appears to be the probable cause for these responses.

The responses to journal question six answer the question, “How does the pressure of togetherness work against self-differentiation?” Respondents reflected on the tension that exists between the force of togetherness and differentiation in the church and family. One respondent, in relation to church togetherness pressure quipped, “you let others dictate to you” what to do. Cultural reflection was found in another response, “We are taught always to think of others before ourselves and because of reactivity it makes it hard to say ‘I’ while remaining connected.” These qualitative responses support success for project goal four as the data indicates the target group is examining ways to improve functioning and differentiation in the culture of church.

In discussion concerning the church during this session, one participant stated that togetherness pressure is used by family, church, school, and government to keep the peace. “The pressure of togetherness can work against differentiation because we want to keep peace in the relationship” was the response of one participant. Togetherness pressure “builds the dependency of one upon another for decision making/behavior.” As pressure to be close together builds, differentiation suffers, as one respondent advised, “sometimes togetherness keeps us from being a ‘self’, because we are too connected.” These reflections indicate success in the continued attainment of the fourth goal of this project. Recognition and changing of systems takes time, and the initial success of examining ways to improve our function as a church is an excellent indicator of the potential for further success in the process of improving church function. The continued process of recognizing how the church functions will be the necessary point of departure for efforts to bring about systems change. Participants provided excellent qualitative data

as they expressed their thoughts and continued to show growth in the knowledge and application of family systems theory to family and church.

A Look at Over and Under Functioning – Session 4

Over and Under Functioning - Pre and Post Survey Results

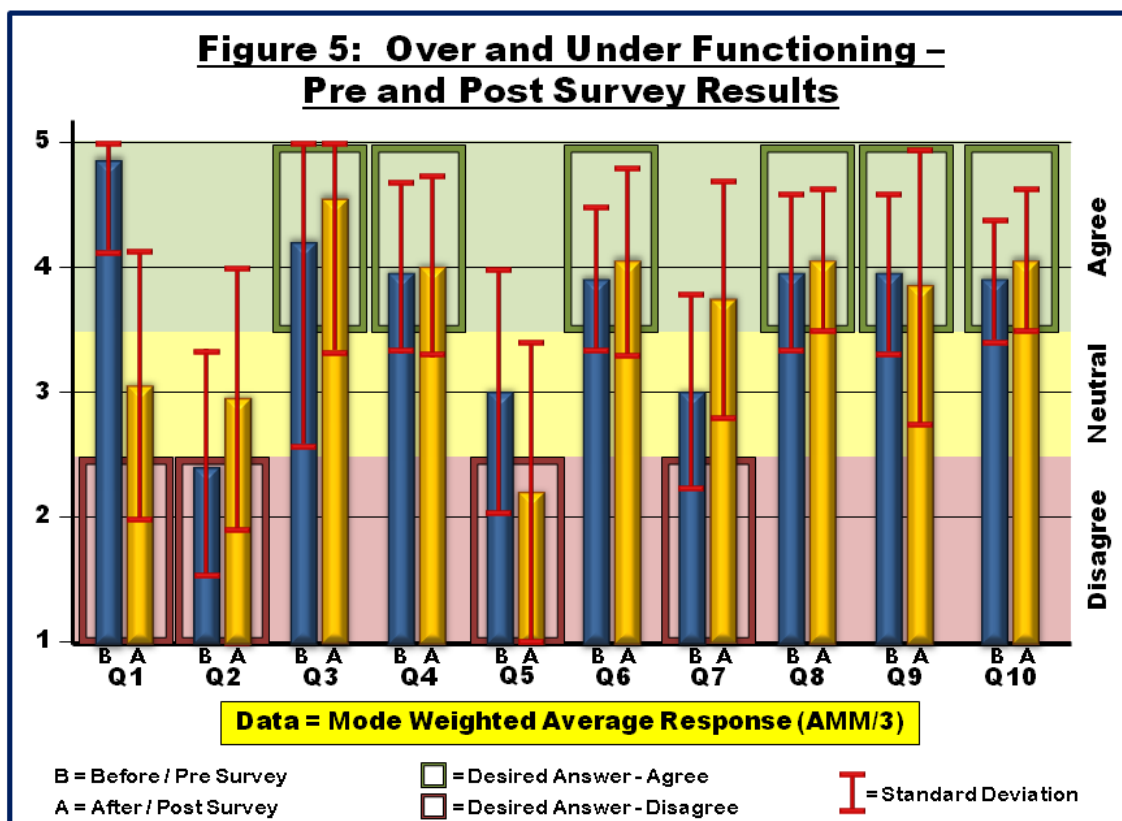


Figure 5

Session four of the relationship study included teaching and discussion concerning over and under functioning in family relationships. This particular study was an important reflection on boundary issues that arise in family. Data from the pre and post survey reveal the attainment of project goal one by demonstrating positive trends in understanding the subject matter that was presented. The first survey question is ironic, stating that if we love someone we will do all that we can to help him. As discussed in the course, the irony of this statement is that often our “helping” someone is an invasion of another person’s emotional space. Initial responses to the question confirmed that most all respondents would do all they could for someone they love. Post session surveys

reveal a two point shift, on the median and mode measurement, trending from strongly agree to neither agree nor disagree regarding this question. This is a positive trend that demonstrates reflection by the participants on the difference between helping and over functioning.

The data for question five continues to show positive trending in response to the study session. Question five addresses the tendency for over functioning people to pair with those who under function. The pairing of over functioning people with under functioning people increases dysfunction in relationships. Responses shifted one point on the mode, from neither agree nor disagree to disagree as participants expressed that they do not agree that over functioning people help those who under function. The data indicates the participants are reflecting on family interaction, confirming success in achieving project goal two. One interesting note in the data, respondents were in agreement with the declaration that preachers have a tendency to over function.

The agreement of respondents on questions six and ten was important from a church leadership and theological perspective. The trend for question six, that over and under functioners deny the selfhood of individuals, was towards strongly agree. Much of the discussion during the session centered on the church and the over and under functioners that constitute church membership. One participant stated during the discussion that “as the over functioners handle everything they do not help the under functioners.” Correspondingly, question ten revealed a trend toward strongly agree that over functioning and ‘stuck togetherness’ blur boundaries in relationship. Another respondent expressed that it is difficult to “leave things undone” in the church while waiting on the under functioner. These reflections support the attainment of project goal

four as the participants examined church functioning from an over and under perspective. Participants recognized the existing patterns of behavior in the church, recognized their functioning within the function of the church, and addressed ways to improve. Leadership and committee boundaries were a part of the dialogue for this session. Church function and the theological implications of over and under functioning in church proved to be a lively discussion.

Journal entries included the question, “Can overfunctioning people cause issues in relationships? If so, why?” Qualitative responses included solid insight into the effect of over and under functioning on a family system. In agreement one wrote “Yes, by robbing others of the opportunity to grow.” Another advised, “Sure can! By assuming too much control in a situation, they are denying the other person an opportunity to grow and learn themselves.” One respondent addressed boundary issues by stating, “Overfunctioning people don’t have a sense of boundaries.” Success of this teaching session is demonstrated by these responses that recognize the way that over and under functioning hinders emotional growth of individuals and creates boundary issues in relationships.

In responding to the journal question, “What is the best way to care for someone who is underfunctioning?” one echoed some of the language of co-dependency by saying, “Don’t do things for them, don’t enable.” This was the only qualitative response that used the word enable in describing an under functioner. One participant made a list describing ways to help an under functioner. “One-Let them make mistakes, Two-Help them to learn responsibility, Three-They must learn to trust themselves.” Another wrote, “Allow a person to make mistakes they can learn from, but DO NOT bail them out of situations they get themselves into.” These reflections call to mind the trap of over functioning

when seeking to help an under functioner. Journal entires that included a response to question six consistently were clear in their agreement that the best ‘help’ that can be given to underfunctioners is to leave them to function for themselves, make mistakes, and assume responsibility for the results.

A Look at Crucial Conversations – Session 5

Crucial Conversations - Pre and Post Survey Results

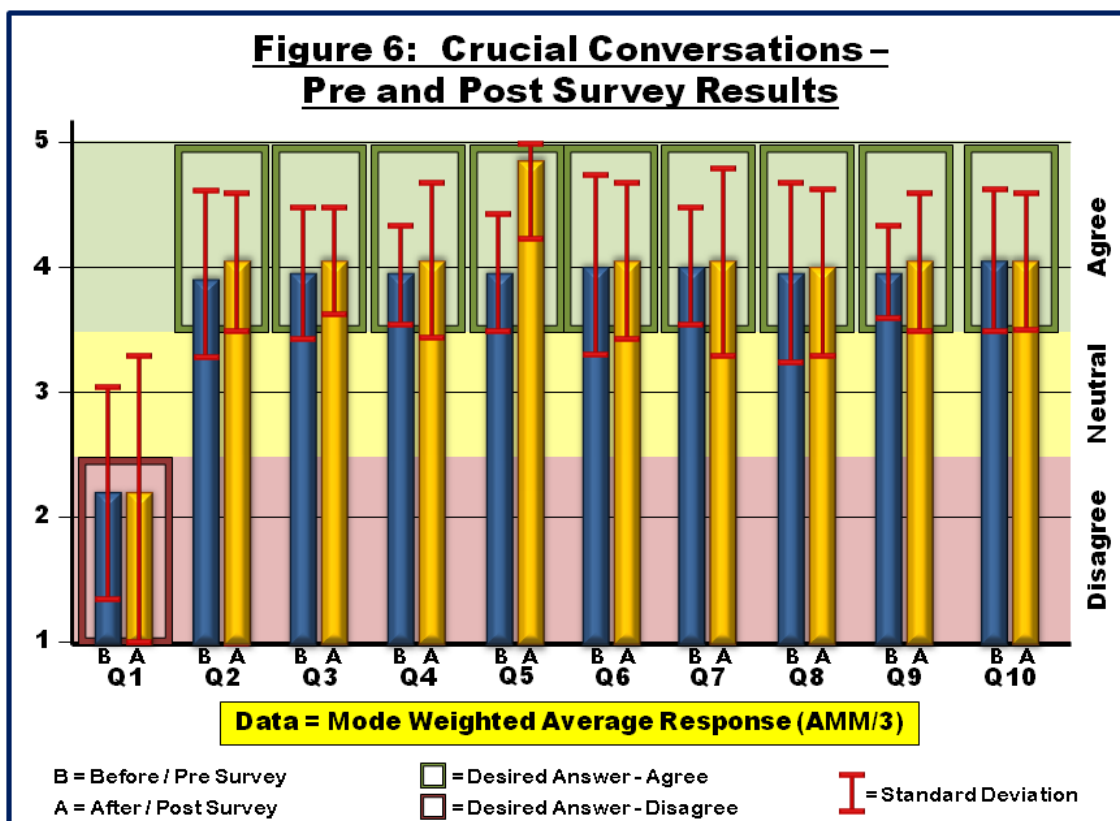


Figure 6

Quantitative data results for the sample population show very little movement between the pre and post session surveys. Accounting for this consistency may be found in the subject matter of the session. Families are very familiar with crucial conversations though they may not be familiar with the terminology. All respondents agreed that it is normative for families to become reactive during crucial conversations. The focus of the teaching session was to draw attention to the need to be intentional about crucial conversations in family and congregation so that reactivity can be decreased. Responses to question two, concerning the necessity of being intentional in order to have meaningful crucial conversations, demonstrated a positive trend toward strongly agree. Intentionality

regarding crucial conversations can help build an environment that will promote dialogue with decreased reaction. Respondents agreed that church congregations should be able to have crucial conversations without reactivity with a positive trend from agree to strongly agree.

During this session, a considerable amount of time was given to addressing the need for crucial conversations within the church and the potential for reactivity in these conversations. Question three addressed the need for congregations having crucial conversations without reactivity. During the discussion respondents spoke to the lack of intentionality in the church with respect to crucial conversations and examined ways of congregational functioning that could be improved through conversation. Data analysis of question three indicates success in achieving project goal four. The data trend was towards strongly agree with a reduction in standard deviation as respondents agreed that the church should be able to have crucial conversations without reactivity.

The greatest data shift for this session occurred in question five, “Crucial conversations can be used to avoid future conflict.” Mode measurement for this question shifted one point to strongly agree. This was an important data result confirming the success of project goal two, reflection on family interaction and making incremental improvements in the way family functions. One of the desired outcomes of this session was the realization by the participants that the way conversation takes place in family can have a bearing on the outcome of the conversation. Respondents shifted towards a stronger agreement with the use of crucial conversations to avoid future conflicts in family.

Qualitative responses through journal entries demonstrated success for project goal one as the sample group respondents understood the concept of crucial conversations. Responding to being asked to identify their resistance to crucial conversations, entries included, “Fear of how others will feel toward me,” “Perhaps a lack of trust, wanting to keep the peace by avoiding conflict,” “Afraid of hurt feelings,” “Afraid of conflict-afraid of disagreement.” The responses to this question were consistent in journal entries, revealing fear of rejection and pain as the most frequent reason for resistance to crucial conversations. Although quantitative data demonstrated an understanding that crucial conversations can decrease future conflict, the qualitative data shows feelings can be more important than knowledge in the decision to avoid, postpone or initiate a crucial conversation. One respondent wrote that the church sabotages initiating crucial conversations by “Avoidance, gossip, anger, and withdrawal.”

Responses to the question concerning the risks of crucial conversations show a distinct fear of loss. Entries included, “Offending others, loss of relationship,” “Creating a crisis,” “Permanent disruption of friendship,” “Possible loss of job, or someone else’s job,” “Anger towards me or among others,” and “Fear of being rejected.” Two observations arise in the analysis of the qualitative data. First, that fear is a feeling that is a strong motivator for avoidance. Second, our fear can cause neglect within our most important relationships. It is possible to surmise, that for many, previous attempts to have crucial conversations have not been successful, and the pain of previous experience has a strong influence on future crucial conversations.

A Look at Projection and the Identified Patient – Session 6

Projection and the Identified Patient - Pre and Post Survey Results

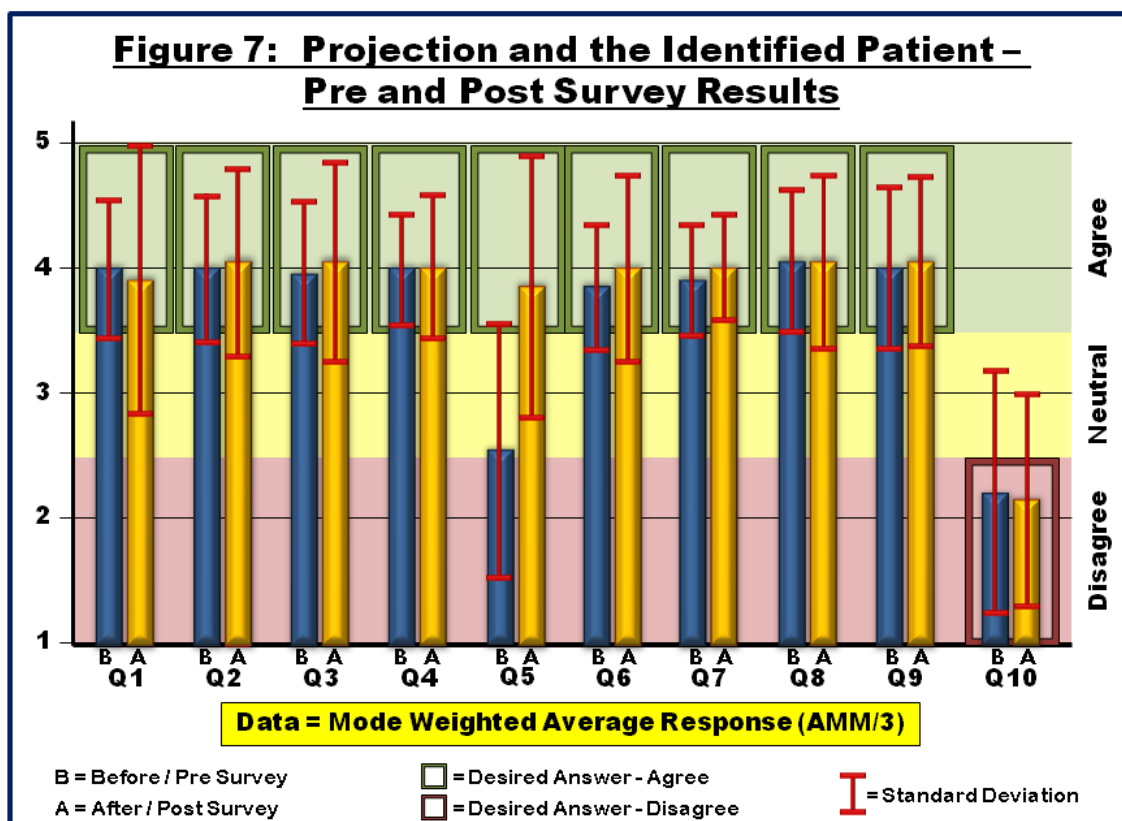


Figure 7

The teaching session on projection and the identified patient required careful preparation due to the complexity of the terminology and processes being described. The success of this study was dependent upon the knowledge gained through the previous five weeks study. During the pre-survey, questions were asked to define the terms ‘projection’ and ‘identified patient’. Although these terms had been used in previous study sessions, participants wanted assistance with the definition of the terms for the survey. Data analysis for this session reveals agreement among the respondents with minor trending between the pre and post survey instruments.

The greatest shift between pre and post survey occurred in question five, “In some family systems the ‘identified patient’ is the most emotionally healthy.” Initial mode measurements were as anticipated with respondents choosing disagree in response to this statement. The post survey shows a median shift of one point and a mode shift of two points toward agree with the statement. This is a significant and important data shift and demonstrates the success of achieving project goals one and two in the teaching session. In talking about the identified patient during the study period, a significant amount of time was utilized to express the fact that the identified patient can be the family member in whom the symptoms of the anxiety of the family system materialize.⁵² Normally, families identify this person as the problem in the emotional system when, in actuality, this family member is the most reflective of the tension and anxiety of the system. Participant’s ability to understand the concept of the identified patient was an important goal of the sixth session of study due to the importance of this concept in the identification of anxiety flow in family process.

Qualitative data from journal entries indicate a proficient understanding of projection and the identified patient. Respondents were sensitive to the dynamic of ‘scapegoating’ that occurs in family with the identified patient. When responding to the question, “Do families benefit from having an identified patient” one wrote, “Sure-they can lay all of the blame and not accept any responsibility.” This response, interpreted as ‘tongue in cheek,’ recognizes the blame displacement that takes place in systems with an identified patient. One respondent recognized that preachers (leaders) can become symptomatic for the system they are tasked with leading. Respondents demonstrated

⁵² Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 19.

awareness of the functioning of blame displacement and the identified patient, and were able to distinguish the fact that families only benefit from an identified patient in that they can recognize that there is enough anxiety and tension in the family system for someone to become symptomatic.

In response to the question, “How does church family (congregation) use projection?” respondent’ answers were varied but confirmed the success in attaining project goal four. Respondents were able to recognize existing patterns of behavior in church. Responses included, “Yes,-the preacher, blame him for all that is wrong.” This statement reflected both blame displacement and projection. Another wrote that the church uses projection “to keep people who are viewed as different out” and to “treat people differently.” One advised, that with respect to the church and projection, “That is the way we’ve always done it; systems resist change.” Acknowledging ways the church uses projection one respondent stated, “Yes-it is done with our eyes, thoughts, and actions.” The latter portion of project goal four, the examination of ways to improve our functioning as a church, will be a continuing process for the church as the church seeks ways to reduce projection in future church functioning.

The study session on projection and the identified patient included complex processes and terminology, building upon the previous five weeks of study. Quantitative and qualitative data indicate respondents have been able to understand and apply the concepts that have been presented on family systems and process throughout the course of the study sessions.

Initial and Post Course Surveys

Initial and Post Course Survey Results

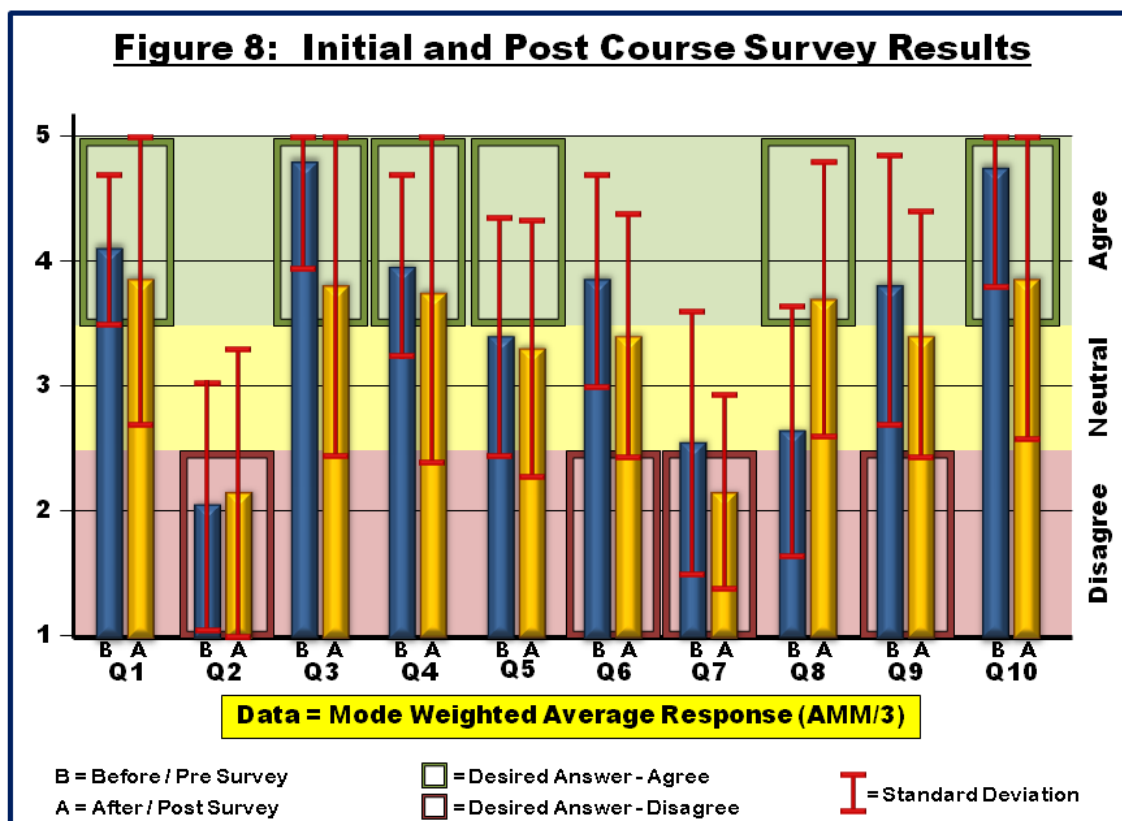


Figure 8

Initial and post course surveys for the sample population demonstrate consistent responses for fourteen questions and mode trend shifts for three questions in quantitative data while qualitative responses demonstrated positive shifts in knowledge and understanding gained. Although the sample population demonstrated positive gains in results for an understanding of family systems and process within the surveys administered in the same testing session, differences in the initial and post survey were statistically minor for quantitative data. The data trends were less defined than the pre and post session surveys administered on the same day. Two obstacles to be taken into account for the quantitative data trends observed for initial and post surveys are the time

that elapsed between the surveys and the subjectivity of the data responses. Data collection for the initial and post surveys was not oriented to hard data. For questions one through ten, standard deviation increased for the post survey for all responses except questions seven and nine. This shift in standard deviation indicates that the data responses were more widely scattered across the response spectrum and tightened only for questions seven and nine.

The most significant data shift occurred for question ten, with respondents shifting two points on the mode measurement toward neither agree nor disagree that over functioners can be described as people who are good at ‘helping’ others. This data shift indicates a positive trend for the sample population in being able to identify possible over functioning behaviors in those who are good at ‘helping’ others. Responses to questions eleven through seventeen of the surveys, which include requesting the respondent gauge the importance of processes and characteristics of family, were virtually identical with only minor statistical variation.

Qualitative responses for the initial and post survey demonstrated a significant shift from initial to post survey and provide strong insight into the growth of the respondents’ understanding of family systems process. Ninety-nine point five percent of respondents in the sample population stated “yes” in response to the final question of the post survey indicating the attainment of project goals one, two, and three. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that they could identify family processes within their own family as a result of participation in this study. This data supports project goals one and two, demonstrating that the participants in the sample group were able to understand family systems terminology and apply family systems concepts to their families. For respondents

answering “yes” to this question, only one offered additional insight by stating “Yes, me as an over functioner.” The last question of the survey was open ended and did not offer any choice for a particular response. This observation supports an initial premise in the development of this project, that participants would not be comfortable being too transparent with respect to discussion concerning their own family system.

The qualitative data responses for question twenty of the final survey validate success in achieving the four project goals. In order for a family and congregation to make intentional changes in the way they relate to each other, they must first be able to identify and understand the processes already at work in the family and congregation. Once a participant is able to see how they function in the flow of process they can begin to affect process change in family and congregation as they work on being a self and differentiation.

Responses to question nineteen on the initial survey, “What area of family would be most important for you to understand,” were wide and varied. The majority of responses were very general and spiritual in focus. Responses included; ‘spiritual health,’ ‘love unconditionally,’ ‘put God first,’ ‘why can’t there be peace?’, ‘how to contribute to a happy home,’ ‘help raising kids is always good,’ and ‘hierarchy of love, God>spouse>children.’ The corresponding post survey question, “What is the most valuable concept or thought you have encountered in this study?” demonstrated a large shift to the identification of process and the use of family systems language to identify the most valuable insight gained in the study. As opposed to the initial survey question, there were no spiritualized answers to this question. Responses included; ‘that I have tended to over function without realizing it,’ ‘the triangle,’ ‘hard to pick one thing, non-

anxious presence and what they can do to a family system,’ ‘anxiety, over and under functioning,’ ‘self,’ ‘the need to be a self,’ ‘self-differentiation and anxiety transference,’ ‘understanding process,’ and ‘to be able to (hopefully) stop and not over function in my family.’

Analysis of the qualitative data from the initial and post course surveys indicate that sample group participants were able to learn and understand family systems terms and concepts and use this knowledge in process application with family. Absent from the responses to questions eighteen and nineteen in the final survey was language indicating blame displacement or language indicating that systems change in family begins with others. The responses are from an ‘I’ perspective which confirms an understanding of differentiation. These data responses show an internalization of the concept of the self as related to differentiation. This data is a strong confirmation of success in achieving project goal three, the development of the concept of differentiation in the target group. Key to any progress in family systems is recognizing that the only person you can change in the family system is self.

Interviews

Two obstacles have been realized with respect to conducting interviews with participants in the family relationship study. First, the response to an opportunity to be interviewed about the experiences of being in the study was very low. This result is not surprising given the analysis of qualitative data throughout the project. Journal entries, which included the opportunity to share instances of the observance of family process, did not contain any significant information concerning individual families. Respondents

participated in the study but did not reveal personal family reflection. Second, the confidentiality of participants, necessary per IRB protocol, could be easily breached during and after the interview process. The decision was made to use the interactions with church members who approached me during the project to express their thoughts and reactions to the study. In keeping a personal learning journal during the project, I had recorded the interactions in written form, with the permission of the participant. These participants granted permission to share their responses. These responses offer an excellent source of qualitative data concerning participants' interactions and feelings concerning the study. The journal entries are chronologically ordered.

September 4, 2014 - While stopping by a local business to visit a church member, I encountered another member who handed me a piece of paper. The piece of paper contained diagrams of the triangles of the church member's relationships. Triangles were interlocking, and it was expressed to me that the relationships with grandchildren were particularly challenging to diagram.

September 6, 2014 - In a conversation with a church trustee it was stated, "Hey, I noticed that you took yourself out of the triangle!" This comment was made concerning a lively debate on refinishing the floor in the fellowship hall.

Conclusion: Project goal one has been attained as participants in the family relationship study are processing the content of the study.

September 12, 2014 - A church member is selling property which has a common boundary with a parent's land. The parent is not pleased that the child is selling the property, and the child is experiencing late night stomach pains on the couch and

sleeplessness. The child is doing what is right for his family at this time, but is struggling with the decision. We discussed the way anxiety travels in triangles and how differentiation is a part of this relationship triangle. We also discussed the possibility of a family member becoming symptomatic for the family and issues of projection in the family.

September 13, 2014 - After the conclusion of the teaching session on anxiety, several church members, as part of their normal routine, went to eat at a local restaurant. A member of a family seated at the large table advised that the family members went around the table describing triangles that are a part of their family life. Another member present at the table joined the discussion as they described relationship triangles in their families.

Conclusion: Project goal two has been attained as study participants are being reflective on the processes that are a part of family relationships and actively working to locate these processes in their family relationships.

September 18, 2014 - While going into a local business, I had a chance to interact with an employee who is a church member. He advised, "I did not think the family study could get any better, but this last weeks' study was the best so far." This member advised that he thought I was talking about his family. I became anxious hearing this statement. He further stated, "I see these things happening in my family. We do get too close, stuck together, and I realize that." This discussion followed the study session on differentiation.

Conclusion: Project goal three has been attained as study participants were able to develop a concept of self and identify complex issues concerning family process in their families.

September 21, 2014 - I was approached by a church member, following the session on over and under functioning, who described a sibling with a medical issue from birth. As a result of the medical issue, the child had not been required to participate in household chores or make decisions concerning household chores or his own immediate welfare. The church member further advised that this family member now calls to get input on a decision to cut his lawn. The discussion on over and under functioning caused this church member to reflect on how the sibling's decision making ability is hindered by under functioning early in life.

Conclusion: Project goal two has been attained as participants have been able to identify generational influence on decision making abilities within the family.

October 5, 2014 - A participant advised that he had really enjoyed the family relationship study. I asked 'why?' He responded, "Because it is where I live. When you share about your family in this study everyone is asking themselves 'where am I in this?'" "You are sharing with us, but everyone is having a conversation with themselves." He further added, "As I am having conversation with other folks, I think to myself, we studied this in church."

October 5, 2014 - One participant stated he was really enjoying the family relationship study. I asked "why?" He advised "I have been using the family systems

theory at work with employees who report to me. I have been able to identify over and under functioning employees at work and how they impact the unit morale.”

Conclusion: Project goal one has been attained as study participants have been able to recognize elements of systems process in the relationships of others and further apply systems process to the work environment.

October 22, 2014 - A conversation with a church member who has a leadership position in the church; “I do not want to get you into a triangle, but we have issues that need to be addressed with our youth.”

November 1, 2014 - I was approached by a church member, a participant in the family relationship study, who asked a question about getting the table cloths cleaned before the Ecumenical Thanksgiving service. I requested she ask the finance committee, and she stopped in the middle of a sentence and said, “I was creating a triangle wasn’t I?”

November 8, 2014 - The heat in the fellowship hall was not working and impacted a missions meeting. A church member states to the church secretary during this meeting, that he is going, “to tell the preacher about the heat not working.” The secretary advised the member, “That is not his task, please tell the trustees about the heat issue.”

December 6, 2014 - Text message from a Sunday School teacher, “Don’t mean to put you in a triangle, but I cannot find an assistant to teach Sunday.”

December 9, 2014 - The last line of an email from the deacon chairman concerning issues in the church, “Triangulation to the max!”

Conclusion: Project goal four has been attained as church leadership, staff, committee members, church members, and teachers are aware of systems processes in the daily life of the church. This knowledge of systems theory is being used to eliminate triangulation and maintain appropriate boundaries within the functioning of the church. Although two months have passed since the teaching session on triangulation and boundaries, these systems concepts and terms remain a part of functioning and reflection for the congregation.

Congregational Sermon Surveys

Sermon surveys were designed and distributed to the congregation following each sermon in the series to gauge the response of the church with respect to the sermon and the identified family systems process. The surveys were distributed before the beginning of the worship service and collected as the congregation exited the sanctuary. Participants in the sermon survey were from the broad range of worship attendees. Participation was not restricted to those who were participating in the family relationship study.

As with the teaching sessions for the relationship study, the amount of data collected from the initial sermon survey was large. Sixty-six surveys were returned with nine questions answered per survey for a total of 594 responses. Anticipating an average response of sixty surveys for the remaining five sermons with nine questions per survey would yield over 3000 responses for the congregation sermon surveys. The response by the congregation has been positive, and the level of participation by the congregation has been high and provided significant data. Given that the focus of this project is not solely

on the preaching event, the decision was made to refine the sermon survey to have one question that would provide a response that was qualitative. Although this decision reduced the number of responses per survey the amount of data for this layer of project assessment was very large.

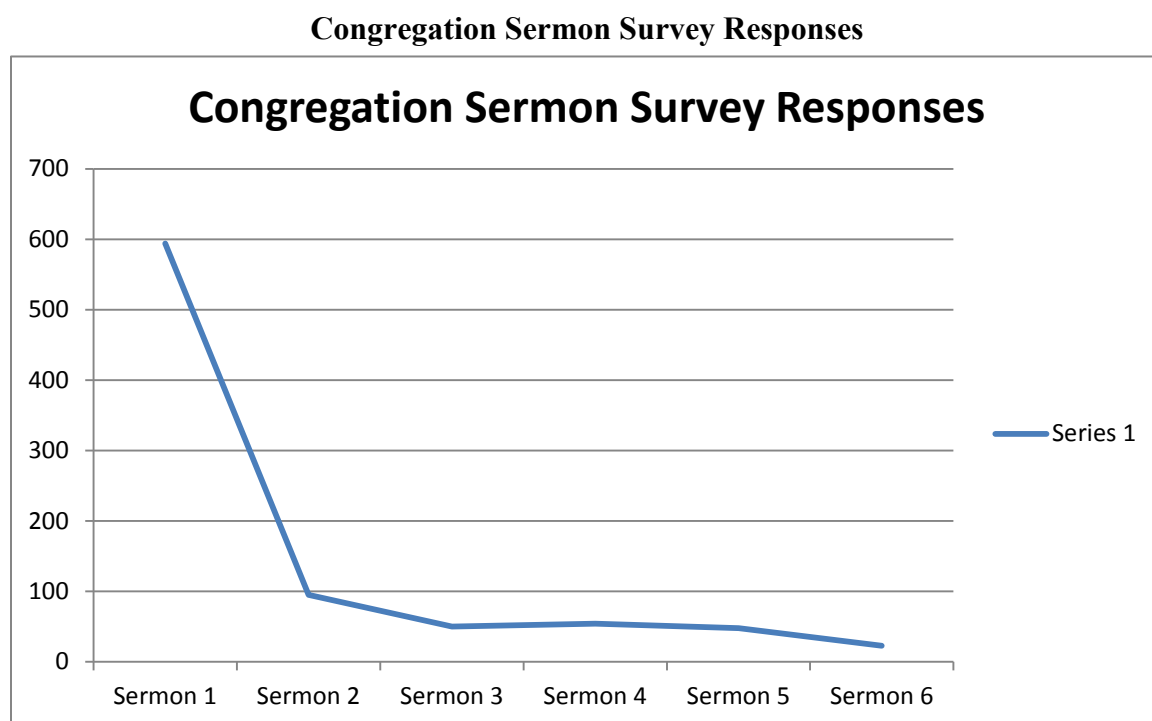


Figure 9

Refining the remaining survey instruments to reflect varying types of qualitative responses proved effective in reducing the volume of data to a manageable level. One anomaly was found in the number of responses to the sermon for week six. There were 23 surveys returned which was less than half of the average level of response. The low response rate for week six was traced to a survey distribution issue. Due to the

distribution issue, week six of congregation sermon survey will not be included in the measurement of the average of surveys returned.

Comparison of the percentage of surveys returned by worship attendance demonstrated an average survey return rate of 33% per sermon.

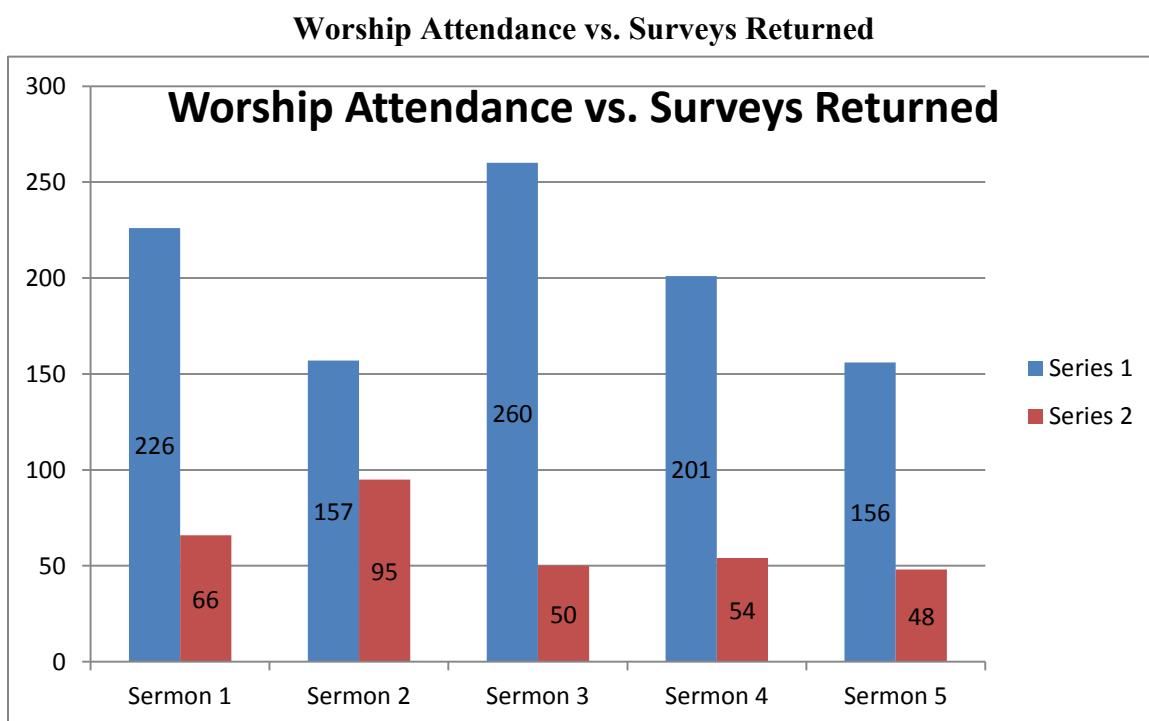


Figure 10

In surveys for the initial sermon, “Tension in the House,” with a focus on triangulation in the family, fifty percent of responses indicated disagree or strongly disagree that the sermon touched their personal story while 29% responded with Agree or Strongly Agree. This result is significant since triangulation is recognized as the most basic element of the family emotional process.⁵³ Out of the respondents who advised the sermon did not touch their personal story, only twelve percent responded that there were

⁵³ Bowen, 134.

no points of connection between the sermon and their extended family. Eighty-eight percent of respondents agreed that the sermon made points of connection with their extended families. Although respondents may not identify triangulation in their own story, they were able to identify triangulation and tension in the story of extended family.

The majority of qualitative responses to the question regarding the one “take away” for the sermon centered on patience in waiting for the direction of the Lord before action. Of the 66 respondents, five provided responses that indicated the importance of recognizing triangles in family emotional processes and the flow of anxiety in triangles. The complexity of vocabulary and fable in this initial sermon hindered the majority of the congregation from hearing and processing the sermon. Inclusion of a fable to help clarify the family processes of scripture further complicated the message and delivery. Subsequent sermons for this series were simplified with respect to vocabulary, illustration, and content in order to provide greater potential for the congregation to absorb scripture and family process.

Survey responses for the second sermon “Hannah’s Prayer; A Look at Anxiety and the Non-Anxious Presence” indicated a strong connection between congregation and a sermon centered on anxiety. The survey asked the congregation to identify the ways that they respond to anxiety. Responses demonstrated that respondents were able to identify anxious feelings and the connection to actions. Forty-one percent of respondents were able to recognize increased reactivity to others as the main way that they respond to anxious feelings. Qualitative responses to the question indicated respondents were aware that actions such as “being snappy,” “shorter responses to others,” “using unkind words,” and “not playing well with others,” were more frequent at home. This connection is not

surprising given the recognition that anxiety disturbs the emotional stability of the family.⁵⁴

Sleeplessness was the next most recognized response to anxiety. Twenty-five percent of surveys indicated sleeplessness due to worry as a response to anxiety. One response included the phrase “paralysis by analysis” as a way to describe the loss of sleep due to over analyzing events and actions of the previous day. Anxious feelings that prevented rest for some respondents were related to spiritual self-evaluation. “Worry about not measuring up to Christ,” and “What have I done that has brought this on me, past sins? God’s will?” are representative statements of those who found sleep elusive as they reflected on anxiety about their spiritual lives. Among the respondents who identified sleeplessness as a response to anxiety, fifty percent included eating too much as an additional response to anxiety. Ten percent of respondents stated that prayer was their main response to anxiety, with specific reference to prayers for guidance from God to move past anxious feelings. The balance of surveys included all of the provided responses of the survey as the effect of anxiety on their lives.

Two respondents questioned the validity of speaking to anxiety and family process in a sermon. One of these responses reflected on the disappointment to “hear our I Samuel text psychologized.” These two survey responses, questioning the validity and appropriateness of examining scripture in light of family process, were the only negative responses in the congregational sermon surveys. Given the return of 336 surveys, these surveys represent less than 1/100 of a percent of total surveys returned. This indicates a strong willingness of the congregation to hear scripture speak to family emotional

⁵⁴ Bowen and Kerr, 135.

systems and process. Congregants were able to understand family systems language and identify the effects of anxiety on their lives as they listened to this sermon on anxiety.

The third sermon of the series examined self-differentiation and family process using Luke 2:41-52. In this pericope Jesus asks his parents why they are searching for him and then advises them that he must be in his Father's house. Ninety two percent of respondents were able to identify the characteristics of Jesus' differentiation in this sermon. For this survey, 42% recognized that as Jesus took responsibility for his decision to remain in the temple, he still remained connected to his parents as he spoke with them without being reactive. Defining self while remaining emotionally connected is an important part of differentiation and was a central part of the teaching session on differentiation and family process. 39% stated that Jesus' expression of his need to be in his Father's house and declining to engage the anxiety of Mary and Joseph is a characteristic of Jesus' differentiation while eleven percent cited Jesus' use of "I" statements as an indicator of differentiation.

The concept of differentiation is complex and is not easily reduced to one or two phrases. Results of this survey indicate that 92% of respondents had a working knowledge of the concept of differentiation from the previous session on family process and were able to identify characteristics of the differentiation of Jesus as related through sermon. These results are a strong indication of the success in the teaching and reflection on family processes with the congregation.

Over and under functioning were the processes of family systems examined in the sermon concerning Jesus' interaction with the man who had many possessions. Central to

the sermon was the way Jesus does not over or under function in showing his love for this man. The survey asked the respondent to describe how Jesus demonstrated his love to the man with many possessions. Sixty-six percent of respondents answered that Jesus' offer of salvation and instruction was the way Jesus loved the man. This percentage answer appears to show the traditional response to this passage with respect to Jesus' interaction with the man. Familiarity with this pericope may have overshadowed the ability of listeners to hear this scripture from a new perspective. Thirty-four percent of respondents were able correlate over and under functioning in the process of caring for others in the sermon. Specifically, several respondents used language such as "observing boundaries in relationship," "Jesus expresses concern and understanding but does not insist on fixing the problem," and "Jesus loved him by letting him make his own choices" in addressing how Jesus demonstrated love to the man. The central theme for these responses included the observation that Jesus provided space for the man to make his decision concerning his possessions.

The fifth sermon in the series, "Getting It Out in the Open," addressed the need for crucial conversations in the processes of family. When Jesus asked the disciples what they had been discussing on the way to Jerusalem, as Jesus made his final trip to Jerusalem, he took the initiative in opening a crucial conversation. Eighty-eight percent of respondents identified crucial conversations as a way for families to share expectations, initiate dialogue, and resolve issues that develop in relationships. Only twelve percent of respondents correlated crucial conversations in relationships as a way to share salvation through Christ with others. Language used to express the benefits of crucial conversations for families included words such as growth, understanding, depth,

feelings, conflict avoidance, and clarity. Use of these terms in relation to family conversations indicates strong retention of the content of the teaching session on crucial conversations. Survey results demonstrate that the sermon was successful in sharing how Christ used crucial conversations with the disciples and the importance of these conversations to the relationships that make up family.

The final sermon of the series centered upon the man who was blind from birth in John 9. Projection, as an emotional process, was used in the sermon to illustrate the parallel process found in the text as disciples and religious leaders sought to determine who sinned the sin that caused the blindness of this man. Recognizing the complexity of asking a question concerning projection and the limited time for response to the survey, the congregation was asked to respond to one question; “Is it possibly true that we all are born blind from birth so that God’s works might be revealed in our lives?” 98% of respondents agreed, that yes, we are born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in our lives. A common theme for listeners was recognizing that the removal of our ignorance to sin is the first work of God that is revealed in our lives. Following this thought, several surveys indicated that once the initial act of God’s first work in their lives was complete, greater and more powerful demonstrations of God’s power had continued as their new life in Christ progressed.

Analysis of congregational survey data reveals that the 67% of respondents to the surveys were attending the teaching sessions on family process. Of those attending the teaching sessions on family process, an average of 61% returned congregational sermon surveys. Given the average attendance per teaching session of 67, an average of 41 participants in the family relationships study were exposed to the processes of family

through sermon. With an average worship attendance of 202 during the six week study period, twenty percent of the congregation attended worship, family relationships study, and returned sermon surveys with journal numbers.

Attendance and survey data indicate that the core of the congregation chose to participate in the family relationship study. Given the time of the teaching sessions, Sunday evenings from 5:30-7:00 p.m., the majority of participants are those who have active roles in leadership, teaching, and ministry at First Baptist Church. The participation percentages provide a strong indication of the success of this project from the perspective of implementation, initial participation, and continued participation throughout the duration of the study.

Instruments for the congregational sermon surveys were developed with a variety of styles to determine the most effective method of survey. Survey instrument development for the congregational surveys provided the most insight into the engagement of the listeners when qualitative responses were requested. Four of the six sermon surveys required a short answer response, and the majority of respondents provided three to four sentences of response. In order to obtain the largest possible number of surveys, respondents were requested to submit the surveys after morning worship. Noting that the time for response was short, the data provided by the respondents indicated critical reflection on the sermon and the identification of terminology and process related to family systems.

Congregational sermon surveys demonstrated that the congregation embraced reflection upon family process and systems theory through sermon. Of the total of sermon

survey responses returned, only two expressed that it was not appropriate to use systems language and thought in sermon. Recognizing the traditional and conservative makeup of the congregation, the sermon series was effective in achieving an appropriate balance between the exposition of scripture and relating scripture to family process. Sermon preparation during this series benefitted from the recognition of the importance of careful exegesis of scripture. The survey results demonstrate that the congregation was able to identify family process in sermon without experiencing the perception that scripture passages were manipulated or twisted from context. Data from the congregational sermon surveys confirm the success of the teaching sessions as respondents have developed a working knowledge of the fundamental concepts of family systems theory, recognized elements of processes in biblical families, and reflected how these processes are a part of their families.

Collaborative Sermon Review

Collaborative sermon review was an important learning tool for the preparation and delivery of the sermon series for this project. Initial steps in this process began with a meeting between John and me to give John an opportunity to review the survey instrument and clarify the goals of our collaboration. The process of review consisted of providing a manuscript and survey instrument each week and then scheduling to meet within the week to review the sermon and instrument. During our time in review, I was able to receive quantitative and qualitative data related to the appropriateness of scripture utilization for the sermon, the range of sermon complexity, effectiveness of the sermon in addressing the emotional processes of the church family, the sermon balance of scripture

exposition and illustration, and the identification of family process as related through fable in the sermon.

The initial metric measuring the appropriate use of scripture for the sermon was of particular interest to me. It is always important to use scripture appropriately and in the proper context. Manipulating scripture for the purpose of sharing family process would be incongruent with the purpose of preaching. Responses from John on this metric ranged from 83% strongly agree to seventeen percent agree with the appropriate use of scripture for the sermon. This measurement confirmed the careful selection of scripture readings for this project and undergirds a fundamental assertion of this project, that the Bible addresses family processes and systems.

Sermon preparation for this project series was challenging with respect to sermon complexity. Vocabulary and concepts that are familiar to me as a result of research and study are not a part of normal vocabulary and concepts for the congregation. The measurement for sermon complexity was 83% neither too simplistic or too complicated and a seventeen percent result for too complicated. The result for too complicated was in review of the initial sermon of the series. Qualitative data on this sermon included the comments “concepts and language for a more educated audience,”⁵⁵ and “a little difficult for me to grasp or identify the process”⁵⁶ as related to family process through fable. In response to the question ‘Were you able to identify the family process that was related through fable?’ the response was Neither Agree/Disagree.

⁵⁵ Hembree, John W. 2014. Interview by author. Woodbury. September 9.

⁵⁶ Hembree, 2014.

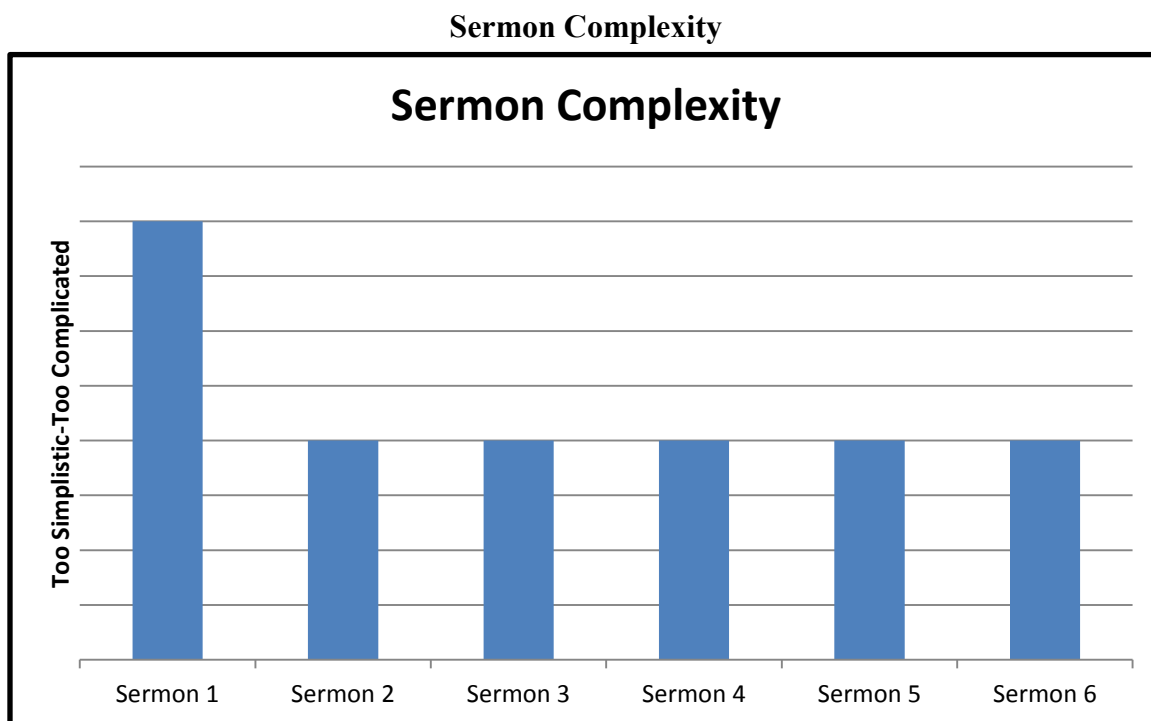


Figure 11

In discussion it was apparent that the addition of the fable *A Nervous Condition*⁵⁷ to the discussion of the relationship triangles in Abraham's tent proved too complicated. Attempting to share a fable with the congregation as they were processing a particular function of family in the sermon caused the complexity of the sermon to rise to a point of placing an undue burden on the hearer of the message. In the midst of delivery of the sermon, I felt some anxiety about the complexity of the sermon and the depth of content. Processing family systems concepts within the movement of a sermon challenges the listener adequately for the purpose of the sermon. The fable had been included in the sermon to provide further illustration of the family process being examined but had the net effect of overwhelming the listener.

⁵⁷ Friedman, *Friedman's Fables*, 17-21

The five remaining sermons of the series were prepared without the addition of a fable for illustration purposes. Greater attention was given to the use of more common illustrations and a reduction in the use of technical language. Subsequent sermon review metrics indicated a much better balance in sermon complexity. Qualitative responses included “right on target,” “right on the money,” and “kept me intrigued till the end.”⁵⁸

One concern with the removal of illustration through fable from the sermon was the need to maintain the effectiveness of the message in addressing the application of the weekly systems focus to the emotional processes of the church family. For the remaining five sermons, eighty percent were evaluated as strongly agree, twenty percent as agree, with the sermon being effective in addressing the emotional processes of the church family. Lowering the level of complexity of the sermon allowed for greater listener engagement and a greater focus on the way scripture speaks to family process in church and nuclear family. Maintaining the application of scripture and systems theory remained an important part of the sermon as the recognition of the parallel processes of church and family life was reinforced through the sermon.

⁵⁸ Hembree, 2014.

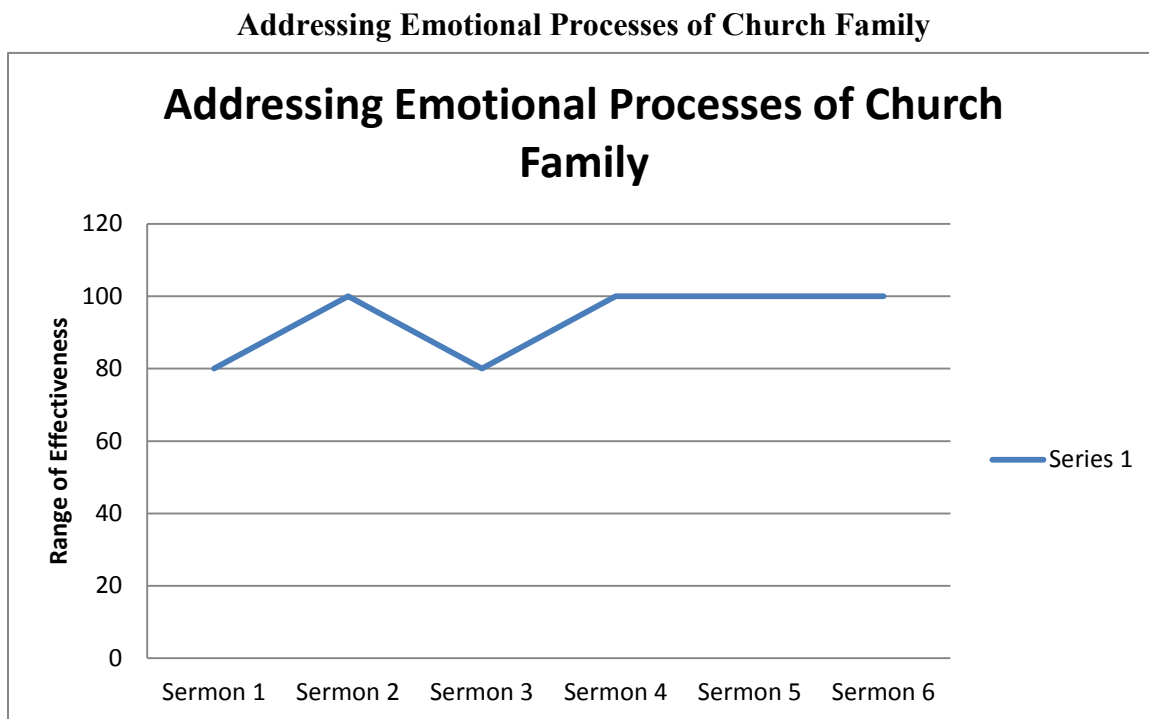


Figure 12

The final metric for collaborative sermon review evaluated the balance, for each sermon, with respect to scripture exposition and illustration. Responses ranged from 66% strongly agree to 34% agree regarding an appropriate balance of scripture exposition and illustration in the sermon. This measurement is an important indicator for the potential of engagement and participation in the sermon by the congregation. One comment that was stated in relation to the sermon from the Gospel of John, chapter 9:1-41, 'Who Sinned, This Man or His Parents,' advised "mostly exposition in this one, not as much illustration, but that did not seem to take away from the sermon."⁵⁹ In reviewing the comment, it is apparent that the strength of the account of the man blind from birth was enough to carry the message of the sermon without much additional illustration.

⁵⁹ Hembree, 2014.

Improvements were made in the sermon series by the reduction of technical language related to family systems, the simplifying of illustrations, and maintaining a focus on the balance between scripture exposition and illustration. Participation in the collaborative review of sermons has provided honest and thoughtful insight that has served to strengthen my attention to detail in sermon preparation and has further increased my appreciation of the relationship that exists between pastor and parishioners. As we reviewed each sermon from the printed page, we both noted how context plays a large part in the delivery and hearing of a sermon. As the church heard sermons that included the processes of family, they were able to recognize elements of the sermon as a part of a continuing conversation within the church concerning family. The collaborative review served to improve the quality of sermon development and delivery for this project and the effectiveness of my preaching will continue to be increased by this collegial effort.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

“As mentioned earlier, efforts to bring about change by dealing only with symptoms (content), rather than process, never will achieve lasting changes in an organic system.”⁶⁰

Before lasting change can occur in family or church, the attention of the individual or institution must shift from content to process. Being a part of family and church is to be involved in systems process. “Understanding the Complexity of Family: Examining Family Systems and the Processes of Relationships for the Families and Congregation of the First Baptist Church of Woodbury, Tennessee” has shared the fundamental concepts of family systems theory, encouraged participants to identify systems process in family and church interactions, and challenged participants to improve their function in family and church processes through the development of self-differentiation. Through teaching sessions, journaling, and sermon review, participants have been encouraged to defocus on the content of relationships and explore their place in the processes of family and church relationships.

First Baptist Church Woodbury has demonstrated the ability to understand family process and discern the distinction between the theology of the church and the processes of the church. This discernment has been a crucial indicator of the success of this project. Qualitative and quantitative data demonstrate that the family relationships study has been

⁶⁰ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 202.

successful in raising awareness, within the family as well as the church, of the difference between content (issues, emotion, theology) and process. From broken heat pumps in the fellowship hall to leadership team meetings, the presence of systems language and process reflection indicate the ongoing dialogue in the church with respect to systems.

Homeostasis, the resistance of an organism to change, will continue to attempt to keep family and institution in their present state. Long term change, for family and church, will be dependent upon a continued intentional effort focused toward process change. The immediate effects of this study of family are evident in the language and reflection of the participants. Achieving lasting change in systems process for family and church will be possible through the cyclical efforts of church leadership to keep an awareness of process in the vision of the congregation.

With respect to the homeostasis of the church, this project has strengthened my resolve to remain differentiated as a pastor while remaining connected to the congregation. Remaining differentiated and connected as a pastor is the only way to bring about lasting process change in a congregation. Lasting change in the process of a system takes time. I have learned that differentiation is the only avenue of leadership that is an effective response to the togetherness pressures and fusion that are a part of congregational life. The learning process for me has included significant reflection on my leadership style and the way personal and congregational anxiety influence my leadership decisions. Pressure within the congregation to keep 'peace' brings significant resistance to innovative leadership and pastoral reactivity to this pressure increases the resistance. My effectiveness as a pastor is directly related to my level of differentiation as a person.

Consistent with process change within the congregation, my growth as a pastor will continue through the process of self-examination of my functioning in the congregation.

An additional part of learning in this project has been in relation to over and under functioning and boundaries. As I have become aware of the areas and ways in which I overfunction I have been intentional to examine and improve my functioning. The need for approval and a lack of differentiation encourage overfunctioning and create a subsequent loss of boundaries. An overfunctioning pastor is a dysfunctional model for the congregation and is a model that cannot be supported biblically or theologically. Through a continuing process of self-examination my functioning will improve and bring about an increased effectiveness in leadership.

Observations

Confirmation of the Desire of Families to Improve Family Function

Participation in the Family Relationships Study was an overwhelming success. Initial interest in the study was much higher than anticipated, and the average number of participants remained high throughout the study. One observation relative to the consistent attendance is the recognition that this study of family was not drawn from the Bible nor did it represent a spiritualized devotional study of family. Initial concerns for this study centered on the possibility of the rejection of the study by the participants due to systems theory subject matter. This was the first study of systems theory in the history of the church. Attendance ratios confirm that families were interested in improving their functioning and were willing to invest their time to learn systems theory as it relates to family.

Teaching Family Systems Concepts and Terminology is Challenging in the Local Church

One challenge throughout the course of this project has been sharing the terminology and concepts of systems theory. The short duration of the teaching sessions and the technical nature of the large, complicated words of systems theory had an impact on the participants. The teaching event was more difficult than I anticipated. During the first session I became aware of the distance between message and messenger as the participants were lost in a sea of complexity. Terms such as differentiation, fusion, projection, and triangulation are not a part of normal communication for the church. Increasing the use of life situation examples and fables improved the ability of the participants to hear and retain the content of the teaching sessions.

Study Participants Understood the Parallel Processes of Family and Church

Efforts were made during the Family Relationship Study to encourage the participants to reflect on how the emotional processes of the church parallel those in the family. Study participants were able to diagram triangles in the church, such as pastor, deacons, congregation, and church council, pastor, and deacons. Participants were able to trace the flow of anxiety in the church through triangles as well as identify the over and under functioning aspects of church committees. This ability to recognize systems process in church and family was a key to the success of achieving project goal four.

Journal Entries Did Not Include Personal Reflection on Individual Family

In order to stimulate reflective thought in the process of journaling, journals were divided into weekly sessions that included the week's teaching session and sermon

scripture. No personal reflections, such as, “today I noticed a triangle in my family” were included in any participant journals. Participants responded to journal requests but did not offer any personal family reflection. This result is not surprising in general, given the reluctance of the congregation to share in personal testimony or other forms of self-revelation. It is interesting that given the diversity of participants in this study that no participant offered personal reflection on family.

Leadership Functioning in the Church Has Improved

Leadership functioning within the church has improved as participants have recognized triangles and boundaries. Boundary discussions were a significant part of the study session on over and under functioning and leadership of the church has been successful in applying this understanding of process in the realm of committee function. Committee boundaries and the under functioning of committees will improve with the guidance of the leadership of the church.

Future Opportunity for Growth and Study

The short term learning and benefits of the Family Relationship Study have been evident in the responses of family and church. Counseling sessions with family members has provided opportunities to use systems theory on an individual basis. As the church becomes more comfortable with systems language usage in sermon and Bible study, there continues to be opportunity for teaching and growth.

Given this initial exposure to family systems theory, the church will benefit with a continued building upon the existing knowledge base by intentional efforts to draw the attention of the church to process. Emotion, passion, and anxiety will cloud the ability to see process patterns that influence the church unless leaders of the church are willing to hold the church accountable to remain focused on process. As the leadership of the church seeks to understand resistance to change within the faith community, system process will necessarily be a part of the dialogue. The future of the church will benefit from analyzing the generational influences that have been a part of the past. The future functioning of the church, informed by systems process, will continue to improve as the church is intentionally called to examine process on a continuing basis.

APPENDIX

Interlocking Triangles Post-Lecture Survey Data (Survey #2)																												
Item #	Description																										Desired Answer	Consensus Answer
RID	Respondent Identifying Number →	7	9	10	16	17	19	20	42	46	49	53	60	64	71	74	76	77	80		AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	STD DEV	AMM/3			
Respondent Demographic Data																												
D1	Age Group: 1 = 1-19 // 2 = 20's // 3 = 30's // 4 = 40's // 5 = 50's // 6 = 60's // 7 = 70's // 8 = 80's & up.	4	5	5	7	4	4	6	8	8	5	6	3	4	7	6	7	5	3		5.389	5.00	4.00					
D2	Gender: 1 = Male // 2 = Female	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2		1.556	2.00	2.00						
D3	Highest Level of Education Completed: 1 = Elementary School // 2 = High School //	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3		2.556	3.00	3.00					
D4	Years Associated with First Baptist Church Woodbury, TN	17	1	1	43	38	3	4	1	46	58	46	2	1	65	8	9	15	9		20.389	9.00	1.00					
Q#	Survey Questions																					AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	STD DEV	AMM/3		
1	An emotional triangle can be three persons in relationship or two persons and an issue?	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	2	4	5	5	5	4	5		4.556	5.00	5.00	0.784	4.852	Y	Y	
2	Triangles can be found in different relationships: friends, family, school, church, business?	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5		4.667	5.00	5.00	0.594	4.889	Y	Y	
3	Family triangles interlock, such as: Father, Mother, Child, and Child, Mother, Grandmother?	5	4	5	3	5	5	3	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	5		4.556	5.00	5.00	0.705	4.852	Y	Y	
4	One party can change the flow of anxiety throughout a triangle?	4	4	5	3	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5		4.500	5.00	5.00	0.618	4.833	Y	Y	
5	Transfer anxiety is a recognizable part of family triangles?	4	3	4	3	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	4		4.167	4.00	4.00	0.707	4.056	Y	Y	
6	Recognizing triangulation in family is an important part of improving family function?	4	4	5	3	5	3	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	4		4.278	4.00	4.00	0.669	4.093	Y	Y
7	Overly sensitive people are not powerful people?	1	2	2	3	1	1	2	3	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	1		1.611	1.00	1.00	0.778	1.204	N	N	
8	Generational influences are not important to family triangles?	2	2	2	4	1	1	4	2	5	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	5		2.111	2.00	1.00	1.410	1.704	N	N	
9	Changing another person is the way to change the flow of anxiety in a family triangle?	4	2	1	4	2	1	3	4	1	4	4	1	4	1	3	1	5	4		2.722	3.00	4.00	1.447	3.241	N	?	
10	"Self Differentiation" and "disregarding the thoughts of others" is the same thing?	2	3	2	4	1	2	3	2	1	1	4	2	2	1	1	1	4	1		2.056	2.00	1.00	1.110	1.685	N	N	
																											Match %	

Quantitative Trends: Pre to Post Survey				<u>Key</u>
AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	AMM/3	
0.389	1.000	1.000	0.796	Trending Positively Toward Correct Answer
0.167	0.000	0.000	0.056	
0.444	1.000	1.000	0.815	No Trend or Neutral
0.222	1.000	1.000	0.741	
0.444	0.000	0.000	0.148	Trending Negatively Away From Correct Answer
0.167	0.000	0.000	0.056	
-0.667	-1.000	-1.000	-0.889	
0.278	0.000	-1.000	-0.241	
-0.056	0.000	0.000	-0.019	
-0.389	0.000	-1.000	-0.463	

Quantitative Trends: Pre to Post Survey				Key
AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	AMM/3	
0.111	0.000	0.000	0.037	Trending Positively Toward Correct Answer
0.056	-0.500	0.000	-0.148	
0.278	0.000	0.000	0.093	No Trend or Neutral
0.167	1.000	0.000	0.389	
-1.000	-1.500	-2.000	-1.500	Trending Negatively Away From Correct Answer
0.278	0.500	1.000	0.593	
0.222	1.000	1.000	0.741	
-0.611	-1.000	-1.000	-0.870	
0.389	0.000	0.000	0.130	
0.056	0.000	0.000	0.019	

Quantitative Trends: Pre to Post Survey				<u>Key</u>
AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	AMM/3	
-0.444	-1.000	-1.000	-0.815	Trending Positively Toward Correct Answer
-0.278	0.000	0.000	-0.093	
0.444	0.500	0.000	0.315	No Trend or Neutral
0.222	0.500	1.000	0.574	
-0.056	0.000	0.000	-0.019	Trending Negatively Away From Correct Answer
0.056	0.000	0.000	0.019	
-0.056	0.000	0.000	-0.019	
0.278	0.000	0.000	0.093	
0.333	0.000	0.000	0.111	
0.278	0.000	0.000	0.093	

Over and Under Functioning Post-Lecture Survey Data (Survey #5)																									Desired Answer	Consensus Answer		
Item #	Description																			AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	STD DEV	AMM/3				
RID	Respondent Identifying Number →	7	9	10	16	17	19	20	42	46	49	53	60	64	71	74	76	77	80									
	Respondent Demographic Data																											
D1	Age Group: 1 = 1-19 // 2 = 20's // 3 = 30's // 4 = 40's // 5 = 50's // 6 = 60's // 7 = 70's // 8 = 80's & up.	4	5	5	7	4	4	6	8	8	5	6	3	4	7	6	7	5	3		5.39	5.00	4.00					
D2	Gender: 1 = Male // 2 = Female	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2		1.56	2.00	2.00					
D3	Highest Level of Education Completed: 1 = Elementary School // 2 = High School //	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3		2.56	3.00	3.00					
D4	Years Associated with First Baptist Church Woodbury, TN	17	1	1	43	38	3	4	1	46	58	46	2	1	65	8	9	15	9		20.39	9.00	1.00					
Q#	Survey Questions																			AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	STD DEV	AMM/3				
1	If we truly love someone we will do all we can to help them.	2	4	3	1	3	5	3	3	2	4	2	2	4	5	3	4	3	3		3.11	3.00	3.00	1.079	3.037	N	?	
2	When someone asks for my help, what they really want is to have my advice.	4	3	3	4	2	4	3	3	5	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	1		2.78	3.00	3.00	1.060	2.926	N	?	
3	Listening is an underrated activity.	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	2	5	4	4	5	1	2	5		4.11	4.50	5.00	1.231	4.537	Y	Y	
4	Overfunctioning people can believe others have problems making decisions.	4	4	4	3	5	4	4	4	5	4	2	4	4	5	4	4	4	5		4.06	4.00	4.00	0.725	4.019	Y	Y	
5	Underfunctioning people are helped and encouraged by overfunctioning people.	2	3	2	3	5	4	2	2	3	1	2	1	4	2	2	3	5	2		2.67	2.00	2.00	1.188	2.222	N	N	
6	Overfunctioning and underfunctioning behaviors deny the selfhood of individuals.	4	3	5	3	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	3	4	4	4	3	5		4.11	4.00	4.00	0.758	4.037	Y	Y	
7	Underfunctioning individuals are weak from a relationship power perspective.	4	3	4	3	4	2	4	4	5	1	4	4	2	2	4	4	4	3	3		3.28	4.00	4.00	0.958	3.759	N	Y
8	Preachers have a tendency to overfunction.	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	5	5		4.11	4.00	4.00	0.583	4.037	Y	Y	
9	Overfunctioners, in our society, are viewed as very helpful people.	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	1	2	4	4	2	4	2	3	5		3.50	4.00	4.00	1.098	3.833	Y	Y	
10	Overfunctioning and "stuck togetherness" blur the boundaries in relationships.	4	4	4	3	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	5		4.11	4.00	4.00	0.583	4.037	Y	Y	
																									Match %			

Quantitative Trends: Pre to Post Survey				Key
AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	AMM/3	
-1.444	-2.000	-2.000	-1.815	Trending Positively Toward Correct Answer
0.111	0.500	1.000	0.537	
0.444	0.500	0.000	0.315	No Trend or Neutral
0.167	0.000	0.000	0.056	
-0.333	-1.000	-1.000	-0.778	Trending Negatively Away From Correct Answer
0.389	0.000	0.000	0.130	
0.278	1.000	1.000	0.759	
0.278	0.000	0.000	0.093	
-0.333	0.000	0.000	-0.111	
0.444	0.000	0.000	0.148	

Table 5

Data Results - Crucial Conversations

Crucial Conversations Pre-Lecture Survey Data (Survey #6)																												
Item #	Description																					AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	STD DEV	AMM/3	Desired Answer	Consensus Answer
RID	Respondent Identifying Number ➡	7	9	10	16	17	19	20	42	46	49	53	60	64	71	74	76	77	80									
	Respondent Demographic Data																											
D1	Age Group: 1 = 1-19 // 2 = 20's // 3 = 30's // 4 = 40's // 5 = 50's // 6 = 60's // 7 = 70's // 8 = 80's & up.	4	5	5	7	4	4	6	8	8	5	6	3	4	7	6	7	5	3		5.39	5.00	4.00					
D2	Gender: 1 = Male // 2 = Female	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2		1.56	2.00	2.00					
D3	Highest Level of Education Completed: 1 = Elementary School // 2 = High School //	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3		2.56	3.00	3.00					
D4	Years Associated with First Baptist Church Woodbury, TN	17	1	1	43	38	3	4	1	46	58	46	2	1	65	8	9	15	9		20.39	9.00	1.00					
Q1*	Survey Questions																					AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	STD DEV	AMM/3		
1	It is normal for families to have crucial conversations without becoming reactive.	2	4	3	3	2	4	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	4	4		2.67	2.00	2.00	0.840	2.222	N	N		
2	It takes intentional behavior to have meaningful crucial conversations.	4	3	4	3	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4		3.67	4.00	4.00	0.686	3.889	Y	Y		
3	Congregations should be able to have crucial conversations without reactivity.	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	4		3.83	4.00	4.00	0.514	3.944	Y	Y		
4	Families that engage in crucial conversations are potentially more healthy.	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3		3.83	4.00	4.00	0.383	3.944	Y	Y		
5	Crucial conversations can be used to avoid future conflict.	4	4	5	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4		3.89	4.00	4.00	0.471	3.963	Y	Y	
6	Crucial conversations can create conflict.	4	5	4	3	4	2	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4		3.94	4.00	4.00	0.725	3.981	Y	Y	
7	Crucial conversations can increase the anxiety and tension in a family.	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4		4.00	4.00	4.00	0.485	4.000	Y	Y	
8	Crucial conversations can lower the anxiety and tension in a family.	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	2	4	4		3.78	4.00	4.00	0.732	3.926	Y	Y	
9	Crucial conversations can be used to address emotional boundary issues.	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3		3.83	4.00	4.00	0.383	3.944	Y	Y	
10	Families can be resistant to honest sharing in an attempt to "maintain the peace."	4	5	4	3	5	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4		4.11	4.00	4.00	0.583	4.037	Y	Y	
Match %																												

Crucial Conversations Post-Lecture Survey Data (Survey #6)																												
Item #	Description																					AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	STD DEV	AMM/3	Desired Answer	Consensus Answer
RID	Respondent Identifying Number ➡	7	9	10	16	17	19	20	42	46	49	53	60	64	71	74	76	77	80									
	Respondent Demographic Data																											
D1	Age Group: 1 = 1-19 // 2 = 20's // 3 = 30's // 4 = 40's // 5 = 50's // 6 = 60's // 7 = 70's // 8 = 80's & up.	4	5	5	7	4	4	6	8	8	5	6	3	4	7	6	7	5	3		5.39	5.00	4.00					
D2	Gender: 1 = Male // 2 = Female	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2		1.56	2.00	2.00					
D3	Highest Level of Education Completed: 1 = Elementary School // 2 = High School //	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3		2.56	3.00	3.00					
D4	Years Associated with First Baptist Church Woodbury, TN	17	1	1	43	38	3	4	1	46	58	46	2	1	65	8	9	15	9		20.39	9.00	1.00					
Q1*	Survey Questions																					AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	STD DEV	AMM/3		
1	It is normal for families to have crucial conversations without becoming reactive.	2	3	3	4	4	2	2	5	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	4	4		2.61	2.00	2.00	1.145	2.204	N	N	
2	It takes intentional behavior to have meaningful crucial conversations.	4	4	4	3	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	4		4.22	4.00	4.00	0.548	4.074	Y	Y	
3	Congregations should be able to have crucial conversations without reactivity.	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4		4.22	4.00	4.00	0.428	4.074	Y	Y	
4	Families that engage in crucial conversations are potentially more healthy.	4	3	4	3	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4		4.17	4.00	4.00	0.618	4.056	Y	Y	
5	Crucial conversations can be used to avoid future conflict.	4	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4		4.56	5.00	5.00	0.616	4.852	Y	Y	
6	Crucial conversations can create conflict.	4	5	4	3	5	4	4	4	3	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4		4.17	4.00	4.00	0.618	4.056	Y	Y	
7	Crucial conversations can increase the anxiety and tension in a family.	3	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	2	5	4	4	4		4.11	4.00	4.00	0.758	4.037	Y	Y
8	Crucial conversations can lower the anxiety and tension in a family.	3	3	4	3	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	4		4.00	4.00	4.00	0.686	4.000	Y	Y
9	Crucial conversations can be used to address emotional boundary issues.	4	4	4	3	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4		4.22	4.00	4.00	0.548	4.074	Y	Y
10	Families can be resistant to honest sharing in an attempt to "maintain the peace."	4	5	4	3	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4		4.22	4.00	4.00	0.548	4.074	Y	Y	
Match %																												

Quantitative Trends: Pre to Post Survey				Key
AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	AMM/3	
-0.056	0.000	0.000	-0.019	Trending Positively Toward Correct Answer
0.556	0.000	0.000	0.185	
0.389	0.000	0.000	0.130	No Trend or Neutral
0.333	0.000	0.000	0.111	
0.667	1.000	1.000	0.889	Trending Negatively Away From Correct Answer
0.222	0.000	0.000	0.074	
0.111	0.000	0.000	0.037	
0.222	0.000	0.000	0.074	
0.389	0.000	0.000	0.130	
0.111	0.000	0.000	0.037	

Data Results - Projection and the Identified Patient

Projection and the Identified Patient Pre-Lecture Survey Data (Survey #7)																																	
Item #	Description																																
RID	Respondent Identifying Number →	7	9	10	16	17	19	20	42	46	49	53	60	64	71	74	76	77	80				AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	STD DEV	AMM/3	Desired Answer	Consensus Answer				
	Respondent Demographic Data																																
D1	Age Group: 1 = 1-19 // 2 = 20's // 3 = 30's // 4 = 40's // 5 = 50's // 6 = 60's // 7 = 70's // 8 = 80's & up.	4	5	5	7	4	4	6	8	8	5	6	3	4	7	6	7	5	3				5.39	5.00	4.00								
D2	Gender: 1 = Male // 2 = Female	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2				1.56	2.00	2.00								
D3	Highest Level of Education Completed: 1 = Elementary School // 2 = High School //	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3				2.56	3.00	3.00								
D4	Years Associated with First Baptist Church Woodbury, TN	17	1	1	43	38	3	4	1	46	58	46	2	1	65	8	9	15	9				20.39	9.00	1.00								
Q#	Survey Questions																																
1	The family member who is viewed as the source of tension in the family system can become the "identified patient"	4	4	4	2	4	2	4	4	1	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	3				3.72	4.00	4.00	1.074	3.907	Y	Y				
2	The "identified patient" can be the family member who shows the most symptoms of the anxiety in the family.	4	4	4	3	4	2	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	5				4.11	4.00	4.00	0.758	4.037	Y	Y				
3	Typically, family members assume that if they could "fix" the "identified patient" the anxiety & tension in the family will become lower or cease to be.	4	4	4	3	4	2	3	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4				4.06	4.00	4.00	0.802	4.019	Y	Y				
4	The effects of tension and anxiety will show up in one or more family member's behavior.	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	3	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4				4.11	4.00	4.00	0.583	4.037	Y	Y				
5	In some family systems the "identified patient" is the most healthy emotionally.	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	5	1	4	5	2	3	5	4	3	4				3.56	4.00	4.00	1.042	3.852	Y	Y				
6	The "identified patient" in a family system can be the object of projection.	4	5	4	3	4	2	3	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4				4.00	4.00	4.00	0.767	4.000	Y	Y				
7	The "identified patient", anxiety, and projection are closely connected in family.	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4				4.06	4.00	4.00	0.416	4.019	Y	Y				
8	Church families can have "identified patients."	4	5	4	2	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4				4.17	4.00	4.00	0.707	4.056	Y	Y				
9	Congregations can be equally as effective at projection as families.	4	5	4	2	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4				4.11	4.00	4.00	0.676	4.037	Y	Y				
10	It is possible to know the absolute truth concerning a person's motivation in behavior.	2	3	4	3	2	3	3	3	1	3	2	2	2	4	1	2	2	2				2.44	2.00	2.00	0.856	2.148	N	N				
																														Match %	1		

Quantitative Trends: Pre to Post Survey				<u>Key</u>
AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	AMM/3	
-0.333	0.000	0.000	-0.111	Trending Positively Toward Correct Answer
0.111	0.000	0.000	0.037	
0.167	0.000	0.000	0.056	No Trend or Neutral
0.056	0.000	0.000	0.019	
0.667	1.000	2.000	1.222	Trending Negatively Away From Correct Answer
0.389	0.000	0.000	0.130	
0.333	0.000	0.000	0.111	
0.056	0.000	0.000	0.019	
0.167	0.000	0.000	0.056	
-0.167	0.000	0.000	-0.056	

Final Course Survey Data (Survey #8)																												
Item #	Description																			AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	STD DEV	AMM/3				
RID	Respondent Identifying Number →	7	9	10	16	17	19	20	42	46	49	53	60	64	71	74	76	77	80									
	Respondent Demographic Data																											
D1	Age Group: 1 = 1-19 // 2 = 20's // 3 = 30's // 4 = 40's // 5 = 50's // 6 = 60's // 7 = 70's // 8 = 80's & up.	4	5	5	7	4	4	6	8	8	5	6	3	4	7	6	7	5	3		5.389	5.00	4.00					
D2	Gender: 1 = Male // 2 = Female	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2		1.556	2.00	2.00					
D3	Highest Level of Education Completed: 1 = Elementary School // 2 = High School // 3 = College // 4 = Graduate School or Higher	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3		2.556	3.00	3.00					
D4	Years Associated with First Baptist Church Woodbury, TN	17	1	1	43	38	3	4	1	46	58	46	2	1	65	8	9	15	9		20.389	9.00	1.00					
Q#	Survey Questions																			AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	STD DEV	AMM/3				
1	Family members can change the way they relate to each other.	4	4	4	3	2	4	3	2	5	2	4	1	5	4	5	4	4	4	3.556	4.00	4.00	1.149	3.852				
2	Changing the way we relate to each other as family is simple and easy.	2	2	2	3	5	4	2	3	1	4	2	4	2	2	2	1	1	2	2.444	2.00	2.00	1.149	2.148				
3	Parents, Grandparents, and Great Grandparents influence the way we relate to our family.	4	4	4	3	1	3	4	1	5	2	4	1	5	4	5	4	4	4	3.444	4.00	4.00	1.338	3.815				
4	Being "anxious" about something is related to being "worried" about something.	4	4	4	3	1	2	4	2	4	1	4	1	5	2	5	4	4	4	3.222	4.00	4.00	1.353	3.741				
5	All families have equal amounts of anxiety but choose to handle anxiety in different ways.	4	2	2	3	2	4	4	3	1	4	2	4	2	4	3	4	2	2	2.889	3.00	4.00	1.023	3.296				
6	Anxiety travels throughout the family relationships in a circular pattern.	2	3	4	3	2	2	3	4	5	2	4	2	4	4	4	3	2	4	3.167	3.00	4.00	0.985	3.389				
7	Anxious feelings remain within the family member who is anxious.	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	4	2	3	1	4	2	2	2.500	2.00	2.00	0.786	2.167				
8	Overfunctioning people can also be described as people who are good at "helping" others.	4	4	4	4	2	3	3	2	3	1	4	2	4	4	1	4	4	4	3.167	4.00	4.00	1.098	3.722				
9	Underfunctioning people need more "help" to live life to the fullest.	2	3	2	3	2	2	4	2	5	4	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	4	3.167	3.00	4.00	0.985	3.389				
10	Open discussions of issues is good for a family.	4	4	4	3	1	4	4	1	5	2	4	1	5	5	5	4	4	4	3.556	4.00	4.00	1.381	3.852				
																							Desired Answer				Consensus Answer	
																							Match %					

Quantitative Trends: Pre to Post Survey				<u>Key</u>
AVG	MEDIAN	MODE	AMM/3	
-0.778	0.00	0.00	-0.259	Trending Positively Toward Correct Answer
0.389	0.00	0.00	0.130	
-0.944	-1.00	-1.00	-0.981	No Trend or Neutral
-0.556	0.00	0.00	-0.185	
-0.333	0.00	0.00	-0.111	Trending Negatively Away From Correct Answer
-0.389	-1.00	0.00	-0.463	
-0.333	-0.50	0.00	-0.278	
0.222	1.00	2.00	1.074	
-0.167	-1.00	0.00	-0.389	
-0.722	-1.00	-1.00	-0.907	

Bulletin Insert for Family Relationship Study August 17, 2014

Family Relationships Study

Our church is in a unique position to offer a great opportunity to study family relationships. Our study of family relationships will utilize fables and case studies so that we can examine particular dynamics of family function in detail. Fables and case studies provide 'neutral ground' for the study of family. This study is a component of my Doctor of Ministry program. I need your help in order for this study to be successful.

The goal of this study is to teach six fundamental concepts of family that will raise each participant's awareness of how family functions. Increasing awareness of how family functions can help participants identify ways to improve family relationships. An additional goal for the study will be to challenge the congregation to recognize patterns of behavior in the church and examine ways to improve our functioning as a church. The schedule for the six week study:

TEACHING SESSIONS

Week One	August 31, 2014	A Look at Interlocking Triangles
Week Two	September 7, 2014	A Look at Anxiety
Week Three	September 14, 2014	A Look at Self Differentiation and Reactivity
Week Four	September 21, 2014	A Look at Over and Under Functioning
Week Five	September 28, 2014	A Look at Crucial Conversations
Week Six	October 5, 2014	A Look at Projection, The Identified Patient

The sessions will take place in the Sanctuary from 5:30-7:00 on Sunday Evenings. This study will be a blessing to the church and I look forward to this time with you.

I need your help. Please contact our church office to advise your desire to attend this study or please tear off the lower portion of this announcement and place in the offering plate. This will help us to prepare materials and journals for those who wish to attend.

Thank you, Hunter

Number to attend_____

Family name:_____

Letter to respondents who expressed interest in Family Relationship Study mailed on
August 27, 2014

Family Systems and Relationships Study

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in attending the Family Relationships Study to be held in the Sanctuary of First Baptist Church from 5:30-7:00 p.m. Our church is in a unique position to offer this opportunity to study family relationships. The sessions of study will utilize fables and case studies as we examine particular dynamics of family function. Fables and case studies will provide 'neutral ground' for the study of family.

This study is a component of my Doctor of Ministry Program and I am grateful for your desire to attend. Your participation in this process will make this study successful. Each participant will receive a journal for the purpose of journaling throughout the six week Family Relationships Study. I ask that you make a commitment to attend the sessions faithfully during the six week period. Each session is oriented to a unique dynamic of family function so that missing a session will not preclude participation in the remaining sessions.

The goal of this study is to teach six fundamental concepts of family that will raise each participant's awareness of how family functions. Increasing awareness of how family functions can assist participants in identifying ways to improve family relationships. An additional goal of this study will be to help the congregation in recognizing patterns of relationship in the church and examine ways to improve our functioning as a church.

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Week One | August 31 | A Look at Interlocking Triangles |
| • Week Two | September 7 | A Look at Anxiety |
| • Week Three | September 14 | A Look at Self |
| | Differentiation/Reactivity | |
| • Week Four | September 21 | A Look at Over and Under |
| | Functioning | |
| • Week Five | September 28 | A Look at Crucial Conversations |
| • Week Six | October 5 | A Look at Projection/Identified |
| | Patient | |

I look forward to this exciting time of study with you and thank you for being a part.

Sincerely, Pastor Hunter Hay

Initial Survey One

August 31, 2014

All responses to survey questions are confidential. No attempt will be made to determine your identity. Demographic answers are for statistical purposes only.

Please circle the answer that applies:

1. Age grouping: 1-19's, 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, 80 and up.
2. Gender: Female Male
3. Circle highest level of education: Elementary High School College Graduate School
4. Years associated with First Baptist Woodbury ____

On a scale of 1-5, please respond to the following statements,

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree 4- Agree 5-Strongly Agree

5. Family members can change the way they relate to each other.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Changing the way we relate to each other as family is simple and easy.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Parents, Grandparents, and Great Grandparents influence the way we relate to our family.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Being 'anxious' about something is related to being 'worried' about something.

1 2 3 4 5

9. All families have equal amounts of anxiety but choose to handle anxiety in different ways.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Anxiety travels throughout the family relationships in a circular pattern.

1 2 3 4 5

11. Anxious feelings remain within the family member who is anxious.

1 2 3 4 5

12. Overfunctioning people can also be described as people who are good at ‘helping’ others.

1 2 3 4 5

13. Underfunctioning people need more ‘help’ to live life to the fullest.

1 2 3 4 5

14. Open discussion of issues is good for a family.

1 2 3 4 5

Please answer the following questions by rank of importance using a scale of 1-5, 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important in your family.

15. Recognizing the process and movement of anxiety in the family?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

16. Recognizing the things that cause me to be anxious?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

17. The spiritual health of my family?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

18. The emotional health of my family?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

19. Recognizing the emotional health of my family affects its’ spiritual health?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

20. Determining whether I ‘over’ or ‘under’ function in my family?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

21. Knowing the people, places, and topics that bring about reactivity (being touchy)?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

22. What area of family would be most important for you to understand?

23. If you were to teach a course on family, what would you address?

Survey Two

INTERLOCKING TRIANGLES

August 31, 2014

Please respond to the following questions on a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree 4- Agree 5-Strongly Agree

1. An emotional triangle can be three persons in relationship or two persons and an issue?

1 2 3 4 5

2. Triangles can be found in different relationships: friends, family, school, church, business?

1 2 3 4 5

3. Family triangles interlock, such as; Father, Mother, Child, and Child, Mother, Grandmother?

1 2 3 4 5

4. One party can change the flow of anxiety throughout a triangle?

1 2 3 4 5

5. Transfer Anxiety is a recognizable part of family triangles?

1 2 3 4 5

6. Recognizing triangulation in family is an important part of improving family function?

1 2 3 4 5

7. Overly sensitive people are not powerful people?

1 2 3 4 5

8. Generational influences are not important to family triangles?

1 2 3 4 5

9. Changing another person is the way to change the flow of anxiety in a family triangle?

1 2 3 4 5

10. 'Self Differentiation' and 'disregarding the thoughts of others' is the same thing?

1 2 3 4 5

Journal Entry One

TENSION IN THE HOUSE

September 7, 2014

No attempt will be made to determine your identity from these journal entries. This Journal is provided as a means and place of reflection during the look at family process.

1. In your opinion, was there tension in the house in Genesis 16:1-6?
2. Please name the emotional triangle in this passage of scripture.
3. What was the cause of the tension in the house?
4. How could the tension in this emotional triangle have been lowered or avoided? If you think the tension could not have been lowered please state why.
5. Walk in Abram's shoes, How would you have handled the growing tensions in the house?
6. A 'take away' is something you can carry with you intellectually or emotionally. Is there one 'take away' that you can identify, for you, from the study of family triangles and, or the sermon Tension in the House?

Survey Three ANXIETY AND A NON-ANXIOUS PRESENCE September 7, 2014

Please respond to the following statements on a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree 4- Agree 5-Strongly Agree

1. All families have anxiety in their family systems.

1 2 3 4 5

2. As our anxiety increases our reactivity (sensitivity, touchiness) decreases.

1 2 3 4 5

3. A person's level of self-differentiation effects how they handle anxiety.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Physical distance lowers anxiety levels in a family.

1 2 3 4 5

5. The closer we are as family the better we function.

1 2 3 4 5

6. It is possible to be 'stuck together' as family.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Panic attacks can be related to anxiety issues.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Anxiety is not emotionally contagious.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Anxiety does not have an effect on our health.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Handling anxiety in relationships is easy for me.

1 2 3 4 5

Journal Entry Two

HANNAH'S PRAYER

September 14, 2014

No attempt will be made to determine your identity from these journal entries. This Journal is provided as a means and place of reflection during the look at family process.

1. How would you define anxiety?
2. Could Elkanah have done anything to remove Hannah's anxiety? If so, what could he have done differently?
3. Please draw the emotional triangle in 1 Samuel 1:3-20.
4. How did Peninnah play a part in Hannah's feelings?
5. Was Elkanah a 'non anxious presence' in this passage? Please state a reason for your answer.
6. Do you think it is possible to be a 'non-anxious presence'?

Survey Four SELF-DIFFERENTIATION AND REACTIVITY September 14, 2014

Please respond to the following statements on a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree 4- Agree 5-Strongly Agree

1. Self-Differentiated people wait to get the reaction of others before making a decision.

1 2 3 4 5

2. Self-Differentiated people are not sensitive to the feelings of others.

1 2 3 4 5

3. The more differentiated person will be less reactive than the less differentiated person.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Individuals choose to be reactive.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Changing our level of differentiation is fairly easy if we put our minds to the task.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Transfer Anxiety can cause reactivity in individuals.

1 2 3 4 5

7. There is a definite place where I stop and others begin.

1 2 3 4 5

8. It is possible to transfer responsibility for your actions.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Some individuals are skilled in transferring responsibility for their actions.

1 2 3 4 5

10. The classic emotional triangle begins something like this....'I think you can help me'.

1 2 3 4 5

Journal Entry Three

LOST IN JERUSALEM

September 21, 2014

No attempt will be made to determine your identity from these journal entries. This Journal is provided as an opportunity for reflection during our look at family process.

1. How would you define self-differentiation?
2. Who becomes reactive in this scripture passage and how are you aware of their reactivity?
3. How are self-differentiation and reactivity connected?
4. How are anxiety and reactivity connected?
5. What tells you that Jesus' response to his mother is not reactive?
6. How does the pressure of togetherness work against self-differentiation?

Survey Five OVERFUNCTIONING AND UNDERFUNCTIONING

September 21, 2014

Please respond to the following statements on a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree 4- Agree 5-Strongly Agree

1. If we truly love someone we will do all we can to help them.

1 2 3 4 5

2. When someone asks for my help, what they are really wanting is to have my advice.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Listening is an underrated activity.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Overfunctioning people can believe others have problems making decisions.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Underfunctioning people are helped and encouraged by overfunctioning people.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Overfunctioning and underfunctioning behaviors deny the selfhood of individuals.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Underfunctioning individuals are weak from a relationship power perspective.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Preachers have a tendency to overfunction.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Overfunctioners, in our society, are viewed as very helpful people.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Overfunctioning and 'stuck togetherness' blur the boundaries in relationships.

1 2 3 4 5

Journal Entry Four

OVER AND UNDER, HOW DID JESUS LOVE?

September 28, 2014

No attempt will be made to determine your identity from these journal entries. This Journal is provided as an opportunity for reflection during our look at family process.

1. The text, Mark 10:17-22, states that Jesus loved the rich man. How did he show that he loved him?
2. What did Jesus do for the rich man?
3. What did Jesus not do for the rich man?
4. Can overfunctioning people cause issues in relationships? If so, how?
5. What is the best way to care for someone who is overfunctioning?
6. What is the best way to care for someone who is underfunctioning?

Survey Six CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS September 28, 2014

Please respond to the following questions on a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree 4- Agree 5-Strongly Agree

1. It is normal for families to have crucial conversations without becoming reactive.

1 2 3 4 5

2. It takes intentional behavior to have meaningful crucial conversations.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Congregations should be able to have crucial conversations without reactivity.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Families that engage in crucial conversations are potentially more healthy.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Crucial conversations can be used to avoid future conflict.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Crucial conversations can create conflict.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Crucial conversations can increase the anxiety and tension in a family.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Crucial conversations can lower the anxiety and tension in a family.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Crucial conversations can be used to address emotional boundary issues.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Families can be resistant to honest sharing in an attempt to 'maintain the peace'.

1 2 3 4 5

Journal Entry Five

GETTING IT OUT IN THE OPEN

October 5, 2014

No attempt will be made to determine your identity from these journal entries. This Journal is provided as an opportunity for reflection during our look at family process.

1. What are the problems that arise from avoiding issues that need attention in the family?
2. When do you find it to be good timing to have a crucial conversation in the family?
3. Can you name benefits that come from productive and honest conversation?
4. If you struggle to have crucial conversations, what causes the resistance?
5. Are there risks involved in having crucial conversations? If so please name them.
6. What is a reasonable expectation of result from a crucial conversation?

Survey Seven PROJECTION AND THE IDENTIFIED PATIENT October 5, 2014

Please respond to the following statements on a scale from 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree 4- Agree 5-Strongly Agree

1. The one family member who is viewed as the source of tension in the family system can become the 'identified patient'.

1 2 3 4 5

2. The 'identified patient' can be the family member who shows the most symptoms of the anxiety in the family.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Typically, family members assume that if they could 'fix' the 'identified patient' the anxiety and tension in the family will become lower or cease to be.

1 2 3 4 5

4. The effects of tension and anxiety will show up in one or more family member's behavior.

1 2 3 4 5

5. In some family systems the 'identified patient' is the most healthy emotionally.

1 2 3 4 5

6. The 'identified patient' in a family system can be the object of projection?

1 2 3 4 5

7. The 'identified patient', anxiety, and projection are closely connected in family.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Church families can have 'identified patients'.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Congregations can be equally as effective at projection as families.

1 2 3 4 5

10. It is possible to know the absolute truth concerning a person's motivation in behavior.

1 2 3 4 5

Journal Entry Six

WHO SINNED, THIS MAN OR HIS PARENTS?

October 12, 2014

No attempt will be made to determine your identity from these journal entries. This Journal is provided as an opportunity for reflection during our look at family process.

1. How would you define an 'identified patient'?
2. Do families benefit from having an 'identified patient'? If so, how do they benefit?
3. Do families suffer as a result of having an 'identified patient'? If so, how do they suffer?
4. Have you been able to identify projection in your family? In the families of others?
5. How are anxiety and the identified patient related?
6. How does church family (congregation) use projection?

Final Survey Eight

October 12, 2014

All responses to survey questions are confidential. No attempt will be made to determine your identity. Demographic answers are for statistical purposes only.

Please circle the answer that applies:

1. Age grouping: 1-19's, 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, 80 and up.
2. Gender: Female Male
3. Circle highest level of education: Elementary High School College Graduate School
4. Years associated with First Baptist Woodbury _____

On a scale of 1-5, please respond to the following statements,

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

5. Family members can change the way they relate to each other.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Changing the way we relate to each other as family is simple and easy.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Parents, Grandparents, and Great Grandparents influence the way we relate to our family.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Being 'anxious' about something is related to being 'worried' about something.

1 2 3 4 5

9. All families have equal amounts of anxiety but choose to handle anxiety in different ways.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Anxiety travels throughout the family relationships in a circular pattern.

1 2 3 4 5

11. Anxious feelings remain within the family member who is anxious.

1 2 3 4 5

12. Overfunctioning people can also be described as people who are good at ‘helping’ others.

1 2 3 4 5

13. Underfunctioning people need more ‘help’ to live life to the fullest.

1 2 3 4 5

14. Open discussion of issues is good for a family.

1 2 3 4 5

Please answer the following questions by rank of importance using a scale of 1-5, 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

15. Recognizing the process and movement of anxiety in the family?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

16. Recognizing the things that cause me to be anxious?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

17. The spiritual health of my family?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

18. The emotional health of my family?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

19. Recognizing the emotional health of my family affects its spiritual health?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

20. Determining whether I ‘over’ or ‘under’ function in my family?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

21. Knowing the people, places, and topics that bring about reactivity (being touchy)?

1-Most 2-Somewhat 3-Middle 4-Less 5-Least

22. What is the most valuable concept or thought you have encountered in this study?

23. Have you been able to see family processes in your family as a result of this study?

Sermon Review

John Hembree, Pastor, First United Methodist Church

Woodbury, TN

Title: _____

Scripture: _____

1. Was the scripture utilized appropriately for the message? Please circle your response.

Range: 1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Neither Agree/Disagree 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

1 2 3 4 5

2. Comments concerning scripture utilization.

3. Sermon Range: 1- too simplistic, 5 - too complicated

1 2 3 4 5

4. Comments concerning Sermon Range

5. Was the sermon effective in addressing emotional processes of the church family?

Range: 1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Neither Agree/Disagree 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

1 2 3 4 5

6. Comments concerning the sermon addressing issues of the church family.

7. Was there an effective balance between scripture exposition and illustration?

Range: 1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Neither Agree/Disagree 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

8. Comments concerning the balance of scripture exposition and family.

9. Were you able to identify the family process that was related through fable?

Range: 1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Neither Agree/Disagree 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

10. Comments concerning family process as related through fable.

Journal Number ____

Congregational Sermon Survey

Tension in the House Genesis 16:1-6

September 7, 2014

All responses to survey questions are confidential. No attempt will be made to determine your identity. Demographic answers are for statistical purposes only.

Please circle the answer that applies:

Age grouping: 1-19's, 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, 80 and up.

Gender: Female Male

Circle highest level of education: Elementary High School College Graduate School

Years associated with First Baptist Woodbury ____

On a scale of 1-5, please respond to the following statements,

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

1. The sermon story touched my personal story.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I was able to remain connected throughout the sermon.

1 2 3 4 5

3. In the sermon I recognized how some family members relate to one another.

1 2 3 4 5

4. There are points of connection between my extended family story and the sermon.

1 2 3 4 5

5. The sermon encouraged and motivated me to take action in my family.

1 2 3 4 5

6. I experienced the sermon as God speaking to me.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Did the sermon offer insight into the ways emotionally healthy families work?

1 2 3 4 5

8. I can recognize how the sermon applies to our church family.

1 2 3 4 5

9. What is your one 'take away' for the sermon, the one thought you will carry with you?

Journal Number ____

Congregational Sermon Survey

Hannah's Prayer I Samuel 1: 3-20

September 14, 2014

All responses to survey questions are confidential. No attempt will be made to determine your identity. Demographic answers are for statistical purposes only.

Please circle the answer that applies:

Age grouping: 1-19's, 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, 80 and up.

Gender: Female Male

Circle highest level of education: Elementary High School College

Graduate School

Years associated with First Baptist Woodbury ____

Can you identify the way you respond to anxiety? Sleeplessness? Not eating and drinking? Being Reactive towards others?

Journal Number ____

Sermon Survey

Lost in Jerusalem – Luke 2:41-52

September 21, 2014

All responses to survey questions are confidential. No attempt will be made to determine your identity. Demographic answers are for statistical purposes only.

Please circle the answer that applies:

Age grouping: 1-19's, 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, 80 and up.

Gender: Female Male

Circle highest level of education: Elementary High School College

Graduate School

Years associated with First Baptist Woodbury ____

In the sermon this morning we spoke of Jesus advising his parents, “Why are you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

This statement comes from one who is very well differentiated. Differentiated meaning: (being a self, the capacity to be an ‘I’ when all are calling for “us” or ‘we’, taking maximum responsibility for one’s own actions and emotional well-being)

What makes this declaration from Jesus a statement of differentiation? Circle the best answer.

- A. It is an “I” statement and not a “You” statement.
- B. In this statement Jesus addresses His need to be about the Father’s interest and declines to engage the anxiety of Mary and Joseph.
- C. Jesus takes full responsibility for the decision to stay behind with this statement while remaining connected to Mary and Joseph.
- D. Differentiation is not an issue in these statements.

Journal Number ____

Congregational Sermon Survey

Over and Under, How Did Jesus Love? Mark 10: 17-22

September 28, 2014

All responses to survey questions are confidential. No attempt will be made to determine your identity. Demographic answers are for statistical purposes only.

Please circle the answer that applies:

Age grouping: 1-19's, 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, 80 and up.

Gender: Female Male

Circle highest level of education: Elementary High School College Graduate School

Years associated with First Baptist Woodbury ____

Mark states that Jesus looked at the man with many possessions and 'loved him.' How did Jesus show his love to this man?

Journal Number ____

Congregational Sermon Survey

Getting It Out In The Open Mark 9: 33-37

October 5, 2014

All responses to survey questions are confidential. No attempt will be made to determine your identity. Demographic answers are for statistical purposes only.

Please circle the answer that applies:

Age grouping: 1-19's, 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, 80 and up.

Gender: Female Male

Circle highest level of education: Elementary High School College Graduate School

Years associated with First Baptist Woodbury ____

Please answer the following question:

We see in this scripture that Jesus had Crucial Conversations with the disciples. Following the example of Jesus, why should you have crucial conversations in relationships?

Journal Number ____

Congregational Sermon Survey

Who Sinned, This Man or His Parents? John 9:1-34

October 12, 2014

All responses to survey questions are confidential. No attempt will be made to determine your identity. Demographic answers are for statistical purposes only.

Please circle the answer that applies:

Age grouping: 1-19's, 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, 80 and up.

Gender: Female Male

Circle highest level of education: Elementary High School College Graduate School

Years associated with First Baptist Woodbury ____

John writes that Jesus disciples asked him "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" They saw the man's blindness and were seeking to determine who sinned and caused the blindness. In place of speaking to the cause of his blindness, Jesus says "...he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him."

Please answer the following question: Is it possibly true that we all are 'born blind' so that God's works might be revealed in our lives?

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