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Practicing Sabbath to Reduce Stress Among Ministers in the Tyger River Baptist Association, Spartanburg, South Carolina

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PRACTICING SABBATH TO REDUCE STRESS AMONG MINISTERS IN THE
TYGER RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION
TYGER RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION
SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT PROPOSAL COMMITTEE OF THE
M. CHRISTOPHER WHITE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY
BOILING SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JAMES L. HAILSTOCK

May 12, 2017

APPROVAL FORM

PRACTICING SABBATH TO REDUCE STRESS AMONG MINISTERS IN THE
TYGER RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

TYGER RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION
SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

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Furthermore, I would like to dedicate my ministry project to the memory of the late Mrs. Alice B. Badenoch who encouraged me from the ninth grade in high school and throughout my adult life until her passing. I would like to honor the memory of my pastor, the late Reverend Dr. S. C. Cureton who always encouraged me and counseled me to be my best and to strive for excellence.

I want to honor my parents, the late Bennie James Hailstock and the late Ollie Lee Hailstock who demonstrated before me an incredibly untiring commitment and love for the work of the Baptist Church.

ABSTRACT

The Sabbath is the zenith of God's creation and the climax of living. The key to reducing stress among ministers is the Sabbath lifestyle which includes practicing the disciplines of prayer, silence, feasting and fellowship in addition to identifying the signs and symptoms of stress. The Sabbath lifestyle empowers ministers with coping skills that can be personalized and implemented consistently as they progress and deal with the daunting demands and responsibilities of ministry. This project tested and compared the stress levels of the research and control groups before and after teaching four courses (disciplines) in the context of a Sabbath lifestyle to the research group only. During the retreat, four activities relative to the four courses were practiced by the research and control groups to determine if the courses had an impact on the activities to reduce stress among ministers. The project also revealed the effectiveness of the instructor, research site, courses, retreat, and activities. The project revealed strengths, weaknesses, and missteps. The results established that the courses did influence the activities to reduce stress among ministers.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Eric Wiesel, a noted Jewish novelist, wrote a play entitled, “Zalmen or the Madness of God.”¹ In the play, Weisel “struggles with this prophetic understanding of hearing and obeying the voice of God.”² He is conflicted with speaking the truth in love even when silence is clearly a better choice. Wiesel calls it “divine madness to utter a word of redemptive judgment even when career success is guaranteed by the intolerance of social injustice.”³ Wiesel advocates that it is “divine madness to act with integrity and freedom even when the pressure of culture and congregational conformity guarantees personal and professional benefits.”⁴

Zalmen is the rabbi’s beadle and lay assistant.⁵ Zalmen pleads that the rabbi speaks the Word of God when he says to him, “One has to be mad today to believe in God and in man. One has to be mad to believe. One has to be mad to want to be human. Be mad, Rabbi, be mad!”⁶ The rabbi responds to Zalmen by saying, “Not so easy. Fear and I have shared the same root for a long time.”⁷

¹ Donald E. Messer, *Images of Christian Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 47.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, 48.

⁷ Ibid.

Wiesel's play illustrates that ministry is a stressful undertaking. Persons in ministry need to develop a Sabbath lifestyle that embraces the practice of prayer, silence, feasting and fellowshiping, on a consistent basis, so that they can better manage the stress and anxiety that come along with being the voice of God in the earth. "The Sabbath is not for the sake of weekdays; the weekdays are for the sake of the Sabbath. It is not an interlude but the climax of living."⁸

Aspects of the Sabbath lifestyle can reduce stress in ministry. My project presupposes there is a strong and positive correlation between ministry and increased stress and is illustrated in a story told during a recent luncheon by a colleague in ministry from Spartanburg County. In sharing his story, I take into consideration that blood pressure is a good indicator of stress level. Prior to having back surgery, the colleague was diagnosed with high blood pressure and prescribed medication by his doctor to bring the blood pressure down. After surgery, there was a six-week period of recovery when the doctor discovered that the blood pressure was low enough to warrant taking him off the blood pressure medication. The blood pressure had dropped from 150/90 to 90/60. The only change in lifestyle was the absence of day-to-day ministry. This reduction in blood pressure occurred even though he dealt with the inconvenience of having a catheter, drainage tube, and using a walker.

My goal was to demonstrate how practicing Sabbath using the disciplines of prayer, silence, feasting, and fellowship along with understanding the signs and symptoms of stress, will reduce stress among ministers in the Tyger River Baptist Association, Spartanburg, South Carolina. Ministers and lay persons alike will learn how to embrace the lifestyle of the Sabbath while utilizing activities relative to the four

⁸ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 14.

disciplines studied in order to reduce their level of stress. At the end of the day, my hope is that readers will come to understand that the inevitable stress that comes along with ministry can be intentionally reduced given the right tools and that the beauty of the call and work of ministry will shine through.

Project Description

Teaching ministers to practice Sabbath in order to reduce stress in ministry was the goal of this project. The context of my project was the Tyger River Baptist Association in Spartanburg, South Carolina, where I serve as moderator. My project consisted of a research group and a control group. Both of these groups consisted of three ministers and three laypersons. Each subgroup was comprised of one female and two male ministers. The breakdown of laypersons in each subgroup consisted of two women and one man. It is important to note that all of the churches in the Tyger River Baptist Association consist of predominately female congregants. The members of both groups varied in age, tenure, ministry size, and assignment. The socio-economic status and educational level of each person in each group varied as well. In addition, the research group and control group represented urban and rural locations. The laypersons represent a random sample of the congregants of the Tyger River Baptist Association. I offered the same pre-test and post-test to both groups in order to assess the level of stress (before and after the project). I taught a class on stress with particular emphasis on signs and symptoms, along with coping mechanisms for reducing stress effectively through the following three disciplines of study and practice: feasting and fellowshiping, prayer and silence.

Each of the four classes included a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the course along with an assessment of the instructor.

The project spanned over a seven-week period. Only the research group received the entire course of study.

The action of the project commenced with the research group and the control group practicing the activities of the four distinct classes (disciplines on coping mechanisms to reduce stress) during the retreat. Following the retreat, the members of the research and control groups performed the activities for each class in their respective places of ministry to determine if the measures to reduce stress, and thus experience Sabbath in ministry, actually worked. There was a two-week window to practice the activities a minimum of three times prior to answering the questionnaires and reporting the data. (Feasting occurred once.) The data collected was assessed and was reported via internet.

Project Setting

Spartanburg has a population of 37,647 (city), 180,786 (urban), and 318,999 (metro). The city has a humid, subtropical climate with long, hot and humid summers. The winters are modestly cool to semi mild. Spartanburg is affectionately known as “Hub City” due to railroad lines forming wheel hub shapes in the area during the 1800s. Prior to the 1950s, the local economy was powered by several mills and to this day several mill villages remain. By the 1950s, the mills began to decline, resulting in a diminishing middle class. In recent years, the city has been branding itself as a “college town,” given there are eight institutions of higher learning in Spartanburg. Also, there

are seven school districts in the county. Within the city, 19.2 percent of the adults have a bachelor's degree. The median income for a household in the city is 28,735 dollars per year. The scope of my project was the Tyger River Baptist Association (of Spartanburg County).

The Tyger River Baptist Association consists of eighteen churches that are dispersed throughout the city and county. It is exclusively a Missionary Baptist organization. The officers consist of moderator, vice moderator, secretary, and treasurer. Membership is voluntary and is contingent upon remaining in good financial standing. There are five auxiliaries (Women's Missionary Ministry, Brotherhood, Union of Churches, Ushers' Ministry, and Congress of Christian Education) that report to the parent body. As the moderator, I can only advise and make recommendations to the member churches. I do have the power to establish policy, design programs, and levy fees as it relates to the operation of the association. The average congregation has approximately 175 members. The ministers for the most part live within a fifty-mile radius of their church. The paid staff generally includes the senior pastor, secretary, minister of music, drummer, guitarist, and church sexton. The buildings for the most part are owned by the membership and have been well maintained. The congregants are predominately African American.

Statement of Problem or Ministry Question the Project Will Address

There are several practices among the churches in the Tyger River Baptist Association that cause unhealthy stress for pastors. Most of the ministers are bi-vocational, which often times causes them to have to make critical decisions between

their secular job and the church. Pastors who are bi-vocational have the same time demands placed upon them as it relates to pastoral duties as full-time pastors. The churches within the Tyger River Baptist Association, like most mainline churches, are experiencing greater denominational disloyalty; therefore, congregants are not as committed or active in ministry. In addition, the monetary contributions are stagnant in the churches of the association. Attendance has decreased on average in the associational churches. Most importantly, the individual churches do not have the knowledge or the infrastructure for dealing with a pastor who is stressed. Pastors are not equipped to cope with the stress that they incur as pastors. The stress of pastors adversely affects their wives and children. The issue of stress for the leader (pastor) is rarely discussed in a public forum.

The ministry question that my project answered was: What courses can be offered to pastors and congregants to help them recognize the signs and symptoms of stress and help them develop coping mechanism?

Chapter 2

GOAL

By May 12, 2017, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Doctor of Ministry degree at the M. Christopher White School of Divinity, Gardner-Webb University, I studied for and prepared a ministry project to teach a diverse research group, which consisted of six ministers and six laypersons from the Tyger River Baptist Association, how practicing Sabbath reduces stress in ministry. My project utilized the Sabbath disciplines of prayer, silence, and feasting and fellowshiping, along with the knowledge of identifying the signs and symptoms of stress in order to reduce stress by implementing coping skills. The research group was made up of or came from a range of ages and ministry sizes, rural and urban settings, different socio-economic strata, and males and females. Including the laypersons ensured that the congregants in the pew shared in the desired outcome as well as the ministers in the pulpit for the benefit of the entire church.

Project Strategy

My plan for teaching ministers to practice Sabbath in order to reduce stress in ministry began with selecting twelve persons (ministers and laypersons) who constituted a representative sample of the Tyger River Baptist Association in Spartanburg, South Carolina to participate in the research. I selected six persons for the research group and six persons for the control group. Each of the participating persons signed a commitment letter which explained the process and confirmed confidentiality. Following the signing of the letter of commitment, the research group took a pre-test for stress. I taught the research group four classes (which I called disciplines) over a period of four weeks. Each

of the four classes mentioned above were held on four consecutive Saturdays from 9:00 am until 10:00 am. The final gathering was a retreat (for both the research group and the control group), making a total of five weeks of research. During this fifth and final session, I lead both groups in performing activities relative to each discipline taught. I did not include the control group until the retreat gathering which I will explain later in this narrative.

The first discipline that I taught the research group was entitled: Recognizing Physical Danger Signs and a Guide to Avoid Physical Burnout. The text books that I taught from were: *Burnout in Ministry* by Brooks R. Faulkner and *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* by Marva J. Dawn. In this class, I taught students to identify stressors in ministry, make connections between stress and burnout, and develop coping skills for reducing stress in ministry. At the completion of this class, I asked students to assess me as facilitator, as well as the course. I used the Likert scale for all of the surveys throughout the research. I tested the research group on the material I taught in class. In addition, the research group wrote a one-page journal to reflect on what they experienced in the course to complete the first week/session one.

The second discipline that I taught the research group was entitled: How Prayer Helps to Overcome Stress. The text that I taught from was *Spiritual Direction* by Henri Nouwen. Also, I had the group to read the account of Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane in the Gospel according to Mark (Mark 14:32-42). During this second week/session two, I taught the research group to develop a definition for prayer, how to pray, determine how to avoid distractions when praying, and to alleviate stress through prayer. The research group was tested on the material, completed a survey on me as

facilitator, and completed a survey on the course. The research group also wrote a one-page journal to complete week two/session two.

The third discipline that I taught during week three/session three was entitled: Silence. The book that I taught from was *Silent Compassion* by Richard Rohr. I taught the research group how to consciously (intentionally) be silent and how to use silence as a means of solace and restoration. Also, I taught the group how to use silence (time-out) to reduce stress in ministry. The research group was tested on the material and asked to assess me as facilitator and the course. Each group member was assigned a one-page journal to complete week three/session three.

The fourth discipline that I taught the research group was entitled: Feasting and Fellowship. The text books that I used were: *Sabbath-Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in our Busy Lives* by Wayne Muller and *The Feast of Israel* by Bruce Scott. I taught the research group to identify the importance of feasting in relationship building, how feasting prompts communication, how feasting lowers defense mechanisms, and how feasting and fellowshiping reduce stress. Each of the group members was tested on the material, completed a survey (assessment) on me as facilitator, and also assessed the course. In addition, each student wrote a one-page journal on his or her experience in the course to complete week four/session four. I held all of the classes at the New Day Baptist Church where I pastor. Each research group member completed a survey on the quality of the facility where the disciplines were taught.

The final gathering was a retreat for both the research group and the control group. I held the retreat at reserved facilities at Select Restaurant. The retreat was conducted the Saturday following the last class from 8:00 am until 2:00 pm. I administered a pre-test for stress for the control group during the retreat in order to

compare the data to the results from the pre-test for stress for the research group. Each of the group members (research and control groups) participated in the following activities: (Session 1-Stress) Deep Breathing and Progressive Relaxation exercise, (Session 2-Prayer) Disciplined Prayer for ten minutes, (Session 3-Silence) Twenty minutes of silence, (Session 4-Feasting and Fellowship) Participated in eating a meal. Following each activity, each of the research and control group members completed an assessment on me as facilitator and assessed the course. Each of the activities was assessed by both groups as well.

Human Resources

I secured six ministers to serve as part of the research group for my project. These ministers are educated, well-informed, and committed Christians who are active in the city where I serve. In addition, these ministers bring to the process the diversity of age, experience, and gender. Alongside the ministers, I assembled six laypersons, for a total of twelve persons in my research group. The persons that I selected were motivated and academically conscientious. Also, the congregation where I serve was considerate of the time demand that it took to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree. Moreover, I had available to me a person who provided technical and internet support. At the meeting site for the classes/research, our church sexton handled the set up and breakdown logistics. My wife and two children served as a solid fan base for my completion of this project. I had a host of support among extended family and friends throughout the community whom I tapped into for encouragement and advice. Finally, my professors at Gardner-Webb University were accessible and assisted me when needed.

Physical Resources

All of the classes for the project took place at the New Day Baptist Church where I serve as pastor. The blessing in using the church was that there were no time constraints. The building is centrally located in the city of Spartanburg on the main thoroughfare in the city. The facility offers a safe location that is well lit and has all of the comforts of a new, modern building, including tables and comfortable seating. In the area where the classes were held, there was access to a large screen for the video capabilities. One of the classes involved a meal which took place in our dining area. In the event some of the research group members needed child care, we were able to accommodate their needs.

Ministry Organization

The Tyger River Baptist Association is structured hierarchically and governed by instructions from *Robert's Rules of Order*. It is exclusively a Baptist organization. The membership churches are not constitutionally mandated. Membership is contingent upon churches requesting membership, being accepted, and maintaining financial requirements. Tyger River is the parent body and is comprised of five auxiliaries that report directly to the association. The association reports to the South Carolina Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention. The State Convention reports to the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. Again, all of these relationships are voluntary. The officers of the Tyger River Baptist Association are moderator, vice moderator, secretary, and treasurer. The auxiliaries have their respective corresponding officers. The purpose of the Association is to support the pastors and member churches in the areas of missions, education, benevolence, fellowship, and settling of disputes. Also, the Association assists

churches in filling pastoral vacancies, installing new pastors, and by serving as a source of encouragement. Although the parent body's constitution legitimizes the above-mentioned auxiliaries, each auxiliary has its respective constitution that governs its individual mission.

Chapter 3

Rationale

My biblical and theological supports for coping with stress resulting from pastoring are from four passages in the Old Testament and two passages in the New Testament. Following an exploration of these biblical texts, I drew upon Tertullian, a third century theologian who comments about the Sabbath during the Patristic Period. I probed Martin Luther and John Calvin's writings about Sabbath observance along with the work of Georgia Harkness about Puritan Sabbatarian during the Protestant Reformation Period. I share thoughts from Toney Jones and Dorothy Bass, two contemporary theologians who gave their perspectives on Sabbath observance. My theological summary captured how the Jewish Sabbath is preserved in the Christian's Lord's Day through creation, revelation, ecclesiology, and worship and how Sabbath observance gave rise to a Christian lifestyle that reduces stress.

Biblical and Theological (Old Testament)

The priestly account of the Word of God says in the book of Genesis, "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made and he rested on the seventh day from all his work he made (Gen 2:2)", which gives us a remedy for how to handle the cry of ministry and the ministers' obsession to silence it. Marva J. Dawn suggests that "[s]etting aside the Holy Sabbath means we cease our productivity and accomplishments for one day in every seven."⁹

Julian Morgenstern put it best when he said:

⁹ Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 19.

[y]et all labor and toil day in and day out must take the zest out of life, and make existence dreary and cheerless. God has created man to be the lord of the universe, and not its slave or drudge. For this reason, God has instituted the Sabbath and has bidden man to rest on this day from labor and toil that he may rejoice in the consideration of the goodness and beauty of the universe and of life and in the knowledge of the dignity and opportunity in his exalted position and that he may thank God reverently and joyfully for all his bounty and love. It is the precious Sabbath which enables men to rightly appreciate and enjoy the sacred privilege of life. God has instituted the Sabbath for Israel and for all mankind and has made it the sign of his everlasting covenant with Israel.¹⁰

Although not mentioned by name in Gen. 2:2, Sabbath is central to the well-being of those who are in ministry. For some persons, entering and leaving the ministry is like crossing the threshold of a constantly revolving door. Wayne Muller says that [w]e miss the joy and love born of effortless delight. Muller further claims “[p]oisoned by this hypnotic belief that good things come only through unceasing determination and tireless effort, we can never truly rest. And for want of rest, our lives are in danger.”¹¹ Notice that in Gen. 2:2, God does not mention the church nor raise the matter of worship. W. Sibley Towner admonishes that “[t]he noun Sabbath does not even appear here at all; however the word Shabbat, which means to cease, is used.”¹² In my view, our culture does not define our person by our being, but by what we do. It is interesting that when a person meets someone for the first time or is at an event where old acquaintances have not seen each other in quite a while, after the exchange of pleasantries, the next question is often, what do you do? Unless we are doing, it appears that we are not validated. Personally, when I have idle time, I feel guilty; it is as though I have forgotten to do

¹⁰ Julian Morgenstern, *The Book of Genesis: A Jewish Interpretation* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 40.

¹¹ Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in our Busy Lives* (New York: Bantam Books, 2000), 1.

¹² W. Sibley Towner, *Genesis*. Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 30.

something important. Unless we are busy, we feel that our self-worth is diminished.

Walter Brueggemann states that,

[t]he world relies on God's promises and not on our efforts. The observance of the Sabbath is a break with every effort to achieve and to secure ourselves and to make the world into our image according to our purpose. The Sabbath is the end of grappling and therefore the end of exploitation. Sabbath is a day of revolutionary equality in society. On that day, all rest equally regardless of wealth, power or need.¹³

Marva Dawn expands that notion with the following statement: "The priestly author is telling the story of all mankind by implication, declaring the Sabbath rest proper for all men in general and not simply an important observation of Judaism."¹⁴ Bruce Vawter expresses similar sentiments in this way: "Celebrating a holy day and living in God's rhythm for six days of work and one of rest is the best way I know to learn the sense of our call—the way in which God's Kingdom reclaims us, revitalizes us, and renews us so that it can reign through us."¹⁵ Out of all the creative power of God exemplified in the beginning, it is the creation of rest that is most powerful and poignant in the life of mankind. Miguel A. De La Torre aptly notes this in the following excerpt from his book: "Although it is sometimes assumed that the high point of creation is the arrival of humankind as described in Genesis 1: 26-28, in truth the crowning of the making of the world does not arrive until the seventh day on which God rested. In this way the Sabbath is connected with and rooted in the creation of the world."¹⁶

¹³ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 35-36.

¹⁴ Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis A New Reading* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1977), 62.

¹⁵ Marva J. Dawn, *The Sense of the Call: A Sabbath Way of Life for Those Who Serve God, the Church, and the World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 33.

¹⁶ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis*, in *Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 38.

Rest as essential is made ever so apparent and necessary as we observe the example set by God following His six-day work schedule. Claus Westermann's language sums this up: "The conclusion of creation creates a rhythm which will affect the whole of creation. The seventh day is not concerned with the solemn celebration of the Sabbath by the people because this is a later institution of Moses; it is concerned with the rest of Yahweh."¹⁷

As a part of the Decalogue, the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy sets forth God's moral law for all time. It is the longest of the commandments and is nestled between the three commandments tilted toward God and six commandments tilted toward the people. As a result, the fourth commandment undergirds the entire Ten Commandments.¹⁸ I am reminded of the times as children when my friends and I were enjoying ourselves playing in the yard. Of course, we had no concern that daylight was quickly approaching nightfall, until we heard the inflective voice of my mother saying that it was time to put away the toys and come in the house for the evening. As I ponder the fourth commandment, which says, "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8), I reflect upon the wisdom and the authority of my mother demanding that we stop playing (rest), prepare for dinner, and ultimately go to bed. It is clear to me as an adult that my friends and I would not have stopped playing unless my mother laid down that law. I believe that this is the spirit of the fourth commandment, in that God knows what is best for those whom He created. The instruction is in fact a commandment and not a suggestion. I can appreciate the image of God making the sheep lie down in green

¹⁷ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 170.

¹⁸ Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1983), 69.

pastures and leading them beside the still waters in order to restore their souls (Psalm 23:2-3). It is clear that morality cannot be legislated, and that it is God's love and authority to which we respond. The rest that God requires of us is not leisure, but it is contemplative, more specifically, it is worship. We are to be reminded as the Israelites were, that the most important service one can render to God as an act of worship is to do nothing, to desist from managing the world through work and achievement, including religious work and achievement.¹⁹ The fourth commandment confirms for me that desired outcomes are not totally dependent on human agency, but that God acts apart from humanity. Often times it is our desire to maximize work at the expense of rest which makes us treat every day the same.

According to R. H. Charles, "[i]t was a standing witness also that, though sore travail was the inevitable lot of man in this world, yet man was not made to spend all his days in feverish, or monotonous, or unrelenting toil to be forever the thrall of his own physical needs, but rather that he was made for spiritual and moral growth, for freedom, and peace and joy."²⁰ Under the guise of being all things to all people, and the attempt to foster commercialism and protect profits, there appears to be a shift to make every day look the same. After all, the department stores and theaters are open every day, and in most municipalities, beer and wine are sold on a daily basis. And, if that is not enough, there is the notion that the strength of the economy is determined by the output of our goods and services. Not keeping the Sabbath is violation of the creative order; it returns

¹⁹ Waldemar Janzen, *Exodus*, in *Believers Church Bible Commentary*, eds. Elmer A. Martens and Willard M. Swartley (Waterloo: Herald Press, 2000), 258.

²⁰ R. H. Charles, *The Decalogue* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926), 121.

one aspect of that order to chaos.²¹ This is the reason why many of our manufacturing plants are producing seven days a week, twenty-four hours per day, often at the expense of the environment, only to close for maintenance in order to resume the same schedule once they are operational again. The model of daily work is established by God. If we choose any other model, it becomes idolatry and resembles a model similar to Pharaoh.²² In the African American experience, I have watched the normalization of the seven-day week play out in the order of worship service, church dress codes, and in the construction of new church buildings. The fourth commandment, to remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy, is to earmark every seventh day of the week as a day that is reserved for God. Remembering the Sabbath is not just a cognitive exercise as in recalling your wedding date. Biblical remembrance requires action.²³ The commandment does not instruct on liturgical or religious practices, but does distinguish the seventh day from the other six days by commanding the desisting from labor and deeming it holy. Unlike most of the other commandments, this one is not a prohibition; rather, it enjoins Israel to positive action.²⁴

In an effort to further explain what I am calling the normalization of the seven-day week, the traditional church service that once offered sacredness and solemnity as its points of distinction has been traded in for a service of celebrity celebration that resembles the raucous pattern of the final four college basketball tournament. Our finer

²¹ Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 230.

²² J. Gerald Janzen, *Exodus*, in *Westminster Bible Companion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 149.

²³ Peter Enns, *Exodus: From Biblical Text...To Contemporary Life*, in *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 448.

²⁴ Walter Brueggemann, "Exodus," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 845.

outfits were reserved for Sunday worship because we believed that our respect for God demanded the best attire from our closets. Nowadays, we wear blue jeans and a sweatshirt to satisfy our desire to fit into normal society. The conventional wisdom is that new church construction is moving away from buildings with front steps, columns and a steeple, and moving toward edifices that resemble other buildings in the community. Israel is not the only nation to have a day of rest, but it is unique in making the seventh day the climax of the creation story. The seven-day rhythm is a necessary element in the structure of life. God rested after creating all things and rejoiced in them because He saw that it was good. The command to cease work means to finish your toil by the sixth day, for on the seventh day you are to join God in His joy. George A. F. Knight espouses that “[i]ts holiness comes from man’s being able to share in God’s holy joy.”²⁵

Many have been caught in the trap of believing that more is better and as a result have become workaholics in order to purchase more commodities. This compulsive behavior adversely affects marriages and the proper development of children. Also, it creates a vicious cycle, in that the more we buy, the more debt we incur, thus perpetuating the necessity to work. The rest that the fourth commandment requires forces more time to be spent at home nurturing spousal relationships and the rearing of children. The more interfacing that family members have, the more likely problems can be solved through the process of communication. The Sabbath makes quality time for the family possible. In addition, the rhythm of the seventh day rest creates a sense of balance in the framework of humanity; we work to rest and rest to work.

²⁵ George A. F. Knight, *Theology as Narration: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press Ltd., 1976), 138.

Writings

The Jewish people are a people who pride themselves in not only knowing their history but celebrating their history. Consequently, it boggles the mind to learn how quickly they forgot that it was in part the breaking of the Sabbath that caused them to be deported to Babylon. Nehemiah appears to be safe-guarding against history repeating itself and the wrath of God that comes along with it. Upon Nehemiah's discovery that the people of Jerusalem were no longer observing the Sabbath, he took corrective action to restore it.

Nehemiah reminds us in the thirteenth chapter of the book that bears his name (Nehemiah 13:15-22) that observing the Sabbath is a way of protecting the holy time, holy place, and the overall peace of the community. The clash of cultures oftentimes destabilizes interpersonal relationships. There were foreigners in Jerusalem who were determined to trade goods every day of the week. The Sabbath observance is not to be viewed as an interruption in the lives of humanity, but a natural part of human existence.²⁶ Fredrick C. Holmgren says that “[i]n the Jewish and Christian traditions, holy space and time protect the holiness and humaneness of life.”²⁷ The self-imposed desire to increase synergy or profits does not negate the covenant relationship that God has with his people.²⁸ Emmett Willard Hamrick expresses that “[t]o disregard the

²⁶ H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 16 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 395.

²⁷ Fredrick C. Holmgren, “Israel Alive Again,” in *International Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 152.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

Sabbath was to break the covenant and invite the wrath of God upon the community.”²⁹ Commercialism was very much a part of the Jerusalem way of life, but Nehemiah serves as the spiritual conscience to preserve the Sabbath as a day of rest. Charles F. Fensham states that “[t]he Sabbath was celebrated to show that a man’s existence as a creation was more important than his fight for survival.”³⁰ In Nehemiah 13:21, he gives the merchants a chance to realize that it is not worth their while to come on the Sabbath, and if they insisted, violence would be a necessary remedy. Nehemiah asserted that arresting violators is an option as well. Nehemiah closed the gates to the city of Jerusalem, and posted his personal guards to enforce his order of strict Sabbath observance.³¹ One could argue the case that, during the time of Nehemiah, and even now, that pluralism holds the potential for increasing secularism. If in fact that is true, the people of faith must resist the temptation to compromise the Sabbath in order that tolerance might be preserved. Also, the foreigners’ desire to trade goods on the Sabbath was a perceived economic advantage in the eyes of the Jews. In light of diminishing blue laws today, the arms race for trade equity cannot be an excuse for ignoring the disciplines of the Sabbath. Later, Nehemiah’s personal guards were replaced by the Levites.³² Charles W. Gilkey expresses that “[i]t seems that even guarding the gates of the Holy city during the

²⁹ Emmett Willard Hamrick, “*Nehemiah*,” in *Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 3 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), 504-505.

³⁰ Charles F. Fensham, *The Book of Ezra and Nehemiah*. in *New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 263-264.

³¹ D. J. Cline, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. *The New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 244.

³² *Ibid.*, 244.

Sabbath was divine service enough to require proper purification before it was undertaken.”³³

Prophets

In Jeremiah 17:19-27, the writer warns the people to take corrective action for their lives. The people have a choice to make, and with that choice comes the consequence of punishment or reward. Ultimately, keeping the Sabbath day holy is a matter of life and death. The rest that God demands in His covenant relationship with His people not only provides spiritual renewal, but it allows for the recuperation of our physical body as well. Specifically, the mind needs rest from being the control center of our daily activities.³⁴ Gilkey further advocates that “[t]he kings and people illustrate by their secularization of the holy day the deep inward failure of fidelity which is the reasons for all their distress.”³⁵ Walter Brueggemann put it best when he said,

The Sabbath became the identifying mark for the covenant community. Sabbath observance is understood as a deep rejection of imperial patterns of exploitation. It is the dramatic act whereby this people asserts to itself and announces to the watching world that this is Israel, a different people with a different way in the world, who will not behave according to the expectations of the imperial world.³⁶

The people of Jerusalem had been profaning the Sabbath by carrying on their secular activities. They brought their produce from the field to the city and marketed

³³ Charles W. Gilkey, “Nehemiah,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick, vol. 3 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), 815.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 959.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 960.

³⁶ Walter Brueggemann, “To Pluck Up, To Tear Down: A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1-25,” in *International Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 159.

their wares in utter disregard of the law.³⁷ Jeremiah warns the people in effect to learn from their ancestors who broke the covenant, and as a result were allowed by God to be carried into exile.³⁸ James Leo Green writes, “The significance of the Sabbath is the greatest institution in the religion of Israel.”³⁹ J. A. Thompson expresses that “[i]t is when God’s people keep the covenant that the blessings of the covenant are bestowed.”⁴⁰ F. B. Huey promotes that “[t]he persons who kept the Sabbath revealed their willingness to obey God in every area of life.”⁴¹

Biblical and Theological (New Testament)

Either the Pharisees happened to be in the right place at the right time, or they had Jesus and His disciples under surveillance. As Jesus and His disciples walked through the grainfields, the disciples picked heads of wheat and proceeded to eat the kernels inside the chaff. Although doubtful, the Pharisees could argue that they were taking a stroll through a field of grain, and were within the Sabbath day’s journey limits of one thousand yards, when they noticed that the disciples performed work on the Sabbath day. The suspicion is enhanced given this is the first time the disciples have spoken to Jesus.

The complaint of the Pharisees is that while picking up the heads of wheat the disciples rubbed out the kernels in their hands, and blew the chaff away, which

³⁷ Ross E. Price, *Isaiah through Daniel*. Beacon Bible Commentary: The Major Prophets, vol. 9 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1966), 385.

³⁸ James Leo Green, “Jeremiah,” in *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), 104.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, 2nd revised ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 430.

⁴¹ F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*. in *The New American Commentary*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, et. al., vol. 16 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 178.

constitutes harvesting, threshing, and winnowing grain, all of which violate the Sabbath.⁴² For the Pharisees this was an act of defiance. Darrell Bock comments that the violation that the Pharisees cite is one of the thirty-nine classes of prohibited labor listed in the Mishnah (a collection of the oral law from about A.D. 200): “He who, ploughs, reaps, binds sheaves, threshes or winnows has violated the Sabbath.”⁴³ The actual eating was not a violation, nor was it illegal for a hungry person to take some of his neighbor’s fruit or grain, provided he did not fill a vessel or use a harvesting instrument (Deut. 23:24-25).

Jesus responded by saying, “The Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). It was a radical interpretation that departed from the traditional interpretation of Judaism. Jesus expressed God’s purpose in establishing the seventh day as a period of joy and refreshment.⁴⁴ In terms of a timeline, God established the Sabbath after He created humanity; therefore, the Sabbath came into being for the sake of humanity, not humanity for the sake of the Sabbath. Jesus is not speaking of the Sabbath observance prior to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, but He is dealing with the regulations that were delivered through Moses.⁴⁵ Jesus does not defend the disciples by denying the accusation. Instead, he appeals to a historical precedent, the case of David’s illegal consumption of the bread of the presence (1 Sam. 21:1-6). Jesus says, “Have you

⁴² Ralph Earle, *The Gospel of Mark*. in *Proclaiming the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1968), 6.

⁴³ Darrell Bock, *Mark*. in *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 153.

⁴⁴ William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 119.

⁴⁵ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel* (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1946), 15.

ever read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him” (Mark 2:25-26). No one was supposed to eat the bread except the priests. Five loaves of bread were placed before the Lord in the Holy Place each Sabbath (Lev. 24:5-6). David gave the bread to his men based on their need. This is a Christological matter. Francis J. Moloney suggests that “If such practices on a Sabbath were condoned for David and his companion, how much more should actions done on the Sabbath be condoned in light of the uniqueness of Jesus?”⁴⁶ The gospel of Mark, unlike the gospel of Matthew, is directed to a Gentile audience. Mark focuses on David, whom the Romans would recognize as a hero and king, while excluding what the priests do and what the prophet Hosea said as it is recorded in the gospel of Matthew.⁴⁷

Douglas R. A. Hare claims that “[b]ecause the precedent has nothing to do with the Sabbath, its function is not to prove the innocence of the disciples, but rather to demonstrate that their violation is justified by the reference to a higher obligation.”⁴⁸ Jesus is not arguing that anyone who is hungry can transgress the Sabbath law. Nor does it suggest that how one observes the Sabbath is a matter of personal interpretation. The focal point of the historical precedent is David. His violation is permissible only because of his special place in God’s plan for Israel. Jesus is not saying that people can do

⁴⁶ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 69.

⁴⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent Mark: Serving Others as You Walk with the Master Servant*. The BE Series Commentary (Wheaton: SP Publications, Inc., 1987), 30.

⁴⁸ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Mark*. in *Westminster Bible Companion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 43.

anything they want to do on the seventh day; it affirms the conviction that the Sabbath is God's gift.⁴⁹

Although it was the disciples who violated the law, the Pharisees addressed their complaint to Jesus. Jesus did not seek to depreciate the Sabbath, He simply wanted to place it in perspective and demonstrate that humanity created in the image of God must be seen as more important than God's gift of the Sabbath to him.⁵⁰

So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God (Heb.4:9ANS)! The writer of Hebrews bridges the gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament in terms of the validity of the Sabbath as part of New Testament theology. The word for rest was intentionally changed to make it unequivocally clear that the Sabbath has a place in the lives of Christians. Robert P. Gordon advocates that "[i]t is likely that the Hebrew audience saw itself as having left the secure forms of Jewish worship for the spiritualized and cult-less devotions of Christianity. They no longer had priesthood or altar or sacrifice. The Hebrew writer seeks to establish that they are not as disadvantaged as they might think. It is highly possible that Sabbath rest replaces the traditional Sabbath observance of Judaism for the Christians."⁵¹

The word the Hebrew writer has used for rest is now described as Sabbath rest for the people who genuinely are the people of God.⁵² The apostle changed the word rest, and substitutes the words 'Sabbath rest' because God having rested on the Sabbath day

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Robert H. Stein, *Mark*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 148.

⁵¹ Robert P. Gordon, *Hebrews*. 2nd ed., in *Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), 81.

⁵² Phillip E. Hughes, *A Commentary of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 160.

and blessed and sanctified it, permitted man to participate with him in his rest.⁵³ The people of God are the ones who have heard the gospel preached, and by faith, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The promise to enter rest was made by God to Israel, but due to a lack of faith and disobedience, they fail to enter. Arthur W. Pink writes that “[a]lthough there is a rest of God mentioned in Genesis 2 (vv.3, 4) and although Joshua led Israel into the rest of Canaan (v.8), neither “rest” was what is promised Christians (v.8). Hence, we can only conclude there is another “rest” for God’s people (v.9).”⁵⁴ Today that opportunity for His rest is available now, and forevermore. William Barclay admonishes “[o]n the first six days of creation, it is said that morning and evening came; that is to say, each day had a beginning and an end. But on the seventh day, the day of God’s rest, there is no mention of evening at all.”⁵⁵ The rest is a rest for all eternity. In spite of our shortcomings, God does not make promises that he cannot keep; there remains a Sabbath for the people of God. Rest, as it has been redefined as His rest, means more than freedom from toil, strain, or activity of any kind.⁵⁶ This rest is a positive rest. The Israelites failed to receive the offers for rest from God when He provided a way for them to be freed from Egypt, and when He asked them to enter the Promised Land. The wilderness wandering challenged the faith and obedience of the people of God. Canaan, the land that flowed with milk and honey, was not succulent enough to move the people of God past their fears and doubts. Although

⁵³ James A. Haldane, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Bradley S. Cobb (Springfield: Particular Baptist Press, 2002), 126.

⁵⁴ Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 208.

⁵⁵ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Hebrews*. in *The Daily Study Bible* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), 31.

⁵⁶ D. Stephen Long, *Hebrews. Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 84.

Joshua did succeed in ultimately leading the people to the Promised Land, this was not the type of rest God had in mind. The rest for the people of God is like the keeping of a Sabbath.

Charles A. Trentham promotes that “[t]he final rest of God includes the result of the quieting of our half-covered fears, deliverance from aimless wanderings, and forgiveness for that which has pierced our burning hearts with pain.”⁵⁷

Patristic Period

Lay aside the otherwise unknown Minucius, Tertullian is the first Latin theologian whom we really know in the West as a distinct personality. Tertullian was an African who was born soon after the middle of the second Century. Tertullian, at different stages in his journey held different views respecting the Sabbath, and committed them to writing. Tertullian had a sound education in rhetoric and law which impacts his writings.⁵⁸

Tertullian’s comments about Sabbath observance in his writings, *An Answer to the Jews*, are the following:

It follows, accordingly, that, in so far as the abolition of carnal circumcision and of the old law is demonstrated as having been consummated at its specific times, so also the observance of the Sabbath is demonstrated to have been temporary. For the Jews say, that from the beginning God sanctified the seventh day, by resting on it from all His works which He made; and that thence it was, likewise, that Moses said to the people: “Remember the day of the Sabbaths, to sanctify it: every servile work ye shall not do therein, except what pertaineth unto life. Whence we (Christians) understand that we still more ought to observe a Sabbath from all servile work always, and not only every seventh day, but through all time. And through this arises the question for us, what Sabbath God willed us to keep? For the scriptures point to a Sabbath eternal and a Sabbath temporal. For Isaiah the prophet says, your sabbath my soul hateth, and in another place he says, my sabbath ye have profaned. Whence we discern that the temporal sabbath is human, and the eternal sabbath is accounted divine; concerning which He predicted through Isaiah: And there shall be, He says, month, after month, and day after day, and sabbath after sabbath; and all flesh shall come to adore in

⁵⁷ Charles A. Trentham, “Hebrews,” in *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 12 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), 38.

⁵⁸ Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Latin Church* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 4-5.

Jerusalem, saith the Lord; which we understand to have been fulfilled in the times of Christ, when all flesh that is, every nation came to adore in Jerusalem God the father, through Jesus Christ His son, as was predicted through the prophet: Behold, proselytes through me shall go unto thee.⁵⁹

But the Jews are sure to say, that ever since this precept was given through Moses, the observance has been binding. Manifest accordingly it is, that the precept was not eternal nor spiritual, but temporary, which one day would cease.⁶⁰

Tertullian confirms that Christ did not abolish the Sabbath when he says: "Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath: he kept the law thereof and did work which was beneficial to the life of His disciples, for He indulged them with the relief of food when they were hungry, and in the present instance cured the withered hand; in each case intimating by facts, I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it."⁶¹

Tertullian believed that the sacredness of the seventh day of the week was transferred to the first day of the week when he writes:

“Concerning the Sabbath also I have this to premise, that this question could not have arisen, if Christ did not publicly proclaim the Lord of the Sabbath, nor could there be any discussion about His annulling the Sabbath, if He had a right to annul it.”⁶²

In book two of *Against Marcion*, Tertullian explains the law of the Sabbath-day in light of the false statements asserted:

Similarly, on other points also, you reproach Him with fickleness and instability for contradictions in His commandments, such as that He forbade work to be done on Sabbath-days, and yet at the siege of Jericho ordered the ark to be carried round the walls during eight days; in other words, of course actually on a Sabbath. You do not, however, consider the law of the Sabbath: they are human works, not

⁵⁹ Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe and Allan Menzies, *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), 155.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 363-364.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 362.

divine, which it prohibits. For it says, “six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work.” What work? Of course, your own. The conclusion is, that from the Sabbath-day He removes those works which He had before enjoined for the six days, that is your own works; in other words, human works of daily life. Now, the carrying around of the ark is evidently not an ordinary daily duty, nor yet a human one; but a rare and a sacred work, and as being then ordered by the direct precept of God, a divine one. And I might fully explain what this signified, were it not a tedious process to open out the forms of all the Creator’s proofs, which you would, moreover, probably refuse to allow.⁶³

Winton U. Soulberg, in *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America*, says:

At the dawn of the Christian era the Lord’s Day replaced the Sabbath as a positive institution of the church. The resurrection invested it with special character as a symbol of redemption in Christ. For practical reason the apostles and other followers of Jesus needed a periodically rewiring day that would allow them to assemble for worship and distinguish them from the Jews. Although Jesus had not directly ordained the Lord’s Day, the church instituted it before the canon of the New Testament was finally confirmed in the fourth century. The Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Lord’s Day coexisted for a time. The Lord’s Day remained at the end of the third century the same simple religious ordinance which the Apostles had bequeathed to the church. It was not until the fourth century that Constantine decreed the establishment of the one weekly holiday. “On the venerable day of the Sun,” he ordered, “let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in the work of cultivation may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost.”⁶⁴

Constantine’s conversion was emulated by commanders in his army and those who coveted promotion. The rank and file also embraced Christianity. They enjoy for the first time a day of rest each week, a Sabbath, distinct from those days prescribed in the work week.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., 313-314.

⁶⁴ Winton U. Soulberg, *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 11-12.

⁶⁵ Paul Stephenson, *Constantine: Roman Emperor, Christian Victor* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2009), 306.

Protestant Reformation Period

Martin Luther and John Calvin are the theological giants who stand out in the Reformation Movement above the rest. There are differences between the two, but when it comes to Sabbatarianism, they are strikingly similar. Sabbatarians are characterized by a return of Christians to the essentials of Jewish Sabbath observance. The sabbatarians were condemned by the Romans, Lutherans, Zwinglians, and Calvinists, and by many Anabaptists.⁶⁶ The puritans were sabbatarians and insisted on observance of the fourth commandment with the furor of the pharisaic literalism.⁶⁷ Luther and Calvin together represent the most radical and comprehensive recasting of religious understanding since the beginning of the Christian movement.⁶⁸ Luther who was trained as a monk, had a seemingly unsystematic and sometimes even an unorganized theological writing style. Calvin, on the other hand, was trained as a lawyer, and was systematic in his writings. The Emperor Constantine had set aside Sunday as a day of rest in 321, but the fully developed idea of a strictly observed Christian Sabbath is a creation of English Puritanism.⁶⁹

Luther in his writings shares Casper Schwenckfeld's position that the true Sabbath is spiritual, and anyone who undertakes to observe the Sabbath literally obligates

⁶⁶ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: The Christian in Society IV*. Edited by Franklin Sherman, & Helmut T. Lehmann Vol. 47 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 59.

⁶⁷ Georgia Harkness, *John Calvin: The Man and His Ethics* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1931), 118.

⁶⁸ John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity: Interpreted Through Its Development*, Second Edition (New York: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1988), 24.

⁶⁹ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 174.

himself to obey the whole of Jewish law.⁷⁰ Luther further states “[t]herefore the seventh day does not concern the Gentiles, nor did it concern the Jews beyond the advent of the Messiah, although by the very nature of things one must rest, celebrate, and keep the Sabbath on whatever day or at whatever hour God’s word is preached.”⁷¹ Luther considered the Sabbath commandment an altogether external matter, and recommended the keeping of Sunday on grounds of expediency rather than necessity.⁷² Luther believed that proselytizing was at the root of the sabbatarian movement.⁷³ In Luther’s lectures on Genesis he remarks, “[i]n our time there arose in Moravia a foolish kind of people, the Sabbatarians, who maintain that the Sabbath must be observed after the fashion of the Jews. Perhaps they will insist on circumcision too for a likewise.”⁷⁴

Martin Luther further reveals his suspicion of Sabbatarianism when he says: “If any where the day (Sabbath) is made holy for the mere day’s sake, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to feast on it, to do anything to remove this reproach from Christian liberty.”⁷⁵

In August of 1536, John Calvin began his ministry at Geneva, and Calvinism was born. Geneva at the time lacked in the area of morality. The Geneva reforms affirm that Sabbath was a figure of things to come, and has therefore been abolished by Christ,

⁷⁰ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 60.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Harkness, *John Calvin*, 119.

⁷³ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 30.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 160.

⁷⁵ Dorothy Bass, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997), 83.

whose resurrection is the beginning of the final Sabbath.⁷⁶ The celebration of Sunday, then, is not a new form of keeping a superstitious observance of days, but is rather a practical means of enabling the church to worship together, and of giving rest to those who labor.⁷⁷ In Calvin's Institutes, he sites three reasons for the fourth commandment: The first is spiritual rest; when we keep holiday from our own works, that God may perform his own works in us.⁷⁸ Secondly, he states that the fourth commandment preserves ecclesiastical polity. Thirdly, Calvin suggests that the fourth commandment provides for the relief of slaves.⁷⁹ In a way, all Christians are in the day of rest, for we are no longer dependent on our own works.⁸⁰ Calvin's work centered in the establishment of purity of doctrine and purity of living. Within a half century after Jesus' death, Christianity had divided into two groups: Jewish Christians who observed a seventh day Sabbath and Gentile Christians who kept the Lord's Day in commemoration of Jesus' resurrection. Calvin was in agreement with many of the early church fathers, such as Ignatius, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Chrysotom, and others, who believed that the Sabbath has been abrogated and the Lord's Day given instead as a day of worship.⁸¹ Calvin insisted that the ceremonial aspect of the Sabbath had been abrogated at the time

⁷⁶ John Calvin, *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, Edited by Henry Beveridge, & Jules Bonnet, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 61.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought: From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century*, vol. 3 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), 297.

⁸¹ Harkness, *John Calvin*, 119.

the veil of the temple was rent.⁸² The Sabbath was given to foreshadow the spiritual repose of the people of Israel, and with the coming of the gospel, all shadows were done away. But, it was given for the purpose of a distinct day of worship and as a day of rest.⁸³ Calvin judged the fourth commandment's injunction to keep the Sabbath day holy part of Jewish ceremonial law, no longer binding on Christians; Sunday set aside as a day of rest and worship was simply a practical application of the larger obligation to worship God with seemliness and order.⁸⁴ Calvin himself occasionally bowled on Sunday afternoon.⁸⁵ The command to keep the Sabbath day holy is an application to the Jews of the natural principle that periodic times of rest are essential for men and women.⁸⁶ God does not order us to labor six days, but allows six days for labor and the seventh is devoted to rest.⁸⁷

The Puritans were Sabbatarians, and insisted on observance of the fourth Commandment with the furor of pharisaic literalism.⁸⁸ Harkness reports the following:

In 1595 an English Puritan by the name of Nicholas Bownde published a book entitled *The True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, plainly laid forth and soundly proved. Bownde's book has great influence among the Puritans. He argued that the Sabbath had existed from creation, that its observance was designed to be perpetual and universal, and therefore that the Sabbath had not been abrogated. The Lord's Day, though the first day of the week, must really be the Sabbath,

⁸² Ibid., 120.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Phillip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 325.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 57.

⁸⁷ Calvin, *Selected Works*, 61.

⁸⁸ Harkness, *John Calvin*, 118.

Bownde declared, and in it no work was to be done nor any recreation indulged in. The Jewish Sabbath was thus made over into the Christian Sunday.⁸⁹

Contemporary Theologians

Toney Jones, a twenty-first century theologian, records many of his thoughts during a three-month sabbatical. He recognizes that the practice of rest goes back to the longest of the Ten Commandments given to Moses, which Exodus records as:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.⁹⁰

Dorothy Bass, a contemporary historian of American religion notes that, in resting, “God declares as fully possible just how very good creation is. Resting, God takes pleasure in what has been made; God has no regrets, no need to go on to create a still better world or creature more wonderful than man and woman. In the day of rest God’s free love toward humanity takes form as time shared with them.”⁹¹

Early Christians, especially those of Jewish descent, struggled to keep the Sabbath, for it seemed like a leftover legalism of rigorous Judaism.⁹² Many still observed the Sabbath on Saturday and celebrated Jesus’ resurrection on Sunday. In the time since, both Jews and Christians have been guilty of Sabbatarianism - that is excessive strictness on the observance of the Sabbath.⁹³ No commandment is more interwoven in God’s covenant

⁸⁹ Ibid., 122.

⁹⁰ Toney Jones, *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 181.

⁹¹ Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, 78.

⁹² Jones, *The Sacred Way*, 182.

⁹³ Ibid., 182-183.

with Israel than the edict to keep the Sabbath. Theologian Jürgen Moltmann writes, “God creates and shapes a rich and colourful world in order to celebrate the feast of creation with all his creatures on the Sabbath. Therefore, the Sabbath is the consummation of creation; without it creation is incomplete and remains insignificant.”⁹⁴ Tony Jones proposes that we challenge family and friends to keep Sunday as a Sabbath.⁹⁵ Sunday as Sabbath involves being committed to events such as corporate worship, family dinner, family recreation, napping, and meditation.

Dorothy Bass believes that Sabbath for the Christian is akin to a gift waiting to be unwrapped.⁹⁶ The excitement of that waiting period is diminished by the denial of modernity, which keeps pushing the Sabbath further and further away from us. Bass believes that, in order to make the Sabbath a reality, we must first discard our image of Sabbath as a time of negative rules and restrictions, as a day of obligation or a day without play. Relocating our understanding of this day in the biblical stories of creation, exodus and resurrection will be essential if we are to discover the gifts it offers.⁹⁷ Sabbath crystallizes Torah’s portrait of who God is and what human beings are most fully meant to be.⁹⁸ To the outsiders, observance of the Sabbath can seem like a dreary set of restrictions, a set of laws that does not bear any good news. To those who live each week shaped by Sabbath, it is a practice that alters their relationships to nature, work, God, and

⁹⁴ Ibid., 184.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 186.

⁹⁶ Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, 75.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 76.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 79.

others.⁹⁹ Sabbath is not just laws and liturgy; it is a shared way of life, a set of activities that becomes second nature, a round of custom and prayer that the youngest child or the oldest child can enter, a piece of time that opens space for God.¹⁰⁰ Jesus in the gospels observed the Jewish Sabbath. Moreover, Jesus did override many of the ceremonial laws. In Matthew's gospel (12:12), Jesus says, It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. It was also believed that the meaning of Sabbath had changed within the new creation God established with Christ's death and resurrection.¹⁰¹ Therefore, the holy day is no longer the seventh day, but the first day.

Religious diversity, pluralism, politics, corporate dictates, and the American culture in general have made it difficult for Sunday to remain a Christian day of rest and worship. Additionally, the cost of education, coupled with the rising cost of living, will make it difficult for twenty-first century Christians who are working on Sunday, who respect diversity, who find it difficult to make ends meet, who are culturally sensitive, to develop new forms in the enduring truths of creation, liberation, and resurrection.¹⁰² Most often, Sundays will make the best Sabbath because our schedules are more open on that day. Also joining an assembly of Christians for a celebration of Word and fellowship will remind us that keeping the Sabbath is not about taking a day off. It is about recalling our knowledge of gratitude for God's activity in creating the world, giving liberty to the captives, and overcoming the powers of death.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Ibid., 81.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 82.

¹⁰² Ibid., 85.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Theological Summary

In summary, the Jewish Sabbath is preserved in the Christian's Lord's Day through God's creation, revelation, ecclesiology, and worship. In addition, the Sabbath engenders a Christian lifestyle that is balanced and in turn reduces stress.

In my view, God established the Jewish Sabbath observance through the order of creation by resting from work on the seventh day. The modeling of rest by God is basic to the quality of life for Jews as well as for the Gentile. Resting helps us to manage the everyday stressors of life. Parents know that if their children are not resting enough, their behavior is adversely affected. Irritability and incoherence are the results of a lack of rest. On the other hand, sufficient rest revitalizes the body and gives us a sharper focus and concentration. The amount of rest we receive affects our cognitive abilities. Rest affects our capacity to think and recall information. One of the instructions that students are given prior to taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in preparation for entering college is to get plenty of rest the night before. Pilots are required to get rest before flying. Truckers who transport materials are required to document their travel so that rest can be accounted for in their schedules. Sleep (rest) deprivation keeps us from performing at an optimal level. There have been times when I have been asked to make important decisions; my response often times is, let me sleep (rest) on it. No one argues with the potential consequences of drinking and driving, but the potential consequences of driving unrested can be equally as devastating. God made rest imperative in the fourth and longest of the Ten Commandments. Long before the subject of rest was in the context of religion, God established rest as a basic human need. Rest affects us physiologically. There is a strong and positive correlation between blood pressure and

the amount of rest that we receive. The amount of rest we receive affects the color of our eyes and the appearance of our skin. Rest is freedom from labor. God has given us one day out of seven as a designated day of rest. Whether the day of rest occurs on the Jewish Sabbath or on what is often called the Christian Sabbath does not diminish or alter the command to rest. Ultimately, rest comes to bare on our level of stress.

The Sabbath observance is preserved in Christian practice through revelation. Our knowledge of God as it is revealed in scripture through Judaism, as well as in the person of Jesus Christ through Christianity, depicts a deity of peace. It is peace that serves as the antidote to life's calamities. A peaceful life is a less stressful life. The knowledge of God and of Christ reveals a deity that exhibits rhythm. A classic example in the Old Testament is found in the book of Judges when the people sin, cry out to God, and God forgives them, and the cycle (rhythm) starts all over again. In the New Testament, Christ utilizes the rhythm of teaching, healing, and praying. Rhythm of the human body demonstrates how the Jewish Sabbath is preserved in the Christian's Lord's Day. That rhythm allows for pauses (rest) in order for the body to function properly. The body is made up of several systems that go unrecognized until the rhythm of that system is interrupted. One of the more obvious rhythms of the human body is the heart beat. Another one is the rhythm of our breathing. In both cases, it is not until the rhythm changes that we notice abnormalities. The frequency of exercise enhances the rhythm of our entire body. It is the duration of that rhythm that benefits us most in the long run. It is the comfort that rhythm produces that makes us creatures of habit. Most of us from the time we get up in the morning until we go to bed at night have a certain routine. There are many times that we noticed a certain behavior in others, and our response is that was not like him/her. Our experiences of hunger and thirst are rhythmic. Rhythms of

saliva and enzymes secretions being released are what make the digestion system work properly. Rhythm establishes boundaries and gives us balance in respect to the pressures of life. The Jews and Christians have rituals or customs that provide rhythm for their lives in order to reduce stress.

Sabbath observance preserves Jewish customs through Christian practices with ecclesiastical relationships. Our knowledge of God revealed through the Passover meal demonstrates that God is a relationship builder. The knowledge of God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ in the observance of the last supper demonstrates a relational God. There is a certain camaraderie that develops when Sabbath customs and values are shared among the people. In Jewish and Christian communities alike, the idea of family is strong. Sabbath observance makes one understand that the covenant relationship with God is the exact same on the Sabbath Day as it on the Lord's Day. Sabbath observance and Christian fellowship foster communication and establish a support system. In essence, people fellowshiping together become like extended family. Our self-awareness and awareness of others is sharpened in obedience to the fourth commandment.

Sabbath observance is preserved through Christian worship. One day per week is a designated day for worship. For the Jews, that day is Saturday. For the Christian, that day is Sunday. Moreover, the Lord's Day emphasis on the resurrection (Sunday) does not diminish the Jewish focus on the Sabbath (Saturday). The congruency for the Jews and Christians is the sacred space that they independently create for worship. On the scales of worship, the pan of Sabbath and the pan of the Lord's Day are balanced. The fourth commandment says to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. The Jewish and Christian image of God (Yahweh) is consistent for both traditions. Both the Jews and the

Christians believe that worship is essential to life. Both Jewish and Christian traditions believe that one day per week should not look like the other six days. The Sabbath and the Lord's Day are given to a day of religious activities and feasts. Holiness does not mean idleness. Although blue laws are becoming a relic of the past, both the Jewish and Christians' traditions eliminate certain activities in an effort to keep the designated day holy. Music is prevalent among Jews and Christians in their worship services. In both traditions the Bible is either taught and/or preached. Sabbath observance preserved through worship reduces stress.

The Jewish Sabbath engenders a Christian lifestyle that is balanced. When I think of balance, I envision the weight of life being evenly distributed like the weight of an automobile. When the tires of an automobile wear unevenly, it is an indication that the weight (stress of the vehicle) is not evenly distributed and that an alignment is needed. The lifestyle that the Jewish Sabbath preserves in the Christian way of life includes humor, intellectual rest, and emotional rest, just to name a few.

In conclusion, there is no ambiguity that God intended for us to observe Sabbath as a way of life. This Sabbath observance has been preserved in the Christian's Lord's Day through creation, revelation, ecclesiology, worship and a balanced lifestyle. The manifestation of Sabbath observance is reduced stress in life. In the end, the only God of us all is honored and glorified, and the well-being of humanity is magnified. I am proud to be a Judeo-Christian.

Chapter 4

Critical Evaluation

This chapter will present the following areas of critical evaluation from the quantitative research conducted by the six-member research group: my role as teacher/facilitator, the effectiveness of the four courses (stress, prayer, silence, feasting and fellowshiping), the adequacy of the research facility, and the course tests. In addition, this chapter will present the following critical evaluation from the qualitative research conducted by the six-member research group: a journal on each of the four courses. The action research will present the following areas of quantitative critical evaluation on the practiced activities by the six-member research group and the six-member control group that occurred during a retreat: deep breathing and progressive relaxation, praying, silence, fellowshiping and feasting (meal). Moreover, this chapter will present the quantitative critical evaluation for the pre-stress tests and post-stress tests from the members of the research group and the control group. The focus of the project was to teach ministers in the Tyger River Baptist Association in Spartanburg, South Carolina how to reduce stress by applying the knowledge of four courses and practicing activities relative to each course all in the context of a Sabbath lifestyle.

Quantitative Evaluation of Pre-Stress Test

Table 4.1 is an analysis of the research group's pre-stress tests. Table 4.2 is an analysis of the control group's pre-stress tests. The score was arrived at by answering questions and rating each of the questions on a scale from zero to three (0=never, 1=infrequently 2=frequently, 3=regularly). The numbers from the ratings were added for a total score.

The total score is interpreted as:

0-20 Below-average strain in your life

21-30 Stress starting to show its effect in your life. You are living life near your stress threshold, at times crossing it.

31-40 Above-average strain. Stress is having a very destructive effect on your life. You are living a good portion of your life beyond your stress threshold.

40+ Unless you do something soon to alleviate your stress, more serious illness will follow.

Pre-Stress Test for Research Group and Control Group Comparison

Table 4.1 Research Group

Research Group Member	Below Average Strain	Strain Starting to Show	Above Average Strain	Highly Stressed
1		30		
2		30		
3	11			
4			36	
5		30		
6				45

Table 4.2 Control Group

Control Group Pre Stress Test				
Research Group Member	Below Average Strain	Strain Starting to Show	Above Average Strain	Highly Stressed
1			32	
2	18			
3	15			
4		30		
5		28		
6	No show			

One research group member showed below-average strain in his or her life scoring in the mid-range of the below strain category. Two members from the control group showed below-average strain scoring in the high range of the below strain category. Three research group members and two control group members showed stress starting to show scoring at the very end of the category. One research group member and one control group member showed above-average stress scoring at the very end of the category. One research group member was highly stressed scoring above forty which indicates that unless something is done to alleviate the stress, more serious illness will follow.

Quantitative Evaluation of Stress Course

Table 4.3 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's course evaluations for the stress course.

Table 4.3

Stress Course Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The topics covered were relevant to me.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The training experience will be useful in my work.	100%		0%	0%	0%

Assignments given for class interested me.	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
The course provided me with many opportunities to interact and communicate with the instructor and others.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The course workload and requirements were appropriate for the course level.	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
The course improved my ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence, and different points of view.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The course design was logical, consistent, efficient, and easy to navigate.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%

Four out of six (67%) of the research members strongly agreed that the assignments given for class were interesting, and the course workload and requirements were appropriate for the course level. Also, eighty-three (83%) percent of the group members strongly agreed that objectives were clearly defined, the topics covered were relevant, the content was organized and easy to follow, time was allowed for interaction and communication with the instructor and others, and the course was logical, consistent, efficient, and easy to navigate. The stress course was successful.

Quantitative Evaluation of the Instructor for the Stress Course

Table 4.4 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's teacher evaluations for the stress course.

Table 4.4

Stress Teacher Evaluation	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Research Group					
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The topics covered were relevant to me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The materials distributed were helpful.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The training experience will be useful in my work.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The teacher was knowledgeable about the topics.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The teacher was well-prepared.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The training objectives were met.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%

Five out of six (83%) of the research group members strongly agreed that the training objectives were clearly defined, the content was organized and easy to follow, and the materials distributed were helpful. Moreover, eighty-three (83%) of the group strongly agreed that the instructor was well prepared, and that the training objectives were met. Additionally, six out of six (100%) of the group members strongly agreed that participation and interaction were encouraged, the topics covered were relevant, the training experience will be useful to their work, and the teacher was knowledgeable about the topics.

Stress Course Test Scores

Table 4.5 is compilation of test scores for the stress course.

Table 4.5

Research Group Test-Session 1: Stress				
Research Group Member	90-100	80-89	70-79	69 and below
A		87		
B	90			
C	100			
D	100			
E	100			
F	100			

Five out of six (83%) of the research group members earned an A. One of the research group members (17%) earned a B. The scores had a range of thirteen points (100%-87%). The average score was 97%.

Qualitative Evaluation of Stress Course

Table 4.6 is a qualitative analysis of the research group's journals for the stress course. Each group member wrote a journal to reflect on his or her experience in the course. This course was taught in the context of a Sabbath lifestyle.

Table 4.6

Stress Research Group	Progression/ discernable movement in thought	Change in attitude, and/or feelings	Reaction negative/ positive	Resistant/ Guarded despondent/ closed-minded
Group Member	Enlightened about the family system and being in touch with feelings of stress	Freedom to talk about stress	Positive	None
Group Member	Aware of stressors, better listener, owning stress	Attitude towards stress is more serious	Positive	None
Group Member	Owning stress	Need to share feelings	Positive	None

Group Member	Educated about stress, sharing feelings	None	Positive	None
Group Member	Owning stress, need to share feelings	None	Positive	None
Group Member	Able to make the Sabbath connection	None	Positive	None

All of the group members had a positive experience in the course. There were no despondent or closed-minded dispositions noted in the journals. As the course progressed, a member was enlightened about how stress affects the family system and the importance of the family as a support system. Group members began to understand how to own their stress, whereas previously they were in denial about their stress. Group members reported that they are better equipped to share their feelings and be better listeners as a result of this course. One group member noted that he was able to make the Sabbath connection. There was a change in attitude about stress in terms of taking the issue of stress more seriously.

Quantitative Evaluation of Prayer Course

Table 4.7 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's evaluations of the prayer course.

Table 4.7

Prayer Course Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%

encouraged.					
The topics covered were relevant to me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The training experience will be useful in my work.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Assignments given for class interested me.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The course provided me with many opportunities to interact and communicate with the instructor and others.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The course workload and requirements were appropriate for the course level.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The course improved my ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence, and different points of view.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The course design was logical, consistent, efficient, and easy to navigate.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Four out of six (67%) of the research group members strongly agreed that the training objectives were clearly defined. Five out of six (83%) of the group strongly agreed that participation and interaction were encouraged, the course workload and requirements were appropriate for the course level, the course improved their ability to

critically analyze ideas, evidence and different points of view, and the course was interesting. All (100%) of the research group members strongly agreed that the topics covered were relevant, the content was organized and easy to follow, useful in their work, allows for interaction and communication with the instructor and others, as well as logical, consistent, efficient, and easy to navigate. The prayer course was successful.

Quantitative Evaluation of the Instructor for the Prayer Course

Table 4.8 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's teacher evaluations for the prayer course.

Table 4.8

Prayer Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The topics covered were relevant to me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The materials distributed were helpful.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The training experience will be useful in my work.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The teacher was knowledgeable about the topics.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The teacher was well-prepared.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The training objectives were met.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Each of the research group members (100%) strongly agreed that the instructor's objectives were clearly defined, participation and interaction were encouraged, the topics covered were relevant, the content was organized and easy to follow, the materials distributed were helpful, the training experience will be useful in their work, the teacher was knowledgeable, well prepared, and the objectives were met.

Prayer Course Test Scores

Table 4.9 is compilation of test scores for the prayer course.

Table 4.9

Research Group Test-Session 2: Prayer				
Research Group Member	90-100	80-89	70-79	69 and below
A	100			
B	90			
C	90			
D			75	
E	100			
F	100			

Five out of six group members (83%) earned an A. One of the group members earned a C. The range of scores was 25 points (100%-75%). The average score was 92.5%

Qualitative Evaluation of Prayer Course

Table 4.10 is a qualitative analysis of the research group's journals for the prayer course. The course was taught in the context of a Sabbath lifestyle.

Table 4.10

Prayer Research Group	Progression discernable movement in thought	Change in attitude, and/or feelings	Reaction positive/negative	Resistant despondent/closed-minded

Group Member	Made the Sabbath connection, understands the power of communication	Feelings of liberation	Positive	None
Group Member	Made the Sabbath connection	None	Positive	None
Group Member	Made the Sabbath connection	None	Positive	None
Group Member	Made the Sabbath connection	None	Positive	None
Group Member	A need to listen more, able to process busy lifestyle better	None	Positive	None
Group Member	None	None	Positive	None

As the group members progressed through the course, there was a noticeable acceptance of the connection between prayer and the Sabbath lifestyle. In addition, the group came to understand the power of communication in learning about prayer. One of the group members recognized that he needed to listen more and incorporate prayer into his busy lifestyle. There was an attitudinal change in that one group member's feelings of restraint gave way to feelings of liberation; he experienced the freedom to express his true feelings. All of the group members had a positive reaction to this course. There was no despondency or closed-mindedness expressed by the group.

Quantitative Evaluation of Silence Course

Table 4.11 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's course evaluations for the silence course. The course was taught from the perspective of living a Sabbath lifestyle to reduce stress in ministers.

Table 4.11

Silence Course Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The topics covered were relevant to me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The training experience will be useful in my work.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Assignments given for class interested me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The course provided me with many opportunities to interact and communicate with the instructor and others.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The course workload and requirements were appropriate for the course level.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The course improved my ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence, and different points of view.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The course design was logical, consistent, efficient, and easy to navigate.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Eighty-three percent (83%) of the research group members strongly agreed that the course allowed for interaction and communication with the instructor and others. Albeit, one hundred percent (100%) of the group strongly agreed that the objectives of the training were clearly defined, participation and interaction were encouraged, topic covered was relevant, and the content was organized and easy to follow. Additionally, each group member (100%) strongly agreed that the training experience will be useful in his or her work, the course workload and requirements were appropriate for the course level, and that the course improved their ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence and different points of view. All six (100%) of the group members strongly agreed that the course design was logical, consistent, efficient, interesting, and easy to navigate. The silence course was highly successful.

Quantitative Evaluation of the Instructor for the Silence Course

Table 4.12 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's teacher evaluations for the silence course.

Table 4.12

Silence Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The topics covered were relevant to me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The materials distributed were helpful.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

The training experience will be useful in my work.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The teacher was knowledgeable about the topics.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The teacher was well-prepared.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The training objectives were met.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Five out of six (83%) of the research group members strongly agreed that the instructor's objectives for the course were clearly defined and that the training experience will be useful in their work. Moreover, each of the group members (100%) strongly agreed that participation and interaction were encouraged, the topics covered were relevant, the content was organized and easy to follow, and the materials distributed were helpful. Also, six out of six (100%) of the group members strongly agreed that the instructor was knowledgeable, well-prepared, and that the training objectives were met.

Silence Course Test Scores

Table 4.13 is a compilation of test scores for the silence course.

Table 4.13

Research Group Test Session 4 Silence				
Research Group Member	90-100	80-89	70-79	69 and below
A	95			
B	90			
C			75	
D		85		
E	100			
F	100			

Four out of six (66%) of the research group members earned an A. One group member (17%) earned a B. One group member (17%) earned a C. The range was 25 points (100%-75%). The average score was 91%.

Qualitative Evaluation of Silence Course

Table 4.14 is a qualitative analysis of the research group's journals for the silence course. Each group member wrote a journal on the experience in the course. The course was taught in the context of a Sabbath lifestyle.

Table 4.14

Silence Research Group	Progression discernable movement in thought	Change in attitude, and/or feelings	Reaction positive/negative	Resistant/Guarded despondent/closed-minded
Group Member	Able to make the Sabbath connection, understands the relationship between body, mind and soul	Owning feelings of anxiety	Positive	None
Group Member	Recognizes silence as a discipline	Feelings of anxiety relieved	Positive	None
Group Member	Recognizes that silence is therapeutic	Desired to implement silence into lifestyle	Positive	None
Group Member	Recognizes the need to listen more	Experienced feelings of happiness, peace and joy	Positive	None
Group Member	None	Experienced feelings of less stress	Positive	None
Group Member	None	Recognized silence as a sleep aid	Positive	None

As the course progressed, research group members were able to make the Sabbath connection, recognize silence as a discipline to reduce stress, and see silence as

therapeutic. One group member noted his understanding of how silence affects the body, mind and soul.

Another group member recognized the need to listen more as compared to speaking more as a result of this course. All of the group members had a positive reaction to the course. There were no members who were despondent or guarded. Feelings of anxiety diminished during the span of the course. In some cases, feelings of anxiety were replaced with feelings of happiness, peace and joy. One group member recognized silence as a possible aid to helping him to sleep.

Quantitative Evaluation of Feasting and Fellowship Course

Table 4.15 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's course evaluations for the feasting and fellowship course. The course was taught in the context of a Sabbath lifestyle as a means of reducing stress in ministers.

Table 4.15

Feasting and Fellowship Course Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The topics covered were relevant to me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The training experience will be useful in my work.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Assignments given for class interested me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The course provided me with many opportunities to interact and communicate with the instructor and others.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The course workload and requirements were appropriate for the course level.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The course improved my ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence and different points of view.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The course design was logical, consistent, efficient and easy to navigate.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

The research group was unanimous (100%) in strongly agreeing that the topics covered were relevant to the group member, organized and easy to follow, useful in their work, and interesting. Moreover, the group strongly agreed 100% that course work and requirements were appropriate for the course level, and improved their ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence and different points of view. The group also strongly agreed 100% that the course design was logical, consistent, efficient, and easy to follow and allowed for interaction and communication with the instructor and others. Eighty-three (83%) percent strongly agreed that the objectives were clearly defined and participation and interaction were encouraged. The feasting and fellowshiping course was highly successful.

Quantitative Evaluation of the Instructor for the Feasting and Fellowship Course

Table 4.16 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's teacher evaluations for the feasting and fellowship course.

Table 4.16

Feasting and Fellowship Teacher Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The topics covered were relevant to me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The materials distributed were helpful.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The training experience will be useful in my work.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The teacher was knowledgeable about the topics.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The teacher was well-prepared.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The training objectives were met.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

The six research group members were unanimous (100%) in strongly agreeing that the instructor's objectives were clearly defined, topics covered were relevant to the student, content was organized and easy to follow, and the material distributed was helpful. Six out of six group members (100%) also strongly agreed that the training experience will help them in their work, and that the instructor was knowledgeable, well-

prepared and the objectives were met. Only five out of six (83%) strongly agreed that participation and interaction were encouraged.

Qualitative Evaluation of Feasting and Fellowship Course

Table 4.17 is a qualitative analysis of the research group's journals for the feasting and fellowship course. Each of the group members was asked to write a journal to reflect on his or her experience.

Table 4.17

Feasting and Fellowship Research Group	Progression discernable movement in thought	Change in attitude, and/or feelings	Reaction positive/negative	Resistant/ Guarded despondent/ closed-minded
Group Member	Made the Sabbath connection	More aware of relationship building during meals	Positive	None
Group Member	Recognized the reduction in stress level	More aware of relationship building during meals	Positive	None
Group Member	Feelings of empowerment	More aware of relationship building during meals	Positive	None
Group Member	Feelings of happiness during meals	More aware of relationship building during meals	Positive	None
Group Member	Improved relationship	More aware of relationship building during meals	Positive	None
Group Member	None	More aware of relationship	Positive	None

		building during meals		
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All of the group members had a positive reaction to the course and indicated that they would like for me to do a conference on the subject after the project is complete. Each of the group members recognized that feasting is more than food consumption, and it provides for an opportunity for fellowship and better social interaction. None of the group members saw the progression of the feasting and fellowshiping in terms of its capacity to build relationships until we processed it in class. It was exciting for me to see the shift in thought during the process. At least three of the group members had a change in feelings of apprehension and gloominess to feelings of intimacy and happiness. One member noted in his or her journal that fellowshiping is conducive to laughter. Another member recognized that he or she had a mood swing from sadness to joy during the feasting and fellowshiping. None of the members were guarded or exhibited resistance toward the process. One of the group members was able to make the Sabbath connection and recognize how feasting and fellowshiping reduced stress.

Quantitative Evaluation of Research Site

The following analysis evaluates the site where the research group meetings were held. The research site was critical for the research group in their effort to produce data for my project. I chose to conduct the research at the New Day Baptist church on 2090 South Church Street in Spartanburg, South Carolina where I serve as pastor. (Note: Table 4.18 reflects responses of the ten categories evaluated relative to the research site.)

Table 4.18

Research Site Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The distance from your home to the church was reasonable.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The room was clean.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The ambiance (atmosphere) was conducive to research/learning.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The bathrooms were accessible.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The water fountain was accessible.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The chairs were spaced adequately for optimal learning.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The chairs were comfortable.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The temperature was comfortable.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The church-worship site was conducive to research/learning.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The other activities occurring simultaneously in the church did not impede/disturb your ability to concentrate and learn.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%

The survey illustrates that the choice of using New Day Baptist Church was a good decision. Six out of six (100%) group members strongly agreed that the church was conducive to research/learning. All six (100%) research group members strongly agreed

that the room was clean, the ambiance was conducive to learning, the restrooms and water fountain were accessible, and that the chairs were comfortable and adequately spaced for optimal learning. The temperature was set at approximately sixty-five degrees Fahrenheit, and 100% of the group strongly agreed that the temperature was comfortable. However, only 83% strongly agreed that the distance from their homes was reasonable and that other activities occurring during the time of the research classes were impeding their ability to concentrate and learn. I was very surprised to learn that the other activities occurring simultaneously in the church were a distraction.

Retreat—Research Group

Quantitative Evaluation of Practicing Progressive Relaxation Techniques

Table 4.19 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's evaluations of practicing progressive relaxation techniques to reduce stress. This activity is relative to the stress course.

Table 4.19

Practicing Progressive Relaxation Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my forehead feels relaxed.	80%	0%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my neck feels relaxed.	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my jaw feels relaxed.	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%

techniques, my shoulders feel relaxed.					
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my torso feels relaxed.	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my arms feel relaxed.	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my hands feel relaxed.	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my legs feel relaxed.	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my feet and toes feel relaxed.	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my mind is less tense.	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%

Eighty percent (80%) of the research group strongly agreed that after practicing progressive relaxation techniques, their forehead and shoulders felt relaxed. Furthermore, sixty percent (60%) strongly agreed that after practicing progressive relaxation techniques, their neck felt relaxed, jaw felt relaxed, torso felt relaxed, and mind felt less tense. Moreover, forty percent (40%) strongly agreed that after progressive relaxation techniques their arms, hands, legs, feet and torso felt relaxed. Twenty percent (20%) agreed that after practicing progressive relaxation techniques, their neck, jaw, shoulders, torso, and mind felt less tense. Additionally, forty percent (40%) agreed that after practicing progressive relaxation techniques, their arms, legs, feet and toes felt

relaxed. Sixty percent (60%) agreed that after practicing progressive relaxation that their hands felt relaxed. Twenty percent (20%) felt neutral after practicing progressive relaxation as it relates to their forehead, neck, jaw, torso, arms, hands, legs, feet, and mind feeling less tense.

Quantitative Evaluation of Practicing Prayer

Table 4.20 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's evaluations of practicing prayer to reduce stress. This activity is relative to the prayer course. One of the research group members did not attend due to conflict of scheduling.

Table 4.20

Practicing Prayer Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When stressed, I am motivated to pray.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
My prayers are focused on my stressors.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Praying gives me an immediate release from stress.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Practicing prayer makes me calmer.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Prayer gives me a peace of mind.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
When prayers are answered, I feel better.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Practicing prayer reduces my guilt.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Practicing prayer reduces my obsessive compulsive behavior.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
When I pray, I am willing to accept God's will.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%

Prayer reduces my fears.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
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The action research by the research group on practicing prayer demonstrated that eighty percent (80%) of the group strongly agreed that when stressed they were motivated to pray, the prayers were focused on their stressors, praying gave them an immediate relief from stress, prayer made them calmer, reduced their obsessive compulsive behavior, made them willing to accept God's will, and reduced their fears. Twenty percent (20%) agreed that when stressed, they were motivated to pray, the prayers were focused on their stressors, prayer made them calmer, reduced their obsessive compulsive behavior, caused them to be willing to accept God's will and reduced fears. The practicing prayer course was successful.

Quantitative Evaluation of Practicing Silence

Table 4.21 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's evaluations of practicing silence to reduce stress. This activity is relative to the silence course. One of the research group members did not attend due to conflict of scheduling.

Table 4.21

Practicing Silence Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
During the acts of silence, my stress level decreased.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
I experienced a sense of peace during my acts of silence.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
During the acts of silence, I felt an increase in motivation.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%

During the acts of silence, I became more goal directed.	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
I became less problem centered during the acts of silence.	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
During the acts of silence, I felt a sense of achievement.	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
My self-image was better during the acts of silence.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
My self-worth was increased as I practiced the acts of silence.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
There was a decrease of fear as I practiced the acts of silence.	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
As a result of practicing acts of silence, I placed smaller value on struggle.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%

All of the group members (100%) strongly agreed that they experienced a decrease in stress while practicing an act of silence. Four out of five (80%) strongly agreed that they experienced a sense of peace during the act of silence. During the act of silence, sixty percent (60%) strongly agreed that they felt an increase in motivation, became more goal-directed, became less problem-centered, experienced a decrease of fear, had a better self-image, and felt a sense of achievement. Forty percent (40%) strongly agreed that while practicing an act of silence, they placed a smaller value on struggle. Twenty percent (20%) agreed that while practicing an act of silence they experienced a sense of peace, felt an increase in motivation, became more goal-directed, had a better self-image, and a decrease of fear. Forty percent (40%) agreed that during the act of silence they felt a sense of achievement. Twenty percent (20%) disagreed that

while practicing an act of silence, they felt an increase in motivation, became more goal-directed, had a better self-image, had increased self-worth, or experienced a decrease in fear. Forty percent (40%) disagreed that during the act of silence they became less problem-centered.

Quantitative Evaluation of Practicing Feasting & Fellowshiping

Table 4.22 is a quantitative analysis of the research group's evaluations of practicing feasting and fellowshiping to reduce stress. This activity is relative to the feasting and fellowshiping course. One of the research group members did not attend due to conflict of scheduling.

Table 4.22

Practicing Feasting and Fellowshiping Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When stressed, feasting and fellowshiping make me feel better physically.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
Feasting and fellowshiping allow me time and space to share my problems and concerns.	60%	20%	0%	0%	20%
Feasting and fellowshiping cause me to relax.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Feasting and fellowshiping give me a peace of mind.	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
When stressed, feasting and fellowshiping make me feel better emotionally.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%

Feasting and fellowshiping reduce my negative thoughts.	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
Feasting and fellowshiping help to build my support system.	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
Feasting and fellowshiping help me to redirect my focus on my own problems.	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%
Feasting and fellowshiping reduce my stress from being around undesirable people.	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%

Sixty percent (60%) of the research group strongly agreed that when stressed, feasting and fellowshiping made them feel better physically, and feasting and fellowshiping allowed them time and space to share their problems and concerns. Eighty percent (80%) strongly agreed that feasting and fellowshiping caused them to relax, and feel better emotionally. Forty percent (40%) strongly agreed that feasting and fellowshiping gave them a peace of mind, reduced their negative thoughts, helped to build their support system, and reduced their stress from being around undesirable people. Twenty percent (20%) of the group strongly agreed that feasting and fellowshiping helped them to redirect their focus on their own problems. Twenty percent (20%) were neutral about feasting and fellowshiping being able to reduce stress from being around undesirable people, and helping them to focus of their own problems. Twenty percent (20%) disagreed that feasting and fellowshiping allowed them time and space to share their problems and concerns.

Quantitative Evaluation of the Retreat

Table 4.23 is an analysis of the retreat by the research group. My aim was to get the research group out of the church building and provide an atmosphere that was more relaxing and conducive to interaction. One of the research group members was not able to attend the retreat due to a conflict of scheduling. The retreat was held in a private room at the Select facilities in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Table 4.23

Retreat Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
The topics covered were relevant to me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The retreat experience will be useful in my work.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Activities during the retreat interested me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The retreat provided me with many opportunities to interact and communicate with the instructor and others.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
The retreat workload and requirements were appropriate for the time allowed.	80%	0%	20%	0%	0%

The retreat improved my ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence and different points of view.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
The course design was logical, consistent, efficient and easy to navigate.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Each of the five (100%) research group members strongly agreed that the objectives of the training were clearly defined, the topics were relevant, the content was organized and easy to follow, and that the experience will be useful in their work. Additionally, each of the five (100%) research group members strongly agreed that the retreat experience will be useful in their work, and that the course design was logical, consistent, efficient, easy to navigate, and interesting. Four out of five (80%) group members strongly agreed that participation and interaction were encouraged, the retreat provided opportunities to interact, communicate with the instructor and others, improve their ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence, and different points of view. Eighty percent (80%) strongly agreed that the course design was logical, consistent, efficient, and easy to navigate, and the workload and requirements were appropriate for the time allowed.

Quantitative Evaluation of Instructor for Retreat

Table 4.24 is an analysis of the research group's evaluations of the retreat facilitator. The retreat was held in a private room at the Select facilities in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Table 4.24

Retreat Teacher Evaluation Research Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged.	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
The topics covered were relevant to me.	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The materials distributed were helpful.	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
The training experience will be useful in my work.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
The teacher was knowledgeable about the topics.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The teacher was well-prepared.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The training objectives were met.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

All six (100%) of the research group members strongly agreed that the facilitator was knowledgeable about the topics, well prepared, and met the training objectives. Five out of six (83%) strongly agreed that the objectives of the training were clearly defined and that the content was easy to follow, and the training was useful to them in their work. Four out of six (67%) strongly agreed that the facilitator encouraged participation and interaction. Also four out of six (67%) strongly agreed that the topic was relevant and that the materials distributed were helpful. However, I find it ironic that only 87% strongly agreed that the objectives of the training were clearly defined and 100% strongly agreed that the training objectives were met.

Retreat—Control Group

Quantitative Evaluation of Practicing Progressive Relaxation Techniques

Table 4.25 is a quantitative analysis of the control group's evaluations of practicing progressive relaxation techniques to reduce stress.

Table 4.25

Practicing Progressive Relaxation Evaluation Control Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my forehead feels relaxed.	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my neck feels relaxed.	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my jaw feels relaxed.	20%	40%	40%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my shoulders feel relaxed.	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my torso feels relaxed.	20%	40%	40%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my arms feel relaxed.	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my hands feel relaxed.	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my legs	20%	20%	60%	0%	0%

feel relaxed.					
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my feet and toes feel relaxed.	20%	20%	60%	0%	0%
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my mind is less tense.	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%

After practicing progressive relaxation, forty percent (40%) strongly agreed that their forehead felt relaxed. Following the application of progressive relaxation techniques, forty percent (40%) agreed that their forehead, jaw, and torso felt relaxed. After applying progressive relaxation techniques, twenty percent (20%) strongly agreed that their neck, jaw, shoulders, torso, arms, hands, legs, feet, toes and mind were more relaxed. Once the progressive relaxation techniques were applied, sixty percent (60%) agreed that their neck, arms, shoulders, hands, and mind were relaxed. Twenty percent (20%) of the group agreed that after applying the relaxation techniques, their feet, toes, and legs were relaxed. Following the application of the relaxation techniques, twenty percent (20%) were neutral that their forehead, neck, shoulders, arms, hands and mind were relaxed. Sixty percent (60%) of the members reported that they were neutral about their legs, feet, and toes being relaxed after applying the relaxation techniques. Twenty percent (20%) were neutral about their forehead, neck, arms, shoulders, hands, and mind being relaxed after applying the relaxation techniques.

Quantitative Evaluation of Practicing Prayer

Table 4.26 is a quantitative analysis of the control group's evaluations of practicing prayer.

Table 4.26

Practicing Prayer Evaluation Control Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When stressed, I am motivated to pray.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
My prayers are focused on my stressors.	60%	20%	0%	0%	20%
Praying gives me an immediate relief from stress.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Practicing prayer makes me calmer.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Prayer gives me a peace of mind.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
When prayers are answered, I feel better.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Practicing prayer reduces my guilt.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Practicing prayer reduces my obsessive compulsive behavior.	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
When I pray, I am willing to accept God's will.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Prayer reduces my fears.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%

Each of the control group members (100%) strongly agreed that when stressed they were motivated to pray. Each of the group members strongly agreed that prayer gave them a peace of mind, answered prayer made them feel better, and when praying, they were willing to accept God's will. Eighty percent (80%) of the control group strongly agreed that praying gave them an immediate release from stress, made them calmer, reduced guilt, and reduced fears. Twenty percent (20%) was neutral about practicing prayer as a means to reduce their obsessive compulsive behavior. Twenty

percent (20%) strongly disagreed that when stressed they were motivated to pray. Twenty percent (20%) agreed their prayers were focused on their stressors, gave immediate relief from stress, made them calmer, reduced guilt, and reduced fears.

Quantitative Evaluation of Practicing Silence

Table 4.27 is a quantitative analysis of the control group's evaluations of practicing silence.

Table 4.27

Practicing Silence Evaluation Control Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
During the acts of silence, my stress level decreased.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0% 0%
I experienced a sense of peace during my acts of silence.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
During the acts of silence, I felt an increase in motivation.	60%	20%	0%	20%	0%
During the acts of silence, I became more goal directed.	60%	20%	0%	20%	0%
I became less problem centered during the acts of silence.	60%	0%	0%	40%	0%
During the acts of silence, I felt a sense of achievement.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
My self-image was better during the acts of silence.	60%	20%	0%	20%	0%
My self-worth was increased as I practiced the acts of silence.	80%	0%	0%	20%	0%
There was a decrease of fear as I practiced the acts of silence.	60%	20%	0%	20%	0%

As a result of practicing acts of silence, I placed smaller value on struggle.	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
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Each of the research group members (100%) strongly agreed that during the act of silence his or her stress level decreased. Eighty percent (80%) strongly agreed that during the act of silence they experienced a sense of peace and their self-worth increased. Sixty percent (60%) strongly agreed that during the act of silence they felt an increase in motivation, became more goal directed, became less problem-centered, felt a sense of achievement, and had a better self-image and a decrease of fear. Forty percent (40%) placed a smaller value on struggle as a result of practicing acts of silence. Twenty percent (20%) agreed that during the act of silence they experienced peace, felt an increase in motivation, became more goal-directed, had a better self-image, and experienced a decrease of fear. Forty percent (40%) during the act of silence felt a sense of achievement. Sixty percent (60%) placed a smaller value on struggle as a result of practicing the act of silence. Twenty percent (20%) disagreed that during the act of silence they felt an increase in motivation, became more goal-directed, had a better self-image, increased self-worth, and felt a decrease of fear. Forty percent (40%) disagreed that they became less problem-centered during the acts of silence.

Quantitative Evaluation of Practicing Feasting & Fellowship

Table 4.28 is a quantitative analysis of the control group's evaluations of practicing feasting and fellowship.

Table 4.28

Practicing Feasting and Fellowshiping Evaluation Control Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When stressed, feasting and fellowshiping make me feel better physically.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
Feasting and fellowshiping allow me time and space to share my problems and concerns.	60%	0%	20%	0%	20%
Feasting and fellowshiping cause me to relax.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Feasting and fellowshiping give me a peace of mind.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
When stressed, feasting and fellowshiping make me feel better emotionally.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Feasting and fellowshiping reduce my negative thoughts.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
Feasting and fellowshiping help to build my support system.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
Feasting and fellowshiping help me to redirect my focus on my own problems.	60%	20%	0%	20%	0%
Feasting and fellowshiping reduce my stress from being around undesirable people.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%

Sixty percent (60%) of the group strongly agreed that when stressed, feasting and fellowshiping made them feel physically better, allowed them time and space to share

their problems, reduced their negative thoughts, helped them to build their support system, helped them to redirect their focus off their own problems, and reduced their stress from being around undesirable people. Furthermore, eighty percent (80%) strongly agreed that feasting and fellowshiping caused them to relax, gave them peace of mind and made them feel better emotionally. Twenty percent (20%) were neutral that feasting and fellowshiping allowed them time and space to share their problems and concerns. Twenty percent (20%) disagreed that feasting and fellowshiping helped them to redirect their focus off their own problems. Twenty percent (20%) strongly disagreed that feasting and fellowshiping allowed them time and space to share their problems and concerns.

Quantitative Evaluation of Retreat Instructor

Table 4.29 is an analysis of the control group's evaluation of the retreat instructor.

Table 4.29

Retreat Instructor Evaluation Control Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The topics covered were relevant to me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The materials distributed were helpful.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The training experience will be useful in my work.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

The teacher was knowledgeable about the topics.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The teacher was well-prepared.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The training objectives were met.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

All of the control group members (100%) strongly agreed that the objectives of the training were clearly defined, participation and interaction were encouraged, topics covered were relevant, content was organized, and easy to follow, and materials distributed were helpful. Moreover, one hundred percent (100%) of the control group members strongly agreed that the training experience will be useful in their work, the objectives were met, and the teacher was well-prepared and knowledgeable about the topics.

Quantitative Evaluation of the Retreat

Table 4.30 is an analysis of the control group's retreat evaluations.

Table 4.30

Retreat Evaluation Control Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Participation and interaction were encouraged.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The topics covered were relevant to me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The content was organized and easy to follow.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The retreat experience will be useful in my work.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Activities during the retreat interested me.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The retreat provided me with many opportunities to interact and communicate with the instructor and others.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
The retreat workload and requirements were appropriate for the time allowed.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
The retreat improved my ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence and different points of view.	60%	0%	20%	20%	0%
The course design was logical, consistent, efficient and easy to navigate.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%

All of the control group members (100%) strongly agreed the objectives were well defined, participation and interaction were encouraged, the topic was relevant, the content was organized and easy to follow, and the activities were interesting. Eighty percent (80%) of the control group strongly agreed that the retreat provided them many opportunities to interact and communicate with the instructor and others, and that the workload and requirements were appropriate for the time allowed. Furthermore, eighty percent (80%) strongly agreed that the course design was logical, consistent, efficient, and easy to navigate. Sixty percent (60%) strongly agreed that the retreat improved their ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence and different points of view. Twenty percent (20%) agreed that the retreat provided them with many opportunities to interact and

communicate with the instructor and others, and that the workload and requirements were appropriate for the time allowed. Also, twenty percent (20%) agreed that the course design was logical, consistent, efficient, and easy to navigate. Twenty percent (20%) was neutral about the retreat improving their ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence and different points of view.

Quantitative Evaluation of Post-Stress Test

Table 4.31 is an analysis of the research group's post-stress tests. Table 4.32 is an analysis of the control group's post-stress tests. Each research group member's pre-stress test (Table 4.1) was analyzed in relation to his or her post-stress test. Each control group member's pre-stress test (Table 4.2) was analyzed in relation to his or her post-stress test.

The score was arrived at by answering questions and rating each of the questions on a scale from zero to three (0=never, 1=infrequently 2=frequently, 3=regularly). The numbers from the ratings were added for a total score. The total score is interpreted as:

0-20 Below-average strain in your life

21-30 Stress starting to show its effect in your life. You are living life near your stress threshold, at times crossing it.

31-40 Above-average strain. Stress is having a very destructive effect on your life. You are living a good portion of your life beyond your stress threshold.

40+ Unless you do something soon to alleviate your stress, more serious illness will follow.

Post-Stress Test for Research Group and Control Group Comparison

Table 4.31 Research Group

Research Group: Post-Stress Test				
Research Group Member	Below Average Strain	Strain Starting to Show	Above Average Strain	Highly Stressed

1				45
2		24		
3	10			
4	20			
5	12			
6				53

Research group member 1 experienced an increase in stress from 30 points on the pre-stress test to 45 points on the post-stress test. Research group member 2 experienced a decrease in stress from 30 points on the pre-stress test to 24 points on the post-stress test. Research group member 3 experienced a decrease in stress from 11 points on the pre-stress test to 10 points on the post-stress test. Research group member 4 experienced a decrease in stress from 36 points on the pre-stress test to 20 points on the post-stress test. Research group member 5 experienced a decrease in stress from 30 points on the pre-stress test to 12 points on the post-stress test. Research group member 6 experienced an increase in stress from 45 points on the pre-stress test to 53 points on the post-stress test.

Table 4.32 Control Group

Control Group: Post-Stress Test				
Research Group Member	Below Average Strain	Strain Starting to Show	Above Average Strain	Highly Stressed
1		25		
2	11			
3	19			
4		30		
5	20			
6	No Show			

Control group member 1 experienced a decrease in stress from 32 points on the pre-stress test to 25 points on the post-stress test. Control group member 2 experienced a decrease in stress from 18 points on the pre-stress test to 11 points on the post-stress test. Control group member 3 experienced an increase in stress from 15 points on the pre-test to 19 points on the post-test. Control group member 4 experienced no increase or decrease in stress with 30 points on both the pre and post stress tests. Control group member 5 experienced a decrease in stress from 28 points on the pre-stress test to 20 points on the post-stress test.

Evaluation of Project Goal

My project goal was to teach ministers how to practice Sabbath in order to reduce stress in ministry. I was successful in reaching this goal. The Sabbath lifestyle was embraced through teaching four classes to the research group: Stress, Prayer, Silence, and Feasting and Fellowshiping. In the final analysis of the project, I wanted to see what impact the knowledge from the four classes had on the various activities practiced to ultimately reduce stress. The control group practiced the activities without the materials taught in the courses in order for me to compare the outcomes of the two groups. The data indicated that I was effective in teaching the courses. The quantitative and qualitative data reflected that the research group was able to make a connection between stress, prayer, silence, feasting and fellowshiping, and a Sabbath lifestyle. Furthermore, the data confirmed that practicing the activities that correlated to the four classes did in fact reduce stress.

Strengths

The topic of my project was readily intriguing to the research and control group members. Inherently, ministry and managing stress go hand in hand. I understood from the beginning of the project that not only did the research and control group members want to support me by participating in the project, but they saw it as having a positive impact on their lives as well. Moreover, there was a good level of trust between the research and control group members and me given that we had known and respected each other for quite some time.

The pool of participants who were members of the research and control groups consisted of conscientious people. In addition, they brought a high level of enthusiasm and energy to the project. Camaraderie was established from the outset due to the homogeneous makeup of the group. The research and control groups were a good sample of the church at large. They were different ages, genders, and came from urban and rural settings. The research and control groups were composed of pastors, associate ministers and lay persons. Additionally, there was no financial cost to the research and control group members.

The New Day Baptist Church was a central location for most of the group members, and the location was a great asset to the project. The table, chairs, and size of the room made it comfortable and conducive to learning. Also, the congregation of New Day Baptist Church was willing to make accommodations for the space and time demands of the project.

Weaknesses

The greatest hurdle that I faced was convincing twelve people to commit for the duration of the project. I realized from the outset that the human resources required for this project demanded great sacrifice on behalf of the participants. There was a built in incentive with the free meal during the retreat, but I discovered that it still was not enough. The project lasted for five weeks and with the exception of two persons there was excellent participation. I asked participants to give up a portion of their Saturday for five consecutive weeks. I felt the pressure of losing some members if I skipped a week. However, as much as people seemed to enjoy the project, I noticed exhaustion toward the end probably due to the fact that this was scheduled during the holiday season. I had a no-show for the control group during the retreat exercise. I had a member of the research group who could not attend one of the classes due to a prior commitment. Given that most of the members of the research group and the control group are ministers with extremely busy schedules, I was held to very rigid time constraints. There were times when the project would benefit from additional dialogue, but due to the constraints, I always dismissed class at the one-hour mark. Although the project was very rewarding, I felt a little rushed at times for reasons I could not control. I especially felt the pinch for time during the retreat when we practiced the activities to reduce stress which were vital to my project. I had to utilize the limited time that I had to demonstrate and allow them to practice.

Another weakness was my ability to get all the documents (surveys, journals, etc.) back in an organized in a timely manner. One of the research group members hand delivered a survey, some mailed materials, and some scanned and sent them via email.

Although the gathering of documents did not work out the way I had envisioned, by the time I got around to analyzing data weeks later, I had no idea who had given me materials since none of them were identified by name.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Biblical Foundation

My love of serving as pastor for nearly thirty years and my desired preservation in ministry led me to do a project on how to reduce stress in ministry for pastors. I recognized that there are positive stressors in ministry, but my focus was on how to cope with the fallout from the negative stressors in ministry. I am constantly reminded of the tragic stories of pastors quitting the ministry, divorcing due to the inability to manage their stress, or succumbing to a premature death. Once I selected a tentative project topic, I looked for a biblical foundation in texts from the Old and New Testaments.

My Old Testament search led me to the creation story in which the Word informs us that the Lord worked for six days, and on the seventh day He rested. It was clear to me that within that text was the idea of the Sabbath. Additionally, I was led to the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 20:8) which admonished us to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. With the help of my project advisor, I was able to craft my final project topic: Practicing Sabbath to reduce stress in ministry. If time had permitted, I would have included humor, boundaries, exercise, and rhythm as additional means for managing ministerial stress.

Living out the Sabbath as a lifestyle helped the Jewish community to balance a lifestyle of work and rest around the strict interpretation of what was considered work and what was not work. Furthermore, from the Old Testament, I cited texts from the writings of the prophets Nehemiah and Jeremiah to show the presence of the Sabbath and the struggle to adhere to it during their time in history. In the New Testament, my biblical

foundations came from the gospel of Mark 2:27 where Jesus reminds us that the Sabbath was made for man and not the other way around. Second, Hebrews 4:9 indicates that the writer makes it clear that the Sabbath has a place in the lives of Christians. My whole argument is that the Sabbath as a lifestyle is applicable to Christians today.

Historical Precedent

From the patristic period, I share the writings of a third century theologian named Tertullian. Tertullian continues the struggle of whether or not to take the observance of the Sabbath literally. During the second and third centuries, he denounced the literal Sabbath and gave evidence that Christians had abandoned observing the Sabbath for observing Sunday as the day of worship.

My discussion of the protestant reformation beginning in the sixteenth century espouses the beliefs of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and the Puritans. Both Luther and Calvin rejected the notion that Christians have to observe the Sabbath. The puritans believed in strict observance of the Sabbath.

I selected Toney Jones and Dorothy Bass for my practical theologians. Both Jones and Bass believe that the Sabbath lifestyle has a place in twenty-first century Christian ministries.

Critical Analysis

The critical evaluation demonstrated that the courses that I taught on stress, prayer, silence, and feasting and fellowshiping in the context of a Sabbath lifestyle did have an impact on yielding lower overall post-stress test scores when compared to the control group's overall post-stress test scores. The research and control groups were similar in their pre-stress test scores which gave me a clearer measurement of the impact

that the classes had on the outcome. The control group had one group member who tested outside of the mean as a highly stressed person in the pre-stress test results. The results indicated that the activities alone are effective in reducing stress, but practicing Sabbath has a greater impact on reducing stress.

Both the research and control groups' evaluations showed that the instructor was effective, and the course objectives were achieved. The journal results showed that for each of the four courses, there was a positive reaction to the overall experience among the research and control groups. Additionally, the journal results demonstrated that there were no members of the research and control groups who were resistant or despondent to the process. The results of the progressive relaxation techniques had more neutral results than any other activity. Each of the activities will increase its effectiveness with additional practice.

Practicing Sabbath does reduce stress among pastors in ministry!

Missteps

Initially, I had selected a day of the week and time but had to change that plan to meet the needs of the participants.

The retreat was where I brought the research and control group together to do the activities that grew out of the four courses. It was the first time that the two groups had been together. Additionally, it was the first time the control group members had met each other. I observed fairly quickly that rapport was an issue. In other words, I had a room filled with strangers, and they were expected to perform activities effectively in a short period of time. A better situation would have been to find a way for the control group to get acquainted prior to the retreat or perhaps have a separate retreat for the

research group and another retreat for the control group. Furthermore, the retreat occurred on a cold and windy day with a wintry mix of weather. Competing with family outings and various church programs during the Christmas season could have been the reason for the one no-show.

It was naïve of me to assume that the research and control groups could make time for a retreat forty minutes outside of Spartanburg, South Carolina at the end of four consecutive weeks of courses. The members of the research and control groups had superb attitudes over the duration of the entire project.

The rubric that I devised to evaluate the activity on feasting and fellowshiping was handed out without explanation. Although I could make out the results, the instructions were not as clear as they should have been.

Another blunder occurred when I was supposed to open the retreat with an ice breaker to set the desired atmosphere. I found myself approximately twelve minutes into the next stage of the retreat before it dawned on me that I had omitted the ice breaker. I immediately stopped and made the group aware of my omission and inserted the humor. Thankfully, the humor worked, but the lapse was noted in one of the journals.

In hindsight, I believe that my surveys could have been focused a little better to flesh out the answers to whether or not the research group understood Sabbath context. Understanding the Sabbath lifestyle was key to my project.

Another thing in my project that I could have done to improve my work was to demonstrate what the Sabbath looks like in a Christian context. There may be a disconnect between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law as presented in the unedited paper. The Jewish Sabbath will never be a carbon copy in a Christian context; therefore, I should have given an example of what the nuance would look like. It is

possible to miss the Sabbath even though the Sabbath prohibitions are being observed. Lauren F. Winner in her book *Mudhouse Sabbath* expresses, “The difference between the Jewish Sabbath and most Christian Sundays is that the Jewish Sabbath is a true cessation from the rhythms of work and world, a time wholly set apart, and perhaps above all a sense that the point of Shabbat, the orientation of Shabbat is toward God.”¹⁰⁴ Winner espouses that during the observance of Sabbath one must open his or her heart to God.¹⁰⁵ The Sabbath’s end can never be self.

The following are examples of what the Sabbath lifestyle would look like in a Christian context: It is a sin to worry on the Sabbath. Therefore, as Christians, we can make concerted efforts not to worry and focus our minds on pleasant thoughts. Cooking is not allowed on the Sabbath therefore Christians can make a concerted effort to prepare meals on Saturday in preparation for Sunday’s dinner. The Oneg Sabbath is a Jewish celebration in honor of the Sabbath that takes place on Friday evening or Saturday afternoon. Christians can mimic the Oneg Sabbath by having a repast following an evening worship service. Jewish prayers are recited out of a prayer book called a siddur. Prayers in a Christian context can be accomplished by reciting prayer from a prepared manuscript as opposed to offering an extemporaneous prayer. Practicing Jews observe dietary laws by eating kosher foods. Christian can honor God through their food intake by eating less sugar, carbohydrates, and fat which are generally harmful to the body in excessive amounts.

My Personal Growth as a Pastor

¹⁰⁴ Lauren F. Winner, *Mudhouse Sabbath: An Invitation to a Life of Spiritual Discipline*, (Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 1989), 10.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 4.

I approached the great challenge of earning a doctorate degree with great enthusiasm, and that enthusiasm remains even until now. My experience in cohort three was most rewarding. It appeared that there were classes when each student had his or her chance at being cut to shreds through the interactive discussion directed by the professor. When my day came, the critique was painful, but I grew a great deal as a result of the process. Part of what I learned was how to push back using knowledge. I learned an extraordinary amount from Dr. Dickens and the members of the cohort.

Refining my theology to a point of developing a definitive pastoral theology was one of my most memorable exercises. Exploring the ins and outs of reality therapy and the family system was second to being the most impressionable. The support that our cohort offered was necessary for my success in the program. I knew that working on a project away from class was potentially a lonely journey. Our group was in constant contact monitoring, motivating, and encouraging each other. I had additional great human resources such as my wife, family, friends and church members. Being a student at Gardner-Webb University has been a refreshing experience for me as well. I have enjoyed the relationship with faculty, and my advisor Dr. Robert Canoy in particular has been amazingly helpful. Dr. Jim Whitlow was extremely encouraging and helped to focus my thinking on my project ideas. The cohort professor required me to read what I thought at the time was an unreasonable amount of material, but looking back I realize how much better prepared I am to do ministry.

The subject matter of my project has been extremely energizing for me. My experience in the cohort reminded me of the importance of pursuing remedies for stressed pastors. My assertiveness, self-awareness and emotional quotient have increased over the course of this work. There is rarely a conversation that I can have with a minister for an

extended period of time before anticipating that the conversation will eventually be about managing stress in ministry. Due to my project, I am positioned to share some pertinent and fresh information that I believe can help pastors better cope with their anxiety. My project is relevant enough to transfer to other disciplines. All of humanity can learn better stress management techniques, but the professions in the caregiving field are at greater risk for burnout.

Another area of personal growth for me has been the experience of doing research at this level. Prior to this experience, like most students, I had done my share of research, but I was still intimidated by it. I have the confidence now to do scholarly research going forward. Learning to maneuver through the resources at the John R. Dover Memorial Library was an exciting accomplishment as well. Also, I have accumulated a large number of reference books for my personal library. This project has inspired me to continue to delve into the matter of coping with stress. I believe that stress is the Achilles' heel of ministry, and there are few conditions or disorders that rival its destruction of self and family.

The whole idea to lifelong learning was reignited through the experience of this project. As I bring this project to an end, I am contemplating where to apply my academic thirst next. For now, I want to take a Sabbath moment and celebrate the grace of God and appreciate the faculty of Gardner-Webb University in helping me to get this far.

Future

As I move forward, I plan to expand my reading related to the Sabbath lifestyle and increase my expertise on the subject matter. I will increase the number of books in

my library on the Sabbath. Although my project was designed to specifically address stress reduction among ministers, I will adjust my focus to reach anyone who struggles in this area. I want to publish a book on practicing Sabbath to reduce stress. I will position myself to speak at churches and businesses concerning strategies for reducing anxiety. I would like to increase my knowledge on the physiological effects of stress. Rather than focusing on the clinical aspects as I did in my project, going forward I will focus on the biological aspects of stress. Moreover, I want to lead conferences on strategies for alleviating stress. In the true sense of the Sabbath lifestyle, I hope that my work will bring joy, peace, and tranquility to all of those with whom I am blessed to share my knowledge with.

Appendix A

The Strain Response Inventory

Pretest/Posttest

Adapted from John D. Adams's survey "The Strain Response"

Scale:

0 = Never

1 = Infrequently

2 = Frequently

3 = Regularly

Strain Rating #	Strain
_____	1. Eat too much
_____	2. Drink too much alcohol
_____	3. Smoke more than usual
_____	4. Feel tense, uptight, and fidgety
_____	5. Feel depressed or remorseful
_____	6. Like myself less
_____	7. Have difficulty going to sleep or staying asleep
_____	8. Feel restless and unable to concentrate
_____	9. Have decreased interest in sex
_____	10. Have increased interest in sex
_____	11. Have loss of appetite
_____	12. Feel tired/low energy
_____	13. Feel irritable
_____	14. Think about suicide
_____	15. Become less communicative
_____	16. Feel disoriented or overwhelmed
_____	17. Have difficulty getting up in the morning
_____	18. Have headaches
_____	19. Have upset stomach
_____	20. Have sweaty and/or trembling hands
_____	21. Have shortness of breath and sighing
_____	22. Let things slide
_____	23. Misdirected anger
_____	24. Feel "unhealthy"
_____	25. Feel time-bound, anxious about too much to do in too little time
_____	26. Use prescription drugs to relax
_____	27. Use medication for high blood pressure
_____	28. Depend on recreational drugs to relax
_____	29. Have anxiety about the future

- _____ 30. Have back problems
_____ 31. Unable to clear up a cold, running nose, sore throat, cough,
infection

_____ TOTAL SCORE (Add all your numbers.)

Interpreting Your Score

0-20 Below-average strain in your life

21-30 Stress starting to show its effect in your life. You are living life near your stress threshold, at times crossing it.

31-40 Above-average strain. Stress is having a very destructive effect on your life. You are living a good portion of your life beyond your stress threshold.

40+ Unless you do something soon to alleviate your stress, more serious illness will follow.

Appendix B

Course Evaluation

Course Name: _____ Instructor _____

Please complete the course evaluation by assigning each statement a number corresponding to your opinion. Place an X in the column that corresponds with your rating.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS EVALUATION! I wish to get objective, anonymous responses from each student. By your remaining anonymous, I can get a more accurate impression of how you felt about the course.

Rating System:

1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree 3-Unsure 4-Disagree 5-Disagree Strongly

Teaching Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.					
Participation and interaction were encouraged.					
The topics covered were relevant to me.					
The content was organized and easy to follow.					
The training experience will be useful in my work.					
Assignments given for class interested me.					
The course provided me with many opportunities to interact and communicate with the instructor and others.					
The course workload and requirements were appropriate for the course level.					
The course improved my ability to critically analyze ideas, evidence and different points of view.					
The course design was logical, consistent, efficient and easy to navigate.					

Appendix C

Teacher Evaluation

Date: _____

Title and location of training: _____

Teacher: _____

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements below:

	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.					
Participation and interaction were encouraged.					
The topics covered were relevant to me.					
The content was organized and easy to follow.					
The materials distributed were helpful.					
This training experience will be useful in my work.					
The teacher was knowledgeable about the topics.					
The teacher was well prepared.					
The training objectives were met.					

Appendix D

Guidelines for Journal

Reporting, Reacting and Reflecting: Guidelines for Journal Writing

Reporting describes a journal submission that summarizes what you heard, learned or experienced. While reporting serves a purpose- it provides a summary of what happened that will be helpful to you personally for a number of reasons – it is less helpful to a reader who is trying to determine how the experience affected you and your thinking.

Reacting describes a journal submission that summarizes your response to what you heard, learned or experienced.

Reflecting describes a journal submission that connects your prior assumptions to what you heard, learned or experienced during the presentations, activities and discussions. The key is to convey the impact of the experience. Doing so effectively requires that you are aware of your own assumptions and expectations.

Appendix E

Test Session 1 Stress: Recognizing Physical Danger Signs

Name _____ Date _____

1. List three stressors you face in ministry and explain why you consider them stressors. (30 pts.)

2. How can stress lead to burnout? (10 pts.)

3. What are two coping skills you can use when handling stress in various situations? (60pts.)

Church: _____

Home: _____

Appendix F

Test Session 2 How Prayer Helps to Overcome Stress

Name _____ Date _____

1. Define prayer.

2. Write a prayer.

3. List three ways to remain focused while praying.

4. How have your ten-minute prayer sessions helped reduce stress?

Appendix G

Test Session 3 Feasting and Fellowship Rubric

Name _____ Date _____

Points	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 Excellent	Score
Number of Guests	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	7 or 8	
Menu	Chips and Dip	Hotdogs and Hamburgers	3 course meal	4 course meal with appetizers and desserts	
Decorations	None	Paper and/or plastic ware	Tablecloth and China	Themed party	
Entertainment	No music or activities	Some music	Ice breaker Music	Ice Breakers Music Games	
Ambience	Interruptions allowed	No Phone Calls	No calls No texts No TV	No interruptions No Complaints	

Total _____

Scale

18 -20 = A (Excellent)

14 – 17 = (Good)

10 -13 = (Fair)

5 -9 = (Poor)

1 -4 = (Stressed)

Appendix H

Test Session 4 Silence

Name _____ Date _____

1. Explain how processing your rebuttal before the speaker completes his or her thoughts adversely affects the process of communication. (25%)

2. Describe the emotional benefits of being in a quiet, tranquil place. (25%)

3. State an occasion when taking timeout would have reduced your stress. (25%)

4. Identify sounds in the environment (day or night) that are usually only heard when you are silent. (25%)

Appendix I

Questionnaire on Deep Breathing

This questionnaire is to be administered after practicing deep breathing exercise for a minimum of two weeks.

Please complete the questionnaire by assigning each statement a number corresponding to your opinion. Place an X in the column that corresponds to your rating.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE! I wish to get objective, anonymous responses from each student. By your remaining anonymous, I can get a more accurate impression of how you felt about deep breathing.

Rating System:

1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree 3-Unsure 4-Disagree 5-Disagree Strongly

Deep Breathing Practice Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
I have noticed a decrease in my heart rate after practicing deep breathing.					
My thinking is clearer after practicing deep breathing.					
I have noticed a reduction in my anxiety level after practicing deep breathing.					
I have noticed a positive change in my attitude after practicing deep breathing.					
My self-awareness has increased after practicing deep breathing.					
My awareness of others has increased after practicing deep breathing.					
I have noticed that I have more patience as a result of practicing deep breathing.					
I have better impulse control after practicing deep breathing.					
I can see myself practicing deep breathing daily as a part of my routine schedule.					
As a result of practicing deep breathing, I feel better.					

Appendix J

Questionnaire on How Prayer Reduces Stress in Ministry

This questionnaire is to be administered after practicing prayer to reduce stress for a minimum of three times within two weeks.

Please complete the questionnaire by assigning each statement a number corresponding to your opinion. Place an X in the column that corresponds to your rating.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE! I wish to get objective, anonymous responses from each student. By your remaining anonymous, I can get a more accurate impression of how you felt about reducing stress using prayer.

Rating System:

1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree 3-Unsure 4-Disagree 5-Disagree Strongly

Practicing Prayer Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
When stressed, I am motivated to pray.					
My prayers are focused on my stressors.					
Praying gives me an immediate release of stress.					
Practicing prayer makes me calmer.					
Prayer gives me a peace of mind.					
When prayers are answered, I feel better.					
Practicing prayer reduces my guilt.					
Practicing prayer reduces my obsessive compulsive behavior.					
When I pray, I am willing to accept God's will.					
Prayer reduces my fears.					

Please check the appropriate box.

Pastor

Associate Minister

Leader

Lay Person

APPENDIX K

Questionnaire on How Feasting and Fellowshiping Reduce Stress in Ministry

Please complete the questionnaire by assigning each statement a number corresponding to your opinion. Place an X in the column that corresponds to your rating.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE! I wish to get objective, anonymous responses from each student. By your remaining anonymous, I can get a more accurate impression of how you felt about reducing stress using feasting and fellowshiping.

Rating System:

1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree 3-Unsure 4-Disagree 5-Disagree Strongly

Practicing Feasting and Fellowshiping Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
When stressed, feasting and fellowshiping make me feel better physically.					
Feasting and fellowshiping allow me time and space to share my problems and concerns.					
Feasting and fellowshiping cause me to relax.					
Feasting and fellowshiping give me a peace of mind.					
Feasting and fellowshiping reduce my feelings of loneliness.					
When stressed, feasting and fellowshiping make me feel better emotionally.					
Feasting and fellowshiping reduce my negative thoughts.					
Feasting and fellowshiping help to build my support system.					
Feasting and fellowshiping help me to redirect my focus to my own problems.					
Feasting and fellowshiping reduce my stress from being around undesirable people.					

Please check the appropriate box.

Pastor

Associate Minister

Leader

Lay Person

Appendix L

Questionnaire on Silence

This questionnaire is to be administered after practicing intentional acts of silence for a minimum of three times within two weeks.

Please complete the questionnaire by assigning each statement a number corresponding to your opinion. Place an X in the column that corresponds to your rating.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE! I wish to get objective, anonymous responses from each student. By your remaining anonymous, I can get a more accurate impression of how you felt about practicing intentional acts of silence.

Rating System:

1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree 3-Unsure 4-Disagree 5-Disagree Strongly

Intentional Acts of Silence Practice Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
During the acts of silence, my stress level decreased.					
I experienced a sense of peace during my acts of silence.					
During the acts of silence, I felt an increase in motivation.					
During the acts of silence, I became more goal directed.					
I became less problem centered during the acts of silence.					
During the acts of silence, I felt a sense of achievement.					
My self-image was better during the acts of silence.					
My self-worth was increased as I practiced the acts of silence.					
There was a decrease of fear as I practiced the acts of silence.					
As a result of practicing acts of silence, I placed smaller value on struggle.					

Please check the appropriate box.

Pastor

Associate Minister

Leader

Lay Person

Appendix M

Questionnaire on Progressive Relaxation

This questionnaire is to be administered after practicing progressive relaxation for a minimum of three times within two weeks.

Please complete the questionnaire by assigning each statement a number corresponding to your opinion. Place an X in the column that corresponds to your rating.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE! I wish to get objective, anonymous responses from each student. By your remaining anonymous, I can get a more accurate impression of how you felt about practicing progressive relaxation.

Rating System:

1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree 3-Unsure 4-Disagree 5-Disagree Strongly

Practicing Progressive Relaxation Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my forehead feels relaxed.					
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my neck feels relaxed.					
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my jaw feels relaxed.					
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my shoulders feel relaxed.					
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my torso feels relaxed.					
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my arms feel relaxed.					
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my hands feel relaxed.					
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my legs feel relaxed.					
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my feet and toes feel relaxed.					
After practicing progressive relaxation techniques, my mind is less tense.					

Please check the appropriate box.

Pastor

Associate Minister

Leader

Lay Person

Appendix N

Church-Research Site Evaluation

Please complete the questionnaire by assigning each statement a number corresponding to your opinion. Place an X in the column that corresponds to your rating.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE! I wish to get objective, anonymous responses from each student. By your remaining anonymous, I can get a more accurate impression of how you felt about the research site facility.

Rating System:

1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree 3-Unsure 4-Disagree 5-Disagree Strongly

Church-Research Site Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
The distance from your home to the church was reasonable.					
The room was clean.					
The ambiance (atmosphere) was conducive to research/learning.					
The restrooms were accessible.					
The water fountain was accessible.					
The chairs were spaced adequately for optimal learning.					
The chairs were comfortable.					
The temperature was comfortable.					
The church-worship site was conducive to research/learning.					
The other activities occurring simultaneously in the church did not impede/disturb your ability to concentrate and learn.					

Please check the appropriate box.

Pastor

Associate Minister

Leader

Lay Person

Appendix O

Symposium

Practicing Sabbath Symposium Curriculum for Research Group

Session 1: Pretest/Stress: Recognizing Physical Danger Signs and a Guide to Avoid Physical Burnout

Date: Week 1

Day: Thursday Time: 6:00 pm- 7:00 pm

Skills/Competencies

Students should be able to:

- Identify stressors in ministry
- Make the connection between stress and burnout
- Develop coping skills for reducing stress in ministry
- Complete session 1 assessment

Resources:

- *Burnout in Ministry- How to Recognize It ...How to Avoid It* by Brooks R. Faulkner
- *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* by Marva J. Dawn
- *The Holy BIBLE* Elijah Distressed I Kings 19:1-18

Assessments:

- Pre-test
- The Strain Response Inventory-Appendix A
- Qualitative Assessment
- Journal-Appendix D
- Quantitative Assessment:
- Questionnaire-Course Evaluation- Likert Scale - Appendix B
- Questionnaire-Teacher Evaluation-Likert Scale-Appendix C
- Session 1 Test-Appendix E

Session 2: How Prayer Helps to Overcome Stress

Date: Week 2

Day: Thursday Time: 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Skill/Competencies

Students will be able to:

- Define prayer
- Demonstrate how to pray
- Determine how to avoid distraction when praying
- Communicate how prayer helps to alleviate stress
- Complete session assessments

Resources

- *Spiritual Direction* by Henri Nouwen
- *The Holy Bible* Jesus Praying at Gethsemane-Mark 14:32-42
- *The Sense of the Call* by Marva J. Dawn

Assessments

- Qualitative assessment
- Journal: Appendix D
- Quantitative assessment
- Questionnaire: Course Evaluation- Likert Scale - Appendix B
- Questionnaire: Teacher Evaluation-Likert Scale - Appendix C
- Session 2 Test-Appendix F

Session 3 Silence

Date: Week 4

Day: Thursday Time: 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Skill/Competencies

Students will be able to:

- Consciously (intentionally) be silent as a discipline of active listening
- Use silence as a solace
- Use silence as a means of restoration
- Use silence (timeout) to reduce stress in ministry
- Discover how silence increases awareness (emotional intelligence)

Resources

- *Sabbath...Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in our Busy Lives* by Wayne Muller
- *A Book of Silence* by Sara Maitland

- The Holy Bible The Lesson of the silence of Lazarus at the table John 12: 1-10
- *Silent Compassion* by Richard Rohr

Assessments

- Qualitative assessment
- Journal-Appendix D
- Quantitative assessment
- Questionnaire: Course Evaluation- Likert Scale-Appendix B
- Questionnaire: Teacher Evaluation-Likert Scale-Appendix C
- Session 6 Test-Appendix H

Session 4: Feasting and Fellowship

Date: Week 3

Day: Thursday Time: 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Skill/Competencies

Students will be able to:

- Identify the importance of feasting in relationship building
- Observe how feasting prompts communication
- Examine how feasting lowers defense mechanisms
- Determine how feasting and fellowship reduce stress
- Complete the assessments

Resource:

- *Sabbath- Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in our Busy Lives* by Wayne Muller
- *The Feast of Israel* by Bruce Scott
- *The Sense of the Call* by Marva J. Dawn

Assessments:

Qualitative

- Journal-Appendix D

Quantitative

- Questionnaire- Course Evaluation-Likert Scale- Appendix B
- Questionnaire- Teacher Evaluation-Likert Scale-Appendix C
- Session 3 Test-Appendix G

Session 5 Retreat for Research Group/Posttest

Activities/Action Items

Session 1 Stress:

- Relaxation Exercises: Deep breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Session 2 Prayer:

- Discipline Prayer time for 10 minutes

Session 3 Feasting & Fellowshiping:

The research group and the control group will independently share a Sabbath meal.

Session 4 Silence:

One hour of silence

Assessments:

- Posttest
 - Qualitative assessment:
 - Journal-Appendix D
- Quantitative assessments:
- Questionnaire on Deep Breathing-Appendix I
 - Questionnaire on How Prayer Reduces Stress in Ministry-Appendix J
 - Questionnaire on How Feasting & Fellowshiping Reduce Stress in Ministry-Appendix K
 - Questionnaire on Silence-Appendix L
 - Questionnaire for Practicing Progressive Relaxation-Appendix M

Practicing Sabbath Symposium Curriculum for Control Group

Session 1 Pre-test

Session 2 Retreat for Control Group/Post-test

Activities/Action Items

Session 1 Stress:

Relaxation Exercises: Deep breathing

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Session 2 Prayer:

Discipline Prayer time for 10 minutes

Session 3 Feasting & Fellowshiping:

The research group and control group will independently share a Sabbath meal.

Session 4 Silence:

One hour of silence

Assessments:

Posttest

Qualitative assessment:

Journal-Appendix D

Quantitative assessments:

Questionnaire on Deep Breathing-Appendix I

Questionnaire on How Prayer Reduces Stress in Ministry-Appendix J

Questionnaire on How Feasting & Fellowshiping Reduce Stress in Ministry-Appendix
K

Questionnaire on Silence-Appendix L

Questionnaire for Practicing Progressive Relaxation-Appendix M

Church Research Site Evaluation-Appendix N

Symposium-Appendix O

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