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The Use of the Jesus Prayer in the Parish Setting  
and Its Relationship to Perceptions of Well-being

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An abstract of  
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Candler School of Theology  
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## **Abstract**

### **The Use of the Jesus Prayer in the Parish Setting and Its Relationship to Perceptions of Well-being By Alex M. Kouri**

Orthodox Christianity is a faith developed within a therapeutic paradigm. According to Orthodox theology, sin is not understood as a crime to be punished but rather a wound to be healed. Many disorders described in the DSM-IV (such as various anxiety and depressive disorders) are seen in the Orthodox Church as consequences of a wounded nous (the faculty of the soul that relates with God). Spiritual practices have developed over the course of many centuries that function as tools for healing the nous. The Jesus Prayer is one such spiritual practice. Paradoxically, however, the Jesus Prayer (as well as many other spiritual practices) is oftentimes unknown in the contemporary parish community. Every Orthodox Christian congregation has people who suffer from a low perception of mental, spiritual, and interpersonal well-being. Yet the spiritual practices that may ameliorate these feelings are not practiced.

This study examines the role that the Jesus Prayer could play in the lives of average parishioners who dedicate themselves to this spiritual practice. In particular, it investigates the relationship of the Jesus Prayer with perceptions of spiritual, mental, and social well-being. Nineteen parishioners took part in an eight week study which included classes on the meaning and practice of the Jesus Prayer. They also committed themselves for the duration of the study to practice the Jesus Prayer on a daily basis. Quantitative surveys were used before and after the study along with a qualitative open ended question. The results represent not only a confirmation of the efficacy of the Jesus Prayer but also its potential within a parish setting.

Additionally, the study explores the relationship of spiritual practices such as the Jesus Prayer with western therapeutic models such as object relations theory and the writings of Donald Winnicott in particular. Thus the study has implications far beyond the Orthodox Church as it may serve as a positive and welcome encounter between the secular and the mystical, and of psychotherapeutic methods and spiritual practices.



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## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

### **Significance of the problem - The lack of an integration of spirituality into daily life**

Orthodox Christian spiritual practices integrate the body, mind and soul. Yet in many places, these same spiritual practices have fallen into disuse. (Krindatch 2008, 155) This has led to a disintegration or split of body, mind and soul as well as a separation of orthodoxy from orthopraxy.<sup>1</sup> This disintegration can have negative results in a person's (or community's) sense of well-being. Reclamation of spiritual practices, such as the Jesus Prayer, can contribute to the healing of these splits and a greater perception of well-being.

This paper considers the spiritual practice of hesychasm as experienced by Orthodox Christians. Hesychasm is a Greek word meaning quiet or stillness. The hesychast is one who is devoted to the use of the Jesus Prayer and to developing an experiential spiritual life rather than leaning on the intellect and discursive thinking. (Ware 1997, 64) Sometimes known as Prayer of the Heart, hesychastic prayer involves a bringing of the mind into the heart with strict attention and participation of the body. It is practiced by Orthodox Christians in monasteries as well as in the "world." Hesychastic prayer is known primarily through the use of the "Jesus Prayer." This Prayer was

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<sup>1</sup> A recent survey of Orthodox Christian laity (Krindatch 2008) revealed that while 98% of those surveyed believed that the Resurrection of Christ was important to be a "good" Orthodox Christian and 97% believed that recognizing the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist was important to be a "good" Orthodox Christian, only 72% believed that helping the poor was important, 50% felt that spiritual practices was important, and only 40% believed that Sunday worship was important.

popularized in the West with the publication of *The Way of a Pilgrim* (anonymous Russian work) and subsequently *Franny and Zooey* by J. D. Salinger.<sup>2</sup> The prayer in its full form is, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” A simpler common variant of the prayer is, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.” In practice the prayer is repeated many times.

The Jesus Prayer is an example of a spiritual practice common to traditional Orthodox Christian spirituality. Yet it is not observed in the contemporary church as often as the literature on Orthodoxy might suggest. In fact, many spiritual practices in our postmodern age have fallen into disuse. This is manifested in a lack of integration for Orthodox Christians of faith and practice. By examining the significance of the Jesus Prayer, I hope to shed light on the broader topic of the role of spiritual practices in the lives of Orthodox Christians in general.

I grew up in an affluent Orthodox Christian church community in New England. Our church was composed of primarily Americans of Middle-eastern descent. The language used in our services was a mixture of English, Arabic, and Greek. Outside of Sunday services two or three times a month, there was little if any expression of our faith in the home. Extended family members who were members of our church seemed to have the same experience. It was not until I was in college that I discovered the wealth of spiritual practices that Orthodox Christians are encouraged to observe. In my case, I

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<sup>2</sup> *The Way of the Pilgrim* is a story about a 19<sup>th</sup> century wanderer in Russia who desires to pray unceasingly through the practice of the Jesus Prayer. It becomes the focus in “Franny,” a short story found in Salinger’s *Franny and Zooey*. Franny says that with the prayer, “You get to see God.” (39) Salinger’s work popularized *The Way of the Pilgrim* exposing the Jesus Prayer to non-monastic and non-Orthodox Christian seekers for which the prayer had previously been unknown. (Holder 2010, 300)

discovered this through reading. I had never heard of the Jesus Prayer, a daily prayer rule, the practice of having an icon corner in the home, or seasonal fasting periods in preparation for feastsdays. It was not until I began to explore these spiritual practices, and others, that I found that there were people who had kept these home traditions and found meaning in them.

As a priest, I have had similar experiences in the congregations I have pastored. It seems that for those that attend a Sunday worship service but do not integrate their faith with other spiritual practices, they have put faith in one small compartment of life. This compartment may be cultural or intellectual. Orthodox Christianity is not meant to be a cultural obligation or a system of ideas but rather a way of life.<sup>3</sup> When faith is separated from life, the local parish loses vital spiritual energy and direction. Christian faith that goes beyond simple profession will be grounded in certain activities. Anderson and Foley describe this in their work, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*.

The myth of Sunday requires the parable of Monday; the proclamation of the divine story requires its integration with real human stories; and the public display of Sunday services demands attention to the cares of everyday life to be a transforming ritual moment. (Anderson and Foley 1998, 161)

When integration between faith and practice, orthodoxy and orthopraxy, does not occur, fullness of the faith, vitality, and wholeness will be absent. The church ceases to be a place of healing and becomes a museum instead. Many who make the decision to

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<sup>3</sup> Petros Vassiliadis (2003, 88) writes “A true theologian as understood in later Byzantine thought was for the most part the one who saw and experienced the content of theology. Theological inquiry and insight were considered to belong not to the intellect alone, though rigorous thinking of course is not excluded from the process, but to the “eyes of the Spirit”, which place the whole human being – intellect, emotions and even senses – in contact with the divine existence. In Orthodox Christianity the “truth” is inseparable from the “communion.” Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that Orthodox Christianity is a way of life, hence the importance of its liturgical tradition. It is exactly for this reason that the Liturgy plays, such a prominent role in the theology of almost all Orthodox Christians in modern times.”



work with a therapist are looking for answers to spiritual questions. (Walsh 2003, 24) They struggle with purpose, meaning, fear, and relationships. It is important that the Church, which identifies herself as a spiritual center, is able to embrace these questions and people.

I was talking to a colleague of mine recently who pastors a community in a major city. He has not received his stipend in several months. The community is behind on their utility bills and insurance payments. Attendance is low. The Ladies Organization and the Teen Group are floundering. The priest who originally came to the community with excitement is struggling to keep up his morale. Parishioners who want to find comfort, strength, and guidance through their faith are becoming less and less committed to the parish and to its needs. This ought not to be a poor parish, however. And the priest is simply the current pastor in a succession of pastors that have been through the parish. In fact, the community has recently finished its multimillion dollar building project, and the church is one of the most beautiful I have ever seen.

How does a house of worship of this magnitude get built with neither the money nor the prayers to sustain it? Perhaps part of the problem is found in a lack of integration of faith and practice, orthodoxy and orthopraxy. As long as faith remains simply an idea, a concept, defined by power, clergy or buildings, a topic for conversation and perhaps debate, it can remain split off from our daily activities and therefore any real meaning. One can imagine himself or herself as a pillar of the church and ignore it at the same time. A person might be able to explain some of the basic Christian teachings without allowing them to impact their day to day decisions. Without integrating the Christian faith with Christian practice, this divide will continue to exist. Abba Moses said,

If a man's deeds are not in harmony with his prayer, he labors in vain. The brother said, 'What is this harmony between practice and prayer?' The old man said, 'We should no longer do those things against which we pray. (Ward 1984, 141-142)

John Caputo, in his work, *What would Jesus Deconstruct* (2007) writes:

But there are two churches, the Big, visible one on top, with bishops, buildings, power, and photocopying machines, and another one underneath, down in the underbelly of the kingdom of God, in the streets... (Caputo 2007, 119)

The Jesus Prayer is practiced in the second church, the one underneath. It is practiced quietly but with a force that can bring change, first to ourselves, and, if to ourselves, then to the world.

## **Practice of the Jesus Prayer as a possible aid in the resolution of the problem**

### **The Jesus Prayer as a Vehicle for Integration**

By focusing the question on a particular spiritual practice, I am examining the role that spiritual practices can play in the lives of contemporary Orthodox Christians. The spiritual practice of the Jesus Prayer was chosen for several reasons.

- It is very accessible. A person can practice the Jesus Prayer when alone or in the company of others. It can be practiced in times of solitude or commotion. The prayer is short enough that memorization is not difficult. The text of the prayer is flexible enough to adapt to different people. In short, it is always with you.
- Though different from meditation practices of eastern religions, there are some common elements. For instance, the repetitions of a phrase, or the cutting off of imagination, are also found in Eastern Yoga and Sufi practices. While Orthodox writers would note the similarities are merely

external (Mathewes-Green 2009, 122), interest in eastern meditation has created some interest in the Jesus Prayer. (Matus 2010)

- The Practice of the Jesus Prayer has become more popular in Christian Traditions outside of the Orthodox Church. Several books from the Roman Catholic Tradition as well as the Anglican and Episcopal tradition have been published on the Jesus Prayer. The brevity and simplicity of the prayer allows people from a variety of Christian traditions to embrace it. (Maloney 2008; Cleary 2007; Ramon and Barrington-Ward 2004; Vogel 1982)
- It is an ancient prayer that has withstood the test of time. Christian prayers like the Jesus prayer were practiced in the early Church. In the fifth century, the psalms were used as repetitive prayers. (Cassian 1966, 132) Shortly afterwards the Jesus Prayer became a common formula. .
- This prayer involves both the intellect and body, integrating them in order to allow the prayer descend into the heart (Theophan the Recluse 1966, 183). Integration lifts up the value of both soul and body while refraining from dualistic tendencies of elevating the soul over the body. Orthodox Christians emphasize that salvation is for the whole person, soul and body. The integration of these elements in prayer may contribute to a greater integration of the person in general bringing about a growing sense of well-being. By integrating soul and body, we can more easily see the need for integration of faith and practice, the spiritual and the practical, orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

### *Integration of body and soul*

Wholeness and well-being certainly extend into the physical body. Gregory Palamas, a fourteenth century monk from Mount Athos and later Archbishop of Thessalonica, became known, among other things, for the controversy with the philosopher Varlaam regarding contemplative prayer and the knowledge of God. Varlaam taught that one can only learn about God through intellectual means. Gregory taught that a person can experience the energies of God through the senses and thus have an experiential knowledge of God, in other words, a real relationship. Varlaam was shocked that Gregory's teaching involved both the body and the passive aspects of the soul (emotions and desires) on the path to communion with God. (Thermos 2002, 21) He felt that using emotions and desires in ones pursuit of God (instead of pure reason) would lead to darkness. Emotions must be mortified. He held a platonic/scholastic view that separated the mind, emotions/feelings, and body.

Object Relations Theory as presented by theorist D. W. Winnicott exhibits certain connections with Orthodox Christian Trinitarian theology, especially in the area of relationship and the experience of God. Winnicott and other object relation theorists plant the seed of *relationship* as an important dynamic of intrapsychic well-being. (Seeley 2006, 48; Chodorow 1999, 116) Object relations theory looks at the need to be attached to others as well as to be separate within a relational context. (Jackson 2000, 6) The adherence to relationship is a further development of Freud's drive theory and proves to be crucial for later developments of an intersubjective approach. Where Freud looked at the infant as composed of various drives and instincts (Mitchell and Black 1995, 13), Winnicott saw that the child was created for relationship. "There's no such thing as a

baby... A baby cannot exist alone, but is essentially part of a relationship” (Winnicott 1987, 88) He believed that a baby does not exist by itself, that it is part of a mother/child unit. The mother at the time of the birth of a child is able to empathically understand the needs and desires of the infant. This is known as primary maternal preoccupation. Prayer operates under a similar assumption. “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” (Mt 6:7-8 New Revised Standard Version)

Winnicott also shares a connection with Gregory in the balancing of experience and reason. Gregory taught that reason is not sufficient in understanding God. One has to have a relationship in order to experience God.

Therefore, not every man who possesses the knowledge of created things, or who sees through the mediation of such knowledge has God dwelling in him; but he merely possesses knowledge of creatures, and from this by means of analogy he infers the existence of God. As to him who mysteriously possesses and sees this light, he knows and possesses God in himself, no longer by analogy, but by a true contemplation, transcendent to all creatures, for he is never separated from the eternal glory. (Palamas 1983, 60-61)

Likewise, Winnicott, describes the healthy person as one who has a balance of the imagination and the intellect. He describes this as living creatively. (Winnicott 2005, 88) Living creatively avoids the lifestyle of compliance on the one hand, and disconnection with reality on the other hand. He explains compliance as a relationship to external reality in which

...the world and its details [are] recognized but only as something to be fitted in with or demanding adaptation. Compliance carries with it a sense of futility...In a tantalizing way many individuals have experienced just enough of creative living to recognize that for most of their time they are

living uncreatively, as if caught up in the creativity of someone else, or a machine. (Winnicott 2005, 87)

An extreme on the other side, however, can be seen in the schizophrenic whose dreams are experienced when awake and cannot distinguish reality from delusion. Individuals in both extremes can be quite unhappy and dissatisfied with their life. “These two groups of people come to us for psychotherapy because in the one case they do not want to spend their lives irrevocably out of touch with the facts of life and in the other because they feel estranged from dream.” (Winnicott 2005, 90)

The creative person lives rather than exists. Living creatively is the characteristic that makes one human. (Winnicott 2005, 91) The person is relational yet spontaneous, that is, not bound or driven by others. (Chodorow 1999, 116) Creative living leads to a flexibility which is able to have varying perspectives rather than being limited to objective certainties. (White and Epston 1990, 78; Nichols 2008, 382) For Gregory, an experiential knowledge of God (as contrasted to a purely intellectual knowledge of God) is not only possible but part of what makes humans human.

Moreover, the transformation of our human nature, its deification and transfiguration - were these not accomplished in Christ from the start, from the moment in which He assumed our nature? Thus He was divine before, but He bestowed at the time of His Transfiguration a divine power upon the eyes of the apostles and enabled them to look up and see for themselves. This light, then was not a hallucination but will remain for eternity, and has existed from the beginning. (Palamas 1983, 76)

Gregory also taught that the body must be integrated with the soul. He asks, “What pain, which pleasure, what movement of the body, is not the common function of body and soul?” (Thermos 2002, 23) And again, “How is it possible for what God has given us as gifts and has ordained to be part of human nature, to become an obstacle for

his salvation?" (Thermos 2002, 23) Nicholas Nisiotis writes in his "Preface to Theological Gnoseology":

The body presents itself as the total human Being par excellence which is given life by the spirit... The spiritual man is precisely he who lives his spiritual hypostasis in the flesh. 'In the flesh' is an absolute prerequisite for complete spiritual existence... Therefore, one does not have a body, but is his body." (Thermos 2002, 49)

As a response to the personal divisions one may experience, the Orthodox Church has focused a great deal of attention and energy on hesychastic prayer, particularly the Jesus prayer. In the Jesus prayer, we see the integration of Divine and Human, Spirit and Body, Faith and Practice, Theology and Experience.

James and Melissa Griffith in their work, *Encountering the Sacred in Psychotherapy* (2002), describe positive and negative emotional postures that influence the body during times of stress or illness. Hope, purpose, agency, and communion are examples of positive emotional postures while despair, meaninglessness, helplessness, and isolation are examples of negative emotional postures. Negative emotional postures make a person more vulnerable to illness. Positive emotional postures such as gratitude and joy help to instill resilience in the face of illness. The choice of one posture or another during challenging times is called an existential crisis state. Negative emotional postures during existential crisis states add a risk factor to serious illness. (Griffith and Griffith, 265) I believe that emotional postures may also be seen as spiritual postures. I would like to see if there is a relationship between spiritual practices such as the Jesus Prayer and positive spiritual postures. In this way, one may see the benefit of spiritual practices not only in terms of wholeness for individual, family, and community, but a source of physical wellness and resilience as well.

The practice of the Jesus Prayer involves an integration of body and soul (thoughts and emotions). Most western approaches to health exist in a dualistic capacity. Focus is either on the body or on mental health. Even within Christianity, the western approach is noted for its intellectual emphasis. One generally thinks of an integration of body and soul with eastern religions and techniques such as yoga and transcendental meditation. With its emphasis on Christian Tradition, including the Creeds, Christian writers and monastics over the centuries, and its liturgical life, Eastern Christianity has consciously been resistant to the vicissitudes of contemporary culture and has retained this integration in both its theology and spiritual practices. The Jesus Prayer traditionally integrates body (breathing, posture, use of a prayer rope, possible prostrations, mindfulness of presence) soul/intellect (the repeated phrase (Lord Jesus Christ...), eradication of external thoughts and images), and spirit (personal faith and wonder). One's prayer life usually does not consist only of the Jesus Prayer, but for a person who embarks on its use, the Jesus Prayer is an integral aspect of their prayer life. The Prayer becomes a story that is lived according to its narrative assumptions. (Anderson and Foley 1998, 6)

The integration of body and soul follows naturally from the theological approach espoused by Orthodox Christianity. It is a theology based not on intellectual speculation but on lived experience. Supported by the Chalcedonian teaching of the dual nature of Christ, the incarnate Christ being fully divine and fully human (Hardy 1977), this experiential or doxological theology has continuously been expressed in the therapeutic function of the Eastern Church.



*Doxological Theology intended to restore wholeness*

The aim of Christianity as understood by Orthodox Christianity is theosis or union with God. Orthodox Christianity teaches that human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, were created to progress into union with God. (Stăniloae 2002, 21)

The fall resulted in a distortion of the original likeness.

The way the Orthodox teachers look at the story of Adam and Eve is quite different from the way it is generally understood in the West. In the West, commentaries tend to emphasize the themes of disobedience, guilt, sin, and remorse, including a fairly heavy hint that the sin of our first parents was somehow sexual in nature ... For the East, by contrast, the story of Adam and Eve is, at its heart, a story of disintegration, fragmentation, and estrangement. The man and woman, and the world in which they lived, were torn apart by their behavior, and vast gaps came to exist between God and man, between heaven and earth, between one person and another, between the genders, and finally even within the human personality itself. Each and every person is internally fragmented and externally isolated from the outside world, right down to the ultimate depths of his or her being. Fragmentation within the human personality is observed essentially as the division between the mind and the nous or heart. (Webber 2007, 11)

The nous is defined by the patristic writers as the center of the spiritual being, the eye of the soul. (Cf. Mt 6:22-23; John of Damascus 1991, 44–52) The nous, sometimes called the heart or even mind, is the faculty of the soul that relates with God. The nous has become injured in the Fall, not able to fulfill its function. The purpose of Christianity and of the Church is to be a hospital where people go to find healing for the nous and a restored relationship with God. (Vlachos 1994) Human beings became ontologically sick, having become separated from God who is whole. With the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, human beings had the possibility to return to their original wholeness. The work of Orthodox Christianity is to facilitate this wholeness and is therefore to be understood as therapeutic.

Orthodox theology is doxological. Evagrios the Solitary, a fourth century monastic said, "If you are a theologian you pray truly. And if you pray truly, you are a theologian." (Evagrios 1979, 62) Theology is not an intellectual endeavor existing apart from experience. As such, it is not the tradition of eastern Christians to develop theological treatises through analytical and philosophical reasoning. Theology is understood and annunciated through experience. According to the Orthodox Church, the Christian life is not to have certain intellectual knowledge or to agree with certain formulations, but to experience the grace and mystery that surrounds us. Archimandrite Vasileios. Abbot of Stavronikita Monastery on Mount Athos writes,

Theology does not have a philosophy of its own, nor spirituality a mentality of its own, nor church administration a system of its own, nor hagiography its own artistic school. All these things emerge from the same font of liturgical experience. They all function together in a Trinitarian way, singing the thrice-holy hymn in their own languages. (Vasileios 1984, 11)

While the monasteries on Mount Athos have continued the tradition of doxological theology, many western Christians, including those in the Orthodox Church have forgotten it. Metropolitan Athanasios, a bishop of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus and formerly a monk on Mount Athos, has said, "We lost the knowledge of God at the moment when we transformed the Ecclesia from experience into theology, from a living reality into moralistic principles, good values, and high ideals. When that happened we became like tin cans with nothing inside." (Markides 2001, 55)

The tradition of Hesychasm (literally stillness or silence) continues to this day on Mount Athos as well as Orthodox monasteries and faithful around the world. Yet many Orthodox Christians and parish communities have unfortunately lost the sense of a

doxological theology. There can exist a disconnect between a professed theology and an operational faith. (Jordan 1986, 29) Like the internal splitting that occurred at the fall, there exists in many places a split between intellectual, theological knowledge and practice/experience. Hesychasm, and particularly the Jesus Prayer, is a way to remove that separation.

For God is silence, and in silence is he sung by means of that psalmody which is worthy of Him. I am not speaking of the silence of the tongue, for if someone merely keeps his tongue silent, without knowing how to sing in mind and spirit, then he is simply unoccupied and becomes filled with evil thoughts: ... There is a silence of the tongue, there is a silence of the whole body, there is a silence of the soul, there is the silence of the mind, and there is the silence of the spirit. (John the Solitary 1987, 98)

Many Christian therapists understand the importance of stillness, silence, and not-doing in the role of healing. In Brian Grant's *A Theology for Psychotherapy* (2001), the author looks at silence as an aspect of the Biblical command to "Remember the Sabbath." Each person needs time to step away from activities in order to rest. Like the desert fathers who say that the silt in a bowl of cloudy water will settle to the bottom when it has time to settle, so we need time to step back, allowing the silt and distractions of our life to settle as well. He writes,

God particularly lends energy, removes obstacles, and is more accessible in those times when our focus on doing and achieving is suspended. It echoes the claim that worship, prayer, meditation, and stillness are created by God and actively used by God to re-form us. (Grant 2001, 128)

His use of "re-form" is very similar to metanoia, the changing of the nous. Pamela Cooper-White uses silence as a way of avoiding "anything born of his or her own need." (Cooper-White 2004, 189) It can become a way of adding extraneous and distracting data to a therapy session. Note how similar it is to the advice from St. Theophan the Recluse on the use of imagination in prayer.

Far from being a cold and aloof "blank screen," silence is the ground out of which much therapeutic work is allowed to grow. This is the therapist's discipline: to refrain from consciously adding anything extraneous, anything unconsidered, anything born of his or her own need. Enough will be added unconsciously – which is one of the best arguments for sitting still as much as possible. This stillness in analytically oriented practice is not unlike Zen sitting. We wait, with complete attention. (Cooper-White 2007, 242-243)

In the natural order of things, when we try to bring our spiritual powers under control, the path from without to within is blocked by the imagination. To arrive successfully at our inward objective, we must travel safely past the imagination. If we are careless about this, we may stick fast in the imagination and remain there, under the impression that we have entered within, whereas in fact we are merely outside the entrance, as it were in the court of the Gentiles. This in itself would not matter so much, were it not that this state is almost always accompanied by self-deception. (Theophan the Recluse 1966, 68)

Imagination, like extraneous comments by the therapist during a therapy session, diverts from the goal of understanding and being present. This is the meaning of hesychia, often translated as stillness or silence. It is a stillness not simply of the lips and silence from words; it is much deeper. As written above from John the Solitary, stillness, or hesychia, exists on many levels. He lists five. "There is a silence of the tongue, there is a silence of the whole body, there is a silence of the soul, there is the silence of the mind, and there is the silence of the spirit." (John the Solitary 1987, 98) It is in this silence that we can listen to God.

### *Integration of Divine and Human, Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy*

The notion of an integration between orthodoxy and orthopraxy is certainly not new. St. James writes that, "So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." (Jas 2:17) Christians who have given their lives for their faith did not simply keep their faith quietly

tucked in their thoughts. Ever since Jesus Christ, the eternal Logos, became a human being, the idea of incarnating our faith into practice has been a common theme. Belief is important, but not enough, for “even the demons believe – and shudder.” (Jas 2:19)

The Fourth Ecumenical Council held in Chalcedon (451) taught that Jesus Christ is fully human as well as fully divine. (Ware 1986d 94; Hardy 1977) This has direct implications on faith and practice. Emphasizing the divinity over the humanity of Christ or the humanity over the divinity of Christ has been central to many disputes and councils over the centuries. The Orthodox teaching of Chalcedon was that Christ is one person having two full and complete natures: divine and human. Within the local parish and the individual Christian this must be expressed in a twofold emphasis on correct faith (orthodoxy) as well as correct practice (orthopraxy). It is in the integration of the divine and the human, of that which is beyond comprehension with that which has become flesh, of faith with practice, that wholeness and well-being is found.

Those that emphasized the divinity of Christ during the time of Chalcedon were known as Monophysites (i.e. one nature). The Church rejected this teaching because, “salvation itself requires the perfect union of Divinity and Humanity in the one Person of Jesus Christ; a union where God is God and Man is Man, and yet where the two become one in perfect unity: without fusion or change, and without division or separation.” (Hopko 1997a, 79) The idea that the Logos became fully human is known as the incarnation. When we do not incarnate our faith into practice, we fall into a spiritual monophytism with faith remaining in the abstract. As Gregory of Nazianzus said, “For that which He has not assumed, He has not healed.” (Gregory of Nazianzus 1991, 440)

## **Integration brings a greater sense of Well-being**

### *Well-being and the True Self*

Modern psychological concepts of the self can be of some help in the understanding of well-being and the ultimate aim of the human person. One example can be Winnicott's description of living creatively. "It is creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living." (Winnicott 2005, 88) This has been described more fully above.

Another example can be found in Winnicott's illustration of the false self and true self. He says that when the care-giver of an infant is not able to sense and/or care for its needs, proper integration does not take place. The true self is the naturally occurring "position from which come spontaneous expressions and the personal idea." (Winnicott 1960, 148) The false self occurs when a care-giver, rather than meeting the needs of the infant, is bothered by those needs and tries to suppress the child's true self spontaneity. The child tries to heal the trauma (of perhaps anger expressed by the caregiver) by compliance. Compliance then, is a way of protecting the true self, but does so by creating a compliant false self. Klein (1994, 318) describes the false self "as a necessary defensive organization, a survival kit, a caretaker self, the means by which a threatened person has managed to survive." Winnicott writes that in "health: the False Self is represented by the whole organization of the polite and mannered social attitude..." He continues by saying, "the False Self defends the True Self..." (1960, 143); though "... the False Self, however well set up, lacks something..." (1960, 152). Because compliance brings social acceptability, the false self is affirmed and strengthened. Winnicott further writes,

These terms [true self and false self] are used in description of a defensive organisation in which there is a premature taking over of the nursing functions of the mother, so that the infant or child adapts to the environment while at the same time protecting and hiding the true self, or the source of personal impulses.... In typical cases the imprisoned true self is unable to function, and by being protected its opportunity for living experience is limited. Life is lived through the compliant false self, and the result clinically is a sense of unreality.... Spontaneity and real impulse can only come from the true self, and for this to happen someone needs to take over the defensive functions of the false self. (Winnicott 1989, 43)

While Winnicott's understanding of the true self and false self may prove beneficial to a person suffering from the trauma of childhood experiences, the notion of the self and well-being that he employs falls short from that of the eastern fathers. It can be used to improve health, as an orthopedist puts a cast on a broken leg in order for it to set properly. But the nature of *leg* is not simply to be *unbroken* but to *walk*. The nature of the mind is not simply to be activated by the Winnicottian *true self* but to progress into its deified emerging self. This deified self cannot be easily described. It appears in different ways with different people. It is characterized by love, but not necessarily by mental health. Most people imagine, for example, that the famous multicolored St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow's Red Square is named after St. Basil the Great. It was named, however, after St. Basil the Fool for Christ. This Basil, an apprentice shoemaker, had the practice of shoplifting from stores and giving the items to the poor. Oftentimes he walked publicly in the nude or without warm clothes in winter, sometimes wearing chains. He harassed the wealthy who did not share their wealth and knocked over the tables and jugs of merchants. His sanity was in question by many, but no one questioned his sanctity.

The self in eastern Christian thought is a mystery which unfolds in its journey into union with its creator. It is something that is discovered, a discovery which unfolds over time. It is discovered, not by focusing on the self, but in transcending the self by looking towards the goodness of God and love of others. It is the realization that change is necessary. It discovers God by letting go of what God is not. It is always new and unimagined. It is unique. It is a liturgical hymn. As St. Gregory Palamas writes,

Illumined, man reaches the eternal heights...and already here on earth he has become a complete miracle. Even without being in heaven, he emulates the untiring singers of hymns; like another angel of God on earth, he leads the entire created family to God. (Evdokimov 1985, 62-63)

St. Gregory of Nyssa describes God as a fountain gushing out of the earth, always new. The emerging self, in union with God, can be described in the same way.

If anyone happened to be near the fountain which Scripture says rose from the earth at the beginning of creation...he would approach it marveling at the endless stream of water gushing forth and bubbling out. Never could he say that he had seen all the water.... In the same way, the person looking at the divine, invisible beauty will always discover it anew since he will see it as something newer and more wondrous in comparison to what he had already comprehended. (Gregory of Nyssa 1987, 201)

For this study, we have defined an increase in well-being as an overall beneficial change in spirituality, mental or emotional state, and interpersonal relations. For example, a greater perception of spiritual well-being may be manifested by a further awareness of God's presence in one's life and an increase in compassion. Mental well-being encompasses how a person is feeling, such as feelings of relaxation, energy, confidence, or cheerfulness. A growth in these and other likewise positive feeling states would indicate a growth in mental well-being. Interpersonal well-being examines one's relations with family, friends, and others. Are these relationships rewarding? Does a



person feel comfortable with others? Are there others that they trust? Changes in these areas would show a change in interpersonal well-being. Certainly there are other concepts that one might study examining well-being. There is physical well-being and financial well-being for instance. Yet the three that have been used in this study (spiritual, mental, and interpersonal) reflect an ancient understanding of health, that is, our relationship to God, ourselves, and to others. This is reflected in the words of Jesus, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Mt 22:37-40)

### *Interpersonal/Intersubjective nature of Trinity*

Intersubjectivity has been described as the shared wisdom, both conscious and unconscious, which is found in the space between persons. (Cooper-White 2007, 44) The writings of Pamela Cooper-White, an Episcopal priest and pastoral theologian, are an example of the integration that is possible between divergent philosophical systems, a third place between the rigid edifices of dogmatic theology and empirical science, between East and West. In the area of counseling, intersubjectivity proves to be an alternative to the more hierarchical shepherding approach of Hiltner. (Hiltner 1958) In the encounter, including the therapeutic encounter, there is not a master-disciple relationship but fellow travelers, with each person seeing a new vista at every turn. Intersubjectivity recognizes that the encounter goes beyond words that are spoken. Cooper-White, explains that oftentimes a person’s understanding of another is a

collection of projections. The other is seen as object rather than subject with his or her own internal world and independent existence. (Cooper-White 2007, 47) Intersubjectivity realizes that that each person and each encounter is a mystery, that the other is a not-me (and not-my-projections). Awareness of this mystery allows the other to be honestly curious. With projection, the real, internal other is destroyed. With intersubjectivity, the other is discovered. Part of the normative vision for Cooper-White is that human beings are loved beings and loving beings. (Cooper-White 2007, 63) It is part of the grounding from which she perceives her world and in which she understands therapy. Human beings are relational, they are loved and loving, and they expand through the encounter.

A relational approach to therapy (as well as to prayer) can be a great source of healing. While a Western model encourages the therapist to observe and diagnose in a neutral and scientific manner, a more nuanced and culturally sensitive model encourages the therapist to engage the client rather than categorize. (Mishne 2002, 109) The therapist needs to be recognized by the client as a person who exhibits an attitude of kindness (Seeley 2006, 235) and non-possessive warmth. (Lartey, 2003 96) It is in an environment such as this, much like Winnicott's holding environment, that the client can begin to thrive. Mishne describes four errors than can be avoided with empathic practice. She writes,

Empathic clinical practice with appropriate attention to cultural realities avoids four typical therapeutic errors. The first one is ignoring a cultural focus altogether. The second is color-blindness – that is, overemphasizing similarities, seeing only universal predicaments, and regarding race and culture as only tangential to therapy....At the other extreme is the third typical error – the position that families are more different than alike...resulting in the view only of the intrapsychic system and/or the interior of the family as responsible for everything. The final

error is an exclusive focus on ethnicity, which overemphasizes the concept of shared meanings due to ethnicity and views members of specific groups as more homogeneous than they really are. (Mishne 2002, 25-26)

Just as the literal holding of the infant does something for infant and mother/father, an empathic clinical practice becomes intersubjective. Engaging is a way of participating in the therapeutic relationship, and older ideas of absolute neutrality are rejected in favor of a more interpersonal relationship between two people. (Mishne 2002, 83)

Other pastoral theologians agree. Brian Grant, a pastoral psychotherapist, and Alistair McFadyen, Lecturer of Theology at the University of Leeds, recognize with Cooper-White the possibilities in understanding the human person that come with a Trinitarian relational theology. This theology, particularly espoused by the Eastern Church, is a model of relationship in unity, a being-in-relationship. (Cooper-White 2007, 77; Grant 2001, 8; McFayden 1990, 24; Chrysostomos 2007, 109) This loving relationship (between the three hypostases and for the creation) calls each person to participate in the multiplicity of creation as well as within each person. An incarnational theology recognizes that the whole person is soul and body and not simply an embodied soul. (Cooper-White 2007, 90; McFayden 1990, 76; Thermos 2002, 25) Life is filled with relationship. God's Trinitarian relationship, God's relationship with persons, person's relationships with each other, and each person's internal relationships (body and soul, differing aspects of the personality) all provide a theological model and normative vision. Using then the analogies of healing and hypostasis, Eastern Christian theology and Western pastoral psychotherapy can dialogue. There is not necessarily agreement on all matters, nor would one expect agreement, but the common normative vision can be

helpful not just to one group or the other but to those persons represented by the space in between. Grant recognizes that communities are struggling (Grant 2001, 36) yet sees the importance of community for restorying (Grant 2001, 94) and that ultimately identity is community structured. (Grant 2001, 197) McFadyen discusses the dangers of seeing God in terms of extreme, either total oneness without distinction (an unmoving mover) or three separate God's (jeopardizing relationship unity) (McFayden 1990, 25) He depicts the relationship with God as one of Call and Response, a relationship in which Jesus is the model, the full human being. Full humanity then is found in entering the mystery of Christ. (McFayden 1990, 47) He recognizes the cosmological relationship as well. Human beings are strongly connected to the world in which they live. (McFayden 1990, 197) In addition he looks at sin as closure, a way that we cut ourselves off from God, others, and ourselves. (McFayden 1990, 236)

We are more whole together than apart. (McFayden 1990, 32) Western pastoral psychotherapy has been positively influenced by Eastern Christian thought and developed a method of practice in which this theology is grounded in the common human experience. Theologians such as Cooper-White, Grant, McFadyen and others apply relational Trinitarian theology in the fields of Pastoral Counseling and community/parish life.

For Orthodox Christians, theology is understood within the revelation of the Trinity. The Church has recognized this revelation within the scriptures and through experience nearly from its inception. God the Father is the fountainhead of the Trinity, the source. God the Son is eternally begotten of the Father. God the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. God is at the same time both one and community. This makes

sense when we know that “God is love.” (1 Jn 4:8) God is love eternally, even “before” creation and time itself. For there to be love, there must be a lover and a beloved—community. The Trinity is more than three persons in one God; the Trinity is a dance of love, and from this our own understanding of community, including marriage, stems. St. John of Damascus in his *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* used the term “perichoresis”, meaning an indwelling in one another to describe the Trinity. But the Trinity is not something far away being only a subject of theological speculation. The understanding of Trinity is of great import for us, for, as Bishop Kallistos Ware says, “The final end of the spiritual Way is that we humans should also become part of this Trinitarian coinherence or perichoresis, being wholly taken up into the circle of love that exists within God.” (Ware 1986d, 34) Human beings, made in the image of God, are called to grow in the likeness of God; we are to model ourselves after the Trinity. In describing the incarnation, St. Athanasius said that “He assumed humanity that we might become God.” (Athanasius 1998, 93) Our calling then is by God’s Grace and our cooperation to grow into the likeness of God which includes God’s existence as community. This “circle of love” is not a community of split parts but forms an integrated whole. Pamela Cooper-White, in her work, *Many Voices*, recognizes what this Trinitarian relationship means for human beings. She writes regarding Winnicott’s remark, “There’s no such thing as a baby,”

If we extrapolate beyond the language of his time and place, of mothers and babies, or all *parents* and babies, we can understand this to mean that none of us is born in isolation. We all have our personal beginnings in the very body of another human being, and as infants we “fail to thrive” without human touch. The object relations theorists were correct in their reframing of Freud’s basic instincts, beyond the two drives of sex and aggression—to the fuller understanding that human beings are driven first

and foremost by their desire to connect and remain connected to other human beings. (Cooper-White 2007, 50)

This understanding of Trinity has practical implications. Kallistos Ware writes in a 1986 article,

Each social grouping—family, parish, diocese, church council, school, office, factory, nation—has as its vocation to be transformed by grace into a living icon of [the Holy Trinity], to effect a reconciling harmony between diversity and unity, human freedom and mutual solidarity, after the pattern of the Trinity. Our belief in a Trinitarian God, in a God of social inter-relationship and shared love, commits us to opposing all forms of exploitation, injustice and discrimination. (Ware 1986e, 17-18)

St. Isaac the Syrian defines the merciful heart as one which goes out from itself and is unified with others people as well as animals. It is a love which is even concerned about the demons. This is a heart growing in the likeness of the Trinity, making it communal and interpersonally oriented. He writes that the merciful heart

... is a heart that burns with love for ‘the whole of creation—for men, for the birds, for the beasts, for the demons, for every, creature. When a man with such a heart as this thinks of the creatures or looks at them, his eyes are filled with tears; An overwhelming compassion makes his heart grow! small and weak, and he cannot endure to hear or see any suffering, even the smallest pain, inflicted upon any creature. Therefore he never ceases to pray, with tears even for the irrational animals, for the enemies of truth, and for those who do him evil, asking that they may be guarded and receive God’s mercy. And for the reptiles also he prays with a great compassion, which rises up endlessly in his heart until he shines again and is glorious like God. (Isaac the Syrian 1985, 344)

St. John of Kronstadt reiterates this teaching on the expansion of the heart.

The purer the heart becomes the larger it becomes; consequently it is able to find room for more and more loved ones; the more sinful it is the more it contracts; consequently it is able to find room for fewer and fewer loved ones – it is limited by a false love: self-love. (John of Kronstadt 1967, 183)

Pamela Cooper-White describes the relational character of human beings in this way:

Our relationality and our longing for connection finally extends to our deep desire for God, and God's loving desire for us in return. God uniquely created and bestowed human beings with the capacity for this relation, however obscured it may be by the brokenness of creation and the consuming preoccupations of daily human existence. (Cooper-White 2007, 51)

The art of hesychasm is grounded in a Trinitarian theology which recognizes human beings as created in the image and likeness of God, a God who is by nature interpersonal and communal. Patterned after the Trinity, Human beings are loved and loving (Cooper-White 2007, 65) The Fall is manifested in the "brokenness of creation" resulting in human beings that are ontologically sick. Though created in God's image human beings have fallen away from the likeness of God. Moving back in that direction, towards the likeness of God, is the same as moving towards a state of well-being.

### *Image and Likeness*

In the book of Genesis we read,

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26, 27)

What does this image and likeness mean? Does it involve the body or does it refer only to the mental, emotional and spiritual capacities of the human being? Origen had followed a Platonic spiritualism which separated body and spirit and elevated the spirit over the body. The body was a flawed and imperfect mode of the spirit's existence.

The only true reality, according to Origen was a spiritual reality. (Meyendorff 1987, 140) But this did not bide well with the scriptural account which refers to the totality of creation as “very good.” (cf. Genesis 1:31) The early fathers of the Eastern Church saw a unity of body and spirit. St. Gregory Palamas said, “We are not able to call the human just the soul or just the body, but rather, both together, of which it is said that it was created by God in his own image.” (Stavropoulos 1976, 26) The human being is a composite whole, a unity of body and spirit. In like manner, St. Gregory of Nyssa said, “For this reason, the Word of God in saying that man was made in the image of God included everything in a comprehensive phrase. It was the same as saying that he created human nature to be a participant in every good.” (Stavropoulos 1976, 26) St. Cyril of Jerusalem had strong words to say to those who despise the body.

The Creator of the human body’s members was not ashamed to assume the flesh they are made from. As God himself asserts: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet.’ (Jeremiah 1:5) It is God who fashions every infant in the womb. As Job says: ‘Remember that you fashioned me like clay...Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese? You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews.’ (Job 10:9-11) There is therefore nothing disgraceful in the composition of the human body, provided only that it is not polluted by adultery or lasciviousness. The One who created Adam created also Eve. Male and female were formed by God’s hands, and no member of the body was created sinful. Thus those who despise the body should keep quiet: they despise Christ himself who made it. (Spidlik 1994, 63)

St. Cyril makes reference to the incarnation of Christ. If Jesus, the eternal Son of God, could lower himself to become flesh and spirit, then flesh and spirit must be worthy of elevation. It is in the direction of the incarnation that the eastern fathers point for the meaning of self. St. Athanasius said,



...the good God has given [humanity] a share in His own Image, that is, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and has made even themselves after the same Image and Likeness. Why? Simply in order that through this gift of Godlikeness in themselves they may be able to perceive the Image Absolute, that is the Word himself, and through Him to apprehend the Father; which knowledge of their Maker is for men the only really happy and blessed life. (Athanasius 1998, 38)

St. Athanasius tells us that to be a human being is more about knowing God than knowing oneself. Yet knowing God (knowledge of the Maker) is intricately connected with the self (the gift of Godlikeness). While knowing the essence of God is not possible, it is in knowing God that Jesus tells us is eternal life. (cf. Jn 17:3) Jesus also tells us that the Kingdom of God is within us. (cf. Lk 17:21) It is the human person who is the meeting point with the divine. The Christian, according to the eastern fathers, is not looking for the self, but discovers an encounter with the divine within the self. As Jesus said, "...we will come to them and make our home with them." (Jn 14:23) And St. Paul says, "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20) It is by realizing that the kingdom of God is within us that we can understand St. Anthony when he says, "He who knows himself knows God," and St. Isaac the Syrian when he says, "heaven is within you; within yourself you will see the angels and the Lord of the angels." (Ware 1997, 226)

In this way the Eastern Church makes a distinction between image and likeness. The image is that which is within us, like a seed waiting to blossom. The human person is created to go beyond itself. The faculties of love, freedom, creativity, and intelligence are for more than simple survival. The image within us directs us towards God. "The *image*, the objective foundation, calls for the subjective, personal *likeness*." (Evdokimov 1985, 59) The likeness is the direction in which we are called to move. Progressing

into the likeness of God because one is in the image of God is the calling of every human being. We are created in God's image because he willed it. The image of God is stamped on every person. God's likeness, on the other hand involves the will of the person as well. "A single will for creation, but two for deification. A single will to raise up the image, but two to make the image into a likeness." (Lossky 1978, 73)

Because of the Trinitarian nature of God, and thus the image, growing into the likeness of God involves the other. Just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dwell within each other and form a unity without mixture or confusion, so also human beings, in the image of God are also one yet distinct. This is why St. Clement of Alexandria said, "When you see your brother, you see God." (Ware 1997, p.226) The nearer one comes to other human beings, the nearer one comes to God. Dorotheus of Gaza described this with the image of a wagon wheel. He said that we should imagine that God is the hub of the wheel and the people are the spokes of the wheel. The closer the spokes are to the hub, the closer they are to each other. The further they are from the hub, the further they are from each other. (Bondi 1991, 31) The human person is made in the image of God, but in a Trinitarian way. The Son is fully divine, but cannot be separated from the Father and Spirit. In like manner the human being is fully a person, but does not realize personhood without the realization that he/she is united to the other. This realization or progression into the likeness of God is known as Theosis. Theosis (or deification or union with God) is the Eastern Christian understanding of Salvation.

In a similar way that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, Winnicott, recognizes that the identification of a mother with her child is an important part of early development. *Holding*, for example, is a way in which the mother identifies

with the child. He described the holding environment as a place of love and trust. "Being loved... means being accepted." (Winnicott 1989, 264) Holding is a process entailing both physical and psychological encounters that allow an infant to organize his/her confused ideas, feelings, desires, and wishes into predictable experiences as well as promoting comfort and stability. In the following examples, Winnicott describes two types of babies. The first are those who have experienced "holding" (or as he also says, not "let down.") The second for those who did not experience proper "holding" (in other words, "let down.")

What does the baby see when he or she looks at the mother's face? I am suggesting that, ordinarily, what the baby sees is himself or herself. In other words the mother is looking at the baby and what she looks like is related to what she sees there. (Winnicott 1967, 151)

This identification of parent and child gives the child support and stability.

Babies who have not been significantly "let down" in infancy, and whose belief in reliability leads towards the acquisition of a personal reliability which is an important ingredient of the state which may be termed "towards independence." These babies have a line of life and retain a capacity to move forward and backward (developmentally) and become able to take all the risks because of being well insured. (Winnicott 1989, 260)

When the child does not have the ability to identify with the parent, because the parent is not able to respond in a way that resonates with the child's experience, this can stifle the healthy growth of the child.

Many babies, however, do have to have a long experience of not getting back what they are giving. They look and they do not see themselves. There are consequences. First, their own creative capacity begins to atrophy... (Winnicott 1967, 151)

Babies who have been significantly "let down" once or in a pattern of environmental failures (related to the psychopathologic state of the mother or mother-substitute). These babies carry with them the experience of

unthinkable or archaic anxiety. They know what it is to be in a state of acute confusion or the agony of disintegration. They know what it is like to be dropped, to fall forever, or to become split into psycho-somatic disunion. In other words, they have experienced trauma, and their personalities have to be built round the reorganization of defenses following traumata, defenses that must needs retain primitive features such as personality splitting. (Winnicott 1989, 260)

Infants who are able to identify with their caregiver are thus able to grow and mature to “personal reliability” rather than “unthinkable or archaic anxiety.” In the same way, a human being growing into the likeness of God is moving in the direction created for him/her, resulting in, as Athanasius said, “the only really happy and blessed life.”

### *Theosis and Healing*

Theosis is possible because of a combination of God’s grace and human effort. As Jesus freely submitted his will to the will of the Father (cf. Lk 22:42) so the Christian freely submits her/his will to God’s. Without the synergy of God and human being, there is no salvation. God leads and the person follows. St. Maximus the Confessor said, “the spirit does not generate a will that is not willing, but transforms into deification a will that has the desire.”(Pelikan 1974, 11) Again from St. Maximus, “God made his willingness and his purpose clear by means of his loving condescension toward mankind, making divine through grace those who consciously travel upwards with it.” (Stavropoulos 1976, 35) One of the great fathers of the Egyptian desert, Macarius, said, “The will of man is an essential condition, for without it God does nothing.” (Harakas 1983, 104) Compare what Augustine (representing a Western Christianity) says about the inability to refuse grace to what St. Gregory of Nyssa says on the same subject.

#### Augustine

God makes whom he wills religious, therefore, so that he will run to the Lord, seek to be ruled by him, join his own will to his will, and by adhering to him become one spirit with him according to the Apostle. All

this is done only by a religious person. Hence, who will do it unless God makes him do it?" (Burns 1981, 94)

Gregory of Nyssa

"The grace of God is not able to visit those who flee salvation. Nor is the human virtue of such power as to be adequate of itself to raise up to authentic life those souls who are untouched by grace...But when the righteousness and the works and the grace of the Spirit come together at the same time in the same soul, together they are able to fill it with blessed life." (Stavropoulos 1976, 34)

Divine life is a gift and a task. It involves two wills, the human and the divine. While they are not equal, they are both necessary. There is an "ought" which is in the center of Eastern Christian anthropology. (Woodill 1998, 83) The aim of Christian life is theosis or deification. St. Athanasius said, "He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God." (Athanasius 1998, 93) St. Athanasius does not say become like God, but become God. His words are echoed by St. Basil the Great.

Just as when a sunbeam falls on bright and transparent bodies, they themselves become brilliant too, and shed forth a fresh brightness from themselves, so souls wherein the Spirit dwells, illuminated by the Spirit, themselves become spiritual, and send forth their grace to others. Hence comes foreknowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of what is hidden, distribution of good gifts, the heavenly citizenship, a place in the chorus of angels, joy without end, abiding in God, the being made like to God, and, highest of all, the being made God. (Basil the Great 1994, 139)

And, according to St. Irenaeus, theosis is salvation and redemption, for the Son of God determined "that He would become the Son of man for this purpose, that man also might become the Son of God." (Irenaeus 1905, 424) This teaching is echoed as well in the writings of St. Clement of Alexandria, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. John of Damascus, St. Gregory Palamas, St. Maximus the Confessor, and others. (Vlachos 2007, 105) Behind this teaching are the words of Jesus, "As you,

Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,” (Jn 17:21) as well as the Apostle Peter, “Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants in the divine nature.” (2 Pt 1:4) A saying from the desert fathers is very descriptive:

Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, ‘Abba, as far as I can I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?’ Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, ‘If you will, you can become all flame.’ (Ward 1984, 103)

Theosis, or salvation in the Eastern Christian understanding, is a call to participate in divinity. This teaching rejects any ideas of pantheism. Firstly, union with God is a result of synergy, our will and God’s will/grace. It cannot be achieved by human effort alone, nor does God force the union upon us.

Secondly, union with God is union with the energies of God and not the essence of God. God’s essence, as was stated earlier, is beyond knowledge, yet is revealed in the world through God’s energies. Bp Kallistos Ware writes, “The energies are truly God himself – yet not as God as he exists within himself, in his inner life, but God as he communicates himself in outgoing love.” (Ware 1986d, 169) Additionally, the energies of God are continuously revealed, sometimes perceived and sometimes not. Thus, in the event known as the Transfiguration of Christ, it was the apostles that changed, not Christ. Peter, James, and John were able, at least for a short time, to perceive the energies of Christ as light. The process of theosis is likened to giving light to the blind. In this way, St. Gregory Palamas quotes St. John of Damascus saying,

Christ is transfigured, not by putting on some quality he did not possess previously, nor by changing into something he never was before, but by revealing to his disciples what he truly was, in opening their eyes and in giving sight to those who were blind. (Beck 1995, 13-14)

Thirdly, unlike eastern religions that teach that a person is swallowed up in divinity, the eastern Christian fathers taught that the human being always retains personal integrity. Unlike Buddhism where permanent personal identity is a fiction (Blofeld, 1992), for Christianity there is a distinct self, the hypostasis. At theosis, a person remains distinct, though not separate from God. As Vladimir Lossky said, “We remain creatures while becoming god by grace, as Christ remained God when becoming man by the Incarnation.” (Ware 1997, 237) St. Maximus the Confessor puts it this way:

In the same way in which the soul and the body are united, God should become accessible for participation by the soul and, through the soul's intermediary, by the body, in order that the soul might receive an unchanging character, and the body, immortality; and finally, that the whole man should become God, deified by the grace of the God-become-man, becoming whole man, soul and body, by nature, and becoming whole God, soul and body, by grace. (Meyendorff 1987, 164)

It is not simply the immaterial aspects of the person that are saved, or simply the intellect but the whole person, body and emotions included. It is the whole person that is created in the image of God: intellect, emotions, body, and spirit. Using Trinitarian theology again, they are distinct yet united.

Theosis is only fully realized on the Last Day, yet it begins in one's lifetime. It is not static but dynamic. It is progressive. It is experienced yet the experience does not contain it fully. This is why when asked the question, “Are you saved?” many Eastern Christians respond by saying, “I have been saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved.” Paul's words reflect both the eastern understanding of synergy and the dynamic nature of

theosis when he writes, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Phil 2:12,13) But what does this progression look like? Kallistos Ware describes six attributes (Ware 1997, 236) of the person who seeks union with God.

Firstly, theosis is not reserved for only a few select people but is open to every human being. It ought to be the goal of the human being. While the goal is not reached necessarily during one’s lifetime, progress is made. For the person with the intention, to an extent that person is already in some degree deified. St. Ephrem the Syrian, in his liturgical poetry on Paradise, speaks of the enjoyment of the Kingdom in this life.

Among the saints none is naked,  
                   For they have put on glory;  
 Nor is any clad in those leaves  
                   Or standing in shame,  
 For they have found, through our Lord,  
                   The robe that belongs to Adam and Eve. (Ephrem the Syrian 1990, 112)

Secondly, a person in the process of deification does not see him/herself as having reached a summit or having achieved a place of prominence above others. Rather that person is conscious of the journey and where the goal is – communion with God. As a result there is a consciousness of repentance, a seeing of the goal but also a realization of the distance yet to go. This in turn becomes an expression of humility.

It was said of Abba Sisoës that when he was at the point of death, while the fathers were sitting beside him, his face shone like the sun. He said to them, “Look, Abba Anthony is coming.” A little later he said, “Look, the choir of prophets is coming.” Again his countenance shone with brightness and he said, “Look, the choir of apostles is coming.” His countenance increased in brightness and lo, he spoke with someone. Then the old men asked him, “With whom are you speaking, Father?” He said, “Look, the angels are coming to fetch me, and I am begging them to let me do a little penance.” The old man said to him, “You have no need to do



penance, Father.” But the old man said to them, “Truly, I do not think I have even made a beginning yet.” (Ward 1984, 214-215)

Thirdly, while there are some, like the desert fathers who have gone to great extremes to progress in theosis, these extremes are not mandatory. What is essential is the commitment to follow the commandments as Jesus taught them, especially the command to love God and neighbor. (cf. Mt 22:37,39)

It was revealed to Abba Anthony in his desert that there was one who was his equal in the city. He was a doctor by profession and whatever he had beyond his needs he gave to the poor, and every day he sang the Sanctus with the angels. (Ward 1984, 6)

In the fourth place, theosis is not individualistic but communal. Salvation involves the other. There is an ancient eastern Christian saying that one can be damned alone but saved only with others. Separation and division is from the devil. God brings about unity. Since the human being is made in the image of the Trinitarian God, theosis must be within community. For the person who lives alone, outside of community, St. Basil asks, “Whose feet do you wash?” (Atwell 1995, 69) St. Anthony said, “Our life and our death is with our neighbor. If we gain our brother, we have gained God, but if we scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ.” (Ward 1984, 3)

Fifthly, the love of neighbor must be practical and active. Prayer and action are one. *Ορθοδοξία*<sup>4</sup> (correct belief) must be combined with *ορθοπραξία*<sup>5</sup> (correct actions). As Abba Moses had earlier instructed us, it is not enough to have loving thoughts without loving deeds. The following story from the desert shows how unceasing prayer and

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<sup>4</sup> Usually translated as Orthodoxy in English

<sup>5</sup> Usually translated as Orthopraxy in English

concern for the neighbor are tied together.

Some of the monks who are called Euchites went ... to see Abba Lucius. The old man asked them, 'What is your manual work?' They said, 'We do not touch manual work but as the Apostle says, we pray without ceasing.' The old man asked them if they did not eat and they replied they did. So he said to them "'When you are eating, who prays for you then?'" Again he asked them if they did not sleep and they replied they did. And he said to them, 'When you are asleep, who prays for you then?' They could not find any answer to give him. He said to them, 'Forgive me, but you do not act as you speak. I will show you how, while doing my manual work, I pray without interruption. I sit down with God, soaking my reeds and plaiting my ropes, and I say "God, have mercy on me, according to your great goodness and according to the multitude of your mercies, save me from my sins."' 'So he asked them if this were not prayer and they replied it was. Then he said to them, 'So when I have spent the whole day working and praying, making thirteen pieces of money more or less, I put two pieces of money outside the door and I pay for my food with the rest of the money. He who takes the two pieces of money prays for me when I am eating and when I am sleeping; so, by the grace of God, I fulfill the precept to pray without ceasing.' (Ward 1984, 120-121)

Lastly, the Church has been created as the communal place for theosis. Participation in the liturgical and sacramental life which is offered there is an important aspect of the emerging self in God. The life in Christ begins as life in the Church (As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:27)) and continues there. This is the purpose of the Church, not only a place of teaching, though it has those elements, but a place of healing and growing into the likeness of God. The Jesus Prayer, as a vehicle and means towards growing in the likeness of God, is more fully understood and experienced when a person who practices it is engaged in the life of the Church, a life within community.

All these attributes of the person seeking theosis are intimately connected with prayer. Prayer has been defined in different ways. The Oxford English Dictionary

defines prayer as “A solemn request to God, a god, or other object of worship.”<sup>6</sup> St. Theophan the Recluse, however, says, “the most important thing is standing before God with the mind in the heart with devotion and heartfelt prostration to Him.” (Theophan 2003, 193) In this case there is no request and perhaps there are no words. Prayer consists of a conscious awareness of being in the presence of God.

Tito Colliander, in his work, *The Way of the Ascetics* (1985), writes, “When you pray, you yourself must be silent. You do not pray to have your own earthbound desires fulfilled, but you pray: Thy will be done. It is not fitting to wish to use God as an errand boy. You yourself must be silent; let the prayer speak.” (Colliander 1985, 79) Here, as with St. Theophan, prayer is certainly not making a “solemn request.” It also carries the idea that the work of prayer is something beyond the person who is praying. It is not a speech or lecture or even an outpouring of praise; it is a relationship in which the one praying puts in some effort and God puts in effort as well.

St. Gregory of Sinai, a 14<sup>th</sup> century monastic, wrote a great deal of prayer which is contained in *The Philokalia*. In the following passage, he spends a long time describing the beauty and glory of prayer as he tries to define it. Ultimately he realizes that he has been using too many words:

For beginners prayer is like a joyous fire kindled in the heart; for the perfect it is like a vigorous sweet-scented light. Or again, prayer is the preaching of the Apostles, an action of faith or, rather, faith itself, 'that makes real for us the things for which we hope' (Heb. 11:1), active love, angelic impulse, the power of the bodiless spirits, their work and delight, the Gospel of God, the heart's assurance, hope of salvation, a sign of purity, a token of holiness, knowledge of God, baptism made manifest, purification in the water of regeneration, a pledge of the Holy Spirit, the

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<sup>6</sup> "prayer, n.1". *OED Online*. 2012. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/149435?result=1&rskey=NYHj1G&> (accessed September 15, 2012).

exultation of Jesus, the soul's delight, God's mercy, a sign of reconciliation, the seal of Christ, a ray of the noetic sun, the heart's dawn-star, the confirmation of the Christian faith, the disclosure of reconciliation with God, God's grace, God's wisdom or, rather, the origin of true and absolute Wisdom; the revelation of God, the work of monks, the life of hesychasts, the source of stillness, and expression of the angelic state. Why say more? Prayer is God, who accomplishes everything in everyone. (Gregory of Sinai 1995, 238)

“Why say more? Prayer is God.” Prayer, for St. Gregory, is not a means to an end. It is not a request or petition. Prayer is the experience of God, the participation in paradise. A person can rest in the prayer rather than looking beyond it. This participation in paradise now is part of the growth in and progression towards theosis. Prayer not only as a means towards God but as an experience of God is very much like what Winnicott referred to as transitional phenomena. He describes transitional objects for an infant as a not-me experience. While the object is “not-me” it is not fully other. It is an in-between state.

I have introduced the terms ‘transitional objects’ and ‘transitional phenomena’ for designation of the intermediate area of experience, between the thumb and the teddy bear, between the oral erotism and the true object-relationship, between primary creative activity and projection of what has already been introjected, between primary unawareness of indebtedness and the acknowledgement of indebtedness. (Winnicott 2005, 2-3)

This intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant’s experience, and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work. (Winnicott 2005, 19)

For the child, one can see the transitional object in the thumb, or the blanket. It is an in-between place between self and mother/other. Winnicott sees this as a potentially positive experience which forms the basis of art, science, faith, and culture. Likewise,

prayer can be seen from the perspective of transitional phenomena. It is an experience of God, but not God as totally other. It is God in relation to me, connected to me.

...the third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated. (Winnicott 2005, 3)

Winnicott calls the place where this experience occurs potential space, the space “between the individual and the environment.” (Winnicott 2005, 135) It is in this space that the “individual experiences creative living.” (Winnicott 2005, 139) For many of the saints, this space, where living is creative, was the place they spent most of their lives. They did not see it as a leaving the world but as a deeper experience of the world. Transitional objects such as the prayer rope, icons, incense and the Jesus Prayer itself all help to make the potential space a real place of experience. As Winnicott saw the idea of transitional phenomena and potential space as a positive part of development, so the early Christian teachers have taught that prayer is an important part of spiritual development. It fills the space between me and God with an experience of me and God.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

As stated earlier, I would like to explore whether the observance of spiritual practices such as the Jesus Prayer creates positive emotional postures that contribute to the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

There is a great deal of literature dedicated to various aspects of the dissertation topic. There is very little literature, however, investigating the experience of Christians who use the Jesus Prayer. Many Orthodox Christian catechists encourage reading the lives of the saints as important as (if not more important than) doctrinal works. In the lives of the saints, we see the integration of faith and practice as well as the application of particular practices including the Jesus Prayer. The goal of this dissertation, however, has been to explore the lives and spiritual practice of contemporary Orthodox Christians in a parish setting.

In addition to theological and doctrinal writings, I have also examined literature that looks at the practice of the faith. There are substantial use of Patristic writings that concern prayer and the Jesus Prayer in particular. These writings include *The Philokalia*, and the works of St. John Climacus, St. Gregory Palamas and others. Additionally, contemporary writers on the topic of prayer will be used such as St. Sophrony, Archmandrite Zacharias, Bishop Hierotheos, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, and others.

### **Research and studies Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is a form of meditation in which the practitioner learns to become aware of sensations and feelings without becoming absorbed in their content. Ramel, Goldin, Carmona, and McQuaid (2004) studied the effects of a course in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) on unhelpful thought processes (rumination) which can

exacerbate symptoms of depression and anxiety. Participants with lifetime mood-disorders were assessed before and after the MBSR course. Results showed that the practice of Mindfulness leads to a decrease in ruminative thinking.

Another study out of Brown University by Kerr, Sacchet, Lazar, Moore and Jones (2013) looked at the role of MBSR in reducing the distress in chronic pain and depression relapse. As in the previous study, the practice of Mindfulness manifested a reduced symptomology.

### **Research and studies on the Jesus Prayer**

Meany, McNarmara, and Burks (1984) examined the relevance of the Jesus Prayer on a physiological relaxation response. Relaxation was measured through a thermal biofeedback response. Forty-four subjects were chosen from the Anglican and Roman Catholic religious traditions. Relaxation states were measured at four stages: 1. baseline; 2. a general subjective relaxation state (in which subjects were told to relax for five minutes); 3. a cognitive-evaluative state (in which subjects were told to write for five minutes); and 4. a Jesus Prayer state (in which subjects were told to pray the Jesus Prayer for five minutes). The results indicated that the stages 2 and 3 were similar to each other but statistically higher (i.e. more relaxed) than stage 1. However stage 4, the Jesus Prayer state, indicated the greatest relaxation of the 4 stages. Based on these findings, the authors suggested that further research be done on the relationship of the Jesus Prayer and the physiology of relaxation with the hope that lowering stress through the practice of the Jesus Prayer may be an effective contribution to alleviating widespread health problems associated with stress.

While this research produced some useful information regarding stress reduction, it focused solely on the benefit of relaxation and only after a one time use of the Jesus prayer for five minutes. The use of the prayer within community was not explored nor its use for longer periods over an extended time. In addition, the measuring instrument (thermal biofeedback) was not able to give meaning to the experience. By using a mixed method research approach over a period of eight weeks with a question-answer survey instrument for the quantitative study and an open-ended question for the qualitative study, I hope to gain further insight into the usefulness of the Jesus Prayer as an ongoing resource of well-being and resilience for the individual and community.

Archimandrite Andrew Vujisić produced *Orthodox Interventions: Orthodox Neptic Psychotherapy in Response to Existential and Transpersonal Psychology* (2011). Neptic Psychotherapy is derived from the neptic Fathers. The neptic fathers are saints within the Orthodox Church who practiced hesychia (stillness) and nepsis (watchfulness). Much is written about nepsis in *The Philokalia*. Neptic Psychotherapy uses the techniques of the neptic fathers such as prayer (especially the Jesus Prayer), praying in particular postures, breathing techniques, and fasting. Vujisić's study examined the role that these techniques could play in helping those suffering from depression and anxiety. Participants were chosen after reporting that they were suffering from a minimum 6 month period of depression and anxiety. Fifteen participants were chosen. They identified themselves as Orthodox(5), Roman Catholic(3), Protestant(2), and Agnostic(5). Participants filled out the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) instrument and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) instrument before and after the study. The study lasted twelve weeks during which time the participants were required fulfill fasting and prayer



components. The fasting component consisted of dietary restrictions that followed the calendar of the Orthodox Church (no meat or dairy on certain days). The prayer component consisted of saying the Jesus Prayer one hundred times while using a particular sitting position and inhaling/exhaling that coincided with the phrases of the prayer.

Vujisić analyzed the results by looking at the participants as three groups: Orthodox, other Christian, and agnostics. The findings following the post study BDI and BAI instruments were both positive in that there was a strong corollary between an application of a neptic psychotherapy and descending levels of depressive symptoms and comorbid anxiety. The Vujisić study and the present study have similarities in the methodology itself. In both studies, an instrument that measures feelings of well-being is used before and after a several week period of prayer.

The main difference, however, is that the Vujisić study was concerned with people in crisis, people with self-reported depression and anxiety. The purpose of the study was to discover whether neptic psychotherapy (i.e. the techniques of the hesychasts including fasting, prayer, etc...) would “reduce the intensity of self-reported depressive symptomatology and comorbid anxiety in participants regardless of their religious affiliation.” (Vujisić 2011, 183) It only examined those with self-reported depression. The current study examines a broader participant base. Rather than looking only at those in crisis, it is directed to the average parishioner who may or may not be in crisis. It asks the question, “Can the average parishioner benefit from hesychastic techniques?” Because the questions are different, the survey instruments are different as well. In the Vujisić study, the instruments measured change in depressive and anxiety

symptomatology. In the current study, the instruments measure changes in spiritual, mental, and interpersonal well-being. The current study is meant to reach a broader population. Rather than examining the reduction in depressive symptomatology it measures the increase in the sense of well-being.

Another difference between the Vujisić study and the current study is in the difficulty of the research plan. In the Vujisić study, participants followed a twelve week prayer commitment rather than an eight week commitment, the added fasting regulation (though many of the Orthodox participants in the current study may have followed a similar regiment), and a weekly report to the researcher. I am concerned that adding similar requirements may deter the participant from completing the program.

Finally, the results of the study, may appeal to those who have been diagnosed with depression or have self-reported depression but not to others who do not suffer from depressive symptomatology or are in denial of depressive symptomatology. The current study, by not focusing strictly on a pathology, may be more helpful to those who are unaware or lack such a pathology.

## **Writings on the Jesus Prayer**

### **Early Christian writers**

Not long after the canonical scriptures were written, other Christian documents appear which show the importance of prayer, the use of the name Jesus, the use of short repetitive scriptural phrases, and the desire to pray continually. The Shepherd of Hermas, a Christian document written in the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century describes the importance of the name of Jesus. “No one shall enter into the kingdom of God, except he receive the name of His

Son” (Lightfoot 1967, 229) “The name of the Son of God is great and incomprehensible, and sustaineth the whole world.” (Lightfoot 1967, 231)

By the fourth century the Egyptian desert had come to be a center of monastic asceticism. (Ward 1984, xvii) These men and women fled the nominalism of the city in order to struggle with the actual practice of faith in the desert. The writings of these early Christian monastics (Apophthegmata Patrum) is usually known as “The Sayings of the Desert Fathers.” It is here that contemplative prayer and eventually the Jesus Prayer began in earnest.

One such father was Abba Pambo (303-375 A.D.). As he could not read, he asked another monastic to help him by teaching him a psalm. His first lesson began with a verse from Psalm 39, “I will guard my ways that I may not sin with my tongue.” Pambo asked to stop at this point in order to reflect on the meaning of this short verse. He chose not to go back for a second lesson since he had enough to meditate on. And thus he was present with this verse for nineteen years. (Matthews-Greene 2009, 5)

Remember the above story of Abba Lucius in which prayer and compassion are linked. In it we also see a description of the use of Psalm 51 and the fulfilling of the scriptural commandment to pray without ceasing:

I will show you how, while doing my manual work, I pray without interruption. I sit down with God, soaking my reeds and plaiting my ropes, and I say, ‘God, have mercy on me, according to your great goodness and according to the multitude of your mercies, save me from my sins.’ ...So when I have spent the whole day working and praying, making thirteen pieces of money more or less, I put two pieces of money outside the door and I pay for my food with the rest of the money. He who takes the two pieces of money prays for me when I am eating and when I am sleeping; so, by the grace of God, I fulfill the precept to pray without ceasing. (Ward 1984, 120)

St. Ambrose (337-397 A.D.) in his book *On the Holy Spirit* emphasizes the importance of the name of Jesus. He writes,

He spread abroad that divine Name of His throughout all creatures, not filled up by any addition (for fulness admits not of increase), but filling up the empty spaces, that His Name might be wonderful in all the world. The pouring forth, then, of His Name signifies a kind of abundant exuberance of graces and copiousness of heavenly goods, for whatever is poured forth flows over from abundance. (Ambrose 1994, 106)

St. John Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.), a fiery preacher of Antioch who became the Patriarch of Constantinople, taught about dedicating one's life to God and caring for the poor. He was well versed in the scriptures offering public sermons based on the scriptures. Today his extant writings include some 600 homilies, most published in English. He wrote also about prayer and the power of using the name Jesus in particular in his *Letter to Monks*:

The remembrance of the name of Jesus rouses the enemy to battle. For a soul that forces itself to pray the Prayer of Jesus can find anything by this prayer, both good and evil. First it can see evil in the recesses of its own heart, and afterwards good. This prayer can stir the snake to action, and this prayer can lay it low. This prayer can expose the sin that is living in us, and this prayer can eradicate it. This prayer can stir up in the heart all the power of the enemy, and this prayer can conquer it and gradually root it out. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it descends into the depths of the heart, will subdue the snake which controls its ranges, and will save and quicken the soul. Continue constantly in the name of the Lord Jesus that the heart may swallow the Lord and the Lord the heart, and that these two may be one. However, this is not accomplished in a single day, nor in two days, but requires many years and much time. Much time and labor are needed in order to expel the enemy and instate Christ. (Brianchaninov 2006, 22)

John Cassian (360-435 A.D.) repeated the first verse of Psalm 70. In his work known as "The Conferences," he wrote,

Hence our anxiety to find a formula which will enable us to think of God and to hold incessantly to that thought so that, as we keep it in view, we may have something to return to immediately whenever we find that we have somehow slipped away from it. (Cassian 1985, 131)

And what follows now is the model to teach you, the prayer formula for which you are searching. Every monk who wants to think continuously about God should get accustomed to meditating endlessly on it and to banishing all other thoughts for its sake. But he will not hold on to it unless he breaks completely free from all bodily concerns and cares. This is something which has been handed on to us by some of the oldest of the Fathers and it is something which we hand on to only a very small number of the souls eager to know it: To keep the thought of God always in your mind you must cling totally to this formula for piety: “*Come to my help, O God; Lord, hurry to my rescue.*” (Cassian 1985, 132)

According to Cassian, this practice had been in existence for some time already having been “handed on to us by some of the oldest of the Fathers.” While many monastics practiced a repetitive prayer using words of scripture and others focused on the name of Jesus, it is not until the fifth century that we see the combination of these two elements in the writings of St. Nilus of Ancyra (d. c. 430 A.D.) advocating the remembrance of the name of Jesus in a continuous manner. (Ware 1986c, 177)

Diadochos of Photiki, (d. c. 485 A.D.), likewise writes,

When we have blocked all its outlets by means of the remembrance of God, the intellect requires of us imperatively some task which will satisfy its need for activity. For the complete fulfillment of its purpose we should give it nothing but the prayer “Lord Jesus”. “*No one,*” it is written, “*can say ‘Lord Jesus’ except in the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor 12:3). Let the intellect continually concentrate on these words within its inner shrine with such intensity that it is not turned aside to any name in the depths of their hearts can sometimes see the light of their own intellect. For when the mind is closely concentrated upon this name, then we grow fully conscious that the name is burning up all the filth which covers the surface of the soul. (Diadochos of Photiki 1979, 270)

In the sixth century Sts Barsanuphius and John, two elders living in the deserts of Gaza, produced an extensive amount of literature detailing the spiritual life. They

corresponded with spiritual children only by letter in order not to hinder their life of silence. In their letters, nearly 850 surviving, Barsanuphius is known as “the Great Old Man,” with John known as “the Other Old Man.” (Ware 1986c, 179) They did not have one formulaic prayer but used several including, “Lord Jesus Christ, save me from the passions of dishonor.” (Barsanuphius 2006, 258), “Jesus, help me,” (Barsanuphius 2006, 169), ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me’, (Ware 1986c, 180) ‘Master Jesus, protect me and help my weakness’ (Ware 1986c, 180) In the following generation, a disciple of Sts Barsanuphius and John, Dorotheus, encourages his disciple to use the prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me,” and to supplement it with the phrase, “Son of God, help me.” (Ware 1986c, 180)

### **Early Hesychastic Writers**

Sinai in the seventh century, beginning with St. John Climacus, becomes a place where the Jesus Prayer in its flexible form and usage is transmitted for future generations. John was abbot of St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai and author of the book, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. This book, with its thirty chapters (or rungs) offers practical advice to the one who desires to grow in spiritual maturity. Originally written for his monks, *The Ladder* is still read today by monastics and lay people alike, especially during Great Lent. Though the Ladder is not primarily concerned with the Jesus Prayer, it makes several remarks regarding it which are important to note. Firstly he uses the phrase “Jesus Prayer.” He writes in Step 15, the chapter on Lust, “So let the remembrance of death and the concise Jesus Prayer go to sleep with you and get up with you, for nothing helps you as these do when you are asleep.” (Climacus 1982, 178) Regarding stillness, hesychia, he writes, “Stillness is worshipping God unceasingly and

waiting on Him. Let the remembrance of Jesus be present with your every breath. Then indeed you will appreciate the value of stillness.” (Climacus 1982, 269)

Hesychios the Priest, possibly eighth or ninth century, writes in a very warm manner about the use of the Jesus Prayer. We see again the use of a repetitive prayer with the name of Jesus.

Attentiveness is the heart’s stillness, unbroken by any thought. In this stillness the heart breathes and invokes, endlessly and without ceasing, only Jesus Christ who is the Son of God and Himself God. It confesses Him who alone has power to forgive our sins, and with His aid it courageously faces its enemies. Through this invocation enfolded continually in Christ, who secretly divines all hearts, the soul does everything it can to keep its sweetness and its inner struggle hidden from men, so that the devil, coming upon it surreptitiously, does not lead it into evil and destroy its precious work. (St. Hesychios the Priest, *Philokalia VI* 163)

The more the rain falls on the earth, the softer it makes it; similarly, Christ’s holy name gladdens the earth of our heart the more we call upon it. (Hesychios the Priest 1979, 169)

The first Christian millennium was a period of liturgical, scriptural, dogmatic, and spiritual development. The seeds of the Jesus Prayer are to be found in the canonical scripture, yet even by the tenth century, the Jesus Prayer did not hold the preeminent place in the Church that it does today. It was the next millennium, however, that developed and solidified the practice and theology of the Jesus Prayer while at the same time posing difficulties for the spiritual practice.

Nikiphoros the Monk’s writings are the first to present a systematic practice of the Jesus Prayer. Writing in the early fourteenth century from Mount Athos, he mentions particular formula of the Jesus Prayer that has become somewhat standardized. He

speaks about the participation of the body with the prayer knowing that the person is a unity of body and soul.

Seat yourself, then, concentrate your intellect, and lead it into the respiratory passage through which your breath passes into your heart. Put pressure on your intellect and compel it to descend with your inhaled breath into your heart. Once it has entered there, what follows will be neither dismal nor glum. Just as a man, after being far away from home, on his return is overjoyed at being with his wife and children again, so the intellect, once it is united with the soul, is filled with indescribable delight. (Nikiphoros 1995, 205)

Moreover, when your intellect is firmly established in your heart, it must not remain there silent and idle; it should constantly repeat and meditate on the prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me", and should never stop doing this. For this prayer protects the intellect from distraction, renders it impregnable to diabolic attacks, and every day increases its love and desire for God. (Nikiphoros 1995, 206)

Less than a generation following the death of Nikiphoros, Gregory of Sinai, another monk of Mount Athos, produces writings that follow the tradition of Nikiphoros. He discusses bodily posture, the use of the phrase, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me," and the need for the prayer to be continuous.

Sometimes - and most often - you should sit on a stool, because it is more arduous; but sometimes, for a break, you should sit for a while on a mattress... You must bend down and gather your intellect into your heart - provided it has been opened - and call on the Lord Jesus to help you... Some of the fathers advise us to say the whole prayer, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy', while others specify that we say it in two parts - 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy', and then 'Son of God, help me' - because this is easier, given the immaturity and feebleness of our intellect... Again, some fathers teach that the prayer should be said aloud; others, that it should be said silently with the intellect. On the basis of my personal experience I recommend both ways. For at times the intellect grows listless and cannot repeat the prayer, while at other times the same thing happens to the voice. Thus we should pray both vocally and in the intellect. But when we pray vocally we should speak quietly and calmly and not loudly, so that the voice does not disturb and hinder the intellect's consciousness and concentration. (Gregory of Sinai 1995, 276)



The controversy between Varlaam and St. Gregory Palamas mentioned earlier occurred at this time. The hesychasts believed that an ascetic life was more than fasting and liturgical prayer. They believed that one could experience the energies of God, though not the essence of God, in this life. Practice of the Jesus Prayer was fundamental to this experience. The controversy also helped to solidify the teaching on the union of body and soul with the understanding the God was not only to be contemplated but experienced. The body itself participated in the experience. The body and soul cooperate as well in the practice of the Jesus Prayer. As Kallistos Ware, says, “Christianity is not merely a philosophical theory or a moral code, but involves a direct sharing in divine life and glory, a transforming union with God ‘face to face’.” (Ware 1986b, 254) Following several synods, the teaching of St. Gregory Palamas was accepted as doctrine in 1351 A.D. in Constantinople. (Ware 1997, 67)

### **Renewal of Hesychasm**

Following the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 A.D., the eastern Church adopted a defensive stance (Ware 1986a, 256) doing what they could to maintain the life of the church in the lives of believers but doing little to develop its theology. With Orthodox schools being closed, those who sought a more formal academic theological education generally went to the west in what began the Western Captivity of Orthodoxy. This resulted in a theology shaped by western categories, both Roman Catholic and Protestant. (Binns 2002, 81) For others, however, the sense of being under a political attack by a Turkish Occupation combined with a theological attack of western ideas led to a strong conservatism and mistrust within Orthodoxy and especially in the monastic centers such as Mount Athos. (Binns 2002, 83; Ware 1986a, 256) What

resulted seemed to be a stifling of Orthodox theological movement. Many Orthodox became reactionary and only repeated the tradition handed to them. Others developed theology along western categories.

A type of Hesychastic renewal began in the mid-eighteen century. St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (Athos) and St. Macarius of Corinth jointly edited *The Philokalia*, a collection of spiritual texts which date from the fourth to fifth century and focusing greatly on contemplative prayer with much on the Jesus Prayer. (Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware 1979, 11) It was first published in 1782 followed by a Slavonic edition by Paissii Velichkovsky appearing at Moscow in 1793. Kallistos Ware describes the main features of *The Philokalia*:

1. Although the texts included are almost entirely by monks, writing for a monastic audience, the editors intended the book for all Christians, monks and laity alike.
2. The need for personal direction by an experienced spiritual father is frequently emphasized.
3. There is throughout the work a close link between spirituality and dogma. The life of prayer is set firmly in the context of Trinitarian theology and Christology.
4. The main centre of interest is the inner purpose of the spiritual way, not the outward observance of ascetic rules. (Ware 1986a, 257)

*The Philokalia*, with its themes of spiritual attentiveness, vigilance, and stillness influenced many Orthodox Christians and spread to the West through *The Way of the Pilgrim* (Anonymous 1991) and the works of Dostoyevsky, particularly *The Brothers Karamzov* and the character of Fr. Zossima of the Optina Pustyn Monastery. It was now a period when theological creativity was seen once again in the East and a movement of theological thought from East to West rather than only the other way around.

### Later Hesychastic Writers

In the nineteenth century, a new flowering of spiritual thought came from two prolific bishops of Russia, Theophan the Recluse and Ignatius Brianchaninov. Many of their writings were published in 1936 from the notes of another Russian elder, Igumen Chariton. Published in English in 1966, *The Art of Prayer* focuses on the Jesus Prayer and its practice. Like *The Philokalia* before it, *The Art of Prayer* has also become an important work for those interested in the Jesus Prayer and contains the writings of many early as well as more modern spiritual elders.

The writings of Theophan the Recluse (1815 – 1894) appear more often than any other contributor to *The Art of Prayer*. Seven years after his election and consecration as bishop, he retired to a monastery. At first he participated in the common life of the community, but eventually chose to live as a recluse, seeing no one except his confessor and the superior of the monastery. (Chariton 1966, 12) He did, however, have a great ministry of correspondence to spiritual children all over Russia. He wrote the following on the purpose of the Jesus Prayer:

When we pray we must stand in our mind before God, and think of Him alone. Yet various thoughts keep jostling in the mind, and draw it away from God. In order to teach the mind to rest on one thing, the Holy Fathers used short prayers and acquired the habit of reciting them unceasingly. This unceasing repetition of a short prayer kept the mind on the thought of God and dispersed all irrelevant thoughts. They adopted various short prayers, but it is the Jesus Prayer which has become particularly established amongst us and is most generally employed: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner!'

So this is what the Jesus Prayer is. It is one among various short prayers, oral like all others. Its purpose is to keep the mind on the single thought of God. Whoever has formed the habit of this Prayer and uses it properly, really does remember God incessantly. (Theophan 1966, 93)

Another prolific author and contributor to *The Art of Prayer* was Ignatius Brianchaninov (1807-1867). Like Theophan, Ignatius became bishop and eventually retired to live a monastic life outside of worldly activities. His writings on the Jesus Prayer are directed mostly to a monastic audience and display, like Theophan, not a simple repetition of earlier spiritual writers, the lived and creative experience of the Jesus Prayer. One of his thoughts on the use of physical techniques is expressed here:

The essential thing is to unite the mind with the heart in prayer. This is accomplished by God's grace at the proper time which He Himself determines. Our earlier techniques are completely replaced by the unhurried uttering of the Prayer; there should be a short pause after every prayer, breathing should be quiet and leisurely, and the mind should be enclosed in the words of the prayer. With such methods, we can easily attain a certain degree of attention. Very quickly the heart begins to feel in sympathy with the attention of the mind as it prays. The concord of heart and mind begins, little by little, to be transformed into the union of the mind with the heart, and the way of prayer recommended by the Fathers will then establish itself automatically. Mechanical methods of a physical kind are suggested by the Fathers exclusively as means to achieve attention in prayer quickly and easily, but not as something essential. (Brianchaninov 2006, 197)

### **Contemporary elders**

The following elders lived in the twentieth century and have continued the teachings of hesychasm that they learned from those that came before them. The hesychastic tradition is passed down from generation to generation and is expressed most fully not in the writings of the practitioners but in the lived experience of their practice. These experiences were shared with their spiritual children who oftentimes shared what they learned in other writings. Elders Sophrony (1896-1993), Paisios (1924–1994), and Porphyrios (1906–1991) all spent time on Mount Athos. Elder Sophrony was of Russian background and eventually moved to England and began a monastery there. Elders

Paisios and Porphyrios were of Greek background. Paisios left Athos the year before his death because of ill health. Porphyrios left the Holy Mountain as well as he realized he needed medical care not to be found on Athos. He became a pastor in Athens and became well known throughout Greece. The writings of these men (and others) of the twentieth century present a living link to our own generation on the spirit of hesychasm. Their writings are mentioned in sermons, read in book clubs, and posted in blogs sharing the wisdom of their life with a more contemporary idiom than in some of the earlier writers. It is from the witness of such elders that our contemporary theologians have become inspired. The inspiration has not only been in the area of academic knowledge and teaching, but also in living a life at peace with one's self, one's neighbor, and God. They are a good example of the ancient dictum mentioned earlier, "If you are a theologian, you will pray truly. And if you pray truly, you are a theologian." (Evagrius 1979, 62) The following excerpts are examples of the writings of Elders Sophrony, Paisios, and Porphyrios on the Jesus Prayer.

St. Sophrony

The true Creator disclosed Himself to us as a Personal Absolute. The whole of our Christian life is based on knowledge of God, the First and the Last, Whose Name is I AM. Our prayer must always be personal, face to Face. He created us to be joined in His Divine Being, without destroying our personal character. It is this form of immortality that was promised to us by Christ. Like St. Paul we would not 'be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life'. For this did God create us and 'hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit' (2 Cor. 5.4,5). (Sophrony 1997, 116)

Our life can become holy in all respects only when true knowledge of its metaphysical basis is coupled with perfect love towards God and our fellow-men. When we firmly believe that we are the creation of God the Primordial Being, it will be obvious that there is no possible deification for us outside the Trinity. If we recognize that in its ontology all human nature is one, then for the sake of the unity of this nature we shall strive to make love for our neighbor part of our being. (Sophrony 1997, 118)

Elder Paisios

“The soul must be constantly ready and alert and always in contact with the spiritual headquarters, that is, God. Only then, it will feel secure, full of hope and joy. When I was in the army, during the war, I was a radio operator. I noticed that we felt secure only when we communicated with the Army Division on an hourly basis. When our communication was limited to every two hours, we felt a little bit insecure; sometimes, when we could only be in touch with them twice a day, we felt uncomfortable, lonely and lost. The same thing applies to our prayer. The more we pray, the more secure we feel, on a spiritual basis, of course. (Christodoulos 1998, 79)

When someone is involved in manual labor, it helps him a lot to say the Jesus prayer and at the same time perform his task. When someone is doing work that needs concentration, i.e. he is driving a car, or he is operating on a patient, he should also say the Jesus prayer so God can help him and enlighten him; however, he should pray with his heart, and use his mind to concentrate on his work and thus avoid doing any mistakes. (Christodoulos 1998, 81)

Elder Porphyrios

Let us love Christ. Then the name of Christ will burst forth from within us with impellent desire, with fervor, with divine eros. We will shout His name secretly, without speaking words. Let us stand before God in adoration, humbly, and in the footsteps of Christ—that Christ may free us from every trace of our fallen nature. Let us ask for tears to be given to us before prayer. but be careful! Do not let your right hand know what the left is doing (Mt 6:3). Pray with contrition: “Am I worthy for You to give such grace, O Christ?” And then these tears become tears of gratitude. I am deeply moved; I have not done the will of God, but I ask for His mercy.

Pray to God with love and yearning, in tranquility, with meekness, gently and without forcing yourself. And when you repeat the prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me,” say it slowly, humbly, gently and with divine love. Pronounce the name of Christ with sweetness. Say the words one at a time: “Lord...Jesus...Christ...have mercy on me”, smoothly, tenderly, affectionately, silently, secretly mystically, but with exaltation, with longing, with passion, without tension, force or unbecoming emphasis, without compulsion and pressure. In the way a mother speaks to the child she loves: “my little boy...my darling girl...my little Johnny...my wee Mary!” With longing. Yes, longing. That’s the whole secret. Here the heart is speaking: “My little child, my joy!” My Lord, my Jesus, my Jesus, my Jesus!” What you have in your heart and in your

mind, that is what you express with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.

Sometimes it is good to say the prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me,” out loud so that you hear it with your ears. We are body and soul and there is interaction between the two. (Porphyrios 2005, 126-127)

### **Contemporary theologians**

There are many recent writers and theologians who have shown interest in the Jesus Prayer. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, a bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Great Britain is a well-known scholar who has written extensively on the history and spirituality of the Orthodox Church. Within his work he has dedicated much time to the study of the Jesus Prayer. His short volume, *The Power of the Name* (1989), was used in the educational portion of the present study. He is also one of the chief translators of *The Philokalia* (Palmer 1979) into English from the original Greek. He provided the thirty page introduction to *The Art of Prayer* (1966).

Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, a prolific bishop from Greece, has written extensively on hesychasm. His works include, *Hesychia and Theology: The Context for Man's Healing in the Orthodox Church* (2007), *Orthodox Psychotherapy: The Science of the Fathers* (1994), and *The Illness and Cure of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition* (1993). Through his experience and studies, he came to see Orthodox theology as a therapeutic science in which the Hesychastic writers assisted restless humanity through their guidance in prayer.

Norris J. Chumley and Fr. John A. McGuckin, have recently published *Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer: Experiencing the Presence of God and a Pilgrimage to the Heart of an Ancient Spirituality* (2011). This work was produced after the author pair travelled to monasteries in Mount Sinai, Greece, Romania, the Ukraine, and Russia interviewing the

monastics who practiced the Jesus Prayer. It is essentially a qualitative research study in which the participants are monks and nuns who share their experience with the Jesus Prayer.

Fr. Meletios Webber, the Abbot of an Orthodox Monastery in Northern California, published *Bread & Water, Wine & Oil: An Orthodox Christian Experience of God* (2007). Like Metropolitan Vlachos, Fr. Meletios sees that healing from despair and anxiety is connected with the perception of the human person. Through prayer, particularly the Jesus Prayer, and the sacramental life of the Church, individuals are led back to the likeness of God to which they were created. Regular communal practice of the Jesus Prayer is held daily in the Monastery church in addition to the private practice of the prayer. As part of the research of this study, I spent several days participating in the prayer life of the Monastery with the resident monks.

Frederica Mathewes-Green, an accomplished author and convert to Orthodox Christianity wrote, *The Jesus Prayer, The Ancient Desert Prayer that Tunes the Heart to God* (2009). In addition to providing a helpful historical background to the prayer, she also presents her personal experience encouraging the prayer as a vehicle for spiritual and emotional renewal not only for monastics but for those living in the world as well.

Kyriakos Markides, professor of Sociology at the University of Maine and the author of numerous books has also explored the place of the Jesus Prayer in Orthodox Spirituality. Through his interviews and travels with Metropolitan Athanasius of Cyprus, an Athonite monastic, he investigates the interior world of prayer and healing. Like Fr. Meletios Webber, Frederica Matthews-Greene, and Metropolitan Vlachos, he writes of the healing of the nous through ceaseless prayer.



Paul Evdokimov, another lay theologian, was a Russian émigré to Paris following the Bolshevik revolution. He taught at the Catholic Graduate Theological Faculty in Paris and produced many books on Orthodox theology including *The Sacrament of Love* (1985) and *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (1998). He was known not only for his writings on prayer and Trinitarian relationality but also for the way his life exhibited those very concepts.

Fr. Vasileios Thermos is a pediatric psychiatrist from Greece, a visiting scholar at Harvard Divinity School, and an Orthodox priest. He has focused his work on bridging the gap between traditional Orthodox spiritual theology and modern psychological Science. His book *In Search of the Person* (2002), draws from the writings of Donald Winnicott and St. Gregory Palamas placing particular emphasis on reclaiming the True Self in order to experience humanity fully.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Orthodox Pastoral Challenge

How is this doxological and experiential theology expressed in persons today? Many monasteries and church communities are quite active and vibrant. The faithful have opportunities to embrace a way of life guided by these concepts. At the same time, other communities are struggling. Many Orthodox Christians (like other Christians and faithful of most any background) have embraced a secular world view and do not see the relevance of integrating Christian theology into their life. Christian leaders as well find it difficult to make that relevance clear. As a result, they often return to a comfortable Old World approach that neither speaks to the current generation nor recognizes the newness in which God always reveals Godself. Chrysostomos writes concerning the Church in Greece,

“There still remains, of course, the perception, among many of the more conservative clergy, that secular psychotherapy has engaged the religious community with the intention of supplanting traditional religious observance with a new-fangled path to mental and psychic restoration.” (Chrysostomos 2007, 29)

This creates a gap between 1) the struggles and challenges of persons and 2) the healing and restoration offered in Christ. This gap is often compounded by Orthodox Christian misunderstandings of Western science or faith expressions. Psychotherapy may be reduced to Freudianism or dream analysis. Roman Catholicism may be seen as power-hungry crusaders. Protestants may be viewed as individualistic fundamentalists. Thankfully these perceptions have begun to be moderated by Orthodox Christian leaders

who are willing to take the time to encounter the other in a real sense and who recognize that God continually is discovered anew.<sup>7</sup>

### **Theological Method**

Insight into bridging this gap may come from David Tracy, a Roman Catholic scholar who wrote a great deal on theological methodology. His concern, very similar to the one expressed above, was to recognize historic texts and the “Christian Fact” as sources but not ignore the common human experience in the process. (Tracy 1975, 43) Tracy examines five different models of methodology. He rejected what he called an “orthodox”<sup>8</sup> model because it limited its criteria for theological statements to traditional beliefs without taking into account human experience. (Tracy 1975, 24) While human experience is fundamental for traditional Orthodox theology, there can be a tendency to rely on the experience of the past and ignore the experience of the present. Tracy also found the “liberal” model to be lacking. While it took into account experience, it ignored the historic groundings of faith. (Tracy 1975, 26) The “neo-orthodox”<sup>9</sup> recognizes human experience and faith, but the faith that is expounded is more experientially based than historically based and is, according to Tracy, an outgrowth of liberal theology. (Tracy 1975, 28) A fourth model, “radical” theology, essentially denies the existence of God altogether. (Tracy 1975, 32) Tracy presents a revisionist model. His first thesis

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<sup>7</sup> For example: Fr. Vasileios Thermos (2002), Archbishop Chrysostomos (2007), Metropolitan Vujisić (2011), Fr. Meletios Webber (2007), and others.

<sup>8</sup> a term not to be equated with the Eastern Orthodox tradition

<sup>9</sup> again, not equivalent to Eastern Orthodoxy

states that the two sources for theology are Christian texts and common human experience. Using these sources, he suggests that anyone making a theological statement that goes beyond a private language of a person or group must be judged by two sets of criteria. The first asks if the statement is appropriate to the basic tenets of the Christian tradition. (Tracy 1975, 64) For Orthodox Christians, the Tradition would include the Scriptures, the Patristic writings, the Councils, worship (especially the Divine Liturgy but also the variety of prayers and services within the corpus of the Church), the lives of the saints, and iconography. These resources are experienced, not just learned.<sup>10</sup> Secondly the theological statement must show that it is adequate to the human experience. (Tracy 1975, 72) This method proposed by Tracy offers up theology to public scrutiny. If it is not to be private language then there must be a way of evaluating it. It therefore also implies a public discourse. When theology is not simply about beliefs but about its correlation to human experience, and when this theology is open to criticism and debate, it must therefore be a theology that speaks to a larger audience. As he says in another work, "...public discourse discloses meaning and truths that can in principle transform all human lives in some recognizable personal, social, political, ethical, cultural, or religious manner." (Tracy 1983, 2) Theology, therefore, is not a private intellectual exercise, nor a

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the Scriptures are not just studied, they are prayed, often in chant form. The Patristic writings, including the desert fathers and mothers, are not theological treatises as much as expressions of experience. The Councils which have formed the dogmatic structure of the Church rely on the acceptance of the people before they become normative. Worship is an experience of mind and body. All the senses participate. By reading the lives of the Saints, Orthodox Christians look for ways to emulate those who have successfully maneuvered the challenges of life. Iconography serves not only as a teaching tool but as a means to worship as well.

constructivist model with no historical grounding. What Tracy here rejects is also what the Orthodox Church (in theory) rejects. Theology is meant to speak to people in their contemporary situation, grounded in the “Christian fact,” and be a source of public edification. Ultimately, theology needs to be appropriate and adequate. (Tracy 1975, 72) It needs to be appropriate to the Christian Tradition and adequate to the human need/experience. This revised critical correlation of David Tracy allows the public discourse to be a two-way street. Theology may indeed have answers to questions and problems that people face. But human experience may also provide answers to theological questions. In many ways, this is how the development of theology occurred in the East. Tracy points out that Eastern Christianity possesses a

theology oriented to and from not history and ethos, but the cosmos and aesthetics; a style of religious practice oriented not so much by the word of scripture as by the manifestations of the sacred image, icon, ritual, logos, and cosmogonical theologies; a way of being Christian that demands radical separation from the ordinary... and allows real participation in the manifestations of the sacred available to our “divinized” humanity. (Tracy 1981, 208)

Yet is that theology experienced by everyday Christians? Recently, the Philadelphia Inquirer said, “No.” In a recent article entitled “A Frayed Connection” the Inquirer focused on the waning attendance in Orthodox Churches in the Northern Liberties neighborhood of Philadelphia.

Indeed, most neighbors “would rather go to a meeting about how to make the park better” than attend church, allowed Jennifer Slater, 25, who works for a jewelry designer. She was passing by Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church on a Sunday morning. Had Slater slipped inside, she would have heard the Rev. Nicolai Buga explain to three dozen worshipers, in Romanian, how the bread and wine are prepared for consecration. Liberty Lands Park was not on the agenda. (O’Reilly 2010)

While the message in church may be appropriate, is it adequate? Should the Church talk about the park? Does it have an opinion? Should it have an opinion? Tracy suggests that any adequate theology needs to recognize the responsibility to “all reality: other persons, society, history, cosmos...to all persons...Each is saved only in relation to all.” (Tracy 1981, 257) He feels most comfortable in making proclamations through the language of analogy. It is a language articulating similarity-in-difference. (Tracy 1981, 408) It is the language of the scriptures. Orthodox Christians recognize analogy as the language of the Patristic writers, the arts, and worship of the Church as well. It moves beyond first-order statements and into second-order reflection which can be more helpful for the contemporary situation. An analogical imagination, grounded in the Christian fact (Tracy 1981, 429) is able to be present and meaningful in the current situation. This language discourages settling into comfortable private pluralities without engagement. It looks for commonalities in the deep questions, limit questions, allowing divergent voices to speak together.

### **Research Paradigm**

The purpose of this two-phase sequential mixed methods study has been to evaluate the relevancy of individuals practicing the Jesus Prayer in the contemporary parish. The first phase began with quantitative research questions being asked of participants who have not been practicing the Jesus Prayer. Participants were parishioners of an Orthodox Church in a midwestern metropolitan area. Research questions came from three instruments exploring 1) Spiritual well-being, 2) Mental well-being, and 3) Interpersonal well-being. Following an eight week study and practice of the Jesus Prayer, the research questions were asked again. Results were derived from

comparing the data from the initial questions with the questions answered eight weeks later. In order to deepen the interpretation of the results from this first phase, a second qualitative phase followed. In the second phase, an open-ended question was asked: “What has been your experience in the practice of the Jesus Prayer?” Insights gained from the responses to the qualitative question helped to give meaning to the quantitative results. This researcher hypothesized that the scores of each instrument (Spiritual well-being, Mental well-being, and Interpersonal well-being) would be higher when the research questions are asked for the second time thus showing a greater perception of well-being following the introduction and practice of the Jesus Prayer for a period of eight weeks.

The mixed method approach has precedent in research method. It was used in 1959 in the field of psychology in order to bring together quantitative and qualitative data sources. (Creswell 2009, 204) This method has continued to be popular as can be seen in its expression in a variety of publications. (Creswell 2009, 205) The mixed method combines qualitative and quantitative methods in order to gain insights from more than one approach. In addition, in a sequential mixed methods approach such as utilized here, data gleaned from the qualitative research may be used to help explain some of the quantitative data. (Creswell 2009, 14) In this sequential mixed method, quantitative research will be followed by a qualitative open ended question. The reason for following up with qualitative research will be to 1) better understand the causes of the results, 2) clarify meaning in the results, and 3) compliment the quantitative results with qualitative discussion data.

## **Research Methods**

### **Participants**

The study population consisted of nineteen parishioners, thirty-one years old to sixty-eight years old, from an Orthodox Church in a midwestern metropolitan area. This congregation consists of about 1500 members. All participants were told that this study is strictly voluntary and confidential. All participants in addition have not been previous practitioners of the Jesus Prayer. They were told that by participating in this study they would learn a practice of Hesychasm known as the Jesus Prayer that may be of benefit to them in their spiritual life.

### **Ethical Considerations**

There was little to no risk to the participants in this study. Participants were practicing a form of prayer that has existed in the Church for centuries. There was nothing novel or experimental about the study. Rather the study sought to look at data to be able to empirically show that the practice of the Jesus Prayer within the parish community was beneficial to a person's sense of well-being. Participants signed informed consent<sup>11</sup> forms and were told that they could withdraw from the study at any time.<sup>12</sup> Participants were also aware of the AAPC certified Pastoral Counselors in the area if needed. There are over thirty Pastoral Counselors practicing near the study location.

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix 1

<sup>12</sup> Following the policies of Emory University/Candler School of Theology, it was determined by IRB Analyst Assistant, Tom Penna, that this study met the criteria for exemption under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and that no further IRB review was needed.



## **Materials**

Introductory content for this study included the seventeen page booklet on the Jesus Prayer, *The Power of the Name* (1989), by Kallistos Ware. This text covered an understanding of prayer from an Eastern Christian perspective, and an introduction to the Jesus Prayer including:

- 1) Free and formal usage
- 2) Distractions
- 3) Simplicity and flexibility
- 4) Completeness of the prayer (theologically and devotionally)
- 5) The power of the Name
- 6) The discipline of the prayer (including length of time, posture, and breathing)

Kallistos Ware is a well-known and well-respected theologian and pastor within the Orthodox Church who has been writing and lecturing since 1961 until he retired his position as the Spalding Lecturer of Eastern Orthodox Studies at Oxford University in 2001. Other supplementary texts on the practice of the Jesus Prayer may also be used.

## **Instruments**

*Spiritual Well-being.* A number of methods of assessing spiritual well-being have been developed. The Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES)<sup>13</sup> (Underwood 2006) is one such instrument that is designed to make available to researchers a self-report

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix A

measure of spiritual experiences. Spiritual experiences are a significant aspect of how spirituality is expressed in daily life for many people. The DSES is a sixteen-item scale which includes constructs such as awe, gratitude, mercy, sense of connection with the transcendent, compassionate love, and desire for closeness to God. Fifteen items are scored using a modified Likert scale in which response categories are *many times a day, every day, most days, once in a while, and never or almost never*. The sixteenth item, “In general, how close do you feel to God?” has four response categories: *not close at all, somewhat close, very close, and as close as possible*.

The DSES was created following a study by the National Institute on Aging and the Fetzer Institute for the National Institutes of Health in 1995. Participants examined issues at the interface of religion, aging, and health. A recommendation was made to develop a scale of daily spiritual experiences since these experiences seemed to be important to individuals’ lives and related to better health. Lynn Underwood, of the Fetzer Institute developed the DSES which was then included in a number of studies.

This scale is intended to measure a person’s perception of the transcendent (God, the divine) in daily life and his or her perception of his or her interaction with or involvement of the transcendent in life. The items attempt to measure experience rather than particular beliefs or behaviors; therefore, they are intended to transcend the boundaries of any particular religion. (Underwood and Teresi, 23)

Originally developed for use in health studies, it has been increasingly used in the social sciences, for program evaluation, and for examining changes in religious/spiritual experiences over time. The U.S. General Social Survey has included the DSES among its instruments and translations have been made into several languages. (Underwood 2006) Rush-Presbyterian–St. Luke’s Medical Center in Chicago administered a series of psychometric analyses with the DSES having 233 female participants. (Underwood 2002)

Loyola University conducted a study with 122 individuals from the University of Chicago area. (Underwood 2002) The internal consistency reliability estimates with Cronbach's alpha were very high: .94 and .95.

This instrument was developed to be used by a variety of cultures and faith backgrounds. Many other instruments I considered seemed created for a primarily Protestant demographic. The limited amount of items, the ease of a self-report approach, and the language of the items all contributed to my selecting this instrument over others.

*Mental Well-being.* Mental well-being relates both to subjective feelings (such as happiness), and objective components (such as the ability to function effectively in one's everyday life). The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)<sup>1415</sup> was created by researchers at the Universities of Warwick and Edinburgh, 2006, with funding provided by NHS Health Scotland, to assess the mental well-being of adults in the United Kingdom. The WEMWBS is a fourteen-item scale of mental well-being which includes constructs such as subjective well-being and psychological functioning. Like the DSES, all items are worded positively and address aspects of positive mental health. Responses are made on a 1 to 5 Likert scale. Within the United Kingdom, the WEMWBS has been validated for those whose ages were above 15 years old. Validation involved both student and general population samples, and focus groups. Like the previous instrument, the WEMWBS uses a self-report approach which people found unambiguous and easy to

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<sup>14</sup> The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was funded by the Scottish Government National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-being, commissioned by NHS Health Scotland, developed by the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh, and is jointly owned by NHS Health Scotland, the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix B

complete. The internal consistency reliability estimates with Cronbach's alpha were very high, .89 for student samples and .91 for the general population sample.

In the general population samples, there were some trends showing that scores were affected by certain factors such as employment status and marital status. It certainly makes sense that stress inducing events such as employment loss/change, divorce, illness, death in the family, geographic move, etc. could affect one's mental well-being. A question which asks if there have been any significant life changes will be important for the second test to account for this possibility.

*Interpersonal Well-being.* Interpersonal relationships play a significant role in an Orthodox Christian understanding of salvation. Salvation is understood as personal and yet communal. In a certain way, we are responsible for each other. While evil serves to divide, God calls us into union. As described above, God, for Orthodox Christians, is understood as a communion of three Persons. Human beings are called to enter into that communion by grace (theosis) as well as be in communion with each other (the Body of Christ). The Quality of Interpersonal Relations Scale (EQRI<sup>16</sup> – from the French: l'Échelle de la Qualité des Relations Interpersonnelles) is composed of five sub-scales evaluating the quality of the interpersonal relationships of individuals with respect to their family, spouse, friends, fellow students and other people in general. Each stem begins *At this time, my relationship with my* [family, spouse,...] followed by one of four adjective phrases (*harmonious, rewarding, satisfactory, and inspires trust*). There are a

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix C

total of twenty items. The participant indicates on a modified Likert Scale with responses of *not at all, a little, moderately, mostly, and extremely*.

The EQRI was developed by Caroline Senécal, Robert Vallerand, and Évelyne Vallières and published in the *Revue Européenne de Psychologie Appliquée* (1992). Its purpose was to fill a gap in previous studies that were not multidimensional. Most studies focused on the relationships of couples or families but did not cover different types of relationships. Therefore this study was meant to be an umbrella which measured the perceived quality of various types of interpersonal relationships. After a variety of studies, the internal consistency reliability estimates with Cronbach's alpha were high with values varying from .89 to .95. Since the testing will be done in conjunction with a church group, the fourth stem question will need to be changed. Instead of it reading, *At this time, my relationship with my fellow students...*, it will read, *At this time, my relationship with my fellow parishioners...*

The three instruments consisted of fifty modified Likert questions all together and covered the areas of Spiritual, Mental, and Interpersonal well-being. The instruments were used on two occasions. The first was at the beginning of the study, before participants had been practicing the Jesus Prayer, and finally eight weeks after participants had been practicing the Jesus Prayer. As noted above, there was an additional question in the second testing requesting information on significant life changes that might have occurred in between the testing times. It was noted that results with the WEMWBS can be affected by stressful life experiences. This may be true with the other instruments as well. Therefore raising this question is important. All testing was by self-report. Scoring was done by adding the values of each response. The

individual's score from the first test were compared with the second test in order to see if there had been any measurable change in well-being. The purpose in the scoring was to discover if there had been a change from the first test to the second. The score itself was not important, nor was a comparison of one person's score to another person's score important.

Following the use of the quantitative instruments, a qualitative study was done using observations from an open-ended question. The open-ended question of this discussion was, "What has been your experience in the practice of the Jesus Prayer?" With this data, I hoped to better understand the results by gaining insight into the meaning of the experience of practicing the Jesus Prayer for the participants. In addition, the qualitative data helped in the understanding of the quantitative research results.

## **Chapter 4: Quantitative Results**

This study measures the states of well-being in the areas of Spirituality, Mental Health, and Interpersonal Relationships before and after an eight-week treatment plan using the Orthodox Christian practice of the Jesus Prayer along with a weekly class on the same topic. The relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable has been examined. The independent variable is the act of praying the Jesus Prayer and participation in the weekly class. The dependent variable is the change in states of well-being following the eight-week period of study. The following hypotheses were thus formulated in the study based on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

1. The null hypothesis, i.e., that there is no statistically significant relationship between the treatment plan (praying the Jesus Prayer and participation in the weekly class) and a change in perceived states of well-being.
2. The alternative hypothesis, i.e., that there is a statistically significant relationship between the treatment plan (praying the Jesus Prayer and participation in the weekly class) and a change in perceived states of well-being.

### **Findings**

In order to explore the relationship (if any) of perceived states of well-being and a treatment plan based on the hesychastic practice of the Jesus Prayer, it was necessary to first determine initial participant levels of perceived Spiritual Well-being, Mental Well-being, and Interpersonal Well-being. This was done using the instruments previously described (Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES), Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-

being Scale (WEMWBS), and the Quality of Interpersonal Relations Scale (EQRI)) as found in Appendix 2. This was then compared to participant levels of perceived Spiritual Well-being, Mental Well-being, and Interpersonal Well-being following the treatment plan. This was done using the DSES, WEMWBS, EQRI, as found in Appendix 3.

While fifty-three individuals attended the first class on the Jesus Prayer, thirty-one individuals chose to be participants and completed the initial instruments. Of the thirty-one participants, nineteen individuals completed the instruments at the end of the study. The results of the initial survey for those who completed the full study showed no significant difference from the results of those who did not complete the full study. A breakdown of participant totals can be found on Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Pre-Treatment scores including those who did not complete the full study*

Initial Survey results for participants who completed full Study			Initial Survey results for participants who completed only initial surveys		
DSES	WEMWBS	EQRI	DSES	WEMWBS	EQRI
54	44	46	48	42	56
59	31	47	52	26	47
52	31	41	63	32	55
54	29	54	36	22	36
33	18	43	62	38	59
54	36	48	40	28	59
49	45	56	46	27	42
44	29	45	56	27	54
50	34	52	50	30	45
36	30	75	43	44	46
34	37	70	27	25	36
35	32	34	45	23	61
32	32	50			
41	31	56			
41	32	46			
28	39	63			
47	37	58			
23	24	27			
43	28	46			



The mean score with the initial instruments for those who ended up completing the study were 42.6/76 on the DSES, 32.6/56 on the WEMWBS, and 50.3/80 on the EQRI. The mean score with the initial instruments for those who did not complete the study were 47.3/76 on the DSES, 30.3/56 on the WEMWBS, and 49.7/80 on the EQRI. A higher score demonstrates a higher perceived state of well-being. Therefore those that did not complete the study showed an initially higher perceived state of well-being in the area of spirituality, a lower perceived state of well-being in the area of mental health, and a nearly equal perceived state of well-being in the area of interpersonal relationships. The following statistics will be concerned only with those who completed both the initial and final instruments of the study.

### **Pre-treatment DSES**

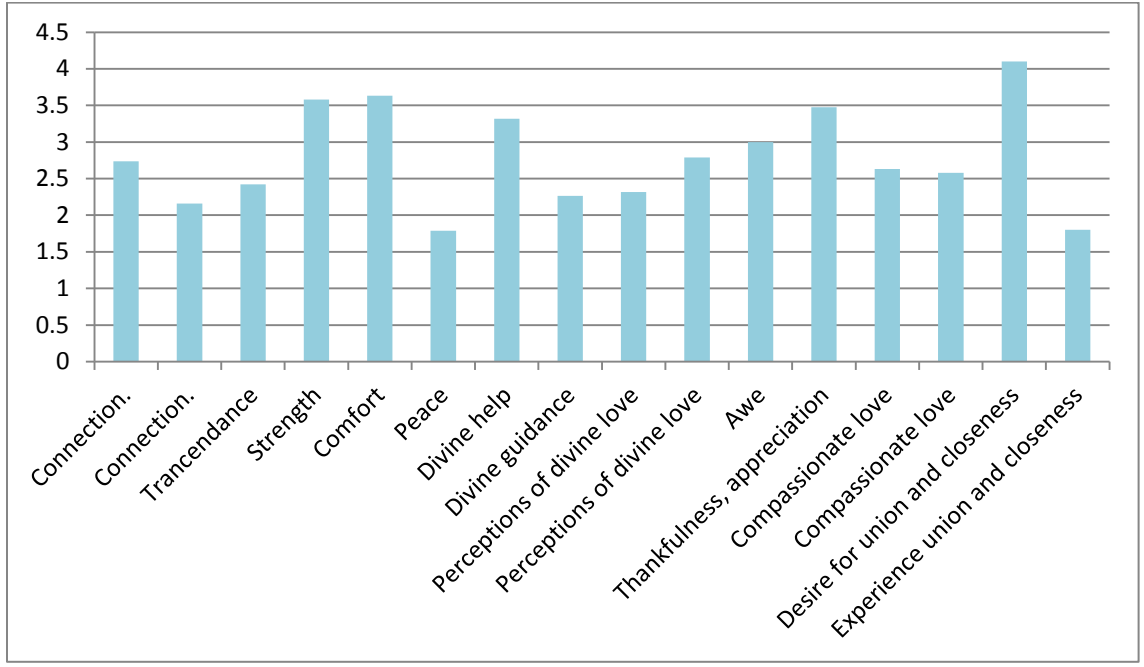
The results of the Pre-treatment DSES instrument were as follows. The mean participant score was 42.6. Of the nineteen participants, one participant scored in the lower third of the 0-76 range. Thirteen participants scored in the middle third range. Five participants scored in the upper third range. A breakdown of participant responses to the Initial DSES survey can be found in Table 2 below. The first two questions were concerned with connection. On question number 1, the mean score (out of a possible 6) was 2.73. On question number 2, the mean score was 2.16. Question 3 was concerned with joy and a transcendent sense of self. On question number 3, the mean score was 2.42. Questions 4 and 5 are concerned with strength and comfort. On question number 4, the mean score was 3.58. On question number 5, the mean score was 3.63. Question 6 is concerned with feeling peace. On question number 6, the mean score was 1.79. Question 7 is concerned with divine help. On question number 7, the mean score was 3.32. Question 8 is concerned with divine guidance. On question number 8, the mean score was 2.26. Questions 9 and 10 are concerned with perceptions of divine love. On question number 9, the mean score was 2.32. On question number 10, the mean score was 2.79. Question 11 was concerned with awe. On question number 11, the mean score was 3.00. Question 12 was concerned with thankfulness and gratitude. On question number 12, the mean score was 3.47. Questions 13 and 14 were concerned with compassionate love. On question number 13, the mean score was 2.63. On question number 14, the mean score was 2.58. Questions 15 and 16 were concerned with union and closeness. On question number 15, the mean score was 2.68. On question number 16, the mean score was 1.21. The mean score for all participants and for all questions was 2.66. Questions 15 and 16

were scored out of a possible 4 instead of 6 like the first 14 questions. Therefore if questions 15 and 16 were weighted to be scaled together, their scores would be 4.1 and 1.8 respectively. The weighted scores are illustrated in Table 3. The weighted scores are reordered from low to high in Table 4. Notice that questions 15 and 16 are at nearly opposite ends of the table. While people greatly desire to have a union and closeness with God, oftentimes the experience is lacking.

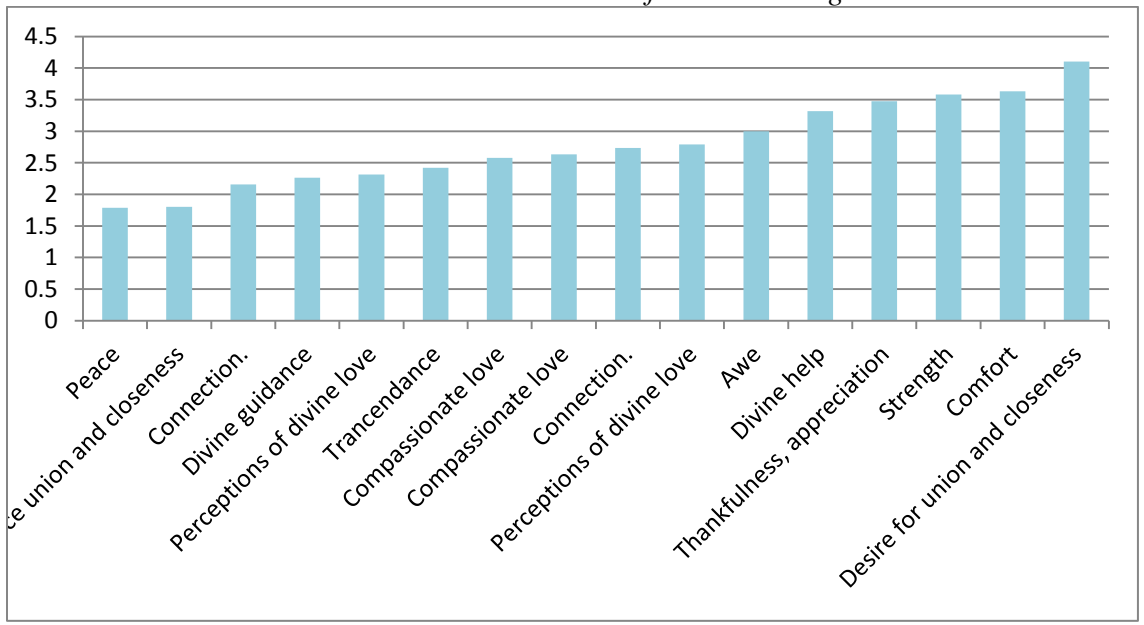
**Table 2**  
*Pre-Treatment DSES item scores*

Questions	Participants																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<b>1</b>	5	4	4	3	2	3	2	2	4	1	1	2	2	4	5	0	2	2	4
<b>2</b>	4	4	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	0	1	1	1	3	1	1	3	1	3
<b>3</b>	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	1	2	1	2	2	1	3	3	1	3
<b>4</b>	5	4	5	5	2	4	3	4	4	5	3	5	2	3	4	2	3	2	3
<b>5</b>	5	4	5	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	3	5	2	3	3	4	3	2	3
<b>6</b>	3	3	2	0	1	3	3	2	2	0	3	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	2
<b>7</b>	2	5	5	3	1	4	4	4	4	5	1	5	5	2	3	1	4	1	4
<b>8</b>	2	4	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	3	1	3
<b>9</b>	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	0	1	1	1	3	3	1	3	1	3
<b>10</b>	4	3	3	5	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	2
<b>11</b>	2	4	4	5	3	5	4	3	3	5	2	1	2	3	2	1	4	1	3
<b>12</b>	5	5	2	3	3	5	5	3	4	5	4	1	3	4	3	2	4	2	3
<b>13</b>	2	4	3	5	2	4	3	2	3	1	3	4	3	2	2	2	2	1	2
<b>14</b>	3	3	2	5	2	3	4	2	3	0	4	2	3	2	2	3	3	1	2
<b>15</b>	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	2
<b>16</b>	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>43</b>

**Table 3**  
*Pre-Treatment DSES item score means*



**Table 4**  
*Pre-Treatment DSES item score means reordered from low to high*



### **Pre-treatment WEMWBS**

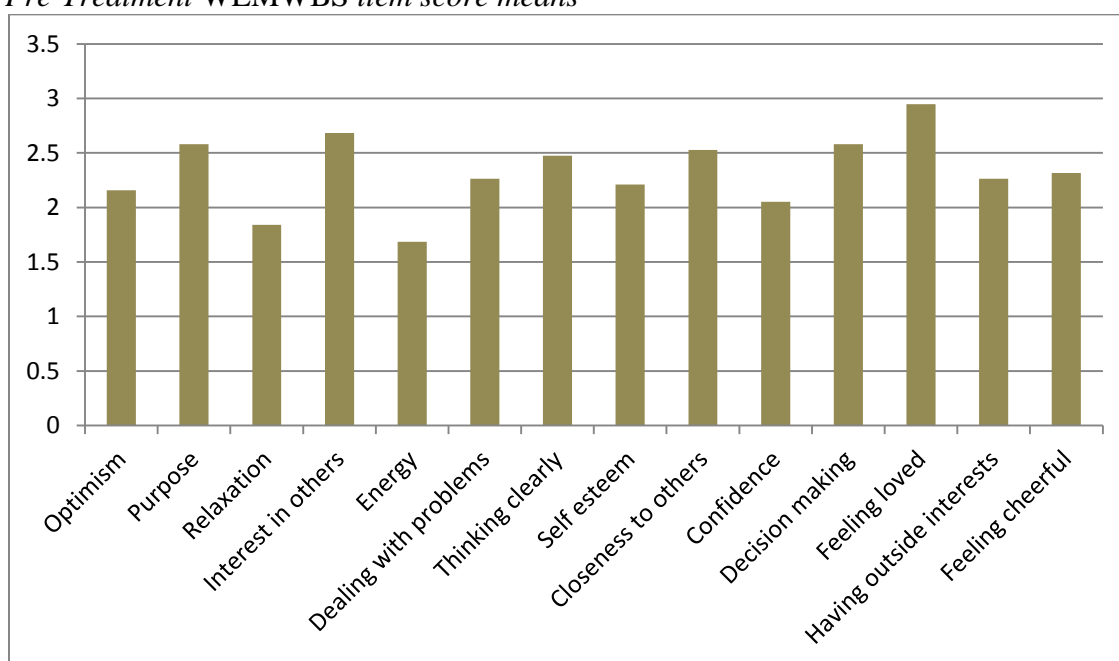
The results of the Pre-treatment WEMWBS instrument were as follows. Of the nineteen participants, one participant scored in the lower third of the 0-56 range. Fifteen participants scored in the middle third range. Three participants scored in the upper third range. A breakdown of participant responses to the Initial WEMWBS survey can be found in Table 5 below. The first question was concerned with optimism. On question number 1, the mean score (out of a possible 4) was 2.16. Question 2 was concerned with purpose. On question number 2, the mean score was 2.58. Question 3 was concerned with relaxation. On question number 3, the mean score was 1.84. Question 4 was concerned with interest in others. On question number 4, the mean score was 2.68. Question 5 was concerned with energy. On question number 5, the mean score was 1.68. Question 6 was concerned with how one deals with problems. On question number 6, the mean score was 2.26. Question 7 is concerned with thinking clearly. On question number 7, the mean score was 2.47. Question 8 is concerned with self-esteem. On question number 8, the mean score was 2.21. Question 9 was concerned with closeness to others. On question number 9, the mean score was 2.53. Question 10 was concerned with confidence. On question number 10, the mean score was 2.05. Question 11 was concerned with decision making. On question number 11, the mean score was 2.58. Question 12 was concerned with feeling loved. On question number 12, the mean score was 2.95. Question 13 was concerned with having outside interests. On question number 13, the mean score was 2.26. Question 14 was concerned with feeling cheerful. On question number 14, the mean score was 2.32. The mean score for all participants and

for all questions was 2.33. The mean scores are illustrated in Table 6. The mean scores are reordered from low to high in Table 7.

**Table 5**  
*Pre-Treatment WEMWBS item scores*

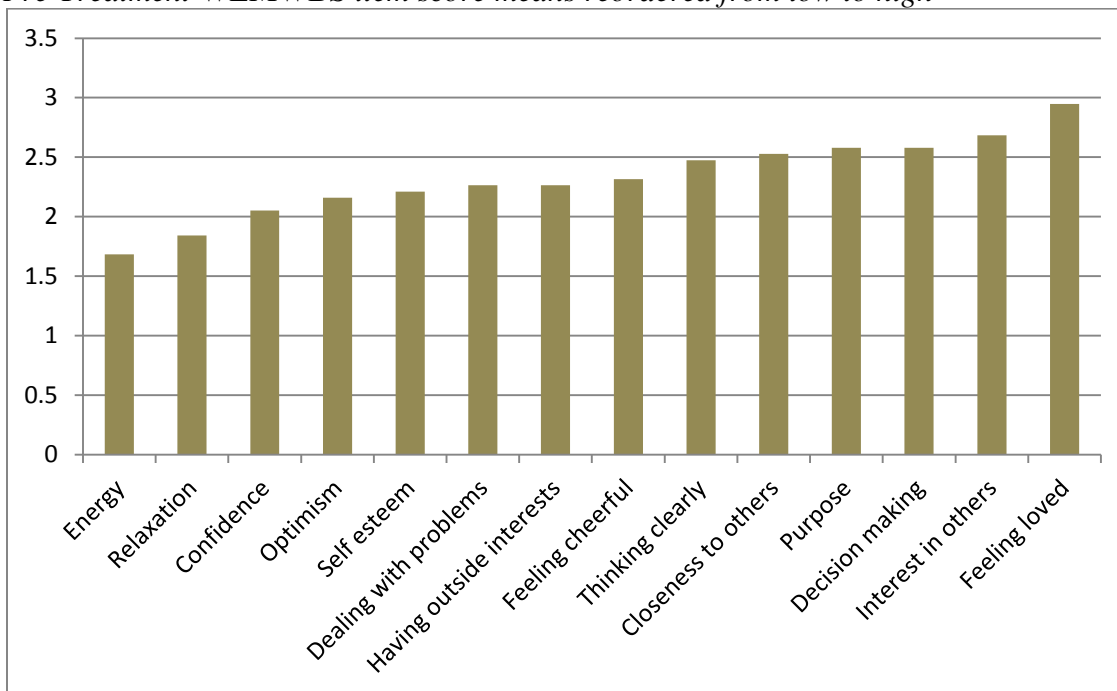
Questions	Participants																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	0	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
2	3	3	3	3	1	3	4	2	3	1	2	2	3	2	3	4	2	2	3
3	1	2	2	2	0	3	3	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	3	1	3	2	1
4	3	3	2	2	2	3	4	3	2	3	3	3	4	2	2	3	3	2	2
5	2	2	3	0	0	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	3	1	1	3	1	1
6	3	2	2	2	0	2	4	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	4	3	2	2
7	4	2	2	2	1	3	4	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	4	2	2	3
8	3	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	1
9	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	4	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	1	2
10	3	1	2	2	1	2	3	2	2	1	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	1	2
11	4	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	4	2	2	2
12	4	4	2	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	2	2
13	4	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	4	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	1	3
14	4	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>

**Table 6**  
*Pre-Treatment WEMWBS item score means*



**Table 7**

*Pre-Treatment WEMWBS item score means reordered from low to high*



### **Pre-treatment EQRI**

The results of the Pre-treatment EQRI instrument were as follows. Of the nineteen participants, no participant scored in the lower third of the 0-80 range. Twelve participants scored in the middle third range. Seven participants scored in the upper third range. A breakdown of participant responses to the Initial EQRI survey can be found in Table 8 below. The first question was concerned with harmonious family relationship. On question number 1, the mean score (out of a possible 4) was 3.05. Question 2 was concerned with rewarding family relationship. On question number 2, the mean score was 2.79. Question 3 was concerned with adequate family relationship. On question number 3, the mean score was 2.74. Question 4 was concerned with family relationships inspiring trust. On question number 4, the mean score was 2.95. Question 5 was concerned with harmonious spousal relationship. On question number 5, the mean score was 2.11. Question 6 was concerned with rewarding spousal relationship. On question number 6, the mean score was 2.26. Question 7 is concerned with adequate spousal relationship. On question number 7, the mean score was 2.11. Question 8 is concerned with a spousal relationship which inspires trust. On question number 8, the mean score was 2.16. Question 9 was concerned with harmonious friendships. On question number 9, the mean score was 2.95. Question 10 was concerned with rewarding friendships. On question number 10, the mean score was 2.47. Question 11 was concerned with adequate friendships. On question number 11, the mean score was 2.21. Question 12 was concerned with friendships which inspire trust. On question number 12, the mean score was 2.53. Question 13 was concerned with harmonious relationships with parishioners. On question number 13, the mean score was 2.79. Question 14 was concerned with



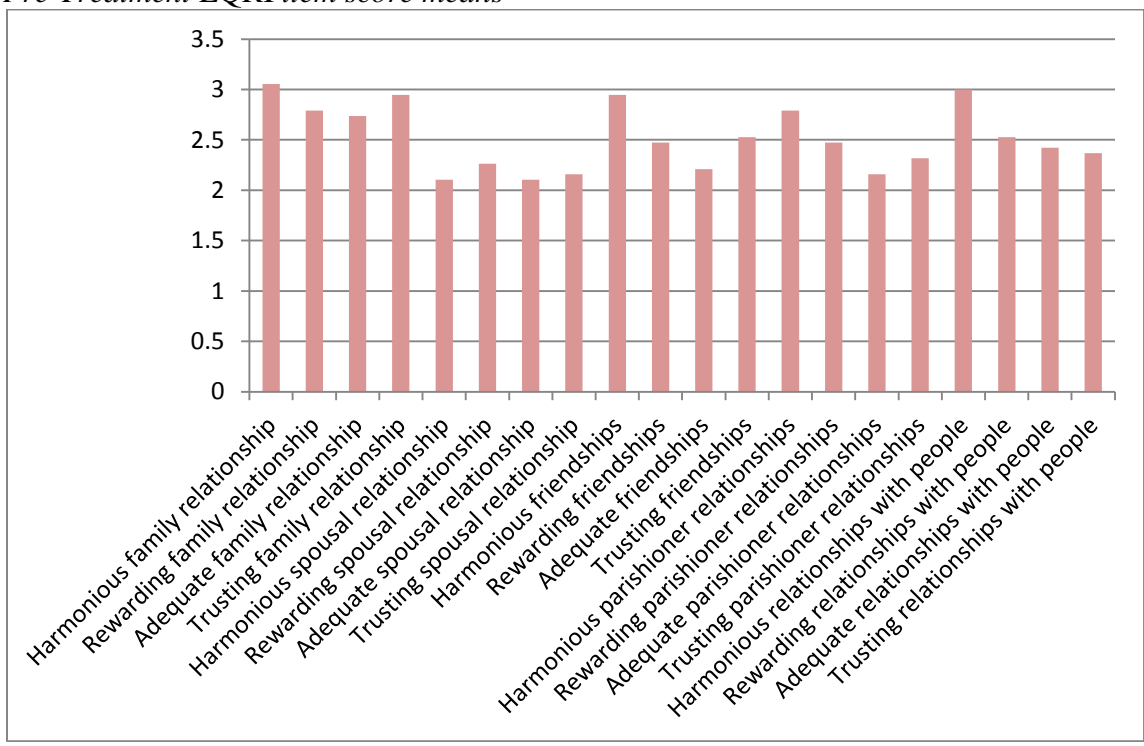
rewarding relationships with parishioners. On question number 14, the mean score was 2.47. Question 15 is concerned with adequate relationships with parishioners. On question number 15, the mean score was 2.16. Question 16 was concerned with relationships with parishioners that inspire trust. On question number 16, the mean score was 2.32. Question 17 was concerned with harmonious relationships with people in general. On question number 17, the mean score was 3.00. Question 18 was concerned with rewarding relationships with people in general. On question number 18, the mean score was 2.53. Question 19 is concerned with adequate relationships with people in general. On question number 19, the mean score was 2.42. Question 20 was concerned with relationships with people in general that inspire trust. On question number 20, the mean score was 2.37. The mean score for all participants and for all questions was 2.52. The mean scores are illustrated in Table 9. The mean scores are reordered from low to high in Table 10.

**Table 8**  
*Pre-Treatment EQRI item scores*

Questions	Participants																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1	4	4	2	4	3	3	4	1	3	4	4	2	2	3	3	4	3	2	3
2	2	3	3	4	2	3	4	2	3	4	3	2	2	3	1	4	3	1	4
3	2	3	2	4	2	3	4	2	3	4	4	2	2	3	1	4	3	2	2
4	4	3	3	4	2	3	4	2	4	4	4	1	2	3	2	4	3	1	3
5	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	0	3	4	4	1	3	2	3	4	4	2	3
6	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	1	3	4	4	2	3	2	4	4	4	1	4
7	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	1	3	4	4	2	2	2	4	4	4	1	2
8	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	0	4	4	4	2	2	2	3	4	4	2	3
9	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	2	4	3	2	4	3	2	2
10	2	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	2	4	3	2	3	3	2	1	3	1	2
11	1	3	2	3	1	3	3	3	2	4	4	1	3	3	1	0	3	1	1
12	4	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	2	4	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2
13	2	3	3	3	3	3	0	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	2	3

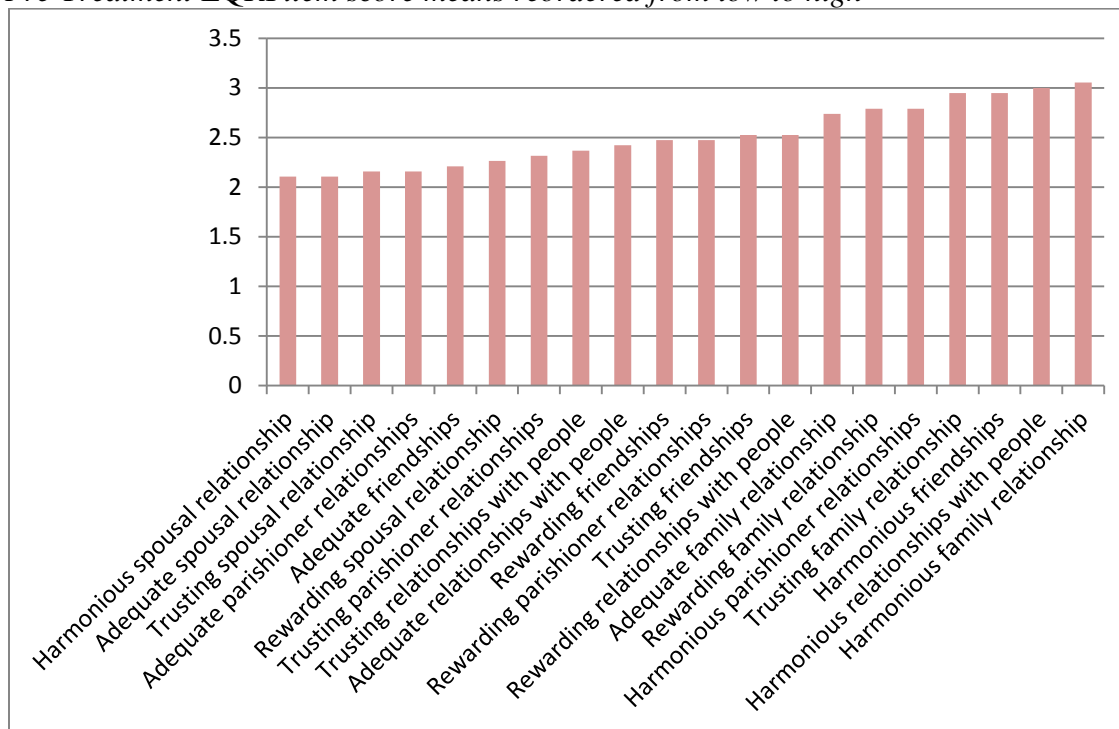
<b>14</b>	4	3	3	3	2	3	0	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	4	2	1	3
<b>15</b>	3	4	3	3	2	3	0	3	2	2	3	1	3	3	1	1	2	1	1
<b>16</b>	3	3	3	2	2	3	0	3	2	4	3	1	2	3	1	4	2	1	2
<b>17</b>	4	3	2	4	2	3	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	2	2
<b>18</b>	3	2	2	4	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	2
<b>19</b>	2	2	2	4	2	3	3	3	2	4	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	1	1
<b>20</b>	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	4	2	1	2	3	3	3	2	1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>46</b>

**Table 9**  
*Pre-Treatment EQRI item score means*



**Table 10**

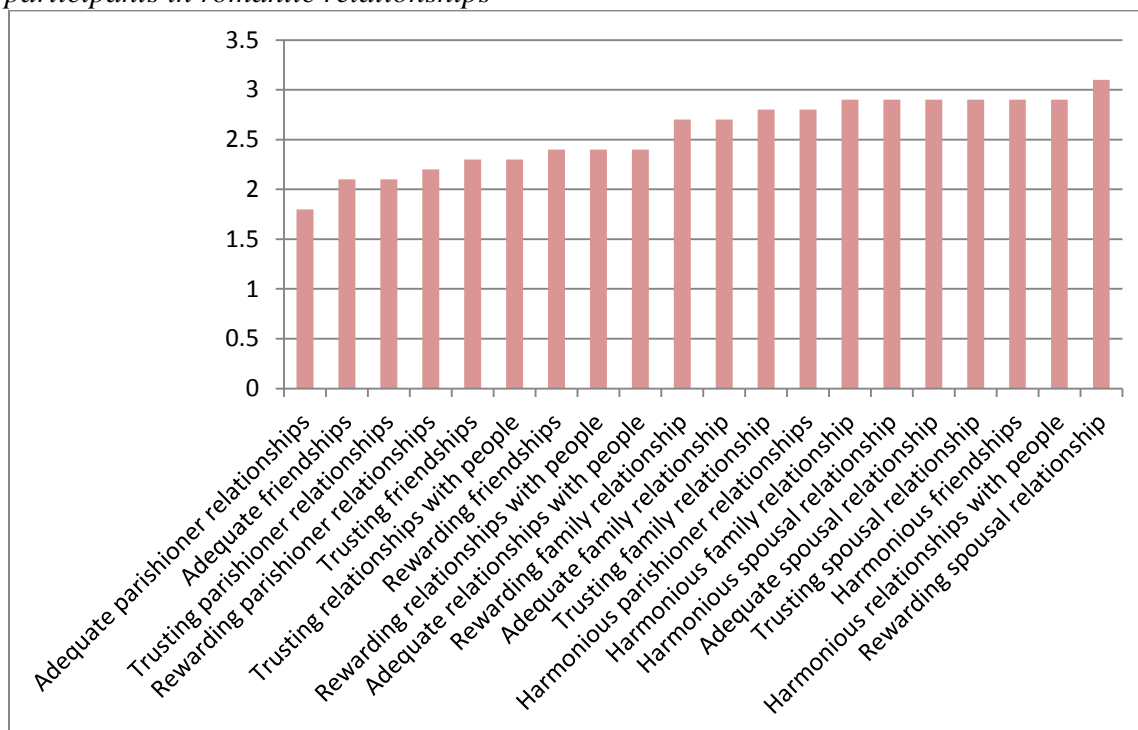
*Pre-Treatment EQRI item score means reordered from low to high*



Looking at the table above (Table 10) it would seem that among the variety of relationships one may have, spousal relationships give the least satisfaction. This data, however, is skewed because several of the participants are neither married nor in a significant relationship. (Note participants 1,2,3,4,and 6 in Table 7.) When this is taken into account and the participants with no spouse or romantic partner are removed, spousal relationships move to the top of the list.

**Table 11**

*Pre-Treatment EQRI item score means reordered from low to high including only participants in romantic relationships*



Following the pre-treatment instruments (Appendix 2), the participants attended a weekly class (See appendix 4) and practiced the Jesus Prayer on a daily basis (five to fifteen minutes a day at least four times a week for a period of eight weeks). Post-treatment instruments (Appendix 3) were administered to measure possible changes in well-being perception.

### **Post-treatment DSES**

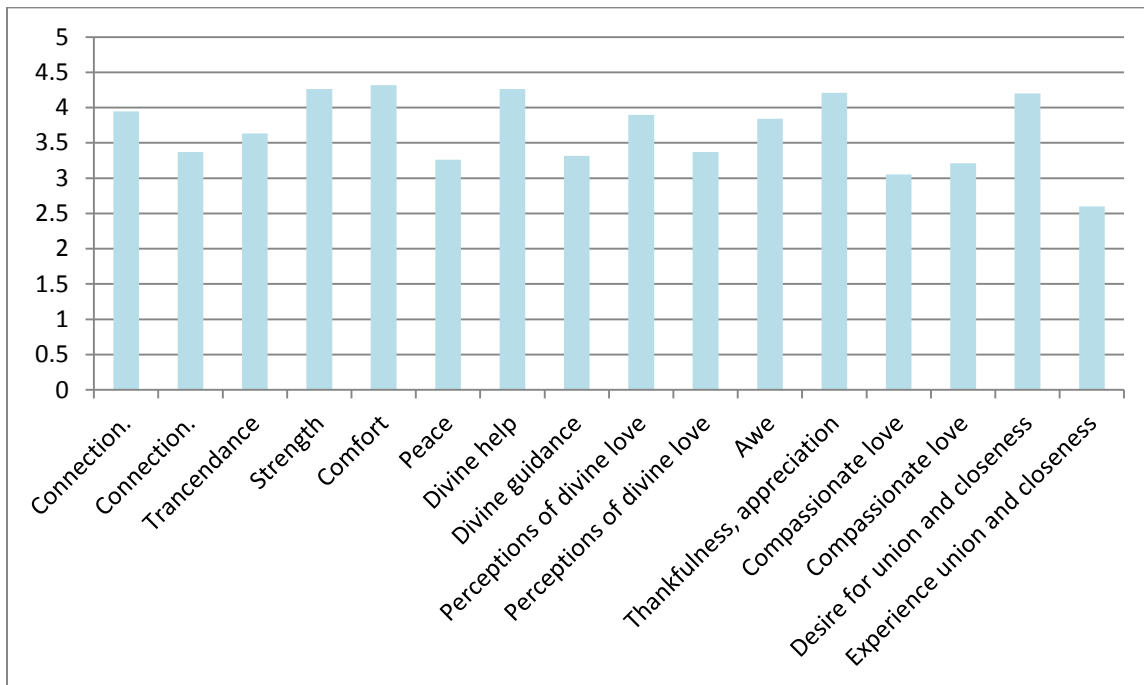
The results of the Post-treatment DSES instrument were as follows. Of the nineteen participants, no participant scored in the lower third of the 0-76 range. Four participants scored in the middle third range. Fifteen participants scored in the upper third range. A breakdown of participant responses to the Initial DSES survey can be found in Table 12 below. The first two questions were concerned with connection. On question number 1, the mean score (out of a possible 6) was 3.95. On question number 2, the mean score was 3.37. Question 3 was concerned with joy and a transcendent sense of self. On question number 3, the mean score was 3.63. Questions 4 and 5 are concerned with strength and comfort. On question number 4, the mean score was 4.26. On question number 5, the mean score was 4.32. Question 6 is concerned with feeling peace. On question number 6, the mean score was 3.26. Question 7 is concerned with divine help. On question number 7, the mean score was 4.26. Question 8 is concerned with divine guidance. On question number 8, the mean score was 3.32. Questions 9 and 10 are concerned with perceptions of divine love. On question number 9, the mean score was 3.89. On question number 10, the mean score was 3.37. Question 11 was concerned with awe. On question number 11, the mean score was 3.84. Question 12 was concerned with thankfulness and gratitude. On question number 12, the mean score was 4.21. Questions 13 and 14 were concerned with compassionate love. On question number 13, the mean score was 3.05. On question number 14, the mean score was 3.21. Questions 15 and 16 were concerned with union and closeness. On question number 15, the mean score was 2.84. On question number 16, the mean score was 1.74. The mean score for all participants and for all questions was 3.53. Questions 15 and 16 were scored out of a

possible 4 instead of 6 like the first 14 questions. Therefore if questions 15 and 16 were weighted to be scaled together, their scores would be 4.2 and 2.6 respectively. The weighted scores are illustrated in Table 13. The weighted scores are reordered from low to high in Table 14. Notice that questions 15 and 16 are at nearly opposite ends of the table. While people greatly desire to have a union and closeness with God, oftentimes the experience is lacking.

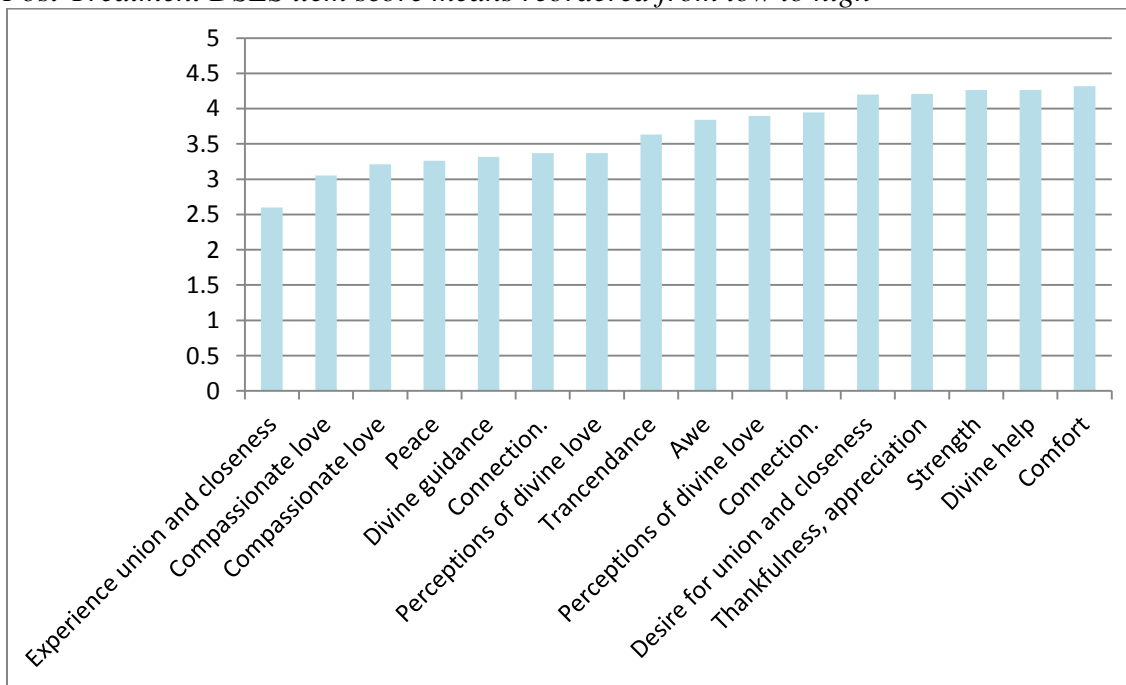
**Table 12**  
*Post-Treatment DSES item scores*

Questions	Participants																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<b>1</b>	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	3	3	3	2	5	5	1	3	4	5
<b>2</b>	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	2	1	4	4	2	3	3	5
<b>3</b>	3	5	4	2	4	4	4	5	5	2	5	1	2	3	5	3	3	4	5
<b>4</b>	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	2	5	3	5	5	2	4	4	5
<b>5</b>	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	3	5	3	5	5	3	4	4	5
<b>6</b>	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	5	1	3	2	2	4	5	2	3	3	4
<b>7</b>	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	1	5	5	5	5	2	4	3	5
<b>8</b>	3	4	5	3	4	3	2	5	5	1	2	3	2	4	5	1	3	3	5
<b>9</b>	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	1	3	5	2	4	5	2	4	4	5
<b>10</b>	5	4	3	3	3	4	0	5	4	3	3	4	2	3	5	3	3	3	4
<b>11</b>	5	5	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	5	1	4	2	3	5	1	5	3	5
<b>12</b>	5	5	4	3	4	5	5	4	5	5	3	2	3	5	5	4	4	4	5
<b>13</b>	3	4	4	3	2	4	0	4	4	2	2	5	3	3	4	2	3	3	3
<b>14</b>	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	5	4	2	4	5	4	2	5	2	3	3	3
<b>15</b>	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	3	3	3	3
<b>16</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	3	2	1	1	2	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>69</b>

**Table 13**  
*Post-Treatment DSES item score means*



**Table 14**  
*Post-Treatment DSES item score means reordered from low to high*



### **Post-treatment WEMWBS**

The results of the Post-treatment WEMWBS instrument were as follows. Of the nineteen participants, no participant scored in the lower third of the 0-56 range. One participant scored in the middle third range. Eighteen participants scored in the upper third range. A breakdown of participant responses to the Initial WEMWBS survey can be found in Table 15 below. The first question was concerned with optimism. On question number 1, the mean score (out of a possible 4) was 2.84. Question 2 was concerned with purpose. On question number 2, the mean score was 3.11. Question 3 was concerned with relaxation. On question number 3, the mean score was 2.79. Question 4 was concerned with interest in others. On question number 4, the mean score was 3.00. Question 5 was concerned with energy. On question number 5, the mean score was 2.53. Question 6 was concerned with how one deals with problems. On question number 6, the mean score was 2.89. Question 7 is concerned with thinking clearly. On question number 7, the mean score was 3.11. Question 8 is concerned with self-esteem. On question number 8, the mean score was 2.84. Question 9 was concerned with closeness to others. On question number 9, the mean score was 3.21. Question 10 was concerned with confidence. On question number 10, the mean score was 2.84. Question 11 was concerned with decision making. On question number 11, the mean score was 3.32. Question 12 was concerned with feeling loved. On question number 12, the mean score was 3.47. Question 13 was concerned with having outside interests. On question number 13, the mean score was 3.00. Question 14 was concerned with feeling cheerful. On question number 14, the mean score was 3.21. The mean score for all participants

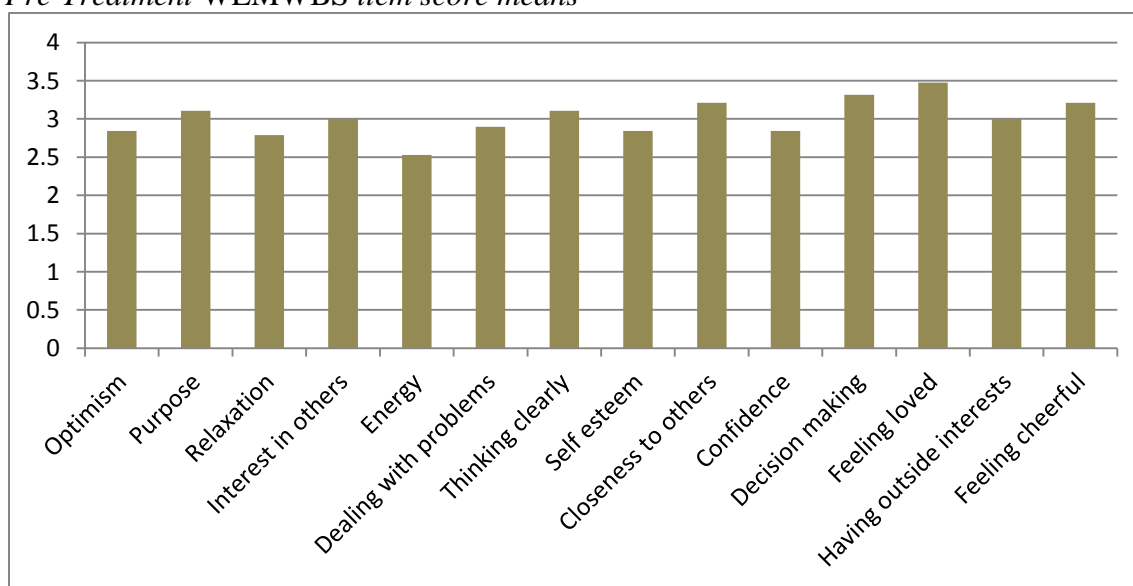


and for all questions was 3.01. The mean scores are illustrated in Table 16. The mean scores are reordered from low to high in Table 17.

**Table 15**  
*Pre-Treatment WEMWBS item scores*

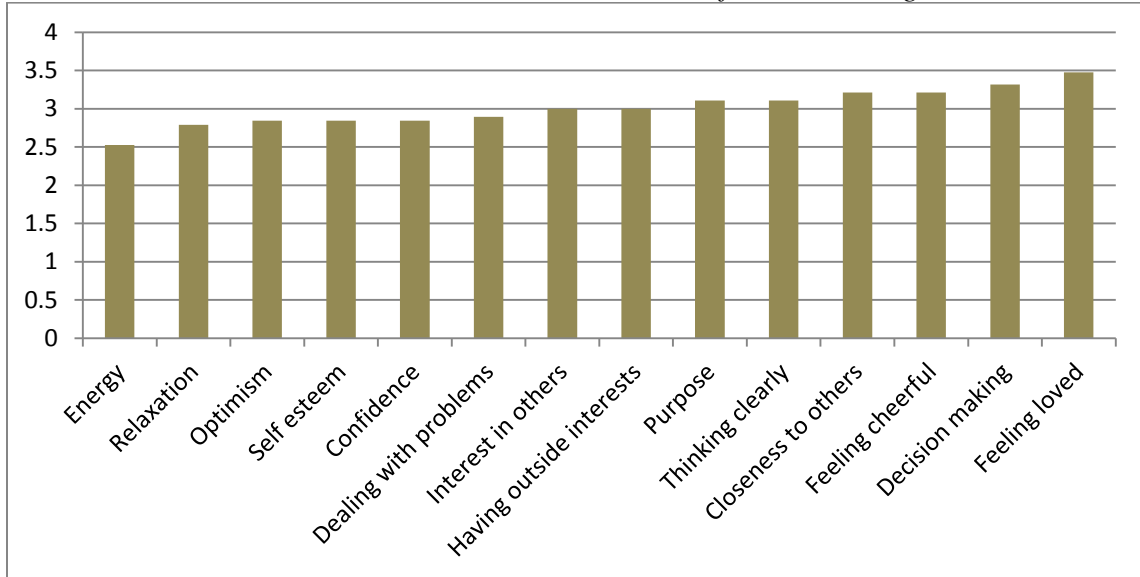
Questions	Participants																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<b>1</b>	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	4	3	2	3	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	3
<b>2</b>	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	2	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	4
<b>3</b>	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	2	3	3	3
<b>4</b>	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	4
<b>5</b>	3	2	3	0	1	2	4	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	3	3	3
<b>6</b>	4	2	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	4	3	3	3	3
<b>7</b>	4	2	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	4
<b>8</b>	3	2	2	3	3	2	4	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	3
<b>9</b>	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3
<b>10</b>	3	2	2	3	2	2	4	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	3
<b>11</b>	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3
<b>12</b>	4	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	4
<b>13</b>	4	2	3	1	3	3	2	4	3	4	3	4	2	2	3	4	3	3	4
<b>14</b>	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>48</b>

**Table 16**  
*Pre-Treatment WEMWBS item score means*



**Table 17**

*Post-Treatment WEMWBS item score means reordered from low to high*



### **Post-treatment EQRI**

The results of the Post-treatment EQRI instrument were as follows. Of the nineteen participants, no participant scored in the lower third of the 0-80 range. Six participants scored in the middle third range. Eighteen participants scored in the upper third range. A breakdown of participant responses to the Initial EQRI survey can be found in Table 18 below. The first question was concerned with harmonious family relationship. On question number 1, the mean score (out of a possible 4) was 3.53. Question 2 was concerned with rewarding family relationship. On question number 2, the mean score was 3.58. Question 3 was concerned with adequate family relationship. On question number 3, the mean score was 3.37. Question 4 was concerned with family relationships inspiring trust. On question number 4, the mean score was 3.26. Question 5 was concerned with harmonious spousal relationship. On question number 5, the mean score was 2.84. Question 6 was concerned with rewarding spousal relationship. On question number 6, the mean score was 2.63. Question 7 is concerned with adequate spousal relationship. On question number 7, the mean score was 2.42. Question 8 is concerned with a spousal relationship which inspires trust. On question number 8, the mean score was 2.42. Question 9 was concerned with harmonious friendships. On question number 9, the mean score was 3.00. Question 10 was concerned with rewarding friendships. On question number 10, the mean score was 3.21. Question 11 was concerned with adequate friendships. On question number 11, the mean score was 2.84. Question 12 was concerned with friendships which inspire trust. On question number 12, the mean score was 2.79. Question 13 was concerned with harmonious relationships with parishioners. On question number 13, the mean score was 2.89. Question 14 was

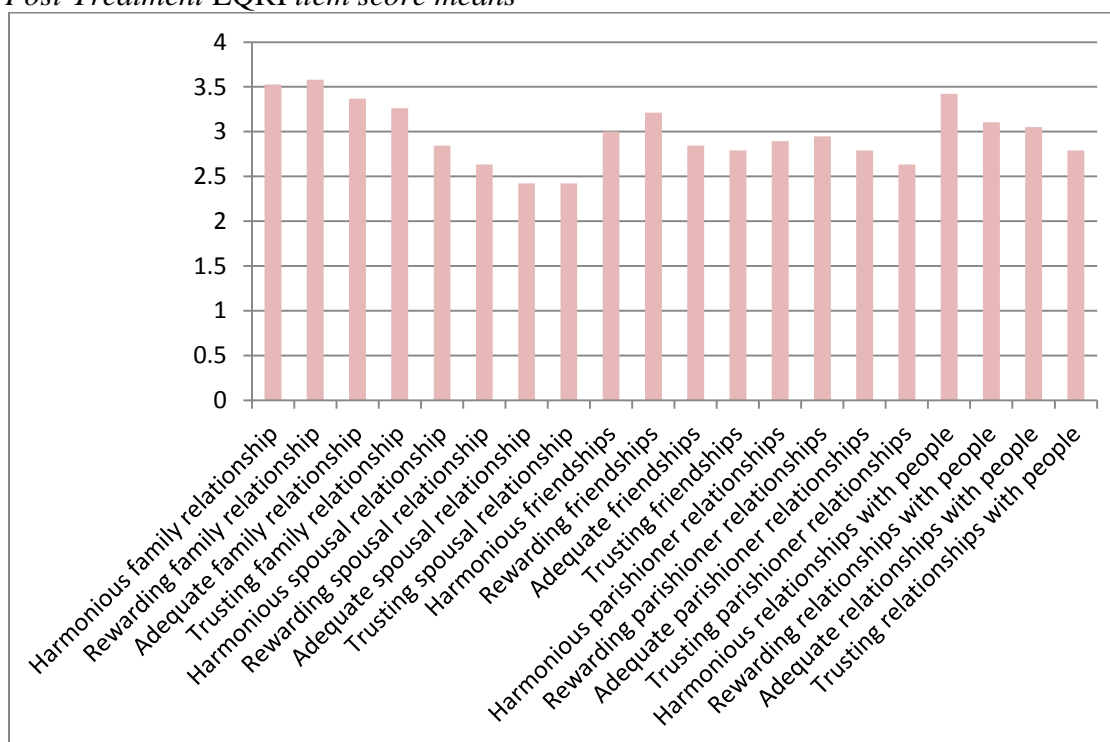
concerned with rewarding relationships with parishioners. On question number 14, the mean score was 2.95. Question 15 is concerned with adequate relationships with parishioners. On question number 15, the mean score was 2.79. Question 16 was concerned with relationships with parishioners that inspire trust. On question number 16, the mean score was 2.63. Question 17 was concerned with harmonious relationships with people in general. On question number 17, the mean score was 3.42. Question 18 was concerned with rewarding relationships with people in general. On question number 18, the mean score was 3.11. Question 19 is concerned with adequate relationships with people in general. On question number 19, the mean score was 3.05. Question 20 was concerned with relationships with people in general that inspire trust. On question number 20, the mean score was 2.79. The mean score for all participants and for all questions was 2.98. The mean scores are illustrated in Table 19. The mean scores are reordered from low to high in Table 20.

**Table 18**  
*Post-Treatment EQRI item scores*

Questions	Participants																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<b>1</b>	1	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4
<b>2</b>	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	2	4
<b>3</b>	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	0	3	4	4	3	3	4
<b>4</b>	2	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	0	3	3	4	3	3	4
<b>5</b>	4	0	0	0	3	0	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	4
<b>6</b>	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	4	4	4	2	4
<b>7</b>	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	3	3	4	4	4	0	2	4	4	4	2	4
<b>8</b>	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	3	4	4	4	3	0	2	4	4	4	2	4
<b>9</b>	4	4	2	3	3	4	0	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	2	2	2	3	3
<b>10</b>	4	4	3	3	2	4	0	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	2	3	4
<b>11</b>	2	4	3	3	2	4	0	4	3	4	3	2	3	3	4	2	2	3	3
<b>12</b>	4	4	3	3	3	4	0	4	3	4	3	3	0	3	2	2	2	3	3
<b>13</b>	0	4	3	3	2	4	0	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	2	3	2	3	4
<b>14</b>	0	4	3	3	2	4	0	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	2	3	4

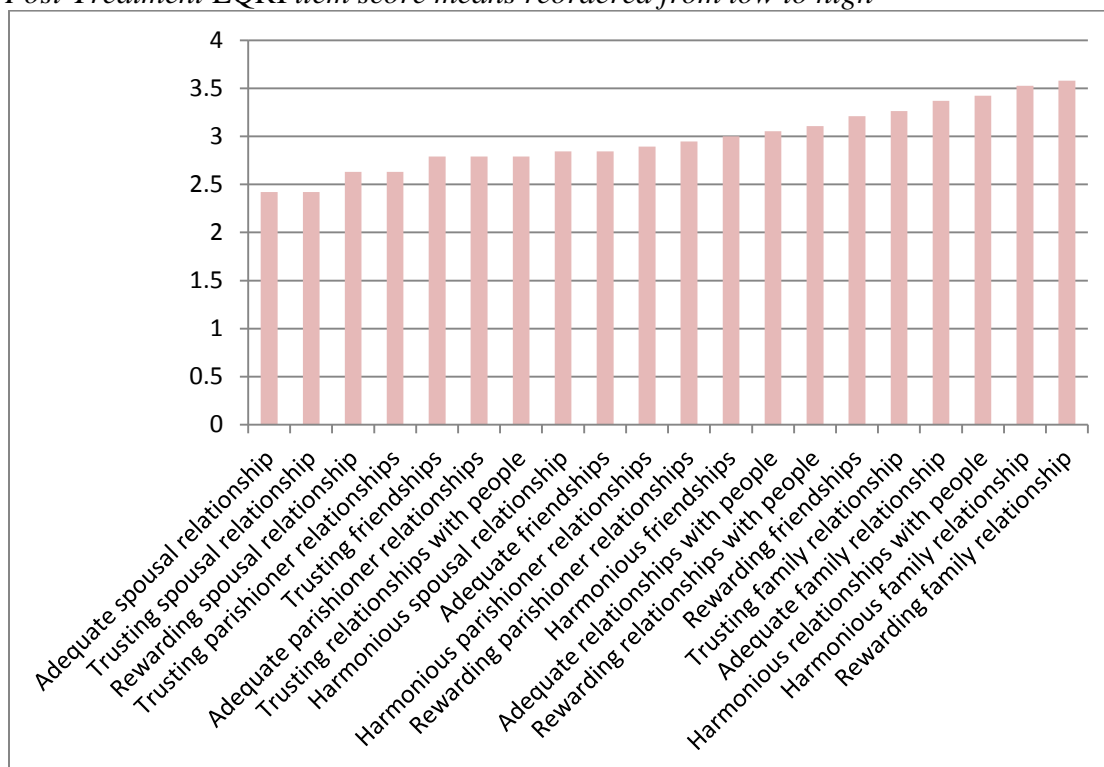
<b>15</b>	0	4	3	3	2	4	0	4	3	4	3	2	3	3	4	3	2	3	3
<b>16</b>	0	4	3	3	2	4	0	4	3	4	3	3	0	3	2	3	2	3	4
<b>17</b>	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	2	3	3
<b>18</b>	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	1	3	4	3	2	3	3
<b>19</b>	4	3	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	1	3	4	3	2	3	2
<b>20</b>	4	2	3	3	3	3	1	4	3	4	4	2	0	3	4	3	2	3	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>70</b>

**Table 19**  
*Post-Treatment EQRI item score means*



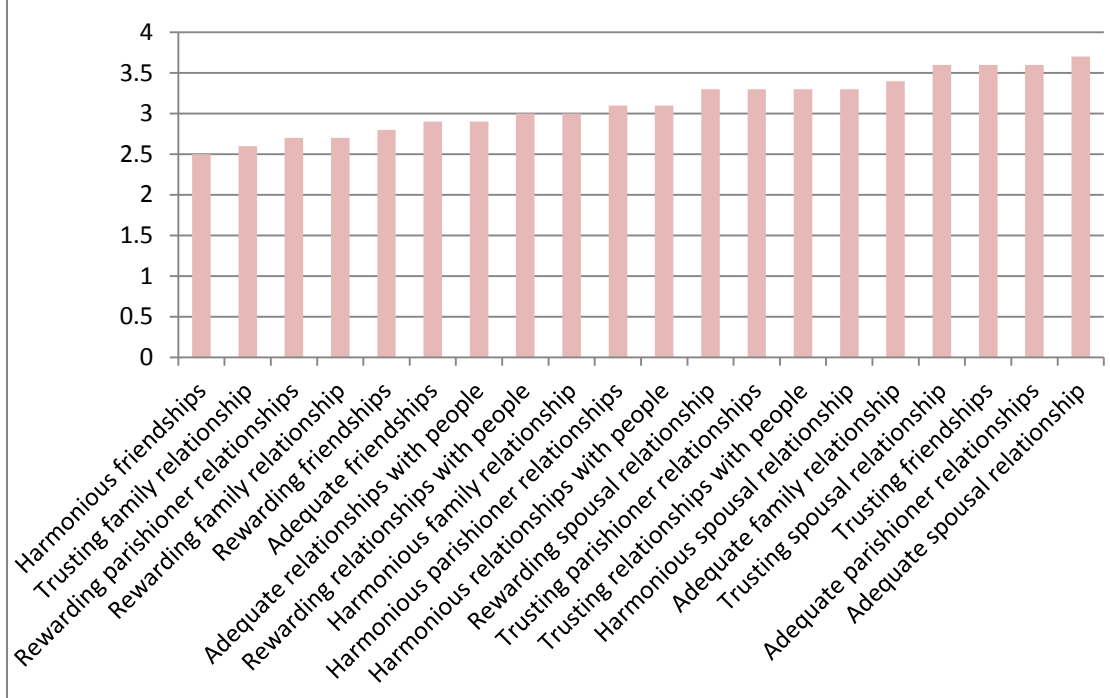
**Table 20**

*Post-Treatment EQRI item score means reordered from low to high*



Like the Pre-Treatment results, the Post-Treatment results also seem to show lower satisfaction in spousal relationships. The table below displays the same data leaving off the participants with no spouse or romantic partner (Participants 1,2,3,4, and 5).

**Table 21**  
*Post-Treatment EQRI item score means reordered from low to high including only participants in romantic relationships*



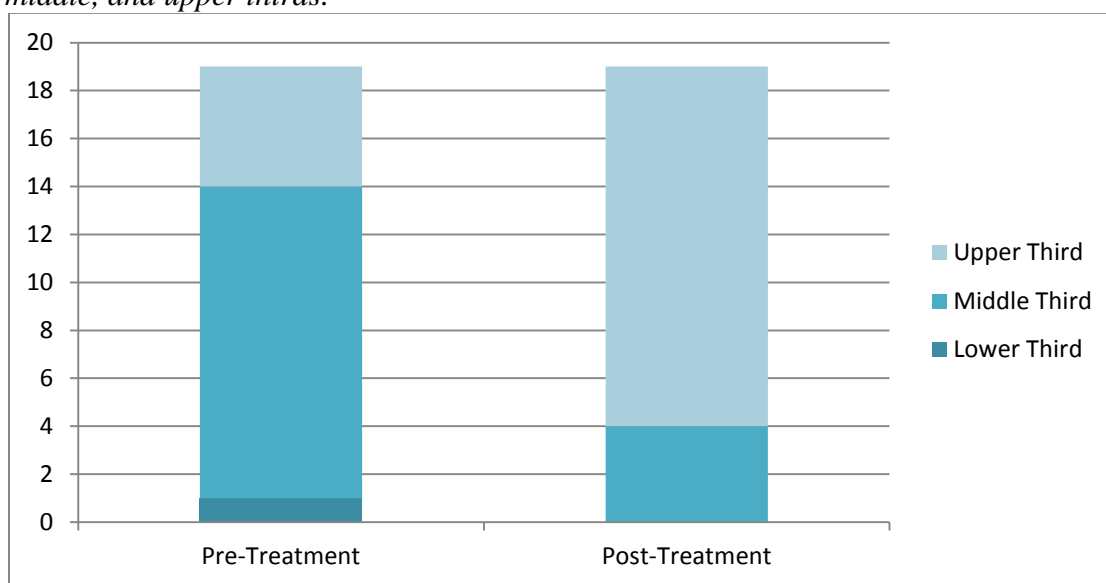
## Analyses and Evaluation of the Findings

### Pre-Treatment/Post Treatment DSES

The pre-treatment/post-treatment DSES scores were as follows. Of the nineteen participants, the number of participants shrunk from one to zero in the lower third of the 0-76 range. The number of participants shrunk from thirteen to four in the middle third range. The number of participants grew from five to fifteen in the upper third range. See Table 22.

**Table 22**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores of participants in lower, middle, and upper thirds.*

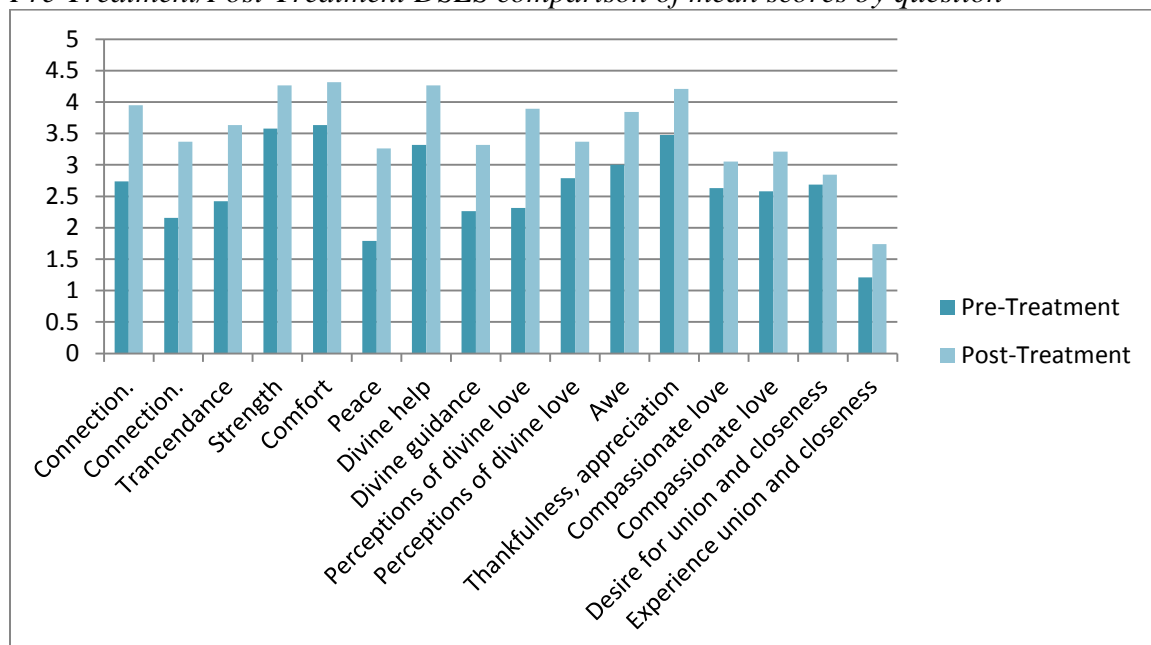


Each of the sixteen questions received a higher score in the Post-Treatment DSES (See Tables 23 and 24). Of the 304 questions asked on this instrument (19 participants \* 16 questions = 304 questions), 17 received a lower score in the Post Treatment results. Question number 14, concerning accepting others, showed a decline in four participants. There did not seem to be any other clustering.



**Table 23***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of mean scores by question*

Question	Pre-Treatment	Post-Treatment
1. Connection	2.74	3.95
2. Connection	2.16	3.37
3. Transcendence	2.42	3.63
4. Strength	3.58	4.26
5. Comfort	3.63	4.32
6. Peace	1.19	3.26
7. Divine help	3.32	4.26
8. Divine guidance	2.26	3.32
9. Perceptions of divine love	2.32	3.89
10. Perceptions of divine love	2.79	3.37
11. Awe	3.00	3.84
12. Thankfulness, appreciation	3.47	4.21
13. Compassionate love	2.63	3.05
14. Compassionate love	2.58	3.21
15. Desire for union and closeness	2.68	2.84
16. Experience union and closeness	1.21	1.74

**Table 24***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of mean scores by question*

A Paired T Test was administered with the following results. The mean difference between the pre-treatment and the post-treatment scores is 13.95. The Confidence Interval is 95% with a .05 alpha. The result is significant:  $t(19) = -6.247$ ,  $p=.000$ . The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative. It is more likely that the scores rose from the pre-treatment DSES to the Post-treatment DSES because of some systematic or deliberate cause rather than by chance. This is strong evidence that the treatment (use of the Jesus Prayer and participation in the 8 week class) enhances perceptions of spiritual well-being. What follows below are the observations of how individuals scored on the pre-treatment and post-treatment DSES.

95% of the Participants scored higher on the Post-Treatment DSES. Only one participant out of the nineteen scored slightly lower. No one received an unchanged score. (See Tables 25 and 26)

**Table 25**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by question<sup>17</sup>*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Pre-Treatment</b>	<b>Post-Treatment</b>
<b>1</b>	54	64
<b>2</b>	59	67
<b>3</b>	52	64
<b>4</b>	54	53
<b>5</b>	33	54
<b>6</b>	54	61
<b>7</b>	49	51
<b>8</b>	44	68
<b>9</b>	50	70
<b>10</b>	36	46
<b>11</b>	34	40

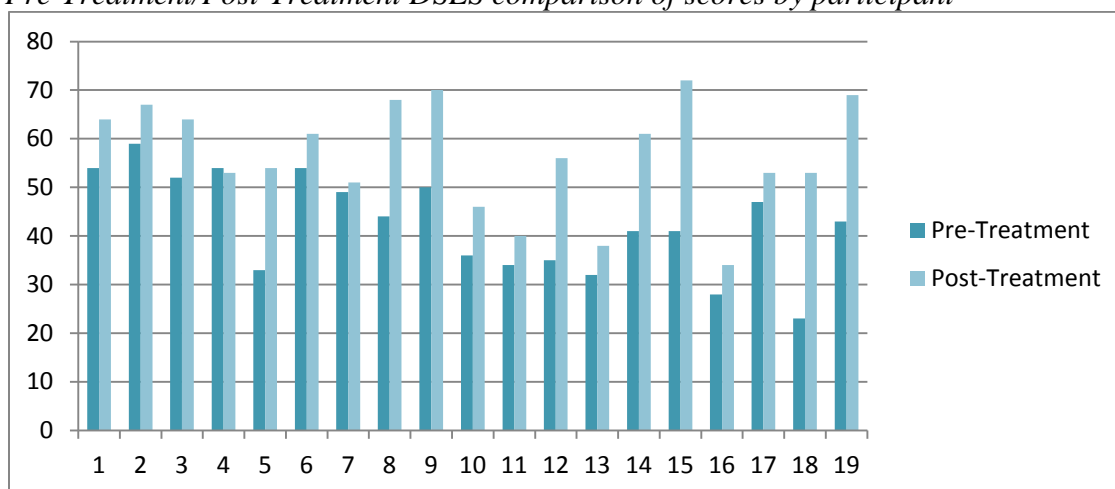
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<sup>17</sup> These scores reflect the totals of all responses including unanswered questions. Responses for unanswered questions have been eliminated in the graphs for individuals.

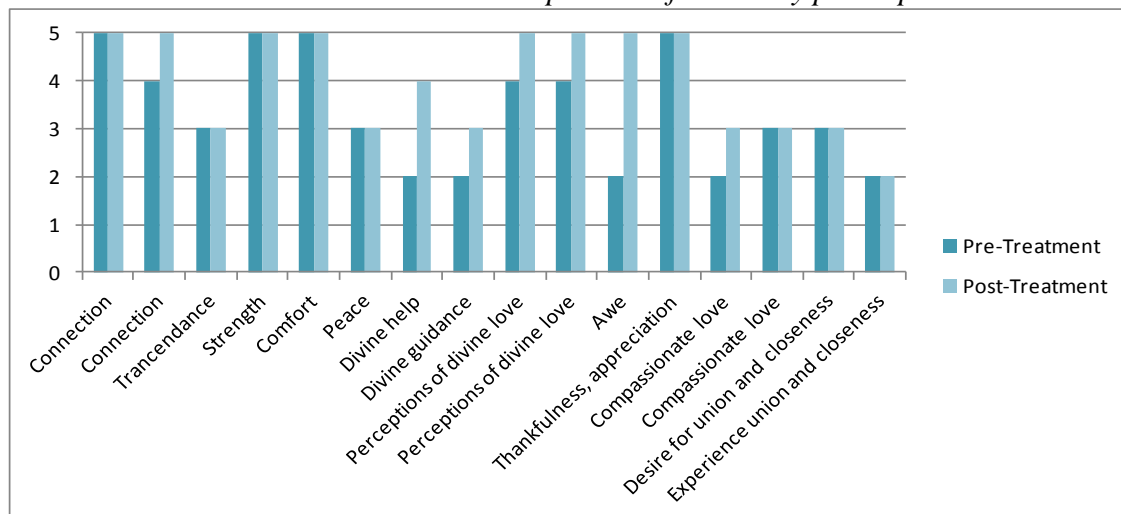
<b>12</b>	35	56
<b>13</b>	32	38
<b>14</b>	41	61
<b>15</b>	41	72
<b>16</b>	28	34
<b>17</b>	47	53
<b>18</b>	23	53
<b>19</b>	43	69

**Table 26**

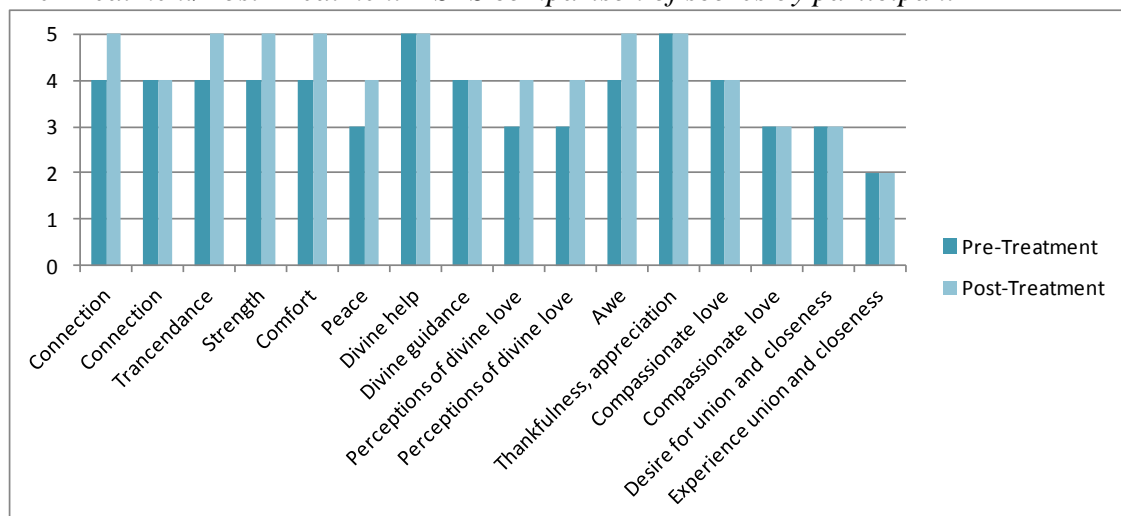
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant*



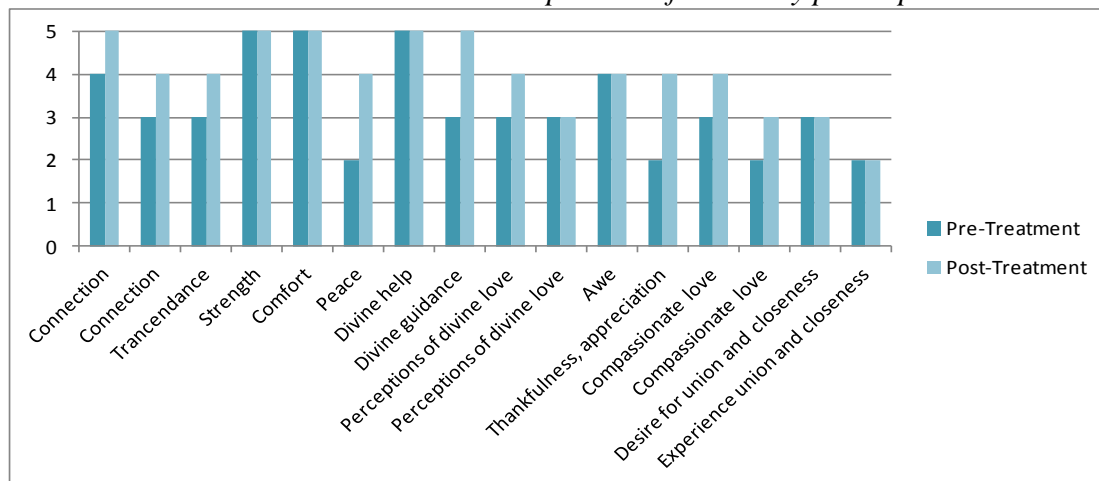
Of the nineteen participants, one participant recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being, no participants recorded an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being, and eighteen participants recorded a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being. Looking at the comparison of the Pre-Treatment DSES and Post-Treatment DSES individual scores we see the following results (Tables 27-45).

**Table 27***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #1*

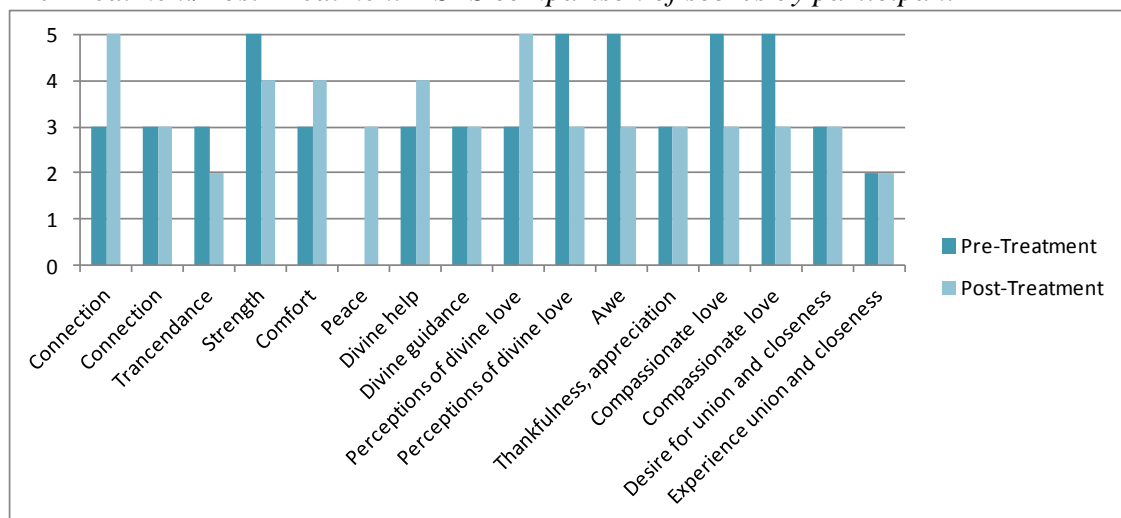
Of the sixteen questions, participant #1 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on nine questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on seven questions.

**Table 28***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #2*

Of the sixteen questions, participant #2 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on eight questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on eight questions.

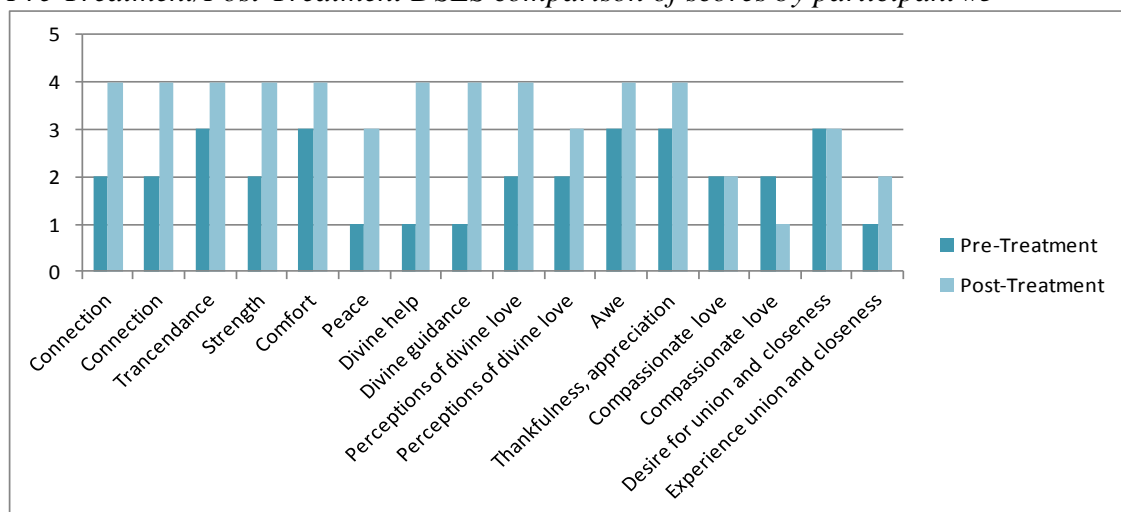
**Table 29***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #3*

Of the sixteen questions, participant #3 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on seven questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on nine questions.

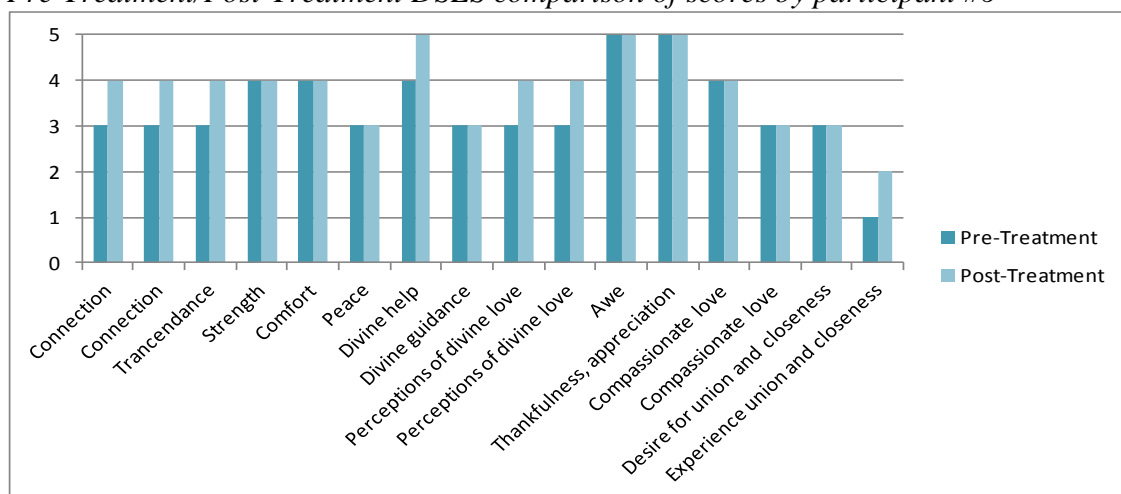
**Table 30***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #4*

Of the sixteen questions, participant #4 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on six questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on five questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on four questions.<sup>18</sup>

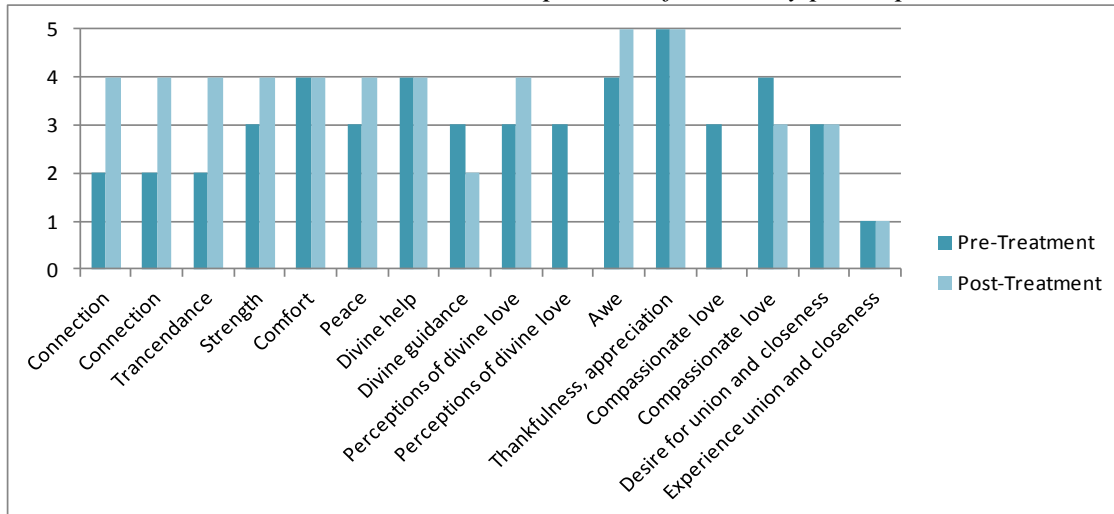
<sup>18</sup> Unanswered questions have been eliminated from the total, thus this graph gives a total response for fifteen questions since question #6 was unanswered in the Pre-Treatment instrument.

**Table 31***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #5*

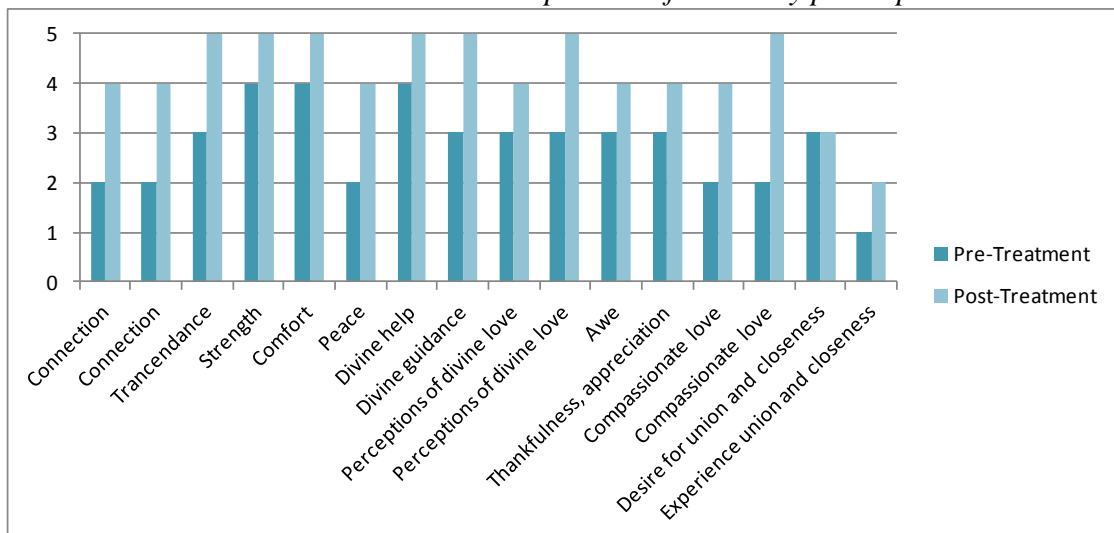
Of the sixteen questions, participant #5 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on one question, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on two questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on thirteen questions.

**Table 32***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #6*

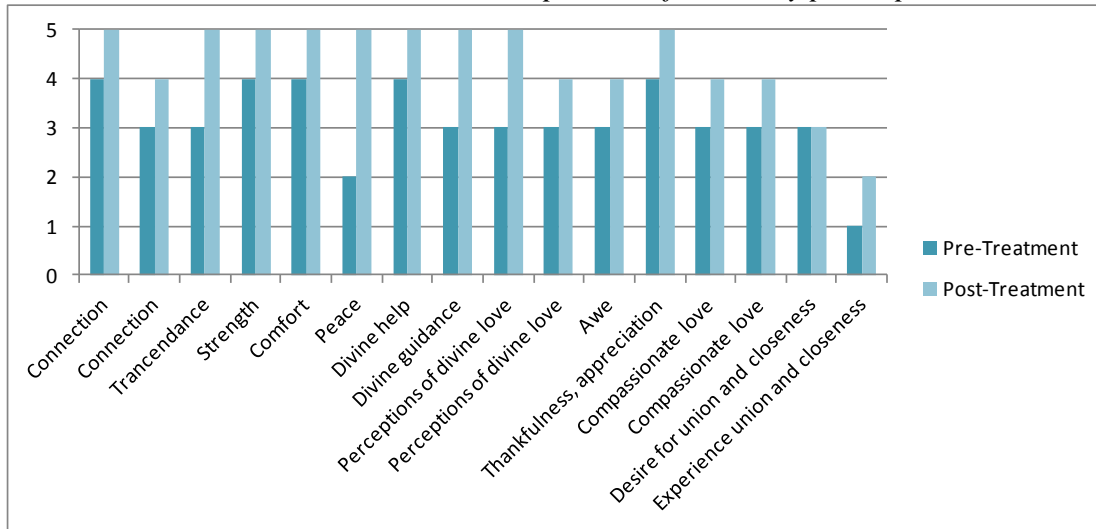
Of the sixteen questions, participant #6 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on nine questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on seven questions.

**Table 33***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #7*

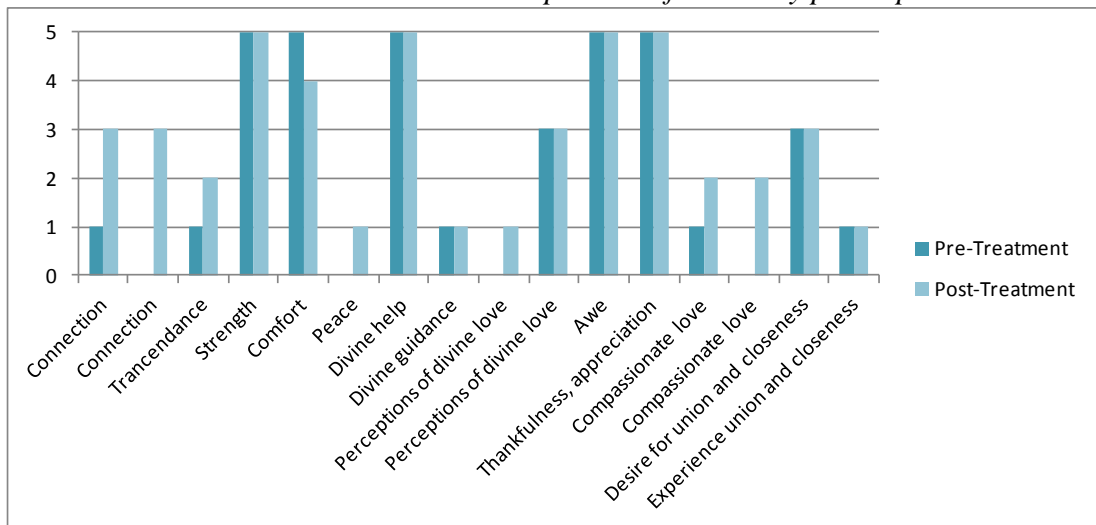
Of the sixteen questions, participant #7 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on two questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on five questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on seven questions.

**Table 34***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #8*

Of the sixteen questions, participant #8 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on one question, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on fifteen questions.

**Table 35***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #9*

Of the sixteen questions, participant #9 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on one question, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on fifteen questions.

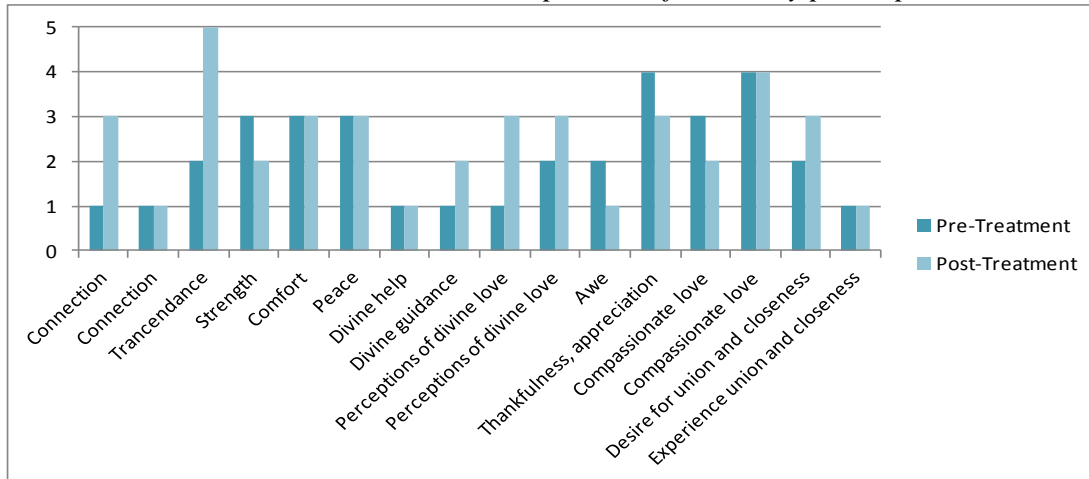
**Table 36***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #10*

Of the sixteen questions, participant #10 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on one question, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on eight questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on three questions.



**Table 37**

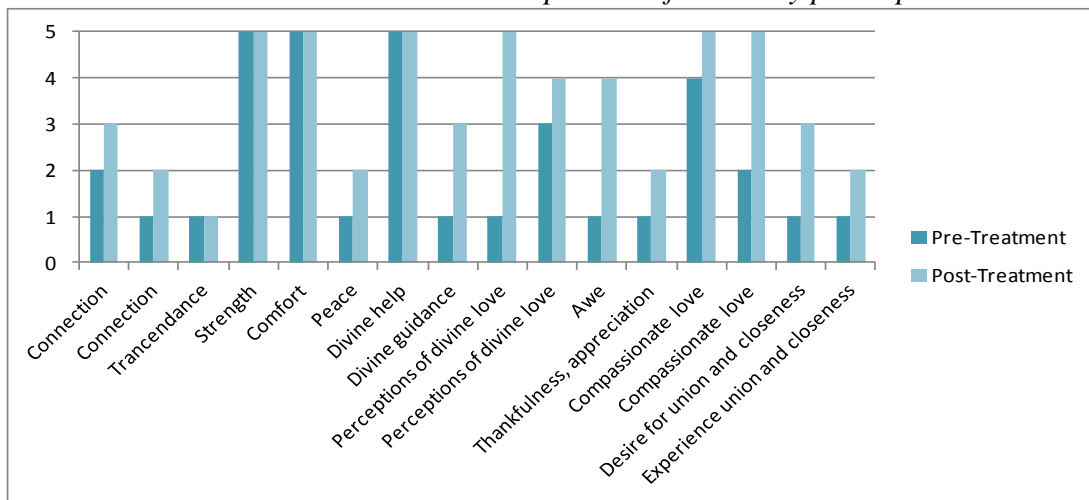
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #11*



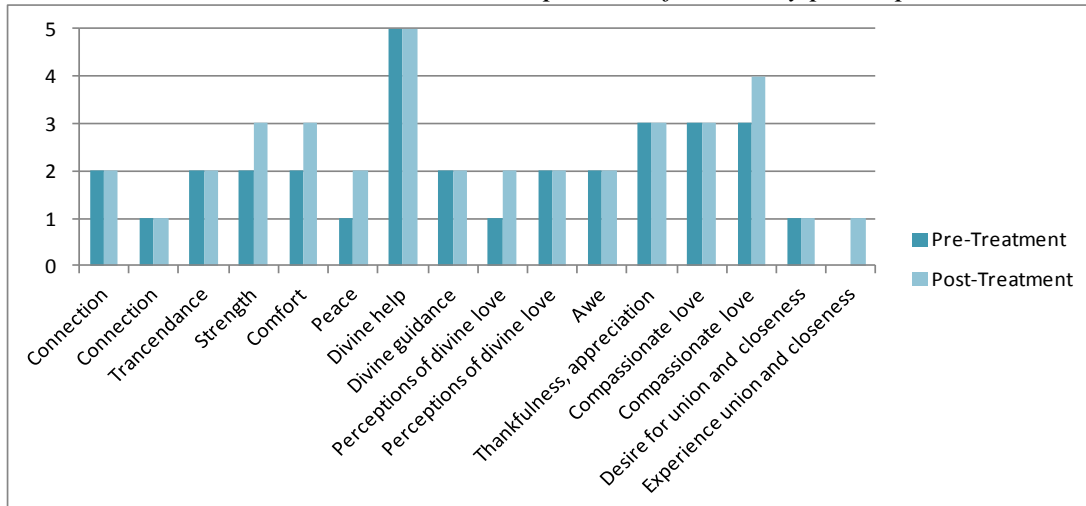
Of the sixteen questions, participant #11 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on four questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on six questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on six questions.

**Table 38**

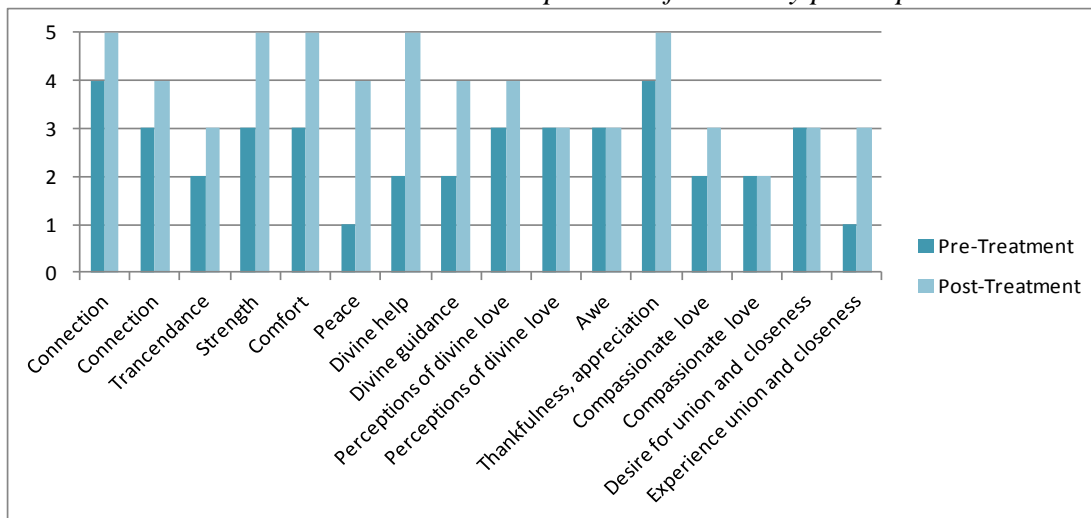
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #12*



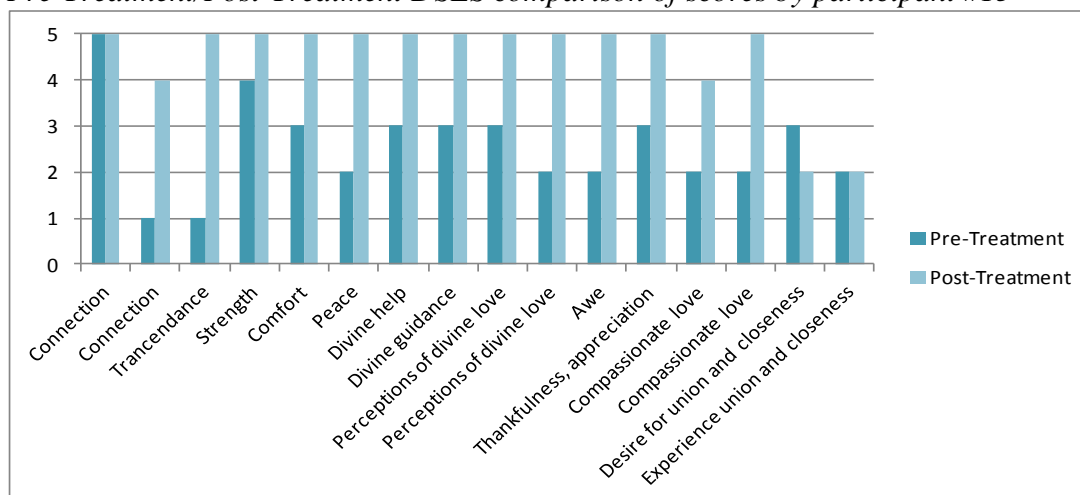
Of the sixteen questions, participant #12 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on four questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on twelve questions.

**Table 39***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #13*

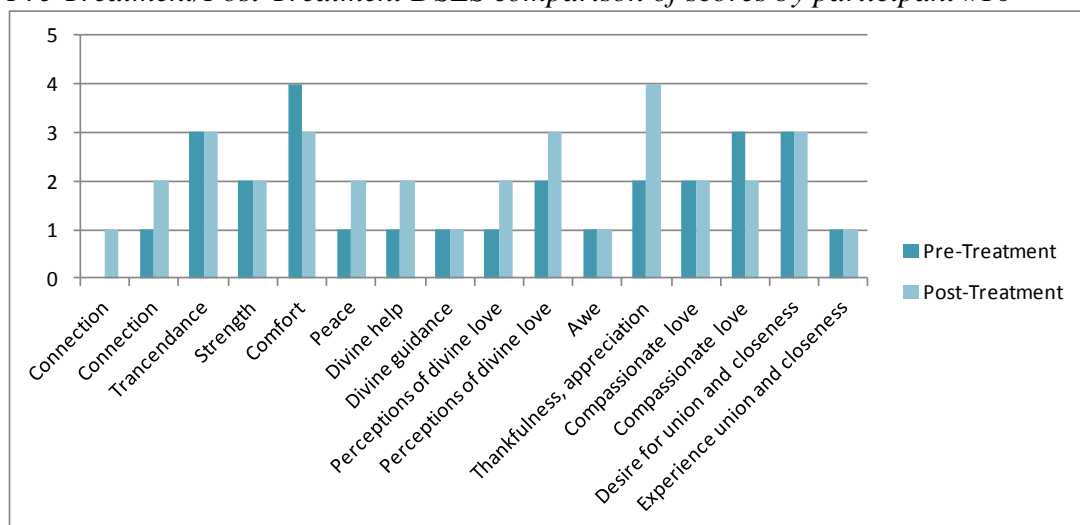
Of the sixteen questions, participant #13 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on ten questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on five questions.

**Table 40***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #14*

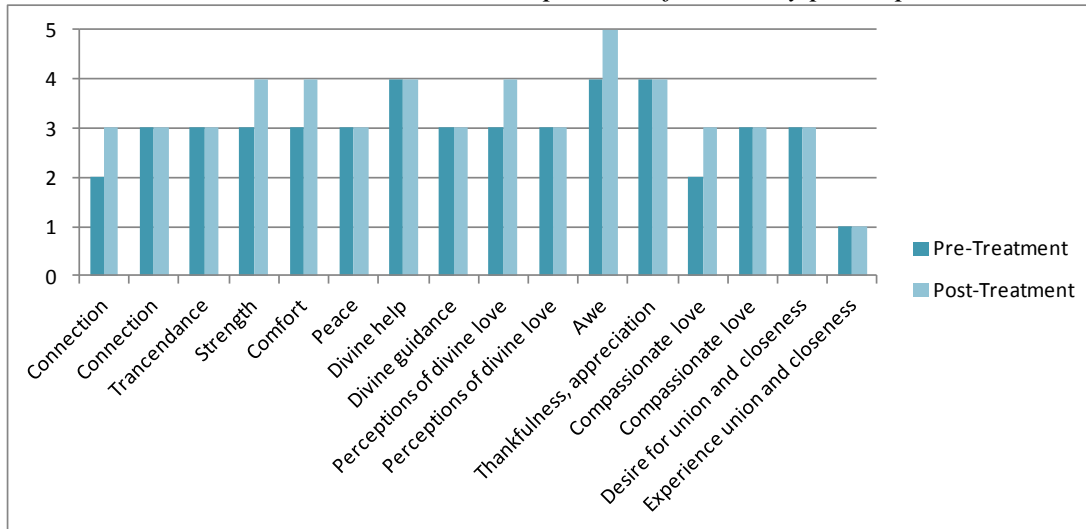
Of the sixteen questions, participant #14 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on four questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on twelve questions.

**Table 41***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #15*

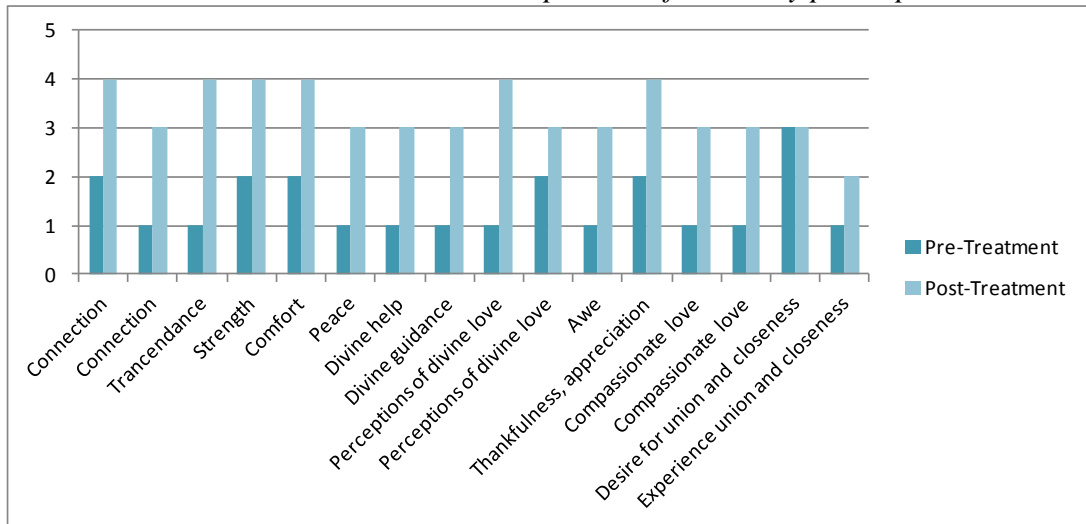
Of the sixteen questions, participant #15 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on one question, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on two questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on thirteen questions.

**Table 42***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #16*

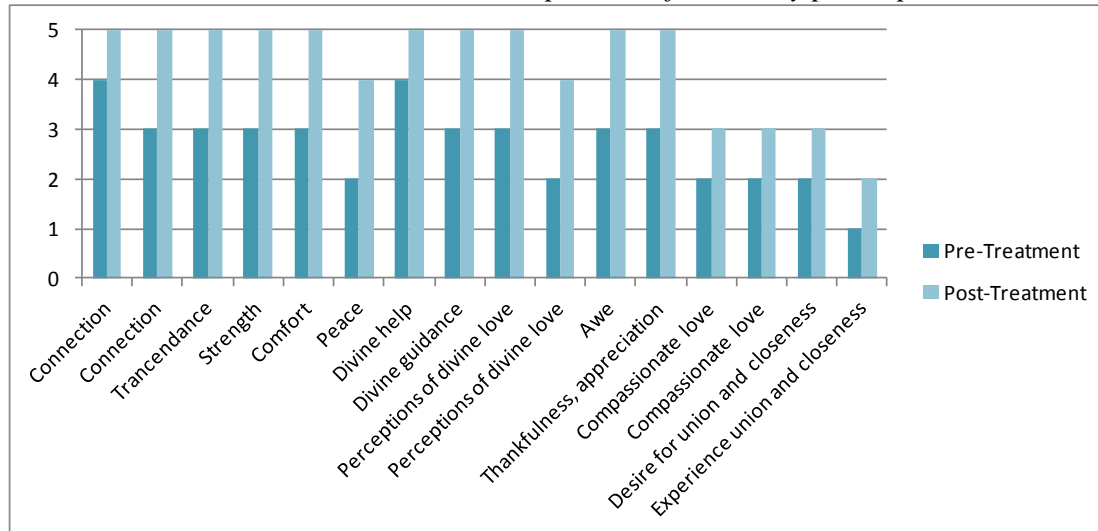
Of the sixteen questions, participant #16 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on two questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on seven questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on six questions.

**Table 43***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #17*

Of the sixteen questions, participant #17 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on ten questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on six questions.

**Table 44***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #18*

Of the sixteen questions, participant #18 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on one question, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on fifteen questions.

**Table 45***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment DSES comparison of scores by participant #19*

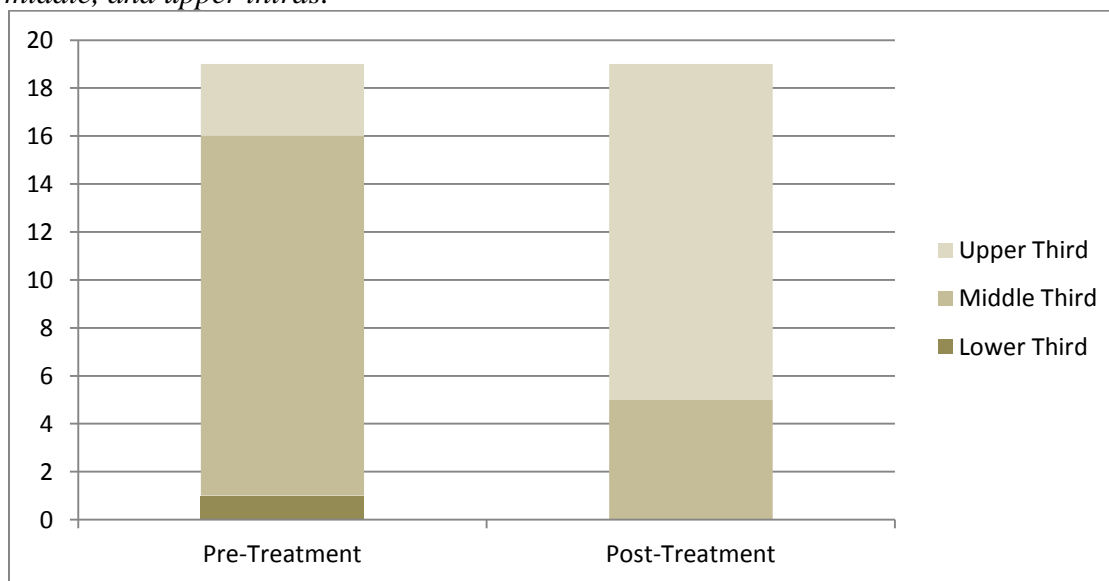
Of the sixteen questions, participant #19 recorded a lower perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of spiritual well-being on no questions, and a higher perceived state of spiritual well-being on sixteen questions.

### Pre-Treatment/Post Treatment WEMWBS

The pre-treatment/post-treatment WEMWBS scores were as follows. Of the nineteen participants, the number of participants shrunk from one to zero in the lower third of the 0-56 range. The number of participants shrunk from fifteen to five in the middle third range. The number of participants grew from three to fourteen in the upper third range. See Table 46.

**Table 46**

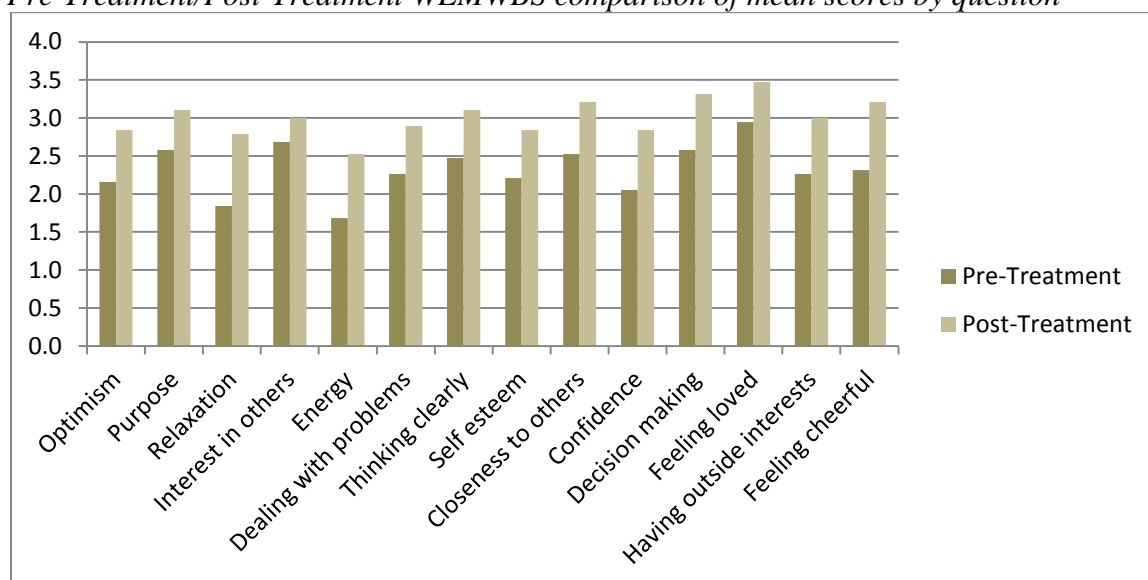
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores of participants in lower, middle, and upper thirds.*



Each of the fourteen questions received a higher score in the Post-Treatment WEMWBS (See Tables 47 and 48).

**Table 47***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of mean scores by question*

Question	Pre-Treatment	Post-Treatment
1. Optimism	2.16	2.84
2. Purpose	2.58	3.11
3. Relaxation	1.84	2.79
4. Interest in others	2.68	3.00
5. Energy	1.68	2.53
6. Dealing with problems	2.26	2.89
7. Thinking clearly	2.47	3.11
8. Self esteem	2.21	2.84
9. Closeness to others	2.53	3.21
10. Confidence	2.05	2.84
11. Decision making	2.58	3.32
12. Feeling loved	2.95	3.47
13. Having outside interests	2.26	3.00
14. Feeling cheerful	2.32	3.21

**Table 48***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of mean scores by question*

A Paired T Test was administered with the following results. The mean difference between the pre-treatment and the post-treatment scores is 9.579. The

Confidence Interval is 95% with a .05 alpha. The result is significant:  $t(19) = -6.038$ ,  $p=.000$ . The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative. It is more likely that the scores rose from the pre-treatment WEMWBS to the Post-treatment WEMWBS because of some systematic or deliberate cause rather than by chance. This is strong evidence that the treatment (use of the Jesus Prayer and participation in the 8 week class) enhances perceptions of mental well-being. What follows below are the observations of how individuals scored on the pre-treatment and post-treatment WEMWBS.

100% of the participants scored higher on the Post-Treatment WEMWBS. (See Tables 49 and 50) Of the 266 questions asked on this instrument (19 participants \* 14 questions = 266 questions), 14 received a lower score in the Post Treatment results. Question number 4, interest in others, showed a decline in four participants. There did not seem to be any other clustering.

**Table 49**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant*

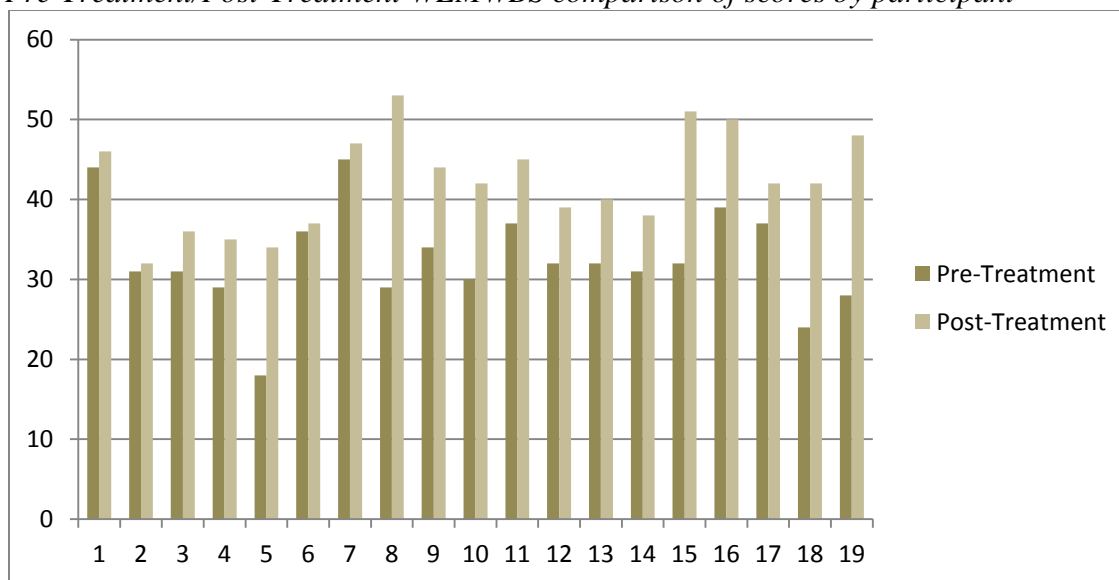
<b>Participant</b>	<b>Pre-Treatment</b>	<b>Post-Treatment</b>
<b>1</b>	44	46
<b>2</b>	31	32
<b>3</b>	31	36
<b>4</b>	29	35
<b>5</b>	18	34
<b>6</b>	36	37
<b>7</b>	45	47
<b>8</b>	29	53
<b>9</b>	34	44
<b>10</b>	30	42
<b>11</b>	37	45
<b>12</b>	32	39
<b>13</b>	32	40



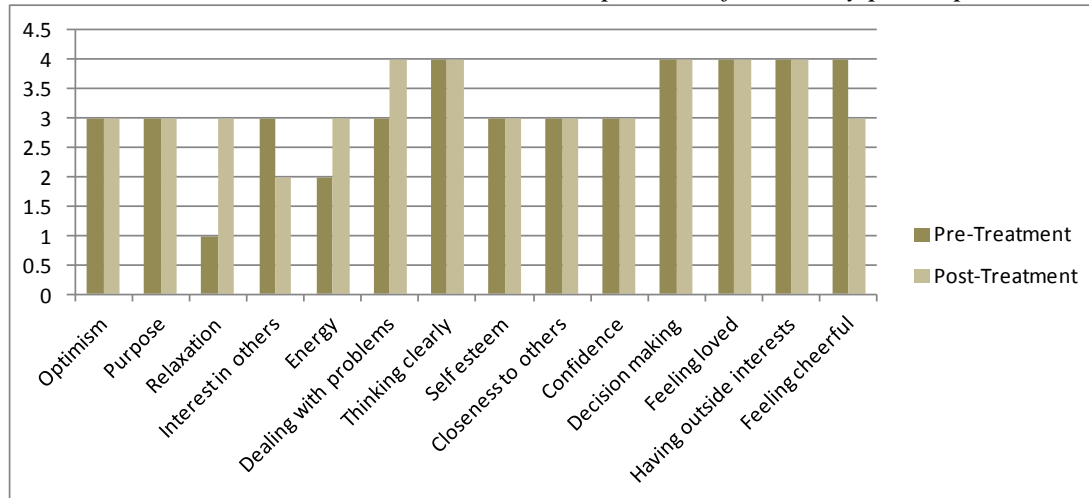
<b>14</b>	31	38
<b>15</b>	32	51
<b>16</b>	39	50
<b>17</b>	37	42
<b>18</b>	24	42
<b>19</b>	28	48

**Table 50**

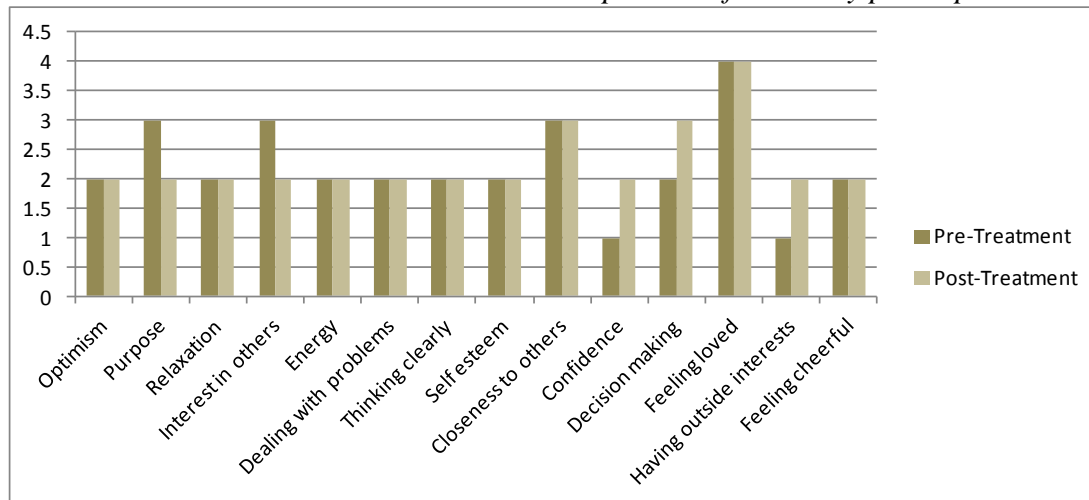
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant*



Of the nineteen participants, nineteen participants recorded a higher perceived state of mental well-being. Looking at the comparison of the Pre-Treatment WEMWBS and Post-Treatment WEMWBS individual scores we see the following results (Tables 51-69).

**Table 51***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #1*

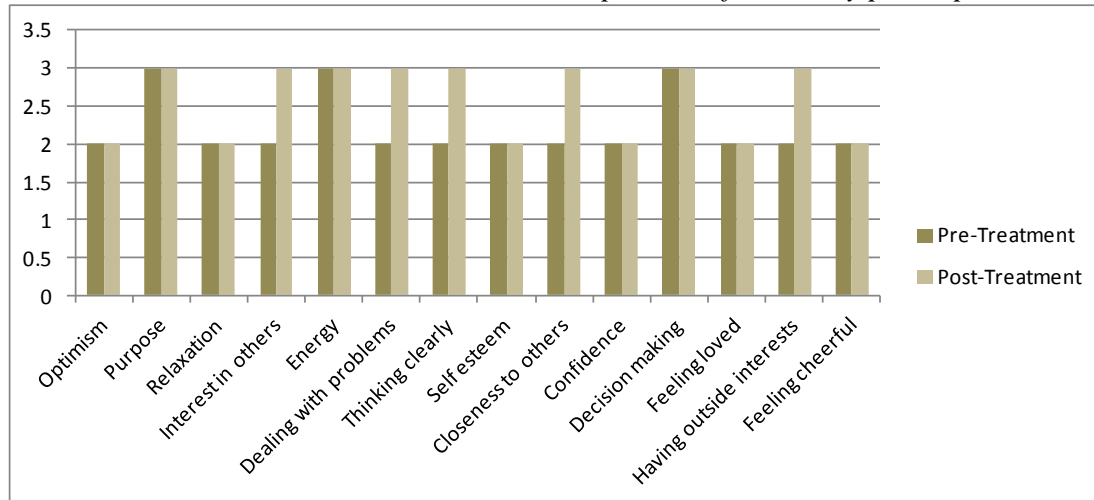
Of the fourteen questions, participant #1 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on two questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on nine questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on three questions.

**Table 52***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #2*

Of the fourteen questions, participant #2 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on two questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on nine questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on three questions.

**Table 53**

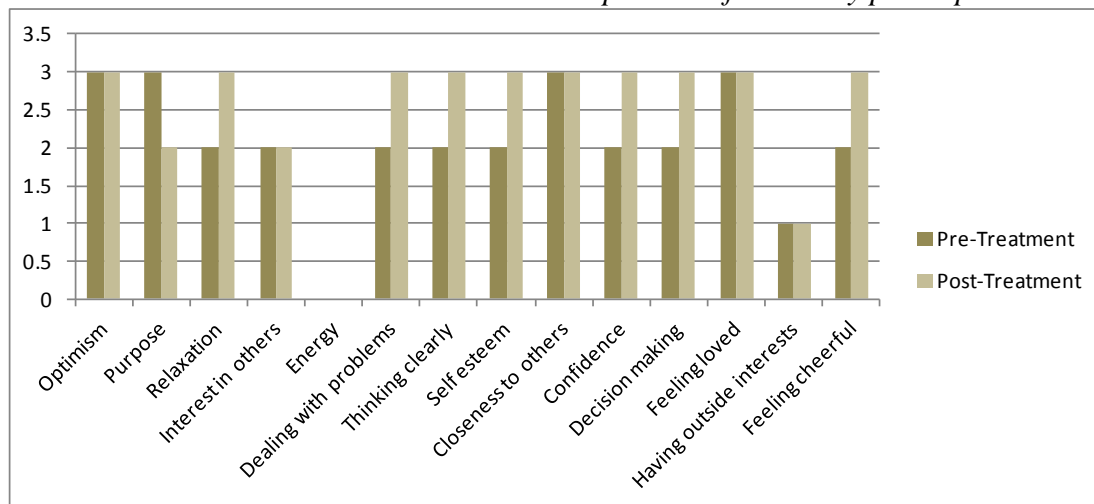
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #3*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #3 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on nine questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on three questions.

**Table 54**

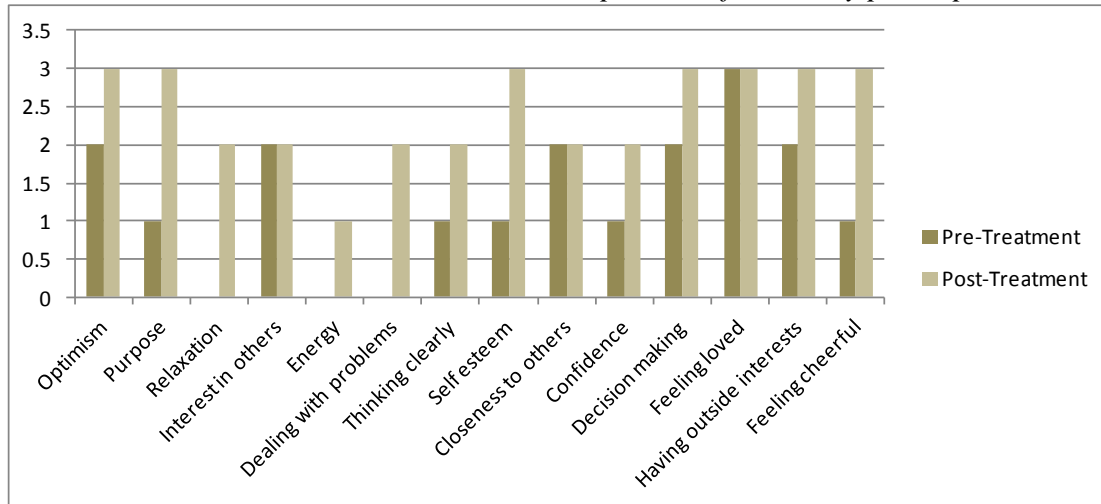
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #4*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #4 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on one question, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on five questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on seven questions.

**Table 55**

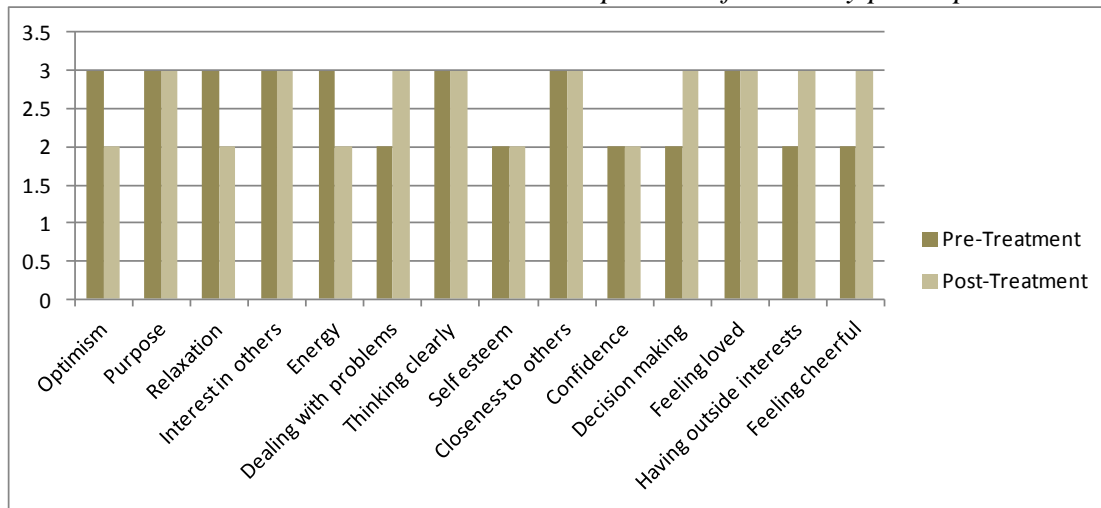
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #5*



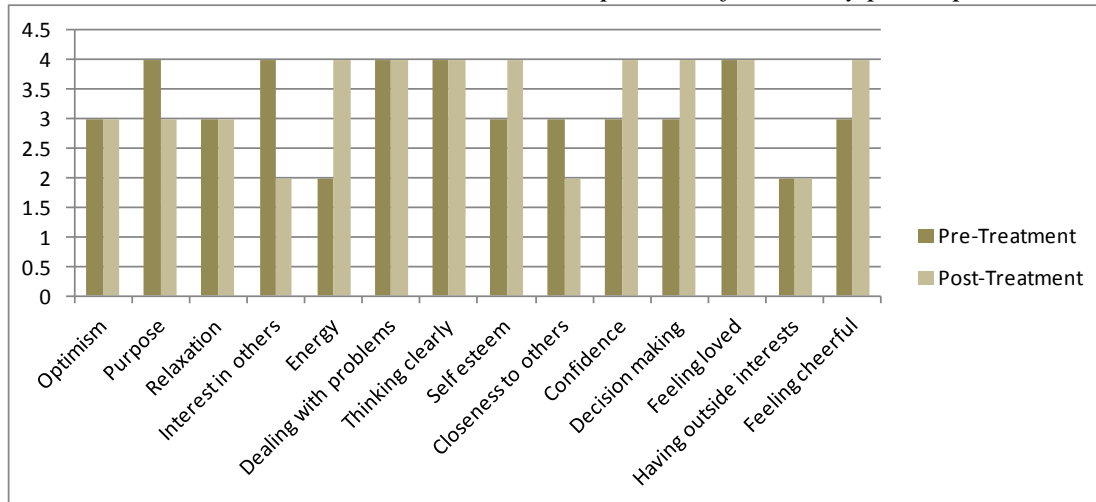
Of the fourteen questions, participant #5 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on three questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on eight questions.

**Table 56**

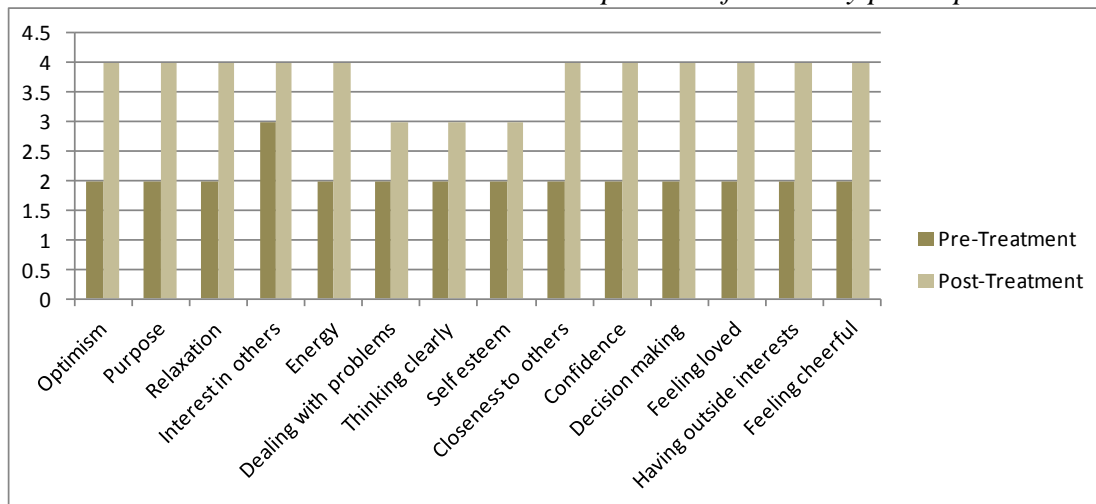
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #6*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #6 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on three questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on seven questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on four questions.

**Table 57***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #7*

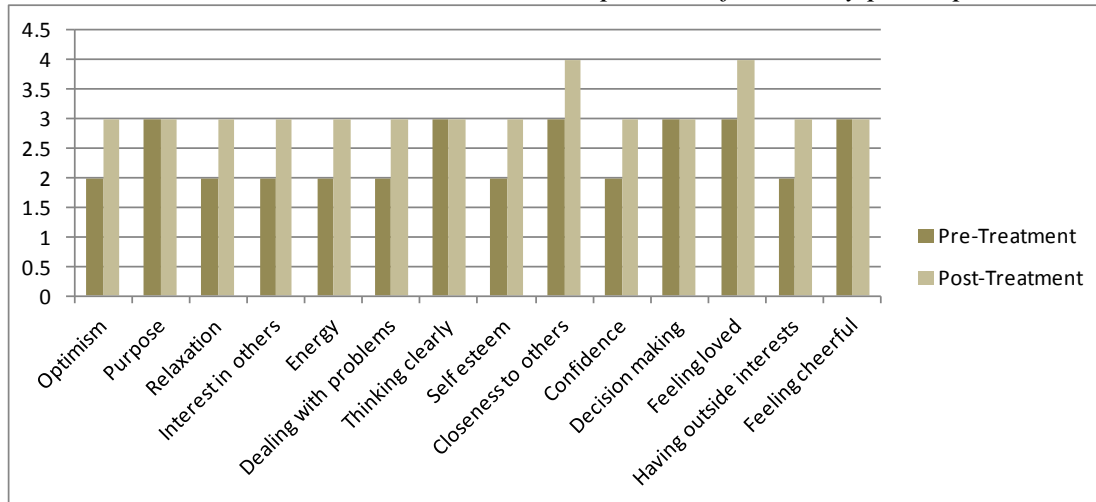
Of the fourteen questions, participant #7 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on three questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on six questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on five questions.

**Table 58***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #8*

Of the fourteen questions, participant #8 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on fourteen questions.

**Table 59**

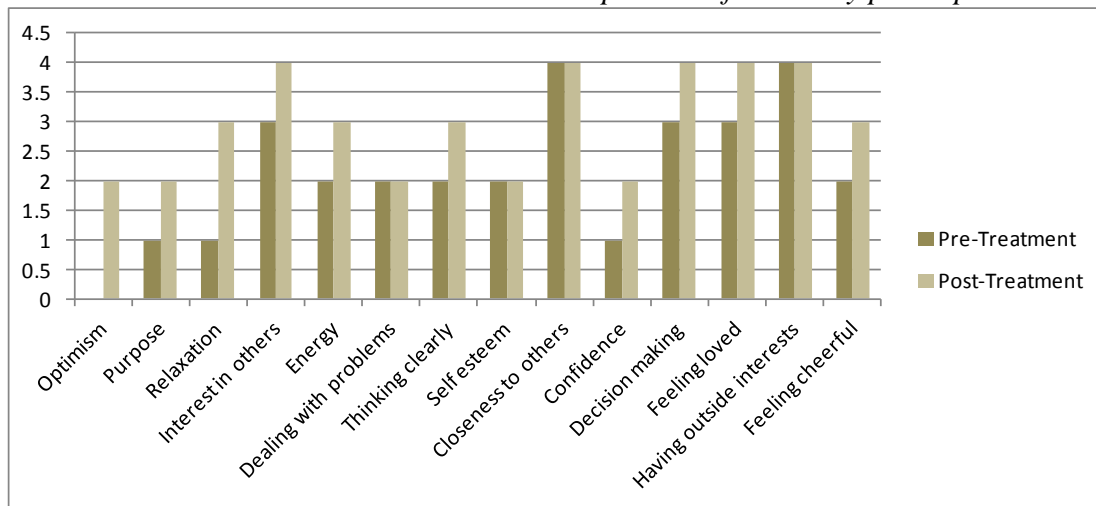
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #9*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #9 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on four questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on ten questions.

**Table 60**

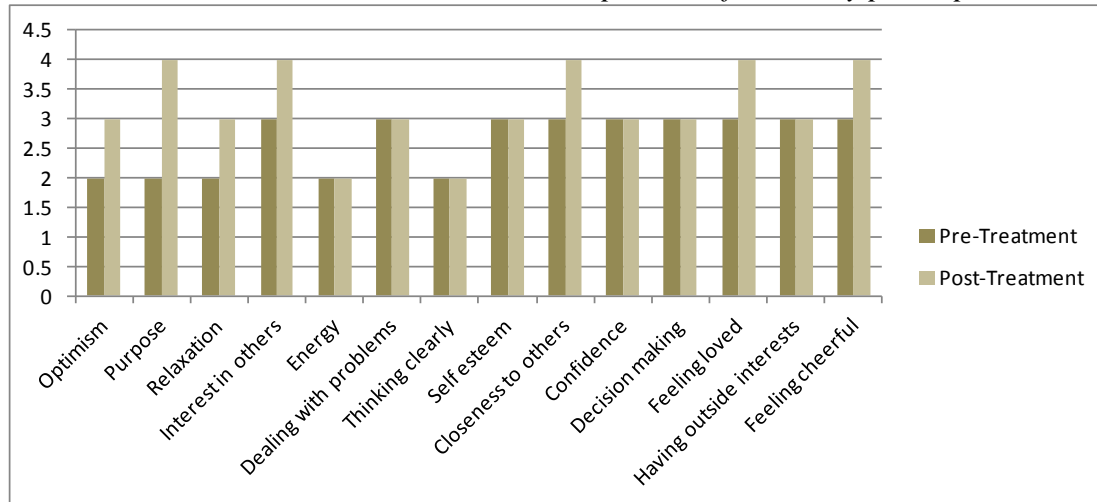
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #10*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #10 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on four questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on nine questions.

**Table 61**

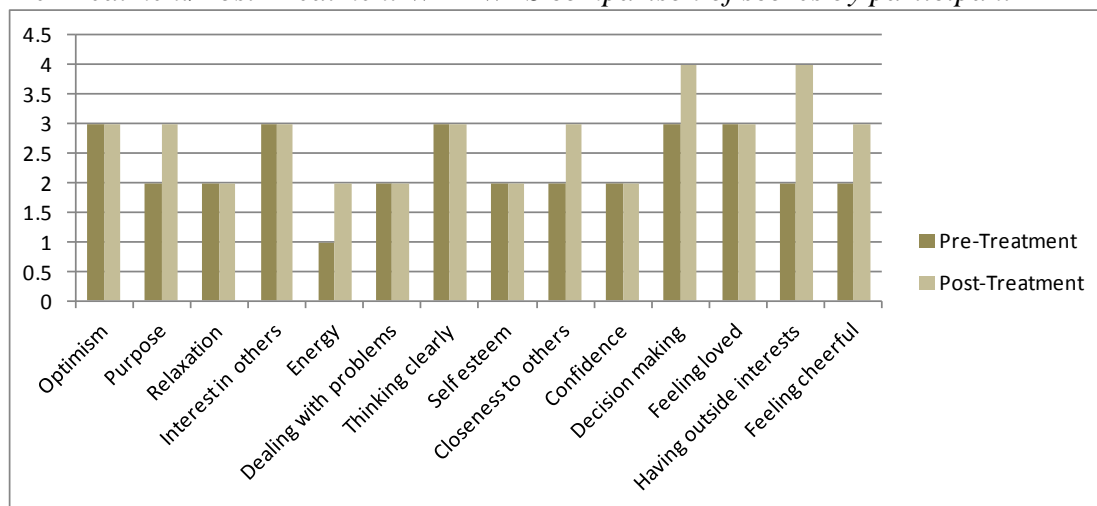
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #11*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #11 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on seven questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on seven questions.

**Table 62**

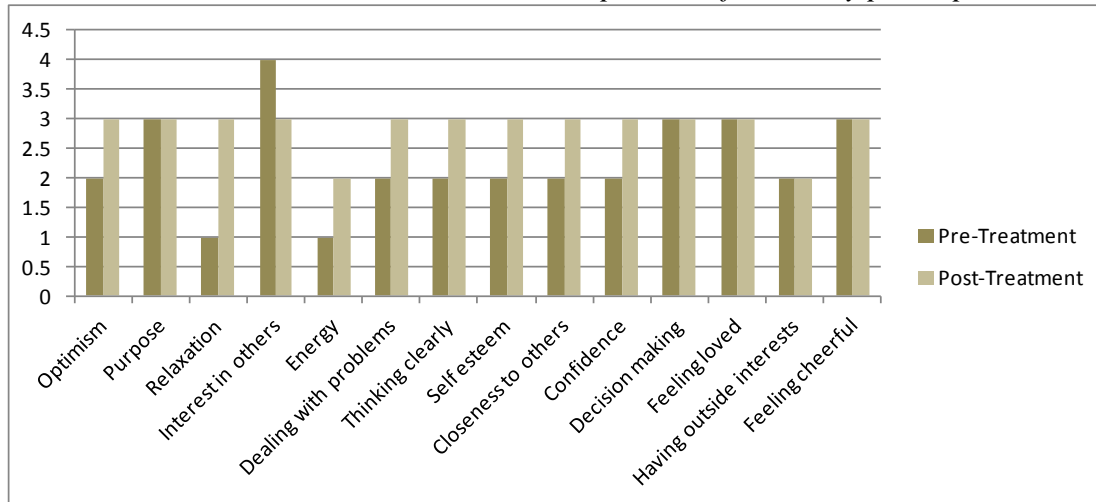
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #12*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #12 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on eight questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on six questions.

**Table 63**

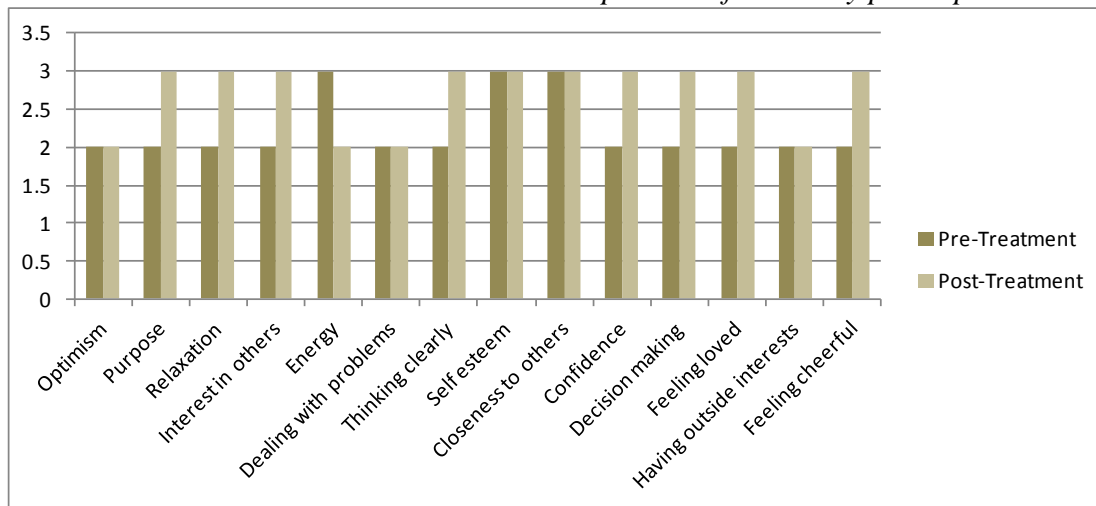
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #13*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #13 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on one question, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on five questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on eight questions.

**Table 64**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #14*

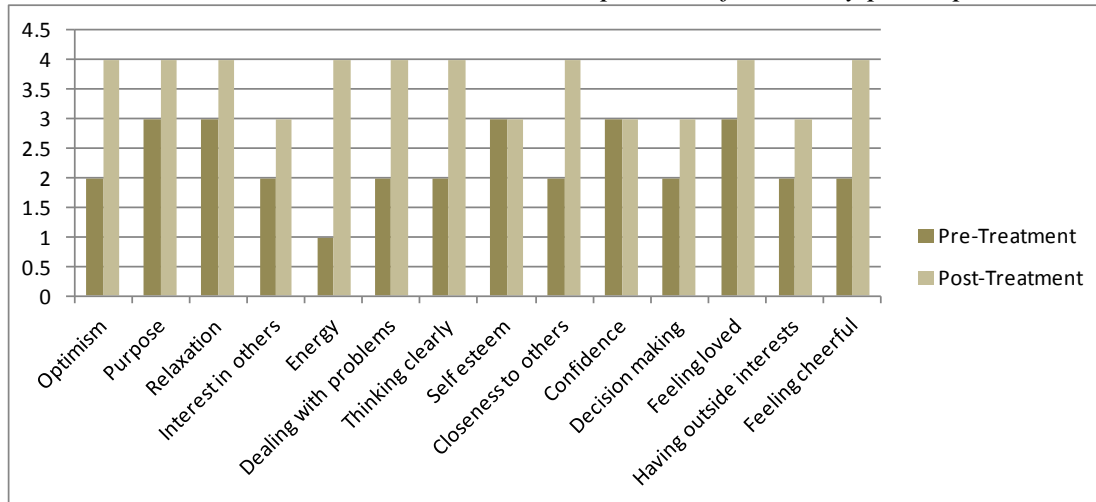


Of the fourteen questions, participant #14 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on one question, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on five questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on eight questions.



**Table 65**

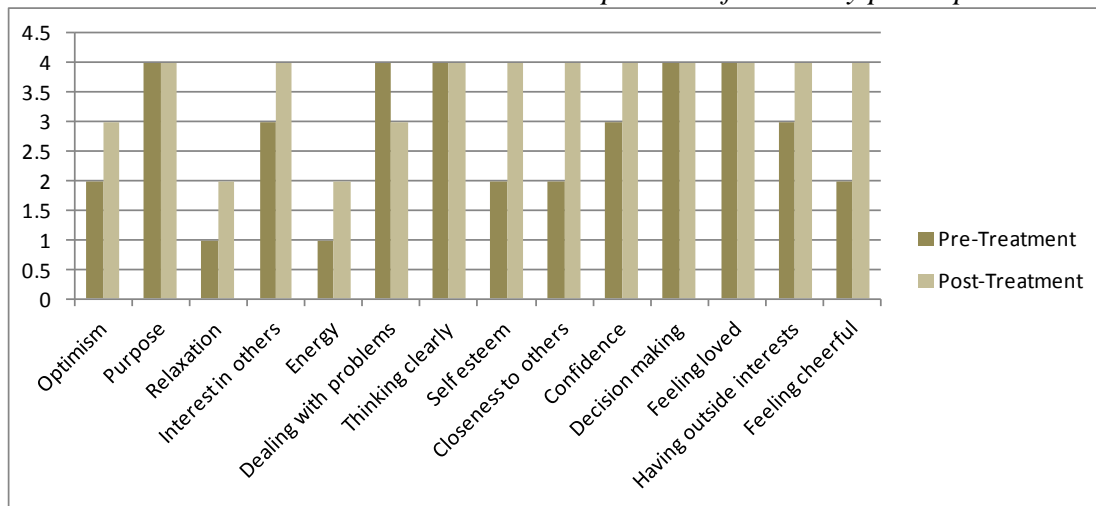
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #15*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #15 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on two questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on twelve questions.

**Table 66**

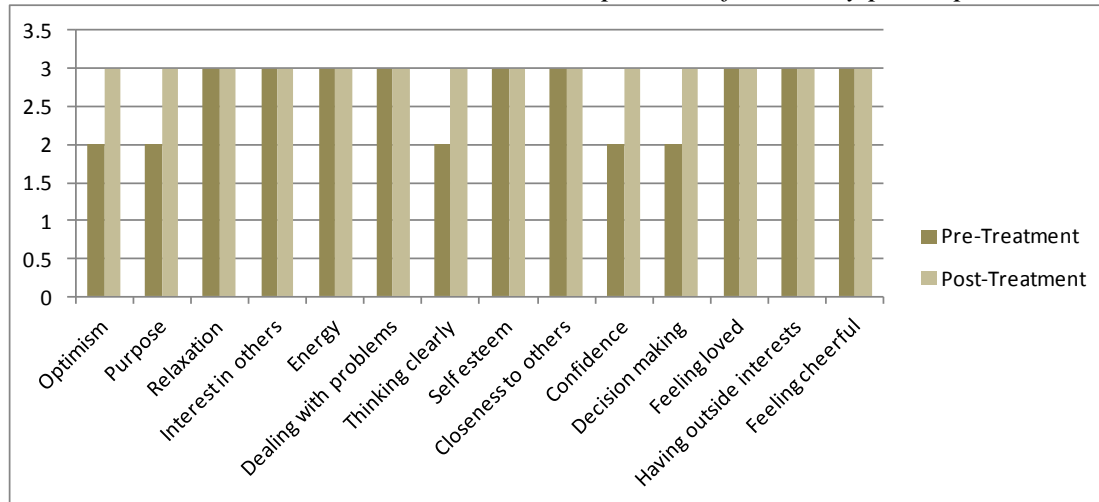
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #16*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #16 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on one question, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on four questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on nine questions.

**Table 67**

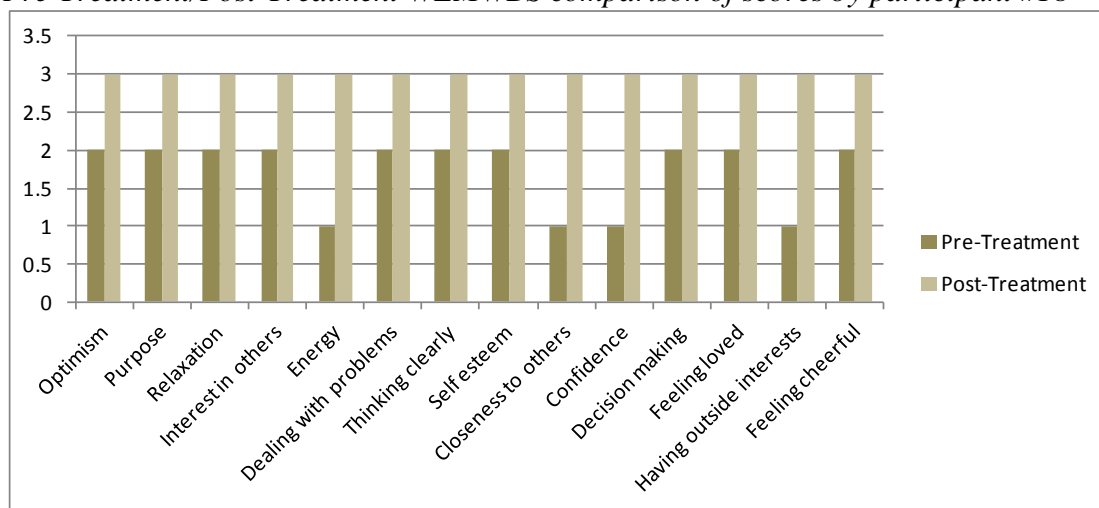
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #17*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #17 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on nine questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on five questions.

**Table 68**

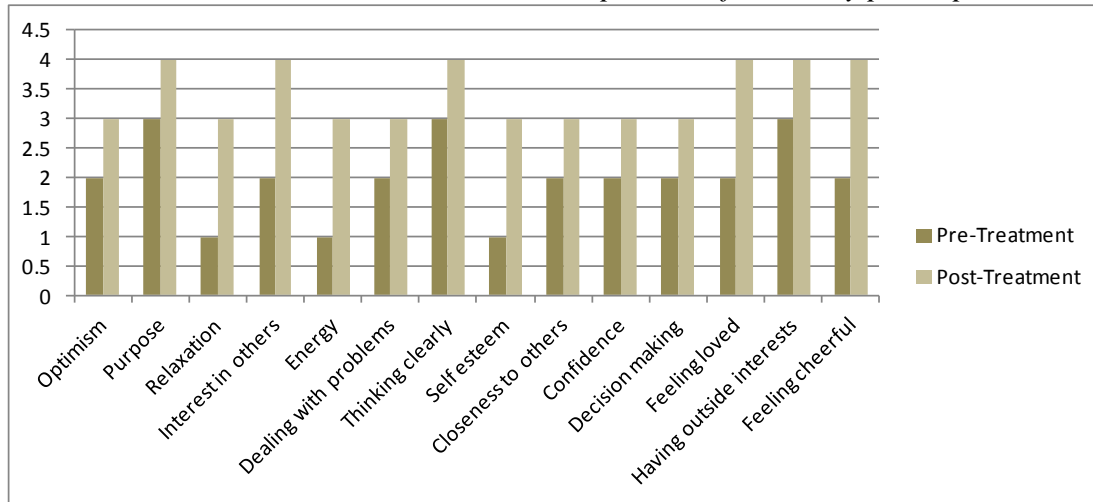
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #18*



Of the fourteen questions, participant #18 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on fourteen questions.

**Table 69**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment WEMWBS comparison of scores by participant #19*



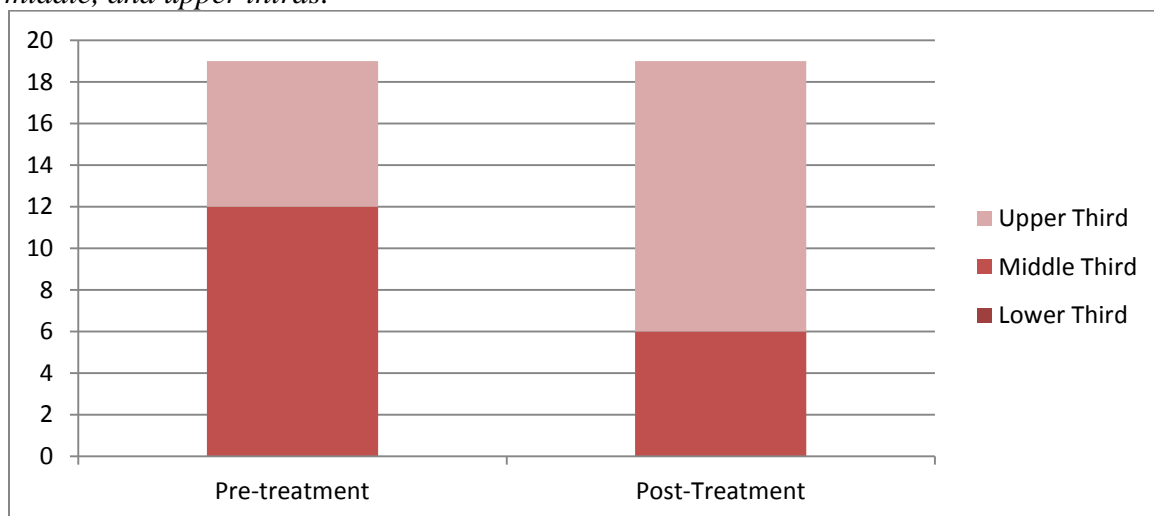
Of the fourteen questions, participant #19 recorded a lower perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of mental well-being on no questions, and a higher perceived state of mental well-being on fourteen questions.

### Pre-Treatment/Post Treatment EQRI

The pre-treatment/post-treatment EQRI scores were as follows. Of the nineteen participants, the number of participants in the lower third of the 0-80 range remained the same at zero. The number of participants in the middle third range shrunk from twelve to six. The number of participants in the upper third range grew from seven to thirteen. (See Table 70)

**Table 70**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores of participants in lower, middle, and upper thirds.*



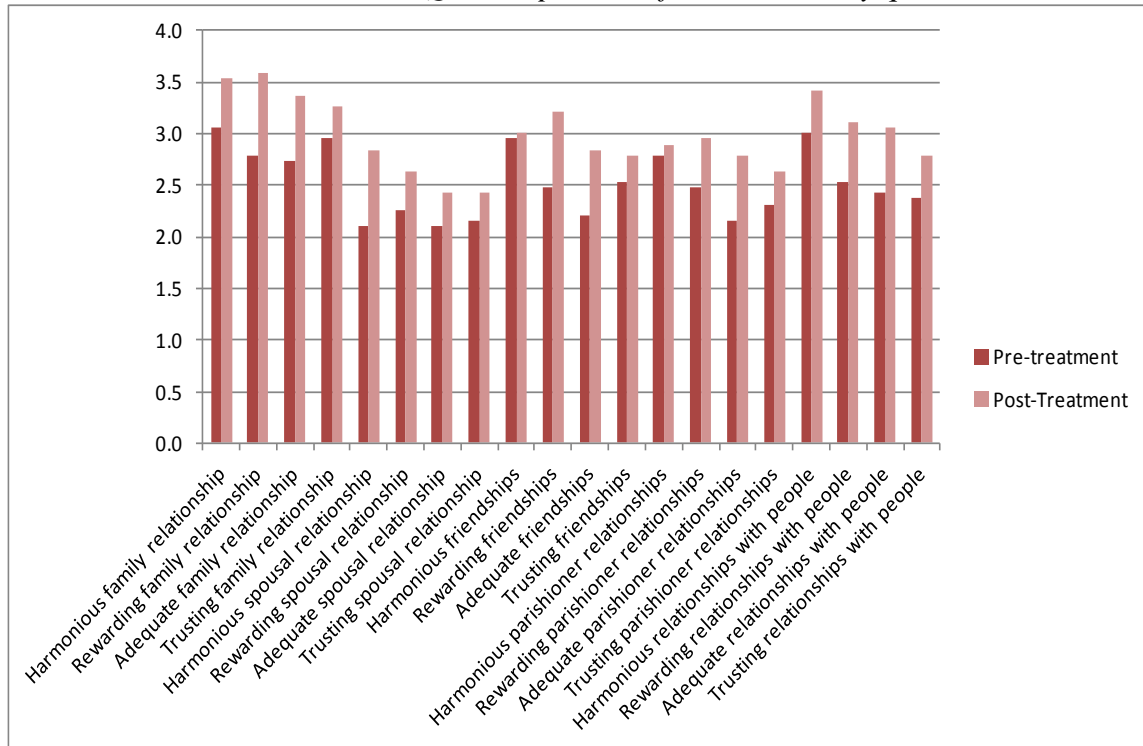
Each of the 20 questions received a higher score in the Post-Treatment EQRI. (See Tables 71 and 72.) Of the 380 questions asked on this instrument (19 participants \* 20 questions = 380 questions), 27 received a lower score in the Post Treatment results. While this instrument tended to show a slightly higher number of the scores of individual questions going down, the few that did go down were spread across most questions. There did not seem to be any clustering.

**Table 71***Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of mean scores by question*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Pre-Treatment</b>	<b>Post-Treatment</b>
<b>1. Harmonious family relationship</b>	3.05	3.53
<b>2. Rewarding family relationship</b>	2.79	3.58
<b>3. Adequate family relationship</b>	2.74	3.37
<b>4. Trusting family relationship</b>	2.95	3.26
<b>5. Harmonious spousal relationship</b>	2.11	2.84
<b>6. Rewarding spousal relationship</b>	2.26	2.63
<b>7. Adequate spousal relationship</b>	2.11	2.42
<b>8. Trusting spousal relationship</b>	2.16	2.42
<b>9. Harmonious friendships</b>	2.95	3.00
<b>10. Rewarding friendships</b>	2.47	3.21
<b>11. Adequate friendships</b>	2.21	2.84
<b>12. Trusting friendships</b>	2.53	2.79
<b>13. Harmonious parishioner relationships</b>	2.79	2.89
<b>14. Rewarding parishioner relationships</b>	2.47	2.95
<b>15. Adequate parishioner relationships</b>	2.16	2.79
<b>16. Trusting parishioner relationships</b>	2.32	2.63
<b>17. Harmonious relationships with people</b>	3.00	3.42
<b>18. Rewarding relationships with people</b>	2.53	3.11
<b>19. Adequate relationships with people</b>	2.42	3.05
<b>20. Trusting relationships with people</b>	2.37	2.79

**Table 72**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of mean scores by question*



A Paired T Test was administered with the following results. The mean difference between the pre-treatment and the post-treatment scores is 9.158. The Confidence Interval is 95% with a .05 alpha. The result is significant:  $t(19) = -2.839$ ,  $p=.011$ . The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative. It is more likely that the scores rose from the pre-treatment EQRI to the Post-treatment EQRI because of some systematic or deliberate cause rather than by chance. This is strong evidence that the treatment (use of the Jesus Prayer and participation in the 8 week class) enhances perceptions of interpersonal well-being. What follows below are the observations of how individuals scored on the pre-treatment and post-treatment EQRI.

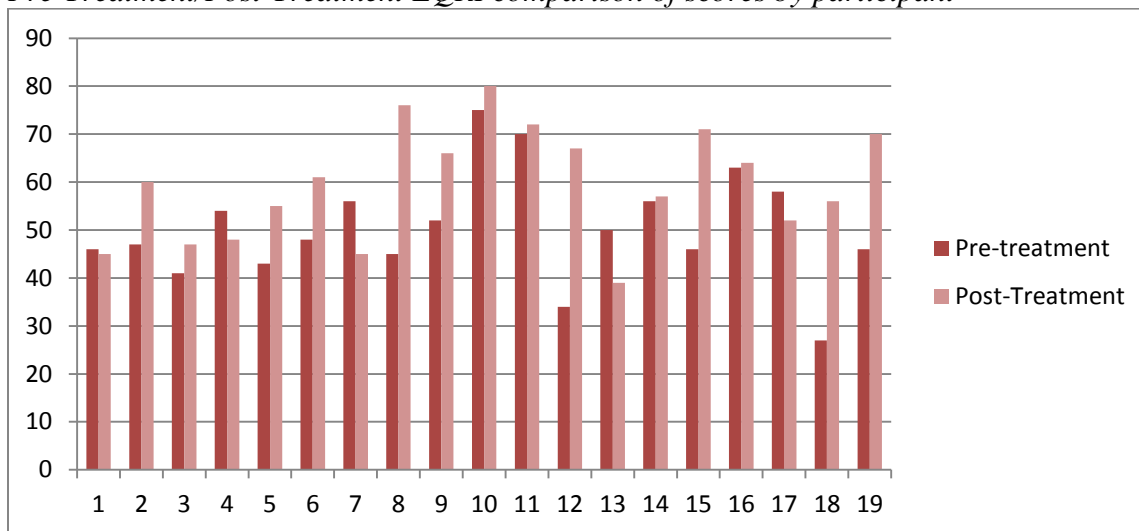
Five out of nineteen (26%) of the participants scored lower on the Post-Treatment EQRI. Fourteen out of the nineteen (74%) participants scored higher on the Post-Treatment EQRI. (See Tables 73 and 74.)

**Table 73**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant*

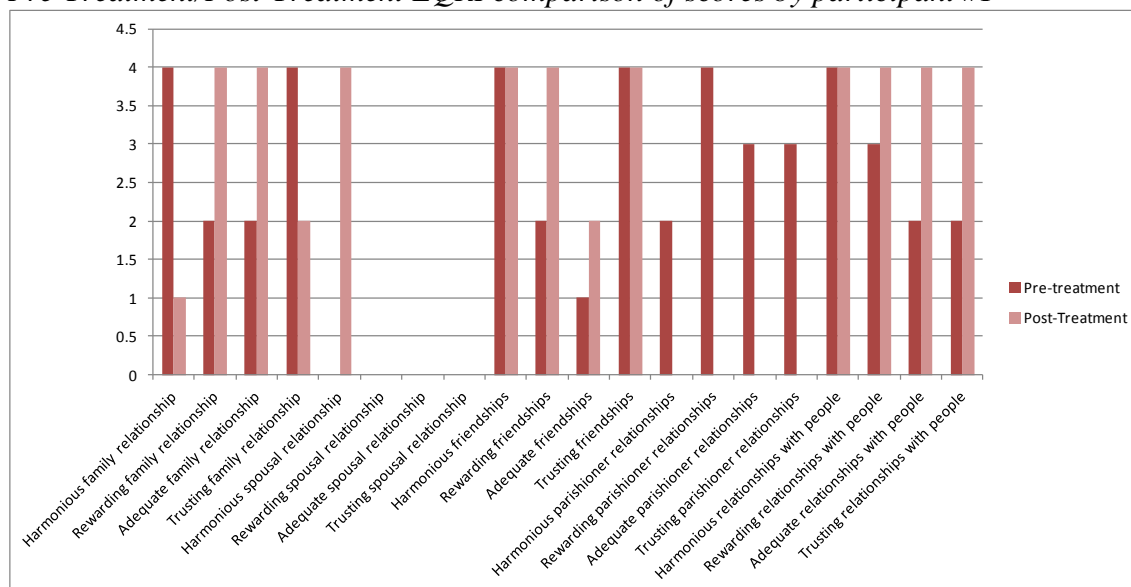
<b>Participant</b>	<b>Pre-Treatment</b>	<b>Post-Treatment</b>
<b>1</b>	46	45
<b>2</b>	47	60
<b>3</b>	41	47
<b>4</b>	54	48
<b>5</b>	43	55
<b>6</b>	48	61
<b>7</b>	56	45
<b>8</b>	45	76
<b>9</b>	52	66
<b>10</b>	75	80
<b>11</b>	70	72
<b>12</b>	34	67
<b>13</b>	50	39
<b>14</b>	56	57
<b>15</b>	46	71
<b>16</b>	63	64
<b>17</b>	58	52
<b>18</b>	27	56
<b>19</b>	46	70

**Table 74**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant*



Looking at the comparison of the Pre-Treatment EQRI and Post-Treatment EQRI individual scores we see the following results. (See Tables 75-93.)

**Table 75**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #1*

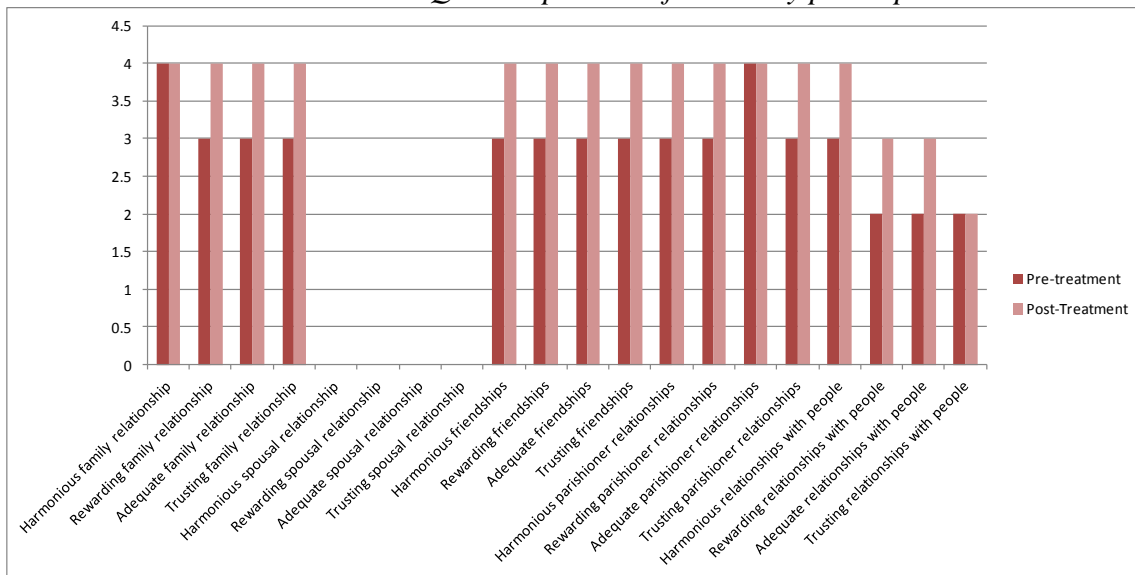


Of the twenty questions, participant #1 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on two questions, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal



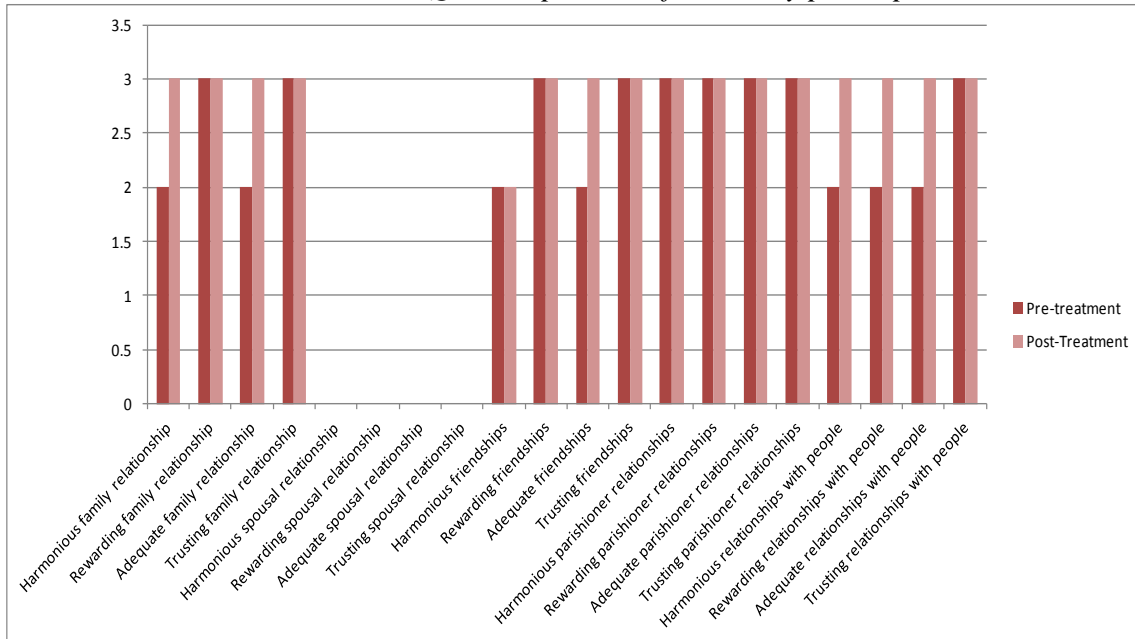
well-being on three questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on seven questions.

**Table 76**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #2*



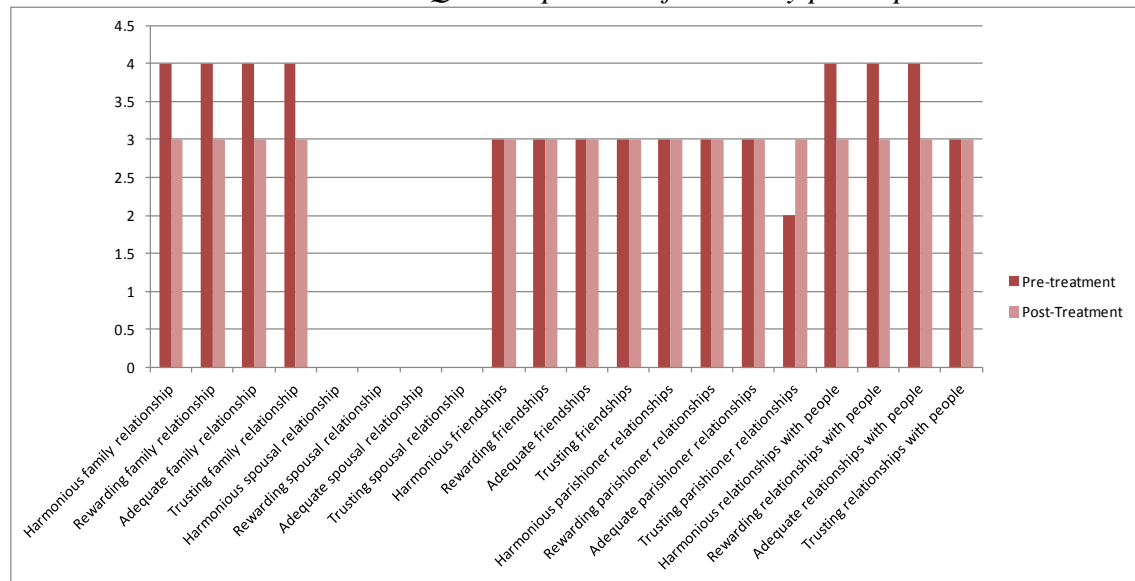
Of the twenty questions, participant #2 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on three questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on thirteen questions.

**Table 77**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #3*



Of the twenty questions, participant #3 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on ten questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on six questions.

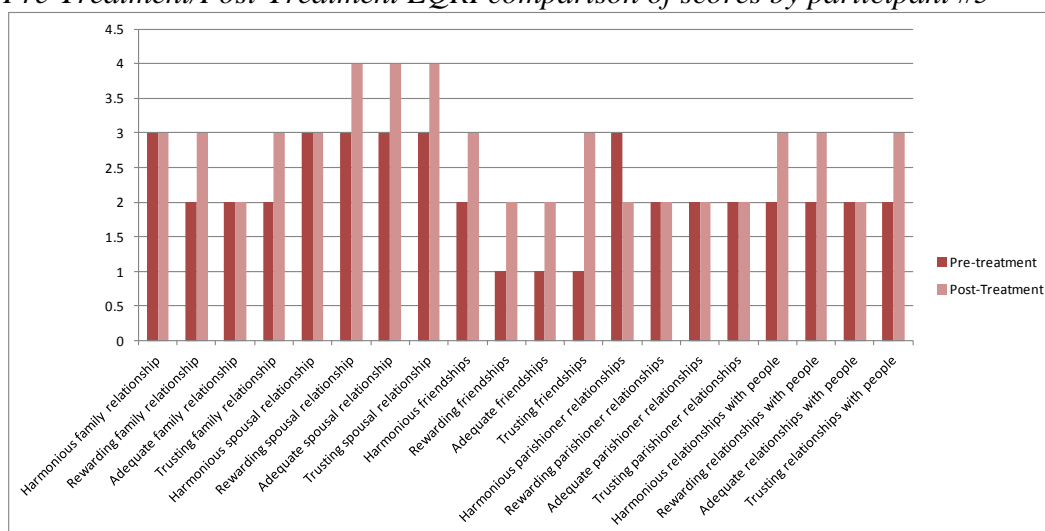
**Table 78**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #4*



Of the twenty questions, participant #4 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on seven questions, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on eight questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on one question.

**Table 79**

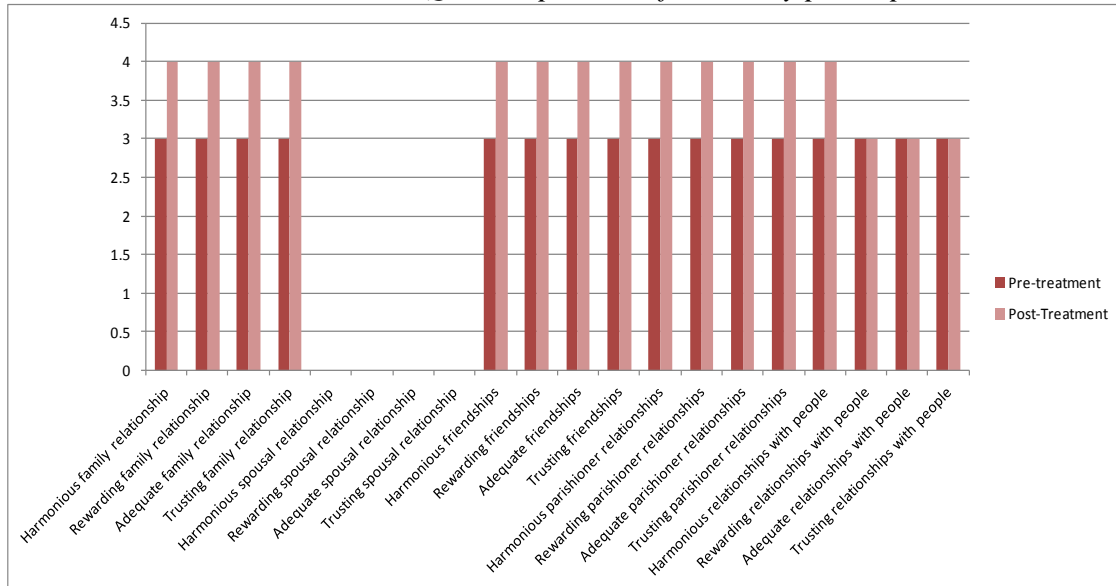
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #5*



Of the twenty questions, participant #5 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on one question, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on seven questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on twelve questions.

**Table 80**

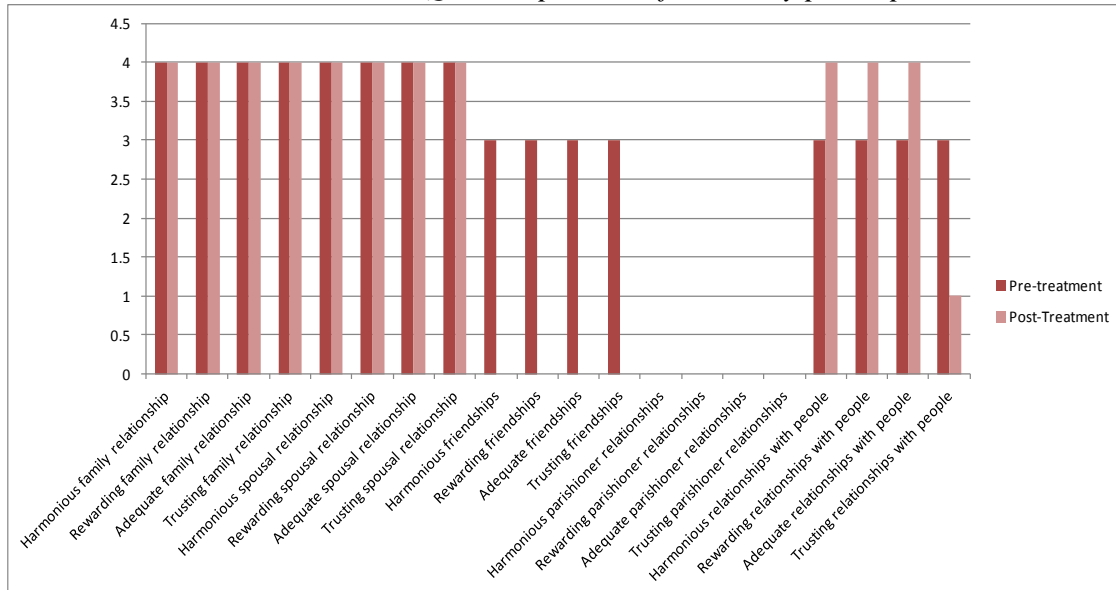
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #6*



Of the twenty questions, participant #6 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no questions, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on three questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on thirteen questions.

**Table 81**

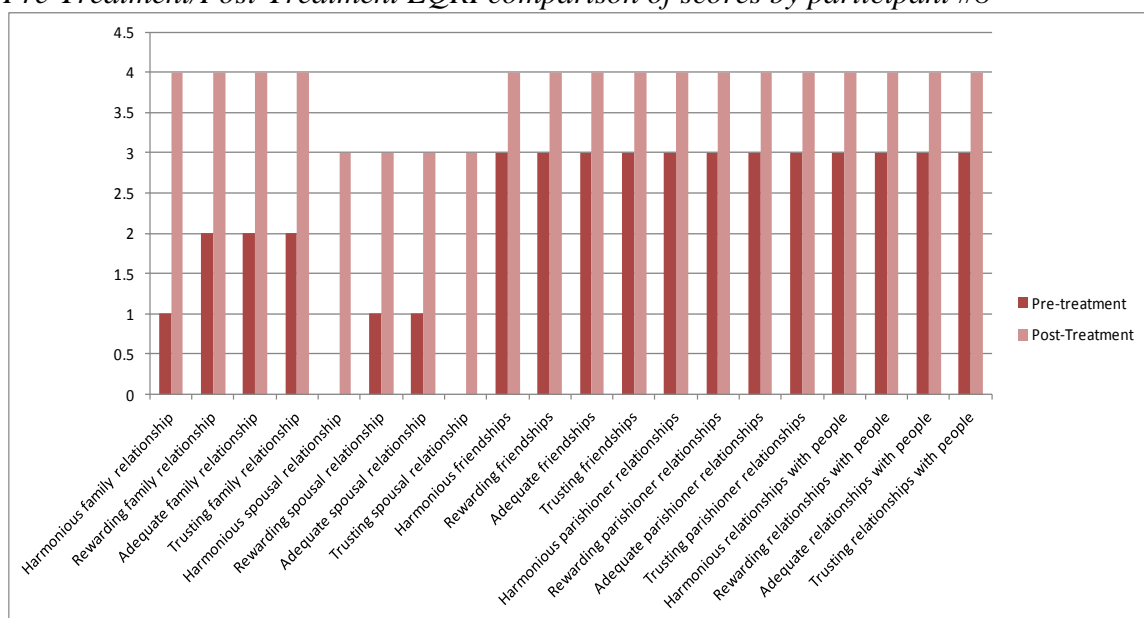
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #7*



Of the twenty questions, participant #7 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on one question, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on eight questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on three questions.

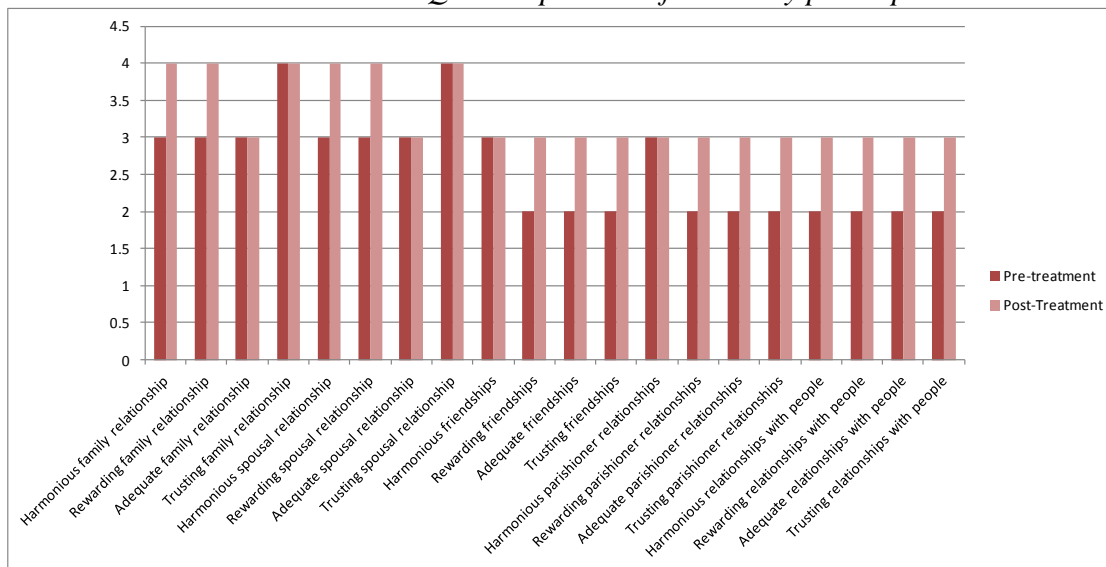
**Table 82**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #8*



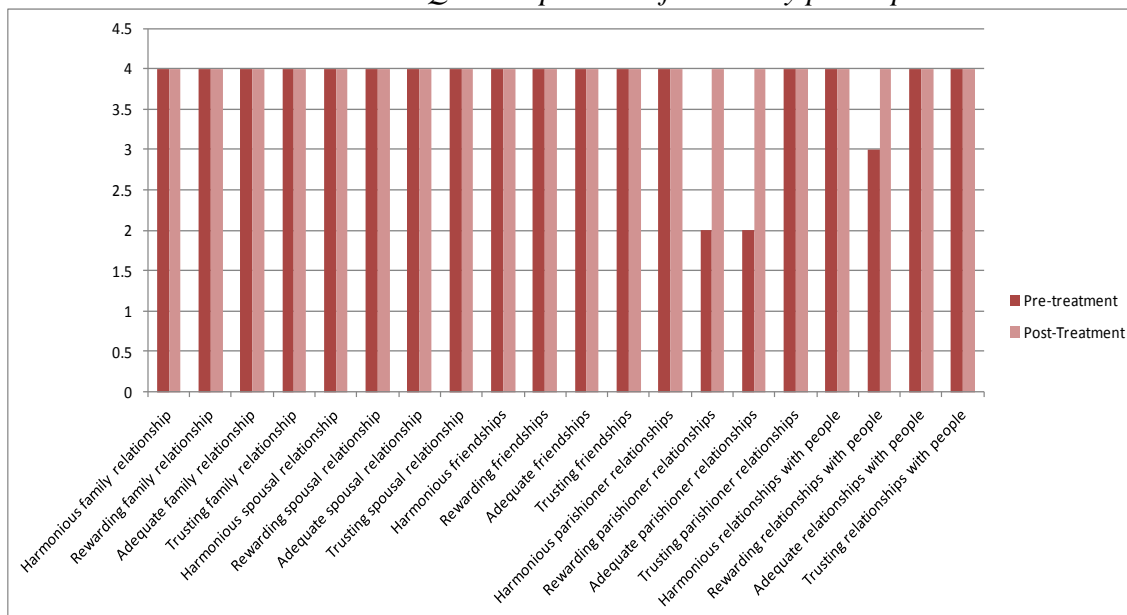
Of the twenty questions, participant #8 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no question, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no question, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on eighteen questions.

**Table 83**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #9*



Of the twenty questions, participant #9 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no question, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on six questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on fourteen questions.

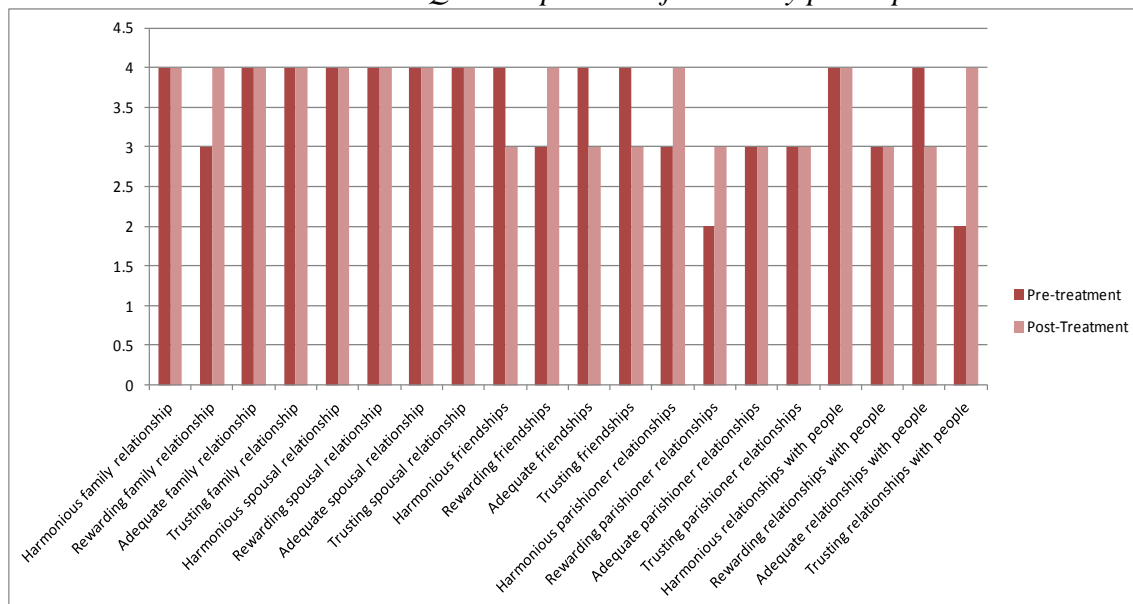
**Table 84**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #10*



Of the twenty questions, participant #10 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no question, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on seventeen questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on three questions.

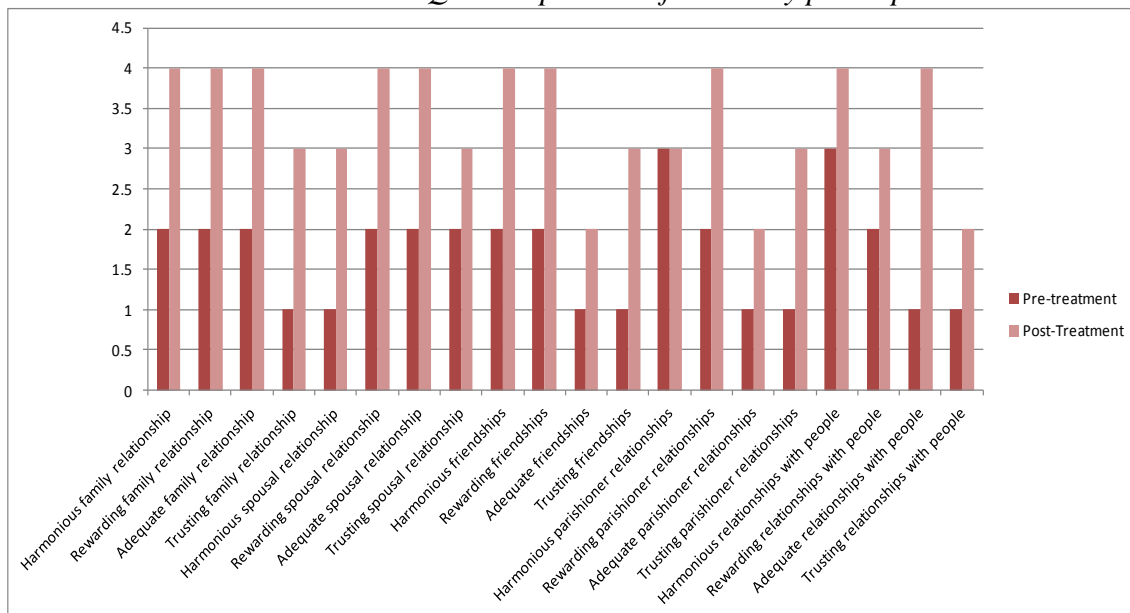
**Table 85**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #11*



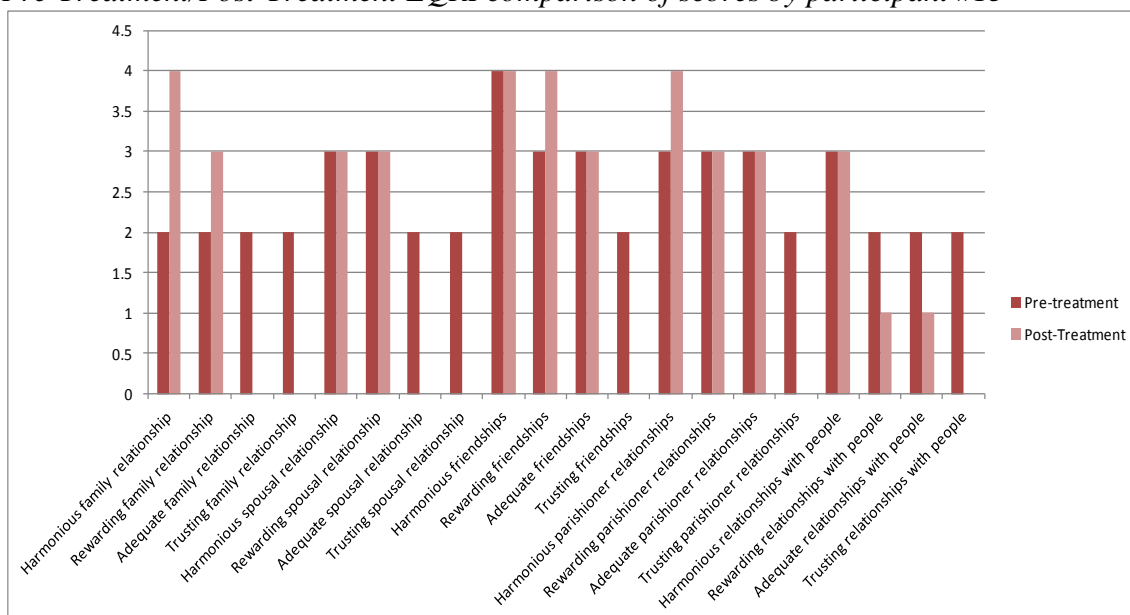
Of the twenty questions, participant #11 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on four questions, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on eleven questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on five questions.

**Table 86**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #12*



Of the twenty questions, participant #12 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no question, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on one question, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on nineteen questions.

**Table 87**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #13*

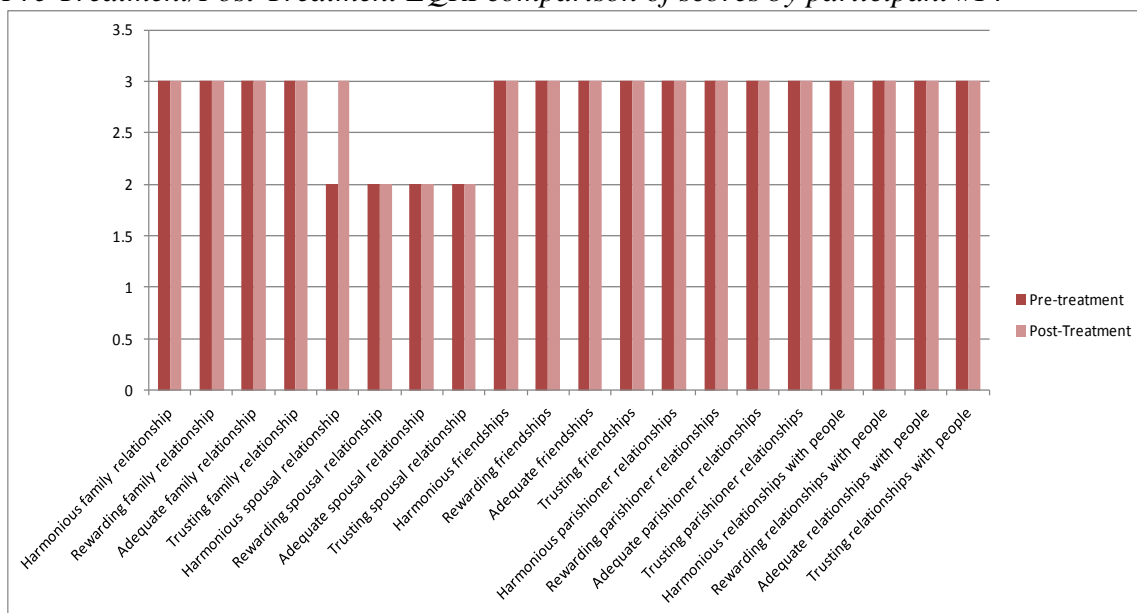




Of the twenty questions, participant #13 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on two questions, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on seven questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on four questions.

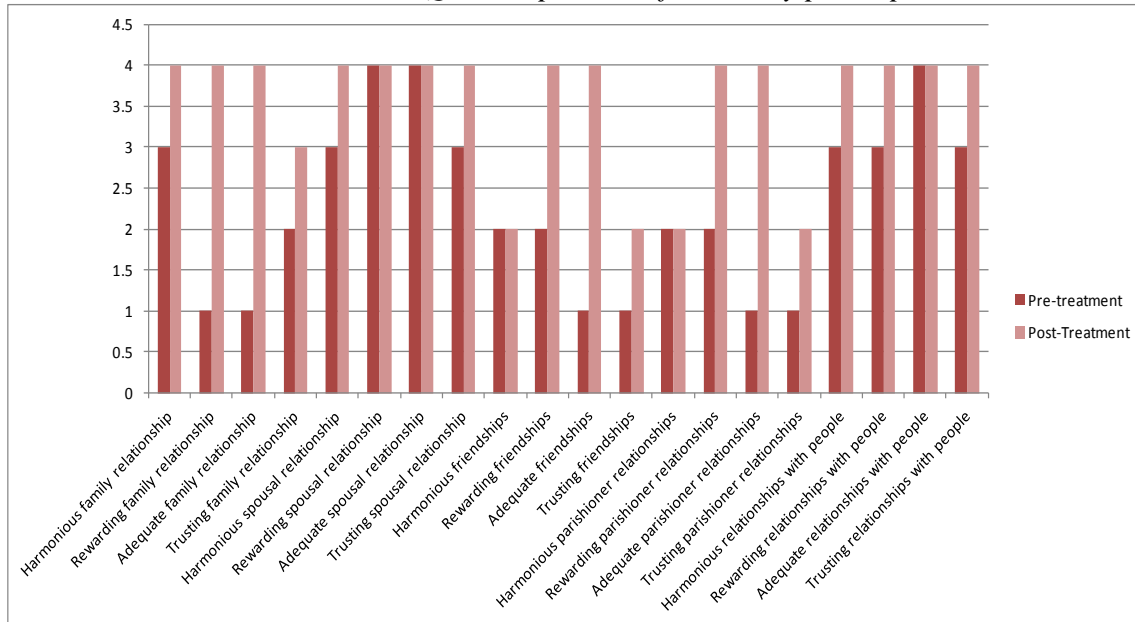
**Table 88**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #14*



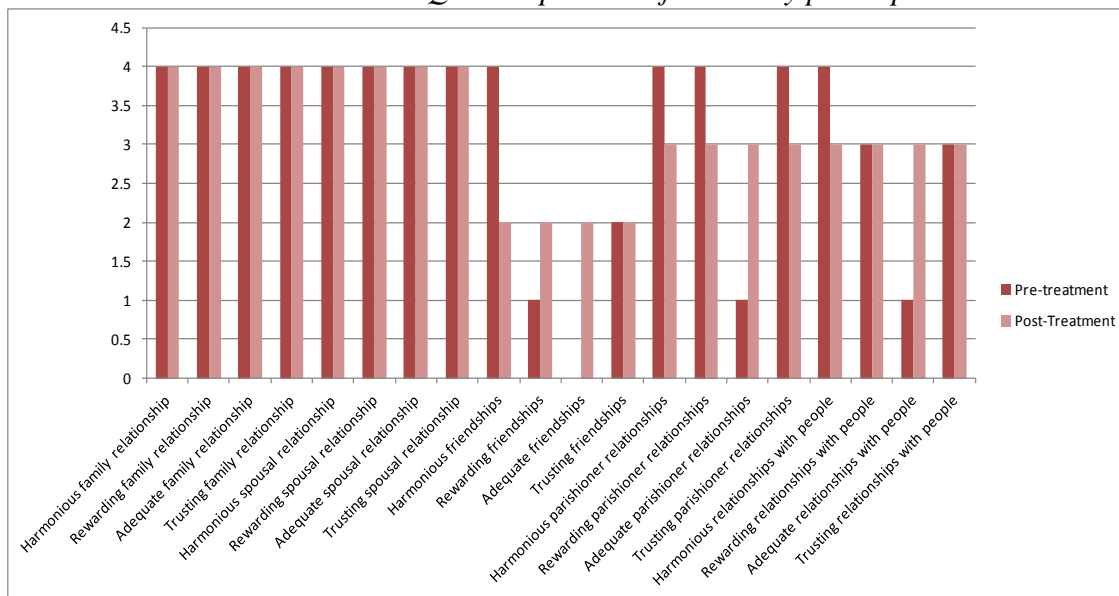
Of the twenty questions, participant #14 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no question, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on nineteen questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on one question.

**Table 89**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #15*



Of the twenty questions, participant #15 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no question, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on five questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on fifteen questions.

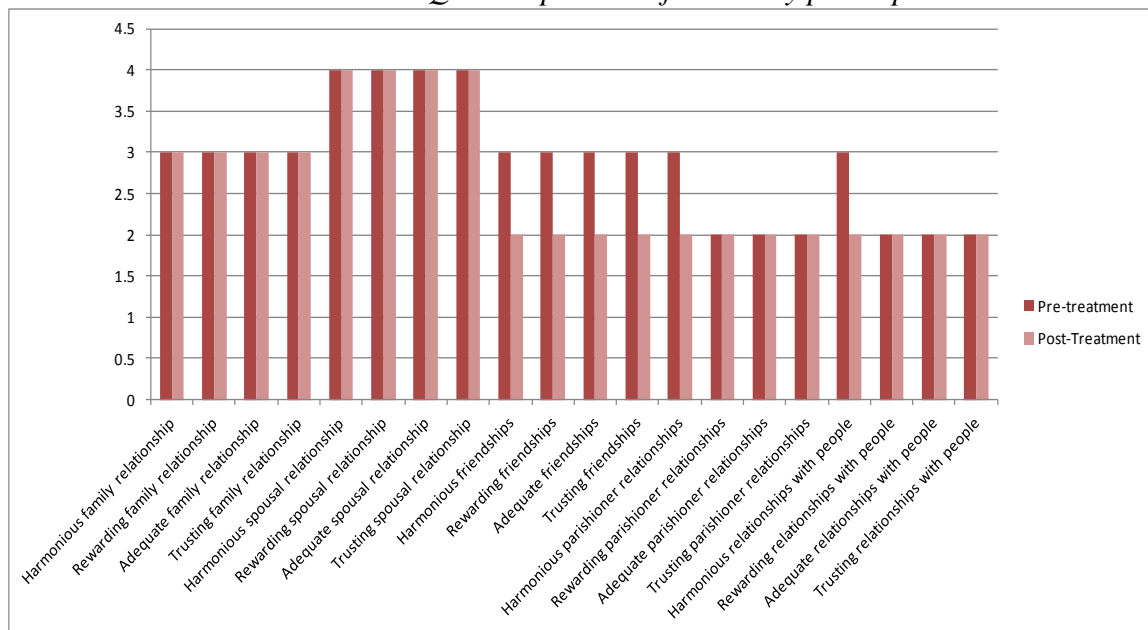
**Table 90**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #16*



Of the twenty questions, participant #16 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on five questions, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on eleven questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on three questions.

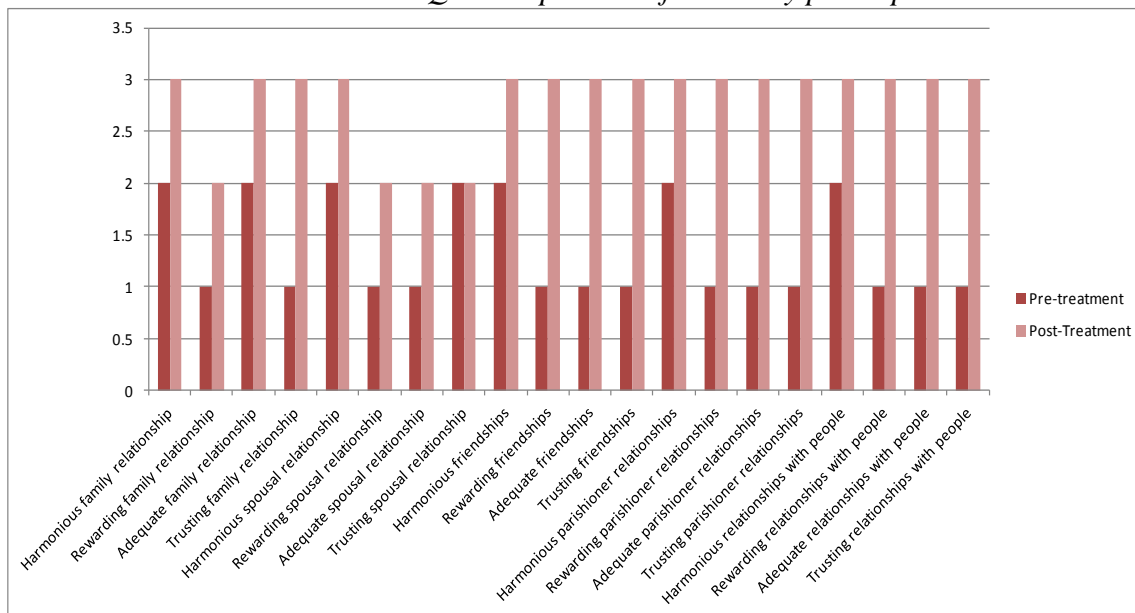
**Table 91**

*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #17*



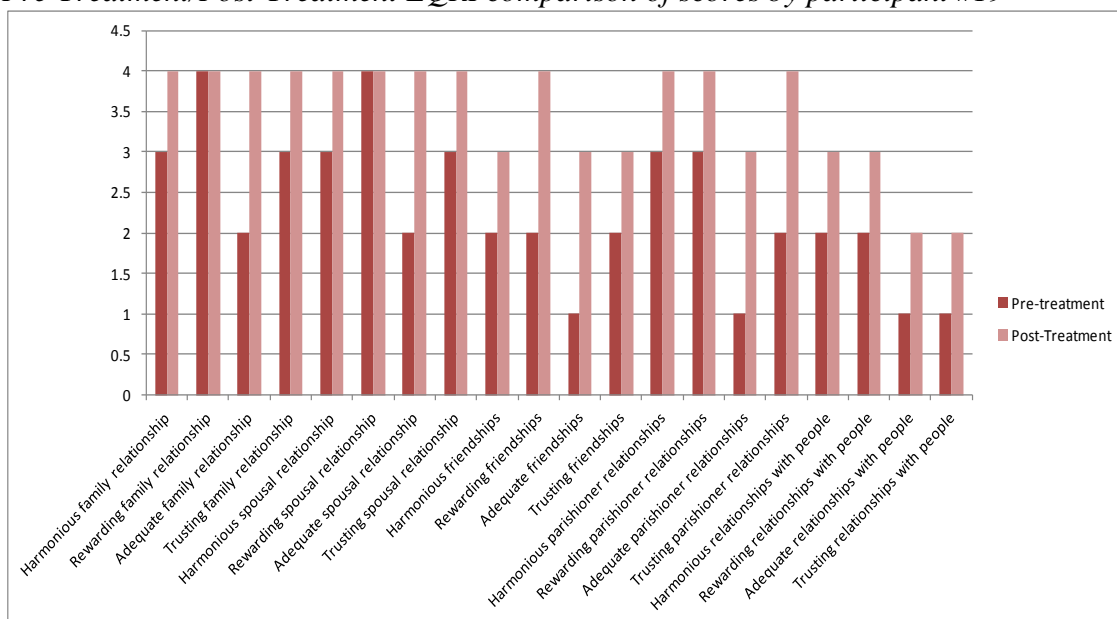
Of the twenty questions, participant #17 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on six question, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on fourteen questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no question.

**Table 92**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #18*



Of the twenty questions, participant #18 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no question, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on one question, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on nineteen questions.

**Table 93**  
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment EQRI comparison of scores by participant #19*



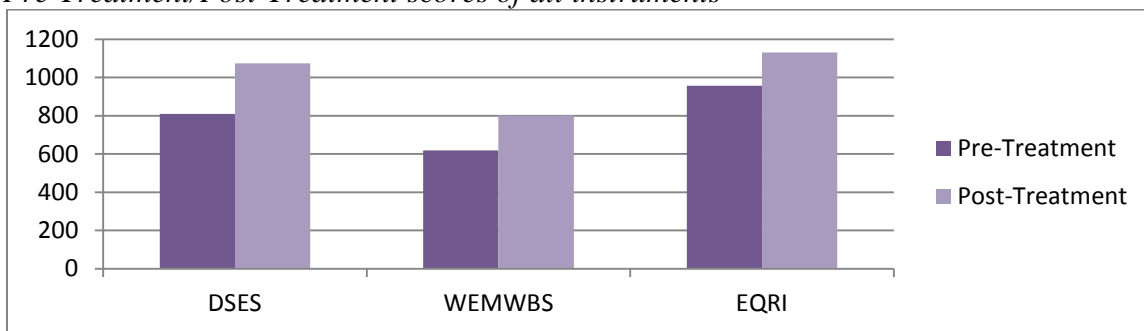
Of the twenty questions, participant #19 recorded a lower perceived state of interpersonal well-being on no question, an equivalent perceived state of interpersonal well-being on two questions, and a higher perceived state of interpersonal well-being on eighteen questions.

### Pre-Treatment/Post Treatment All Instruments

The results from all three instruments used seem to show that there has been an increase in perception of well-being following the eight-week treatment of Jesus Prayer and class presentation. Perceptions of spiritual well-being, mental well-being, and interpersonal well-being rose in most cases. The rise in scores can be seen in Table 94.

**Table 94**

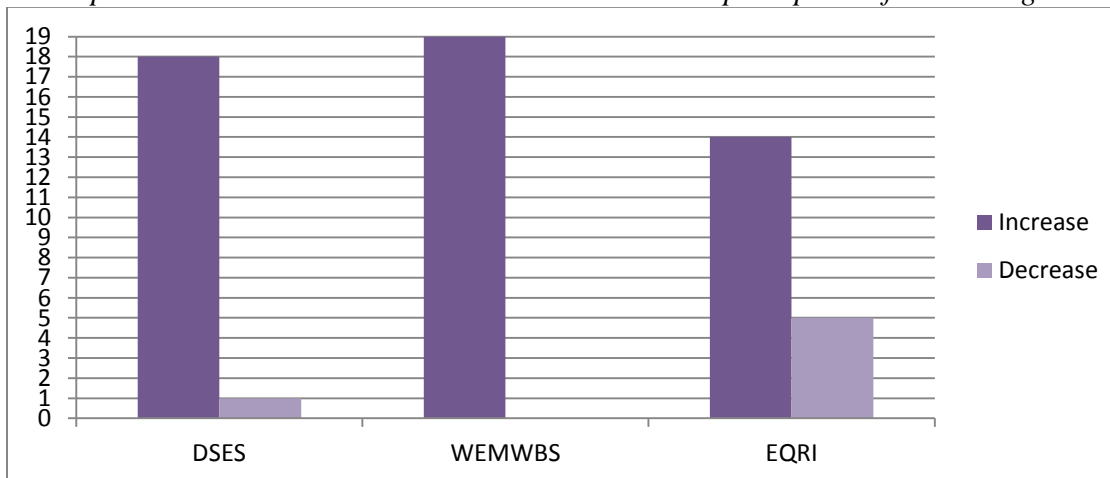
*Pre-Treatment/Post-Treatment scores of all instruments*



The scores for the DSES rose by 33%. The scores for the WEMBES rose by 29%. The scores for the EQRI rose by 18%. While it can be seen that the scores rose in the Post-Treatment instruments, it can also be seen that most of the participants also showed an increase in perception of well-being in the three areas of spiritual well-being, mental well-being, and interpersonal well-being.

**Table 95**

*Participants who showed either increase or decrease in perception of well-being*



## Chapter 5: Qualitative Result

This study focused on the function of hesychastic prayer, fundamentally the Jesus Prayer, within a parish community setting on the perception of spiritual, mental, and interpersonal well-being. In addition to the data received from the quantitative instruments, the following open-ended question was used in order to receive qualitative data: “What has been your experience of the practice of the Jesus Prayer?” This question was appended to the end of the final quantitative survey questions. They were told they may answer the question as fully as they wanted. Each of the nineteen participants responded in some way. I have followed a phenomenological approach for the qualitative research where “it is important to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences of a phenomenon,” (Creswell 2009, 60) in this case the phenomenon being the practice of the Jesus Prayer.

This data was analyzed in the following way:

- Reading through each of the nineteen responses several times to get a sense of patterns and recurring themes
- Making note of significant sentences or phrases that supplied meaning to the experience of practicing the Jesus Prayer
- Collecting these meanings into themes that reflected overall experience
- Describing the results and comparing with findings of the quantitative research portion of the study both in broad findings as well as in the particular areas of well-being that the quantitative instruments explored.

## Findings

From 19 written transcripts, 90 significant statements were extracted. From these statements, general meanings were formulated. Table 96 gives some examples of sentences or phrases with their associated meaning. Associated meanings were clustered into ten themes, seven major (six or more participants) and three minor (two participants each). Table 97 gives some examples of meanings clustered into broader themes.

**Table 96**

*Significant statements and their associated meanings*

<b>Significant Statement</b>	<b>Associated Meaning</b>
I have felt the sweetness of God's presence	The Jesus Prayer brings awareness of God's presence
Often, I will say the Jesus Prayer when I'm feeling anxious, and a calm comes over me	The Jesus Prayer helps lower anxiety
but I find myself saying it randomly during the day while doing my daily routine	The Jesus Prayer helps one to pray more often
I feel an inner comfort that God is hearing me and is helping to guide me through each day.	The Jesus Prayer helps the practitioner experience God's guidance

**Table 97**

*Associated meanings clustered under broader themes*

<p><b>Awareness of God's presence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feels not alone</li> <li>Awareness of God's presence</li> <li>Feeling like one is working together with God</li> <li>Feel that God is listening</li> <li>Feel closer to God</li> <li>Better contact with God</li> </ul> <p><b>Greater calm and less anxiety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feel more calm</li> <li>Less fearful</li> <li>Less anxiety</li> <li>It slows a person down</li> <li>Greater peace</li> <li>Experience of comfort</li> <li>Comforting when angry</li> </ul>
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**In God's presence, one has a greater sense of joy in life**

Experience the love of God  
 Experience life as a gift  
 Desire to surrender to God  
 Greater sense of humility  
 Feeling of joy  
 Self-awareness  
 Feelings of gratitude

*Theme 1: Awareness of God's presence.* The recognition of being in the presence of God seemed to be a great spiritual resource for many of the participants. It was expressed in different ways including the clear understanding of being in God's presence as well as expressing this thought by the recognition that they were not alone, that they were working together with God, and that God was listening. Participant #2 who has been grieving the loss of her father speaks of "the major change of living alone" yet speaks of the calm that comes with the practice of the Jesus Prayer and how it is able to "remind me I am not alone even if the room is empty." Participant #3 speaks of the "sweetness of God's presence." Participant #8 says that the Jesus Prayer is empowering qualifying the statement by saying, "Not in the traditional thought of having power. Perhaps more of not being alone." She continues by saying, "There is an awareness of God. It almost seems like we are in sync working together." Participant #13 said he felt "an inner comfort that God is hearing me." Participant #14 describes the study as an "opportunity to learn how to increase and improve my contact with the Lord." She goes on to say that though awareness is important, one should be leery of turning feeling into a goal.

Nine participants referred to this awareness and all felt it as a positive experience. This has been recognized as an improved perception of well-being. The sense of an awareness of God is part of the study's first instrument on Spiritual Well-being.

This qualitative theme is related to the following question in the quantitative instruments: *DSES Question 1: I feel God's presence.* In this quantitative question, the mean score from Pre-treatment to Post-treatment rose from 2.7 to 3.9 or 24%. This is consistent with the data garnered from the qualitative statements.

*Theme 2: Sense of guidance.* Six participants refer to guidance as an ongoing theme with the practice of the Jesus Prayer. Participant #2 states that she is “looking for the right direction in my life.” Participant #5 has felt that God has given her specific guidance in career matters. Participant #13 feels that the practice of the Jesus Prayer helps him to feel that God is “helping to guide me through each day.” Participant #15 describes the sense of stillness and quiet that comes from the practice of the Jesus Prayer which “is when I hear God tell me what I need to do and be aware of.” The DSES instrument recognizes that a perception of guidance is part of a person’s Spiritual Well-being. Almost one third of the participants made a note of the growth of this perception through the practice of the Jesus Prayer.

This qualitative theme is related to the following question in the quantitative instruments: *DSES Question 8: I feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities.* In this quantitative question, the mean score from Pre-treatment to Post-treatment rose from 2.3 to 3.3 or 20%. This is consistent with the data garnered from the qualitative statements.

*Theme 3: In God's presence, I have a greater sense of joy in life.* Eight participants expressed a growth in perception of new awarenesses of God's love, and experiencing life in a fuller way. Participant #3 said she is "experiencing the wonder of God's love and that he wants us to experience life fully and as his gift." She also sees the necessity of humility in the process. "...it is necessary I drop all defenses and let him take over." Humility is not seen as something negative but as a way of perceiving the world through God's eyes and thus seeing beauty in places that before did not appear that way, including within oneself. Participant #9 expressed a sense of inner "peace and joy." Being more aware of God, also led to being more aware of the blessings of life. She said, "I feel more aware of God and my blessings and it gives me comfort." Participant #18 commented, "I feel safe and loved when I say it."

For many of the participants, the relationship with God nurtured through the Jesus Prayer seems to be a growing spiritual alliance similar to the therapeutic alliance between the therapist and client that grows and matures over time. In addition, the one who is using the prayer, takes the prayer (and God) with them wherever they go. The prayer, like Winnicott's Transitional Object, is the presence of God that a person can take with them in a very tangible way. It becomes a bridge between God and the one who prays. Seeing life in a more positive way is not only a sign of spiritual well-being but of mental well-being as well. Items such as feeling loved and cheerful are on the WEMBES Mental Well-being instrument. This theme shows an increase in the perception of well-being in both these areas.

This qualitative theme is most directly related to the following question in the quantitative instruments: *DSES Question 3: During worship, or at other times when*

*connecting to God, I feel joy which lifts me out of my daily concerns.* In this quantitative question, the mean score from Pre-treatment to Post-treatment rose from 2.7 to 3.9 or 24%. This is consistent with the data garnered from the qualitative statements.

It is also related, though less directly, to the following question in the quantitative instruments: *DSES Question 6: I feel deep inner peace or harmony.* In this quantitative question, the mean score from Pre-treatment to Post-treatment rose from 1.8 to 3.3 or 30%. This is consistent with the data garnered from the qualitative statements.

*Theme 4: I have a greater desire for prayer.* Eleven participants shared that they had a greater desire for prayer as well as actually put more time into praying. The encouragement of the practice of the Jesus Prayer during times of quiet contemplation or during daily activities was received in such a way that over 50% of the respondents mentioned it. Participant #1 says that he finds himself “turning to the Jesus Prayer at random points in my day.” Participant #5 practices the prayer while driving and walking and adds, “I’m looking for other touch points during the day to recite the prayer.” Participant #7 says that she has found a peace by living it daily. She finds herself “saying it randomly during the day while doing my daily routine.” Likewise, participant #9 says, “I now say the Jesus Prayer often to myself throughout the day. I have prayed while driving, waiting in a long checkout line and working.” In addition to praying more, participants seem to *want* to pray more. Participant #17 laments after getting out of the habit. “The last two weeks, I have become lax and not set aside the time like I had during class. I find myself longing for the difference I could clearly see in myself... I’m putting it back into my weekly routine this week, and my hope is I can keep it there without

interruption.” Likewise participant #18 says, “I find I don’t want to stop even though my time is up. I’m content to sit and keep saying it.”

This qualitative theme is related to the following question in the quantitative instruments: *DSES Question 7: I ask for God’s help in the midst of daily activities.* In this quantitative question, the mean score from Pre-treatment to Post-treatment rose from 3.3 to 4.3 or 20%. This is consistent with the data garnered from the qualitative statements.

*Theme 5: I am feeling better about myself and my faith.* This theme is similar to Theme 3 but is centered more on the experience of the self rather than on outside the self. It overlaps theme 3. It is also an overlapping of spiritual well-being and mental well-being but has a greater focus on spiritual well-being. Eight participants mentioned the experience of feeling cleansed, empowered, and experiencing and inner peace. This theme includes feelings of contentment. Participant #2 remarked that the prayer helped to “cleanse my mind of doubts.” Participant #7 says that the prayer “makes me more comfortable with my spirituality.” Participant #9 described her participation in the study as “a very rewarding spiritual experience.” Participant #12 said that she was able to “focus better on the Lord’s presence and be in the moment.” Participant #17 said, “The Jesus Prayer is such a blessing to me,” and that she had “more of an inner peace or contentment, different from what I’ve experienced.” Participant #19 described the importance of an open heart in the practice of the Jesus Prayer.

This qualitative theme is related to the following questions in the quantitative instruments: *DSES Question 4: I find strength in my religion or spirituality.* In this

quantitative question, the mean score from Pre-treatment to Post-treatment rose from 3.6 to 4.3 or 14%. This is consistent with the data garnered from the qualitative statements. *DSES Question 5: I find comfort in my religion or spirituality.* In this quantitative question, the mean score from Pre-treatment to Post-treatment rose from 3.6 to 4.3 or 14%. This is consistent with the data garnered from the qualitative statements.

*Theme 6: I feel less anxious and calmer.* Theme 6 is directed more in the mental well-being area yet also overlaps with the others. Twelve participants reported that the practice of the Jesus Prayer helped them to “settle down,” feel more “peace,” experience a sense of stillness, with less fear and anxiety. Participant #1 mentioned that the Jesus Prayer helped him to “settle down and prepare myself for the rest of my prayer.” Participant #4 says, “Often, I will say the Jesus Prayer when I’m feeling anxious, and a calm comes over me.” Participant #12 says that she feels “less fearful and have more periods of peacefulness.” Participant #13 says that the prayer helps him when he becomes angry. “Quite a few times when I have become upset or angry-I find comfort in saying that Jesus Prayer.” Participant #14 says, “My time of the Jesus Prayer has made me feel more relaxed and calm.” Participant #15 says she experiences times of “complete stillness.”

This qualitative theme is related to the following questions in the quantitative instruments: *WEMWBS Question 1: I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future.* In this quantitative question, the mean score from Pre-treatment to Post-treatment rose from 2.2 to 2.8 or 15%. This is consistent with the data garnered from the qualitative statements. *WEMWBS Question 3: I’ve been feeling relaxed..* In this quantitative question, the mean

score from Pre-treatment to Post-treatment rose from 1.8 to 2.8 or 25%. This is consistent with the data garnered from the qualitative statements.

*Theme 7: I have greater focus.* Seven participants referred to the benefit of being more focused with the practice of the Jesus Prayer. While the Jesus Prayer does not eliminate distractions, there seems to be a way to deal with them. Rather than fighting the distractions, which ultimately puts more energy onto the distraction itself, the method is to accept the distraction and then move on, ignoring it (Markides, ). Participant #5 says that the Jesus Prayer helps her “mind from running amok into the day’s activities.” Though still challenged by distractions, participant #9 said that she found the recommended practice of acknowledging the distraction and moving on to be a helpful method to keep her focus. Participant #12 says that she has “been able to more quickly toss off logismoi<sup>19</sup>.”

This qualitative theme is related to the following questions in the quantitative instruments: *WEMWBS Question 7: I’ve been thinking more clearly.* In this quantitative question, the mean score from Pre-treatment to Post-treatment rose from 2.5 to 3.1 or 15%. This is consistent with the data garnered from the qualitative statements.

Along with these seven major themes, three minor themes were also noted. Two participants mentioned that they had a greater focus on the person of Christ. Two other participants stated that they noticed a change in relationships with others. In particular,

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<sup>19</sup> A term used to describe distractive or tempting thoughts. See Markides (2001), Vlachos (1994), Webber (2007)

Participant #17 that she finds herself listening more and responding more thoughtfully. “When I was actively praying the Jesus Prayer, I was aware that I listened to others, more with my heart, then with my mind. I also was not ‘reactive’ to their contents.” Participant #5 found that she had a greater desire to pray for others. Finally, other participants noted the intensity of feeling that came with the prayer, a difficulty that produced positive results. “This has been intense and sometimes painful, but the direction seems to be a good one. I know I will continue practicing The Jesus Prayer even after the class ends.” Participant #12 perceived “a few more intense fearful episodes” that attributed to her more focused prayer and better ability to deal with distractions.

### **Quantitative Results in Light of Qualitative Responses**

All participants conveyed in their qualitative responses their enjoyment of the program as well as their appreciation for the benefits they received. At the same time, one participant (#4) scored lower on both the DSES and EQRI instruments and another participant (#17) scored lower on the EQRI instrument.

In the qualitative comments of Participant #4, the focus was on the peace and freedom from anxiety that she received by praying the Jesus Prayer. Participant #17 wrote in a very positive manner of her experience. It is worth quoting her comments in full:

This has been a wonderful class. Thank you so much for teaching us this beautiful, life-long prayer. I noticed when I practiced the prayer regularly 3-4 times a week, I had more of an inner peace or contentment, different from what I’ve experienced. The last two weeks, I have become lax and not set aside the time like I had during class. I find myself longing for the difference I could clearly see in myself. How I reacted to others is what I noticed most. When I was actively praying the Jesus Prayer, I was aware



that I listened to others, more with my heart, then with my mind. I also was not “reactive” to their contents. I also had a greater awareness of my daily sin. I miss what the prayer gave me, just in those few short months. How quickly it slips away, almost without one realizing it. I’m putting it back into my weekly routine this week, and my hope is I can keep it there without interruption. The Jesus Prayer is such a blessing to me.

One can see the increase in awareness from this participant. “I noticed when I practiced...” “...different from what I’ve experienced.” “...the difference I could clearly see in myself.” “How I reacted to others is what I noticed most.” “I was aware that I listened to others...” “I also had a greater awareness of my daily sin.”

This greater awareness may also be the source of the lowering of scores in the post-treatment instrument. A person may score a question high and after greater insight may lower the score. This would not necessarily reflect a reduction in well-being but in the perception of well-being. It is possible she has come to understand the importance interrelationships with a new seriousness that was reflected in the second round of questions.

While the WEMWBS instrument scored higher results in all participants, Question# 4 regarding interest in other people received four lower scores (from participants #1, #2, #7, and #13). The father of Participant #2 died during the period of the study. She references feelings of loneliness. This may explain the lowering of her scores. Yet she, as well as the others, spoke in very positive and grateful words about the benefit of the study in their own lives. Again, perhaps part of the reason for certain questions being answered lower in the post-treatment instrument was the result of a greater awareness of relational and spiritual needs. In future studies, another quantitative question could refer to what was learned in the process of the eight week practice of the

Jesus Prayer. The participant could be asked to reflect on things that have come to light regarding their relationship to God and others during the course of the study.

## **Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

### **Overview of the Study**

This study examined the relationship, if any, of the practice of the Jesus Prayer within a local parish community on perceptions of well-being. An increase in well-being for this study has been defined as a manifestation of an overall beneficial change in spirituality, mental or emotional state, and interpersonal relations. It was hypothesized that perceptions of well-being are enhanced by an integration of body, mind and soul. Since Orthodox Christian worship in general, and the Jesus Prayer in particular have as a primary purpose to heal the fracturing that can occur between body, mind and soul, it has been further hypothesized that the practice of the Jesus Prayer may contribute to that healing and thus bring about a perception of a greater sense of well-being.

In order to test this hypothesis, a mixed method study was performed over the course of 8 weeks and included nineteen individuals, male and female, who volunteered to participate in the study. The quantitative component measured perceptions of well-being using three instruments: the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES), The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), and the Quality of Interpersonal Relations Scale (EQRI).

The qualitative component gathered information by asking the open ended question, “What has been your experience in the practice of the Jesus Prayer?” following the second use of the three instruments after the 8 week practice of the Jesus Prayer. All nineteen participants responded to the question.

The investigation was guided by the following research question, “Can the average parishioner benefit from hesychastic techniques?” The findings are presented

under four subheadings: DSES Findings, WEMWBS Findings, EQRI Findings, and Qualitative Findings.

### **DSES Findings.**

Nineteen participants were tested. The mean pre-treatment score for the DSES was 42.6. The mean post-treatment score for the DSES was 56.5. Eighteen of the nineteen participants scored higher on the post-treatment instrument.

### **WEMWBS Findings.**

Nineteen participants were tested. The mean pre-treatment score for the WEMWBS was 32.6. The mean post-treatment score for the WEMWBS was 42.2. All nineteen participants scored higher on the post-treatment instrument.

### **EQRI Findings.**

Nineteen participants were tested. The mean pre-treatment score for the EQRI was 50.4. The mean post-treatment score for the EQRI was 59.5. Fourteen of the nineteen participants scored higher on the post-treatment instrument.

### **Qualitative Findings.**

All nineteen participants responded to the open-ended question, “What has been your experience in the practice of the Jesus Prayer?” Several themes were generated from the responses which confirm the quantitative findings for the DSES and WEMBMS instruments. Participants described greater perceptions for well-being, though interpersonal benefits, while apparent, were not as obvious in the qualitative study.

## Conclusions

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study based on the changes in the pre-treatment and post-treatment quantitative instruments and the open-ended qualitative question.

1. The null hypotheses, i.e., that there is no statistically significant relationship between the treatment plan (praying the Jesus Prayer and participation in the weekly class) and a change in perceived states of well-being.
2. The alternative hypotheses, i.e., that there is a statistically significant relationship between the treatment plan (praying the Jesus Prayer and participation in the weekly class) and a change in perceived states of well-being.

In order to test these hypotheses, it was necessary to measure the participants levels of well-being before the treatment (the eight week study) and to compare the results with the measure received following the treatment. It had been theorized that practicing the Jesus Prayer over an eight week period along with attending a class which described the purpose, meaning, and practice of Hesychastic prayer would increase perceptions of well-being.

Three Paired T Tests were administered to compare the pre-treatment results to the post-treatment results for the DSES, WEMWBS, and EQRI instruments. In each case there was a Confidence Interval of 95% and a .05 alpha,  $p < .05$ . The result is significant. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative. It is more likely that the scores rose from the pre-treatment to the post-treatment DSES, WEMWBS, and EQRI because of some systematic or deliberate cause rather than by chance. This is strong evidence that

the treatment (use of the Jesus Prayer and participation in the 8 week class) enhances perceptions of spiritual, mental, and interpersonal well-being.

Therefore from the analysis of the data in Chapters 4 and 5, it is concluded that

1. There is a strong and statistically significant relationship between the treatment plan (praying the Jesus Prayer and participation in the weekly class) and a change in perceived states of well-being.
2. The relationship is in a positive direction, that is, with the treatment plan, a greater perception of well-being was perceived.
3. The practice of the Jesus Prayer, an aspect of the hesychastic tradition of the Orthodox Church, would be beneficial to average parishioners. It is not simply a benefit to monastics or to those suffering from known disorders.

## **Implications**

### **Implications for Orthodox Pastors and Health Professionals**

The results of this study may be helpful to pastors and health professionals within the Orthodox Christian tradition. While there has been a tremendous amount of historical anecdotal data regarding the efficacy of hesychasm and the Jesus Prayer, little has been shown empirically. This study also shows that a local parish may find benefits in practicing the Jesus Prayer. There is evidence that positive emotional postures are created that contribute to the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. It should not be restricted to monastics alone. The manner and method of practicing the Jesus Prayer

as used in this study (with a much smaller time commitment than monastic practice) shows that perceptions of well-being can grow over a short period of time.

Many people coming for help are having trouble negotiating the challenges and hard realities daily living. It is not that unlike an infant who is moving from a purely subjective state, in which there is no discernible difference between me and not-me, to the objective reality that one's subjective experience of the world and the actual world are not the same. The infant oftentimes uses transitional objects to negotiate this move. The Jesus Prayer is one example of a transitional object that can be used by adults. It is not the same as prayer in general because of its compact nature. One can "see" the whole of it at once and therefore it is not as vague. And unlike a simple mantra, there is the person of God who is the ultimate love object of the prayer. The Jesus Prayer is something that can be "carried along" and used whenever desired.

### **Implications Beyond the Orthodox Church**

The results further suggest that the practice of the Jesus Prayer may be helpful to those outside the Orthodox Christian tradition yet who hold onto a Trinitarian belief system. A practice of stillness with the use of the Jesus Prayer may be of great importance to Christians seeking the peace and calmness that comes with a deeper relationship with their creator.

### **Implications for Object Relations Therapists**

Object relations therapists who work from a pastoral perspective can observe not only the relationship between therapist and client but also the relationship between client and the object of their client's faith. A person practicing the Jesus Prayer will experience transference toward God. The classical understanding of transference begins

with Freud who proposed that all feelings a person may have toward another derives initially from earlier relationships. It occurs within therapy when the client projects feelings of another person onto the therapist. (Seeley 2006, 34) These feelings may be early father, mother, or sibling images as well as other important figures from early in childhood. (Cooper-White 2004, 11) Because the image of another person is projected onto the therapist, the real person of the therapist may be distorted in the eyes of the client. This is also the case in a person's relationship with God. Transference may be positive or negative. A positive transference may be based on positive experiences with authorities. A negative transference may manifest itself as a distrust of the therapist from previous painful experiences. (Rizzuto 1979, 209; Grant 2001, 60) Difficulty in practicing the Jesus Prayer may also be the result of negative transference. The Jesus Prayer is more about relating to God than making a request from God. Any transference is material that can be useful to the therapist and their client.

It is love and trust which Winnicott termed the holding environment. "Being loved... means being accepted." (Winnicott 1989, 264) While the therapeutic hour serves as a holding environment for the client, the quiet time of practicing the Jesus Prayer for five minutes or fifteen minutes serves as a holding environment as well. The person praying in this manner is encouraged to let all that that person is be presented and accepted by God. This holding environment can then be extended through the use of the Jesus Prayer in the not-so-quiet times of the day. Distinguishing between the free and formal uses of the prayer (Ware, Power, 8), Kallistos Ware encourages a "free use" of the prayer to be used during daily activities. The prayer in this way can serve as a



“transitional object” which connects a person to their more “formal” and quiet periods of prayer.

### **Limitations**

There are limitations to this study. Several limitations are related to the participant sample. Though the participants are volunteers from a multi-cultural and multi-racial community, all volunteers were Caucasian. Also the majority of the participants were female (fifteen female and four male). All participants currently reside in a single metropolitan area. Perhaps a different population, a different racial and/or gender mix, or a population from a different geographical area would have yielded different results. The number of participants is itself a limitation. A study with one hundred or one thousand participants would have presented more data with perhaps a greater variety of information.

Though I, as the study leader, had not been in the city for a very long period by the time the study was completed (approximately one year), it was still long enough to develop relationships with the parishioners of the parish and with the participants. These relationships, with the accompanying transference that occurs, may have influenced the study more than another in which the participants did not know the study leader. The results of the Paired T Test show, however, that the data is good. Participants were unable to compare the first survey instrument answers with the second, and, with eight weeks between the surveys, it is unlikely that nearly all participants were able to respond in a similar way because of bias rather than experience.

Lastly, a very real limitation is the time period in which the study took place. When reading the discussions of the Jesus Prayer by the spiritual athletes of the Church,

they all look at the practice of hesychasm and the Jesus Prayer as a life-long endeavor, not an eight-week study. Results are usually the product of years of practice, not of weeks. In my own thoughts before the study, I was concerned that there may be no positive movement in the perceptions of well-being. This was not due to the lack of potency found in the “Jesus Prayer” but due to the short period of time under study. Yet perhaps this limitation is also a manifestation of its validation. Even with a relatively short durational practice of the Jesus Prayer, benefits were experienced.

### **Recommendations**

For future studies, I would recommend that the limitations mentioned above be addressed. The study could be researched with a more diverse population. As participants were members of a local Orthodox Church who may practice fasting and prayer outside of the study, it may be helpful for more assessment of such phenomena such as faith, fasting, and prayer, through both qualitative and quantitative means to see if and how such practices may or may not influence a person’s change in perceptions of well-being. This might lead to a more focused treatment process in which other factors are added to enhance and strengthen the desired outcome.

A further qualitative question could also be asked in future studies that helps to understand if a lowering of scores is occurring because there has been some reduction in well-being or if it was because the participant gained a greater awareness of themselves and the truth of their relationships, and thus scored themselves in a stricter manner on the post-treatment instrument. A great part of the Jesus Prayer is meant to give the practitioner a greater awareness of God’s presence in our lives as well as our participation

in our distance from God and others. This could be reflected in the qualitative portion of the study.

### **Final Thoughts**

When a person enters into the body of an Orthodox Church, one of the architectural structures that is immediately apparent is the wall of icons (iconostasis) in front of the Altar. A wide door in the center is known as the Holy Doors and is closed by a double gate. To the left of the Holy Doors is an icon of the Mother of God holding the infant Jesus, and, to the right, an Icon of Christ glorified. To some, these icons may be described as an icon of Mary and another of Jesus. But the meaning is actually different. The icon on the left represents the first coming of Christ. The other on the right represents the second coming of Christ. The Holy Doors in the middle, the place where we find ourselves, represent the present time, between the two comings of Christ. (Hopko 1997b, 12)

Our life is in the in-between time, the liminal time between those two comings. The liminal time is important because it is the only real time. We do not live in the past, and the future has not yet arrived. The Jesus Prayer helps to claim this liminal time as a reality. While one who practices the prayer is not forgetful of past events nor of future hopes, that person comes to recognize that life occurs in the present. Jesus is met in the present. Relations are experienced in the present. The present is the only time we have. With each breath, with each movement of the hand on the prayer rope, with each mention of the Lord's name, the one praying is also the one present.

Winnicott has also claimed this reality calling it transitional, yet an important link between subjectivity and reality. This transitional space, so important for developing

children, continues into adulthood and is characterized most clearly through relationship and intersubjectivity. The Jesus Prayer can help practitioners understand the relational reality and interconnectedness between them and God as well as between them and others. “In the beginning is the relation.” (Buber 1970, 69)

To conclude, this study has shown that there is a strong positive relationship between the practice of the Jesus Prayer and positive growth in perceptions of well-being. The number of participants in the study (19) though small has been large enough to show statistically significant trends. Ultimately, the conclusions were formed through the use and results of the three quantitative surveys (DSES, WEMWBS, and EQRI), confirmed by the T-tests, and qualitatively affirmed through the open ended question asked following the final taking of the survey instruments. With the positive results thus received, in addition to the further studies recommended above, it is important that more attention be given to the approaches to healing seen in the Eastern Christian church. Those within and without the Orthodox Church would benefit from learning and practicing these ancient methods. The study also draws attention to the relationship between spiritual, emotional/mental, and physical health. Quite often they are interrelated. Gregory Bateson (1956) and his work with schizophrenic patients helped the family system model develop its theories of homeostasis and the identified patient (IP). “When a single IP is identified, you need to listen for and explore problems other family members may have.” (Patterson et al. 1998, 43) Jesus, it seems, understood the interrelatedness of spiritual, emotional/mental, and physical health. “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.” (Lk 17:19)

The Church has always seen prayer as a source of healing. And it views theosis, the process of becoming more Godlike, as also the process of becoming who one actually is – not only more human, but more of one particular human. In coming closer to God we come closer to ourselves. Winnicott describes the baby and his mother in a way reminiscent of Hesychastic prayer. “In individual emotional development the precursor of the mirror is the mother's face...What does the baby see when he or she looks at the mother's face? I am suggesting that, ordinarily, what the baby sees is himself or herself.” (Winnicott 1967, 144-145) Practice of the Jesus Prayer is looking up into the Creator’s face. St. Isaac the Syrian says, likewise, “Let this our state become a mirror where we may see in ourselves that likeness and true image which naturally belong to the Divine Essence.” (Isaac the Syrian 1985, 312)

Though the Hesychastic language of Isaac the Syrian and the Object Relations language of Donald Winnicott can seem quite distant from each other, perhaps the ancient and modern healing arts are more similar than may at first appear. And perhaps they can inform each other for the well-being of the people we serve.

## **Appendix 1. Informed consent**

### **Emory University's Candler School of Theology**

#### **Consent to be a Research Subject**

**Title:** Hesychasm in the local church

**Principal Investigator:** Fr. Alexis M. Kouri

**Funding Source(s):** Self Funded

#### **Introduction**

You are being asked to be in a research study. This form is designed to tell you everything you need to think about before you decide to consent (agree) to be in the study or not to be in the study. It is entirely your choice. If you decide to take part, you can change your mind later on and withdraw from the research study. The decision to join or not join the research study will not cause you to lose any benefits in your affiliation to St. [REDACTED]<sup>20</sup> Orthodox Church. You were chosen to participate in this study because of your interest in the Jesus Prayer. There will be approximately 10 to 20 people in the study. It will last around 9 weeks.

#### **Purpose**

The scientific purpose of this study is to look at the possible benefits of hesychastic prayer in general and the Jesus Prayer in particular within the local parish. While the benefits have been described traditionally within monastic communities and anecdotally

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<sup>20</sup> The parish name has been hidden to provide anonymity

outside monastic communities, this study will measure and document each participants change in perceived level of well-being.

### **Procedures**

At the beginning of the study, participants will be asked to respond to a fifty question survey which will measure the perception of spiritual, mental, and interpersonal well-being. Participants will then practice the Jesus Prayer for five to fifteen minutes a day at least four times a week for a period of eight weeks. The survey will then be administered again to measure possible changes in well-being perception.

### **Risks and Discomforts**

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study.

### **Benefits**

By participating in this study you will learn a practice of Hesychasm known as the Jesus Prayer that may be of benefit to you in your spiritual, mental, and interpersonal life. This study may also be a contributing factor in a reemphasis of a spirituality based on experience in our congregations and in the lives of our parishioners. In addition, this study may also serve as bridge between western Christians and eastern Christians in their search for authentic spiritual practices and theology.

### **Compensation**

You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

### **Confidentiality**

Certain offices and people other than the researchers may look at your study records. Government agencies, Emory employees overseeing proper study conduct may look at your study records. These offices include the Emory Institutional Review Board, and the

Emory Office of Research Compliance. Emory will keep any research records we produce private to the extent we are required to do so by law.

A study number rather than your name will be used on study records wherever possible. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results.

Study records can be opened by court order or produced in response to a subpoena or a request for production of documents unless a Certificate of Confidentiality is in place for this study.

### **Costs**

There are no anticipated costs to you from being in this study.

### **Withdrawal from the Study**

You have the right to leave a study at any time without penalty. This decision will not affect in any way your current or future relationship to St. [REDACTED]<sup>21</sup> Orthodox Church, its pastor, Fr. [REDACTED]<sup>22</sup>, or any other benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

The investigator, Fr. Alexis Kouri, has the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if:

- He believes it is in your best interest;
- You were to object to any future changes that may be made in the study plan;
- or for any other reason.

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<sup>21</sup> The parish name has been hidden to provide anonymity

<sup>22</sup> The pastor's name has been hidden to provide anonymity



**Questions**

Contact Fr. Alexis Kouri at 502-794-0810 or [fatheralexis@gmail.com](mailto:fatheralexis@gmail.com).

- if you have any questions about this study or your part in it,
- if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the Emory Institutional Review Board at 404-712-0720 or 877-503-9797 or [irb@emory.edu](mailto:irb@emory.edu).

**Consent**

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep. Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and get answers that make sense to you.

Nothing in this form can make you give up any legal rights. By signing this form you will not give up any legal rights. You are free to take home an unsigned copy of this form and talk it over with family or friends.

Please sign below if you agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date and Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Conducting Informed  
Consent Discussion

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date and Time

## **Appendix 2. Pre-treatment questionnaires/instruments**

### **Hesychasm in the local church**

Is the practice of the Jesus Prayer beneficial to an individual's sense of well-being in the contemporary Christian parish?

At the beginning of the study, participants will be asked to respond to a fifty question survey which will measure the perception of spiritual, mental, and interpersonal well-being. Participants will then practice the Jesus Prayer for five to fifteen minutes a day at least four times a week for a period of eight weeks. The survey will then be administered again to measure possible changes in well-being perception.

What follows is the first survey.

Do not write your name on the survey.

Answer each question by circling the appropriate number.

Please return the completed survey to Fr. Alexis next week.

***You may experience the following in your daily life. If so, how often?***

Never or almost never	Once in a while	Some days	Most days	Every day	Many times a day
0	1	2	3	4	5

1. I feel God's presence.	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. I experience a connection to all of life.	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. During worship, or at other times when connecting with God, I feel joy which lifts me out of my daily concerns.	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. I find strength in my religion or spirituality.	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. I find comfort in my religion or spirituality.	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel deep inner peace or harmony.	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. I ask for God's help in the midst of daily activities.	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities.	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel God's love for me, directly.	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel God's love for me, through others.	0	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel thankful for my blessings.	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. I feel a selfless caring for others.	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.	0	1	2	3	4	5

*The following 2 items are scored differently.*

Not at all close	Somewhat close	Very close	Every day
0	1	2	3

15. I desire to be closer to God or in union with Him.	0	1	2	3
16. In general, how close do you feel to God?	0	1	2	3

**Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please indicate the number that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.**

	None of the time <b>0</b>	Rarely <b>1</b>	Some of the time <b>2</b>	Often <b>3</b>	All the time <b>4</b>
1.					
	I've been feeling optimistic about the future.				
2.					
	I've been feeling useful.				
3.					
	I've been feeling relaxed.				
4.					
	I've been feeling interested in other people.				
5.					
	I've had energy to spare.				
6.					
	I've been dealing with problems well.				
7.					
	I've been thinking clearly.				
8.					
	I've been feeling good about myself.				
9.					
	I've been feeling close to other people.				
10.					
	I've been feeling confident.				
11.					
	I've been able to make up my own mind about things.				
12.					
	I've been feeling loved.				
13.					
	I've been interested in new things.				
14.					
	I've been feeling cheerful.				

**MY INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS**

**Please indicate the quality of each relationship you currently have with the people around you.**

Not at all	A little	Moderately	Much	Extremely
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

1. At this time my relationship with my family. . .

*(If you currently do not have relations with your family, go to question 2)*

Is harmonious	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is rewarding	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is adequate	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Inspires trust	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

2. At this time my relationship spouse (or romantic partner). . .

*(If you currently do not have a romantic relationship, go to question 3)*

Is harmonious	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is rewarding	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is adequate	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Inspires trust	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

3. At this time my relationship(s) with my friend(s). . .

*(If you currently do not have relations with your friend (s), go to question 4)*

Are harmonious	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Are rewarding	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Are adequate	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Inspire(s) trust	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

4. At this time my relationship with my fellow parishioners. . .

*(If you currently do not have relationships with other parishioners, proceed to question 5)*

Is harmonious	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is rewarding	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is adequate	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Inspires trust	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

5. At this time my relationships with people in general. . .

Are harmonious	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Are rewarding	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Are adequate	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Inspire trust	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

### **Appendix 3. Post-treatment questionnaires/instruments**

#### **Hesychasm in the local church**

Is the practice of the Jesus Prayer beneficial to an individual's sense of well-being in the contemporary Christian parish?

At the beginning of the study, participants were asked to respond to a fifty question survey which will measure the perception of spiritual, mental, and interpersonal well-being. Participants will then practice the Jesus Prayer for five to fifteen minutes a day at least four times a week for a period of eight weeks.

What follows is the second survey.

Do not write your name on the survey.

Answer each question by circling the appropriate number.

Also answer the follow up question at the end.

When finished, write your name on a separate paper and attach it to this survey by paperclip or staple.

Please return the completed survey to Fr. Alexis.

***You may experience the following in your daily life. If so, how often?***

Never or almost never	Once in a while	Some days	Most days	Every day	Many times a day
0	1	2	3	4	5

1. I feel God's presence.	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. I experience a connection to all of life.	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. During worship, or at other times when connecting with God, I feel joy which lifts me out of my daily concerns.	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. I find strength in my religion or spirituality.	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. I find comfort in my religion or spirituality.	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel deep inner peace or harmony.	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. I ask for God's help in the midst of daily activities.	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities.	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel God's love for me, directly.	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel God's love for me, through others.	0	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel thankful for my blessings.	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. I feel a selfless caring for others.	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.	0	1	2	3	4	5

*The following 2 items are scored differently.*

Not at all close	Somewhat close	Very close	Every day
0	1	2	3

15. I desire to be closer to God or in union with Him.	0	1	2	3
16. In general, how close do you feel to God?	0	1	2	3

**Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please indicate the number that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.**

	None of the time <b>0</b>	Rarely <b>1</b>	Some of the time <b>2</b>	Often <b>3</b>	All the time <b>4</b>
1.					
	I've been feeling optimistic about the future.				
2.					
	I've been feeling useful.				
3.					
	I've been feeling relaxed.				
4.					
	I've been feeling interested in other people.				
5.					
	I've had energy to spare.				
6.					
	I've been dealing with problems well.				
7.					
	I've been thinking clearly.				
8.					
	I've been feeling good about myself.				
9.					
	I've been feeling close to other people.				
10.					
	I've been feeling confident.				
11.					
	I've been able to make up my own mind about things.				
12.					
	I've been feeling loved.				
13.					
	I've been interested in new things.				
14.					
	I've been feeling cheerful.				



**MY INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS**

**Please indicate the quality of each relationship you currently have with the people around you.**

Not at all	A little	Moderately	Much	Extremely
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

1. At this time my relationship with my family. . .

*(If you currently do not have relations with your family, go to question 2)*

Is harmonious	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is rewarding	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is adequate	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Inspires trust	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

2. At this time my relationship spouse (or romantic partner). . .

*(If you currently do not have a romantic relationship, go to question 3)*

Is harmonious	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is rewarding	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is adequate	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Inspires trust	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

3. At this time my relationship(s) with my friend(s). . .

*(If you currently do not have relations with your friend (s), go to question 4)*

Are harmonious	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Are rewarding	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Are adequate	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Inspire(s) trust	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

4. At this time my relationship with my fellow parishioners. . .

*(If you currently do not have relationships with other parishioners, proceed to question 5)*

Is harmonious	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is rewarding	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Is adequate	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Inspires trust	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

5. At this time my relationships with people in general. . .

Are harmonious	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Are rewarding	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Are adequate	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Inspire trust	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

Have there been any significant life changes (such as loss of job, move, death of family member, etc.) between today and when you first filled out the questionnaire at the beginning of the Jesus Prayer class?

No

Yes

If yes, please explain:

What has been your experience in the practice of the Jesus Prayer? You may answer as fully as you want. Please feel free to use the back of this page.

When finished, write your name on a separate paper and attach it to this survey by paperclip or staple. Then return it to Father Alexis.

## **Appendix 4: The weekly Presentation of the Practice of the Jesus Prayer**

### **Class 1: Introduction**

Introduction includes description of study and distribution of materials.

### **Class 2: Scriptural Basis of the Jesus Prayer**

#### **On praying without ceasing**

The early Christians lived in communities of prayer. Much of their prayer life continued through forms of prayer that had been practiced by religious Jews for centuries. The prayers of Christ throughout the New Testament are seamlessly connected to the Old Testament, the Psalms being used most of all. Prayer was an act of devotion as well as being consciously present in the presence of God. But it was more than a reaching out to God, it was also experienced as God's protection of those who prayed. The Apostle Paul thus encourages his readers to pray continuously: "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer." (Rom 12:12) Prayer was integral in being watchful: "Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints." (Eph 6:18) "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving." (Col 6:18) In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he appeals to his listeners to pray without ceasing. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thes 5:16-18) These scriptural passages encourage the continuous nature of prayer to which the early adherents of the Jesus Prayer held.

### **On name of Jesus**

The name of Jesus is central to the Jesus Prayer. In the Old Testament there is a connection between a person's soul and that person's name. If a person's name is known, one can gain insight into that person's nature, personality and character. It can make a person more vulnerable. This is why the messenger who wrestles with Jacob (Gn 32:29) refuses to give his name and why the angel said to Manoah, "Why do you ask my name? It is too wonderful." (Jgs 13:18) When a name is changed, it indicates a change in one's life. Abram became Abraham. (Gn 17:5) Jacob becomes Israel. (Gn 32:28) Saul becomes Paul. (Acts 13:9) In the Jewish tradition, to use a name in an oath is a way to make that person present. "...the heritage consisting in the name is not an empty appellation, a sound, but the substance of a soul." (Pederson 1964, 254) "The name immediately calls forth the soul it designates; therefore there is such a deep significance in the very mention of a name." (Pederson 1964, 256) Therefore the use of the name Jesus is central to the Jesus Prayer. Again the Apostle Paul writes, "Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth." (Phil 2:9-10) Demons are cast out in the name of Jesus. "The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!'" (Lk 10:17) Prayers are answered in Jesus name. "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it." (Jn 14:13-14) People are healed by the name. "Peter said, 'I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.'" (Acts 3:6) Therefore for the Jesus Prayer, the name of Jesus, uttered with faith, is in itself powerful.

### **On the word mercy**

The scriptural word for mercy, *eleison*, is quite common in the New Testament, particularly in the Gospels. It is related to Olive Oil (*elaion*) a substance used in ancient times for healing. (cf. Lk 10:25-37) Thus the word for mercy means more than to have pity or to refrain from punishing. It has the connotation of pouring forth God's healing grace. This is the sense of the following Gospel passages:

Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." (Mt 15:22)

When they came to the crowd, a man came to him, knelt before him, and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water. (Mt 17:14-15)

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mk 10:46-48)

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" (Lk 17:11-12)

But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' (Lk 18:13)

Within these passages, one can see the scriptural root of the Jesus Prayer as well as get a sense of its meaning. The sinner is not simply one who breaks commandments, but more accurately, one who is broken and in need of healing. Praying the Jesus Prayer helps the one praying to recognize not only the presence of God but the understanding of God as healing and grace-filled presence.

### **Faith and Love**

The Jesus prayer is not a mantra. (Matthews-Greene, 124; Sophrony, 119) The goal of Zen meditation is to achieve a state of void so that enlightenment may eventually occur. Similarly the Jesus Prayer is also aiming at a kind of apophatic prayer, that is, prayer without image and thought. However, the aim of the Jesus Prayer is not simply the laying aside of all thoughts, but an encounter with Someone. The Jesus Prayer is focused on the person of Jesus Christ. (Sophrony 1997, 114) This can easily be seen in the following dialogue between a pilgrim and Elder Paisios on Mount Athos.

One afternoon, I had the opportunity to speak in private with a venerable monk in the library of the monastery's guesthouse. At one point, I told him, "Elder [Paisios], I'd like you to teach me to pray." With a surprised look in his eyes, he repeated my words, "You want me to teach you to pray?"

"Yes, Elder, what should I do in order to pray? What do I have to say? How should I sit?" Being influenced by Hinduism, I imagined that there must be a special method or technique, just as there was for the meditation I practiced. He understood how little I knew, but he didn't show it. "It is really quite simple, and you must approach prayer with simplicity. Just sit calmly in some corner and speak to Christ as though He were in front of you and listening to you. And He is in front of you and listening to you. Just speak to Him as you would one of your friends. (Farasiotis 2008, 63)

The heart must also be in a condition of repentance in order that the focus remains on Christ. The end is Christ, not the self. (Brianchaninov, Art, 265) Yet the self is uplifted in the process. Without an attitude of repentance, prayer itself may be an exercise in narcissism. "Instead of transcending your egotism, you reinforce it. That is one of the possible traps of spiritual practice, that instead of attaining deep metanoia and repentance, it can stimulate the ego." (Markides 2007)

In the same way, the Jesus Prayer is not about relief from anxiety and fear. Yet the practice may bring about both. The prayer exists within the context of a relationship, and outside of that context it loses its proper meaning.

Though there are mechanical techniques and formulations that are stressed by some, these techniques are seen as non-essential by most practitioners. (Ware 1987; Sophrony 1999, 113)

The various methods described by the Fathers (sitting down, making prostrations, and the other techniques used when performing this prayer) are not suitable for everyone: indeed without a personal director they are actually dangerous. It is better not to try them. There is just one method which is obligatory for all: to stand with the attention in the heart. All other things are beside the point, and do not lead to the crux of the matter. (Theophan the Recluse 1966, 98)

While a particular technique is not essential, an attitude of faith and love (or at least the desire for these virtues) certainly is essential.

Do not forget that you must not limit yourself to a mechanical repetition of the words of the Jesus Prayer. This will lead to nothing except a habit of repeating the prayer automatically with the tongue, without even thinking about it. There is of course nothing wrong in this, but it constitutes only the extreme outer limit of the work. The essential thing is to stand consciously in the presence of the Lord, with fear, faith and love. (Theophan, 1966, 99-100)

Faith is an important dimension of the practice of the Jesus Prayer. In order to pray the prayer, there is a presupposition that the one praying believes the words that are being said, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Perhaps the faith in many of us is very uncertain and faltering; perhaps it coexists with doubt; perhaps we often find ourselves compelled to cry out in company with the father of the lunatic child, 'Lord, I believe: help my unbelief' (Mk 9:24). But at least there should be some desire to believe; at least there should be, amidst all the uncertainty, a spark of love for the Jesus whom as yet we know so imperfectly. (Ware 1987, 14)

As St. Theophan reminds us, in addition to a disposition of faith, there must also be an attitude of love and therefore a sense of community is very important. The person praying does not say the prayer as a separate individual, cut off from the world but as a member of the Church community. Many of the hesychastic writers took it for granted that those here were praying the Jesus Prayer were active in their participation of the sacramental mysteries of the Church. It was not seen as a personal replacement for a life in the Church but a reinforcement of that life (Ware 1987, 14) The Prayer itself, which ends with the phrase, “have mercy on me” is also communal. Elder Porphyrios advises not to change the words to “have mercy on us” or “have mercy on them.” For Porphyrios, the word “me” implies “all” especially in prayer. To change the word me to a plural would ultimately mean that “I” am alone which is never the case.

Pray for others more than for yourself. Say, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," and you will always have others in mind. We are all children of the same Father; we are all one. And so, when we pray for others, we say "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," and not, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on them." In this way, we make them one with ourselves. (Porphyrios 2005, 132)

### **Time of prayer**

The Jesus Prayer is flexible in terms of when and where it can be practiced. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware distinguishes between a “free” and “formal” recitation. (Ware, Power, 8) The free manner is an application of the Prayer during a person’s daily activities. It can be said while taking a walk, driving the car, riding a bike, or waiting in line, “in the scattered moments which otherwise would be spiritually wasted.” It can also be used during a difficult, painful, or fearful time such as before an interview, while the plane is taxiing down the runway preparing to depart, or during some temptation.



The formal application of the Prayer follows the injunction by Jesus to “go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Mt 6.6) In this case, the one praying is usually sitting in a comfortable position. One should avoid a too rigid and uncomfortable position as well as a too comfortable position which may encourage sleep. (Chumley and McGuckin 2011, 95) The room is preferably quiet without bright lights. Candles may be lit in front of icons. A prayer rope may be used as an aid to concentration and the establishment of a rhythm. (Mathewes-Green 2009, 62) Prostrations may be used. (Theophan the Recluse 1966, 98) The prayer usually falls in a rhythm with one’s breathing. One should not adjust the breathing to the prayer. (Brianchaninov 1966, Art, 197) Unlike the Pilgrim in *The Way of the Pilgrim*, an extreme quantity of recitations is not necessary. St. Theophan advises,

Do not trouble about the number of times you say the Prayer. Let this be your sole concern, that it should spring up in your heart with quickening power like a fountain of living water. Expel entirely from your mind all thoughts of quantity. (Ware 1987, 5)

And again he writes,

As to the number of times you should repeat this prayer and on what occasions, you should decide this yourself, or ask the advice of your spiritual father. Only do not undertake too much at first, but increase the number of repetitions gradually, as your enjoyment of this prayer grows. If the desire comes to double the set number, do not deny yourself, but take it not as a set rule, but only for this occasion. And whatever the number of repetitions your heart demands, do not refuse it. (Theophan, 1987, 216)

### **5 Minutes of the Jesus Prayer.**

Sitting down, I remind everyone to be conscious of the present surroundings, where they are, who they are with, and what they hear. Then I ask them to be conscious of their breathing, and then of God’s presence in our midst. I then begin by saying the

Jesus prayer slowly, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” After this is said three times, we all say the prayer quietly for five minutes. To close, I say the Jesus aloud three more times.

### Class 3: Silence

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.' (Lk 10:38-42)

In this story Jesus chooses to chastise Martha, who it could be argued, was being the responsible sister. With a guest in the home, she was preparing a meal. Mary meanwhile simply stayed with their guest. Jesus said that Martha's work was a case of distraction and that Mary's sitting in silence in the presence of Jesus was the "better part." Martha is concerned with the things that ought to be done while Mary is concerned with being present. This can be a similar experience for many people, especially those who are involved in Christian ministry. There are many things we *do* for Christ, yet oftentimes we forget that Christ is with us. Mary understood that Jesus was there with her at that moment, and she did not want to miss the opportunity. The Jesus Prayer is likewise an opportunity for sitting quietly with Jesus.

In the world at large, there is a silence which is simply the lack of all noise. This is a negative silence, a silence waiting to be filled. However, in the spiritual life we discover another, much more valuable sort of silence, and that is the silence which is the voice of God. The two sorts of silence sound similar, but they are not the same. The silence sought by the hesychasts is the voice of God. Within this silence we are bathed in the goodness and love of God. Silence is the language of God. Everything else is a mistranslation. (Webber 2007, 55-56)

More than anything else one should adorn oneself with silence; for St. Ambrose of Milan says: I have seen many being saved by silence, but not one by talkativeness... From solitude and silence are born tender contrition, and meekness; the activity of this latter in the human heart may

be compared to that quiet water of Siloe, which flows without noise or sound, as the Prophet Isaiah speaks of it: 'the waters of Siloe that go softly' (Is. 8:6). (Seraphim of Sarov 1996, 54-55)

Our world is so filled with noise that it is very difficult to find silence. In addition to the lack of exterior silence (traffic, loud music, radio, television, background music so we don't feel alone), there is also a lack of interior silence. Abba Poimen said, "A man may seem to be silent, but if his heart is condemning others, he is babbling ceaselessly." (Ward 1984, 193) John the solitary shows illustrates levels of silence.

For God is silence, and in silence is he sung by means of that psalmody which is worthy of Him. I am not speaking of the silence of the tongue, for if someone merely keeps his tongue silent, without knowing how to sing in mind and spirit, then he is simply unoccupied and becomes filled with evil thoughts: ... There is a silence of the tongue, there is a silence of the whole body, there is a silence of the soul, there is the silence of the mind, and there is the silence of the spirit. (John the Solitary 1987, 98)

Fr. Lazarus of St. Anthony's Monastery in the desert at the foot of Mount Sinai explains this further.

First of all, there are kinds of silence. There is silence and there is silence. Silence can mean not speaking; you are going to stay in a place that is quiet, This is helpful. It's nice to go into a nice forest or a nice garden where you are away from the traffic and from talking with people, where you are away from the demands of the modern world. But this is an exterior silence - which helps you breathe slowly, to enjoy the aesthetic pleasure, the beauty of the creation - but it is transient; it will not last. There is another type of silence which is an interior silence. Now this is much harder to find, but it is long-lasting. For example, memories. Here we are living in the desert; here I am living up there in the mountain. For long periods of time - two weeks, three weeks, one month - I don't see any people. I'm not committing sins of daily action. I'm just sitting quietly and working and praying and being alone. What about my mind? My mind can range anywhere. If I don't have interior silence, I can be as busy in mind as if I were in New York. (Chumley and McGuckin 2011, 34-35)

The Jesus Prayer begins with exterior silence with the hope of moving towards interior silence. When a person is not used to silence, it can feel uncomfortable, awkward and strange. But that is because the art of listening and being present in the silence has been lost. One awakes with the alarm clock, turns on the radio, takes a quick shower, checks the email, grabs something to eat, and heads out the door with rarely any silence. From conversations with people, I have seen that it is quite seldom that a person wakes up and quietly thanks God for the new day, taking a few moments of silence to be gathered and whole before beginning the day's tasks. The Jesus Prayer is a way to help our soul be gathered before the day begins.

#### **5 Minutes of the Jesus Prayer.**

Sitting down, I remind everyone to be conscious of the present surroundings, where they are, who they are with, and what they hear. Then I ask them to be conscious of their breathing, and then of God's presence in our midst. I then begin by saying the Jesus prayer slowly, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." After this is said three times, we all say the prayer quietly for five minutes. To close, I say the Jesus aloud three more times.

#### **Class 4: Distractions**

One cannot speak about prayer without looking at the distractions to prayer. Some may not pray at all because they are bothered by distractions and believe that their prayer is therefore meaningless. St. Isaac the Syrian warns us about this “all or nothing approach” to prayer.

If you insist on not praying until you are freed from distractions, you will never pray; for distracting thoughts decline and disappear when we persist in prayer itself. He who seeks perfection before action and labor will achieve nothing.” (Matthew the Poor 2003, p 194)

While we can never be totally freed from distractions, there are things that can be done to minimize them.

#### **Outside of Prayer**

Many of the distractions that occur during prayer are the results of activities and ways of thinking that occur outside of prayer. Therefore the spiritual masters of prayer continually warn their listeners to prepare their hearts for prayer outside of the time of prayer. We may divide the two main sources of distraction that occur outside of prayer as sensual distractions and spiritual distractions.

#### ***Sensual Distractions***

Sensual distractions are those attached to the senses, especially to hearing and seeing. Our consumerist culture focusses particularly on these two senses in order to make the greatest impact in advertising and therefore profits. This culture, combined with technological advances, has made the distractions to the senses nearly ever present. With the internet and smartphones, children and adults have to be more watchful than ever in order avoid high doses of sensual distractions. Though these distractions change

form in different generations, they seem to always be present. St. Theophan wrote of them long before the digital age.

You are subject to wandering thoughts because you listen to idle talk, and memories often remain with you. Out of these memories the enemy weaves a web in front of your mind's eye in order to enmesh it. When this happens, you should descend into your heart, turning your eyes away from the illusory images presented by the enemy, and call to the Lord. (Theophan the Recluse 1996, 265)

Therefore it is important to minimize unnecessary images and conversations. The gossip we engage in outside of prayer affects our time in prayer. The images and sounds that we allow into our imaginations, especially from television, movies, and the internet, are with us long after the entertainment has stopped. A person who wants to grow in prayer needs to be more selective in what is allowed into the heart through the senses.

Another sensual distraction can be one's attachment to material things. Desire for things of the world enter the heart and can be an obstacle to prayer. As Jesus said,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Mt 6:19-21)

St. John of Kronstadt writes that earthly desires keep our hearts from the true desire and thus obstruct our prayer.

Through our attachment to perishable things, by thoughts and cares about them, we lose sight of objects of the greatest importance, of the objects really natural to our souls, constituting their true and eternal element; we hew out for ourselves "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," and forsake "the Fountain of living waters"; we do not turn spiritual, holy, heavenly and life-giving thoughts into our life, into our blood, but continue to live by worldly, earthly, passionate thoughts and aspirations, which only oppress, torment, and slay us. (John of Kronstadt 1897, 389)

St. Nilus, one of the early desert fathers also reminds us that desire of earthly

possessions goes hand in hand with distraction to prayer. “Go, sell all that belongs to you and give it to the poor and taking up the cross, deny yourself; in this way you will be able to pray without distraction.” (Ward 1984, 153)

It is impossible to avoid everything that leads to sensuous distractions. Even monastics who have “left the world” still struggle in this area. For those who desire to pray and especially practice the Jesus Prayer, it is important to have a conscious and intentional attitude toward minimizing the sources of these distractions.

### *Spiritual Distractions*

In addition to sensual distractions, there are also spiritual distractions. These come from our beliefs and attitudes towards ourselves and others. The early Christian teachers of prayer often speak of the lack of forgiveness as an obstacle to prayer. “There is no prayer so quickly heard as the prayer whereby a man asks to be reconciled with those who are wroth with him. For when he charges himself with the offence, this prayer is immediately answered.” (St. Isaac, Homilies, 124) St. John Climacus echoes this statement in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, on the Chapter (Step 9) entitled Remembrance of Wrongs:

Remembrance of wrongs comes as the final point of anger. It is a keeper of sins. It hates a just way of life. It is the ruin of virtues, the poison of the soul, a worm in the mind. It is the shame of prayer, a cutting off of supplication, a turning away from love, a nail piercing the soul. It is a pleasureless feeling cherished in the sweetness of bitterness. It is a never-ending sin, an unsleeping wrong, rancor by the hour. (Climacus 1982, 152)

Instead of remembering wrongs, an active love for neighbor expressed through acts of compassion is a great support for prayer. The story of Abba Lucius who prays while sleeping (see above, section on *Theosis and Healing*) shows how prayer is directly



connected to caring for those in need. And in *The Philokalia*, from the writings of Patriarch Callistus we read:

If you wish to learn how to pray, keep your gaze fixed on the end of attention or of prayer. This end is adoration, contrition of the heart, love of neighbor. It is self-evident that lustful thoughts, whisperings of slander, hatred of one's neighbor and similar things are opposed to it. All this is incompatible with the work of prayer. (Callistus 1992, 273)

Likewise feelings of superiority or its opposite, hopelessness, disturb one's prayer. While trusting in our own strength and will-power separates us from God (Gn 3:5), we also see that an attitude of despair, or what Vlachos calls "harmful contrition," is likewise an obstacle. (Vlachos 1994, 179) In these cases the one praying has the focus on self rather than on God. Commenting on the Psalm 51:17, *a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise*, St. Mark the Ascetic writes, "There is a breaking of the heart which is gentle and makes it deeply penitent, and there is a breaking which is violent and harmful, shattering it completely." (Mark the Ascetic 1979, 111) In much the same manner, we see again in *The Philokalia* St. Simeon the New Theologian warning against an excessive sorrow.

Long and excessive sorrowing of the heart for anything sensory darkens and disturbs the mind. It banishes pure prayer and tenderness from the soul and brings a painful pining of the heart. This leads to measureless hardness and insensibility; and thereby the demons usually bring despair upon those who have undertaken to lead a spiritual life. (Simeon the New Theologian 1992, 106)

Spiritual distractions may also occur because of a neglect of worship. (Matthews-Greene 2009, 49) Worship helps to prepare the heart to be ready for the presence of God. As Fr. George Florovsky writes, worship is proper orientation of a person to God.

Worship is the norm of Christian existence. It should be the constant disposition or attitude of the Christian man. Indeed, to worship God means

precisely to be aware of His presence, to dwell constantly in this presence. It is through worship that the 'new man' is being formed in the believer, and the baptismal grace of adoption is actualized. The Christian man must be always in the state of worship, whether it is expressed in words or not. In its essence worship is the orientation of man towards God. (Florovsky 1990, 31)

Distractions in prayer, whether sensual or spiritual, are planted within a person outside of the times of prayer. Attachment to worldly things, injury to the senses through harmful images, neglect of compassion, remembrance of wrongs, and a disregard for worship all make prayer more difficult. In seeking to remove distractions during prayer, it is important to attend to the way of life and thinking outside of prayer.

### **Moments just before prayer**

Another help in avoiding distractions is to prepare oneself for prayer in the moments before prayer. St. Theophan instructs his readers,

Do not stand at prayer immediately after household chores, conversations, or errands; instead, make some preparation for it, trying to collect your thoughts ahead of time and direct them toward standing worthily before God. (St. Theophan the Recluse 2003, 197)

When a person pauses for a moment before prayer begins, he or she is able to reflect on the wonder of what is about to be done and with whom the time will be spent. Before beginning, it is helpful to be conscious of one's breathing, and, if possible, one's heartbeat. There are some who suggest various techniques in order to control the breathing, but most teachers would say that this can be dangerous without an experienced spiritual director. (Ware 1987, 3; Matthews-Greene 2009, 117) Simply to be aware of one's breath and heartbeat can be helpful in being present in the moment.

### **During Prayer**

There are times during prayer when distractions seem innumerable. St. Theophan suggests that this is because the work is being done with the head instead of the heart. –

You must descend from your head to your heart. At present your thoughts of God are in your head. And God Himself is, as it were, outside of you, and so your prayer and other spiritual exercises remain exterior. Whilst you are still in your head, thoughts will not be subdued but will always be whirling about, like snow in winter or clouds of mosquitoes in the summer. (Theophan the Recluse 1966, 183)

St. Theophan describes the thoughts as like “snow in a winter” or “mosquitoes in the summer.” But what does one do with the thoughts. The teachers of the Jesus Prayer give a simple answer. Ignore them. Recognize that there is a distracting thought and then return to the prayer. Otherwise a person can begin making a commentary on the distraction. Now there are two distractions. Instead, acknowledge the thought, and then return to the Prayer.

Fight always with your thoughts and call them back when they wander away. God does not demand of those under obedience that their thoughts be totally undistracted when they pray. And do not lose heart when your thoughts are stolen away. Just remain calm, and constantly call your mind back. (Climacus 1982, 112)

St. John Climacus counsels the distracted pray-er to remain calm and call the mind back. St. Ignatius Brianchaninov reminds his readers to return the thought to the words of the prayer. Do not battle the distraction or fight against it. Just return to the Prayer. Otherwise, instead of gazing at God, the one praying will be gazing at the distraction.

...he who prays the method proposed by St. John Climacus will pray with the lips and with the mind and with the heart. ...What delusion can there be in this way of praying? Only thought-wandering and distraction. But this is a fault that is completely obvious, inevitable in beginners, but

capable of immediate treatment through the restoration of the thought to the words. (Brianchaninov 2006, 49)

Ultimately, the Jesus Prayer is about being in the presence of God. A person needs to be careful of having expectations of what the experience of prayer is going to be like. Expectations can be another distraction. The one praying must instead remember that the Prayer is to be with God. God is personal and prayer is a process of developing a relationship with a Person.

We have no expectations, and indeed, nothing has to happen. We do not expect to think anything, feel anything, or hear anything. We simply listen to the silence. (Webber 2007, 56)

### **10 Minutes of the Jesus Prayer.**

Sitting down, I remind everyone to be conscious of the present surroundings, where they are, who they are with, and what they hear. Then I ask them to be conscious of their breathing, and then of God's presence in our midst. I then begin by saying the Jesus prayer slowly, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." After this is said three times, we all say the prayer quietly for ten minutes. To close, I say the Jesus aloud three more times.

### **Class 5: Communal Aspect of Prayer and Salvation**

One is not a Christian alone. Christianity implies relationship with God and with others. An understanding of a relationship with God as “Me and God” is a distortion of the communal relationships for which we are created. This is obvious during communal worship, but it is true as well during personal prayer, including the Jesus Prayer. One does not need to separate oneself from others to be with God. In fact, to be with God, one has to bring others with them. Fyodor Dostoyevsky illustrates this in *The Brothers Karamazov* with a parable about a woman and an onion.

Once upon a time there was a peasant woman and a very wicked woman she was. And she died and did not leave a single good deed behind. The devils caught her and plunged her into a lake of fire. So her guardian angel stood and wondered what good deed of hers he could remember to tell to God. “She once pulled up an onion in her garden,” said he, “and gave it to a beggar woman.” And God answered: “You take that onion then, hold it out to her in the lake, and tell her take hold of it and be pulled out. And if you can pull her out of the lake, let her come to Paradise, but if the onion breaks, then the woman must stay where she is.” The angel ran to the woman and held out the onion to her. “Come,” said he, “catch hold and I’ll pull you out.” And he began cautiously pulling her out. He had just about pulled her out when the other sinners in the lake, seeing how she was being drawn out, caught hold of her so as to be pulled out with her. But she was a very wicked woman and she began kicking them off. “I’m to be pulled out, not you. It’s my onion, not yours.” As soon as she said that, the onion broke. And she fell back into the lake and she is burning there to this day. So her guardian angel wept and went away. (Dostoyevsky 2005, 324)

The Jesus Prayer is not a replacement of communal prayer but a strengthening of communal prayer. To go into one’s closet and pray is not a way of separating from the Church but rather a way of drawing the body of believers into one’s heart. As Abba John the Dwarf said,

A house is not built by beginning at the top and working down. You must begin with the foundations in order to reach the top.” They said to him,

"What does this saying mean?" He said, "The foundation is our neighbor, whom we must win, and that is the place to begin. For all the commandments of Christ depend on this one (Ward 1983, 93)

Seraphim of Sarov, in his *Spiritual Instructions*, tells his spiritual children God's warmth will also be warmth for our neighbor and is never meant to be something we hold onto for ourselves.

God is a fire that warms and kindles the heart and inward parts. Hence, if we feel in our hearts the cold which comes from the devil - for the devil is cold - let us call on the Lord. He will come to warm our hearts with perfect love, not only for Him but also for our neighbor, and the cold of him who hates the good will flee before the heat of His countenance. (St. Seraphim of Sarov 2008, 23)

St. Isaac the Syrian ponders on the meaning of a merciful heart. He describes it as a heart that is outward, compassionate and other centered rather than a heart focused on the self. This outward heart cannot stop praying.

What is a merciful heart? It is a heart that burns with love for 'the whole of creation—for men, for the birds, for the beasts, for the demons, for every, creature. When a man with such a heart as this thinks of the creatures or looks at them, his eyes are filled with tears; An overwhelming compassion makes his heart grow small and weak, and he cannot endure to hear or see any suffering, even the smallest pain, inflicted upon any creature. Therefore he never ceases to pray, with tears even for the irrational animals, for the enemies of truth, and for those who do him evil, asking that they may be guarded and receive God's mercy. And for the reptiles also he prays with a great compassion, which rises up endlessly in his heart until he shines again and is glorious like God. (Isaac the Syrian 1923, 341)

St. John of Kronstadt describes a similar phenomenon.

The purer the heart becomes the larger it becomes; consequently it is able to find room for more and more loved ones; the more sinful it is the more it contracts; consequently it is able to find room for fewer and fewer loved ones – it is limited by a false love: self-love. (John of Kronstadt 1981, 183)

St. Seraphim of Sarov, St. Isaac the Syrian, and St. John of Kronstadt all speak of the heart in their words on compassion for their neighbor. For the Orthodox Christian, the heart has a particular meaning and is closely connected to repentance.

### **10 Minutes of the Jesus Prayer.**

Sitting down, I remind everyone to be conscious of the present surroundings, where they are, who they are with, and what they hear. Then I ask them to be conscious of their breathing, and then of God's presence in our midst. I then begin by saying the Jesus prayer slowly, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." After this is said three times, we all say the prayer quietly for ten minutes. To close, I say the Jesus aloud three more times.

## **Class 6: Repentance**

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.' Jesus spoke up and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' 'Teacher,' he replied, 'speak.' 'A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?' Simon answered, 'I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt.' And Jesus said to him, 'You have judged rightly.' Then turning towards the woman, he said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.' Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' And he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.' (Lk 7:36-50)

### **Therapeutic Model**

The teaching on sin and repentance in the Eastern Church is developed out of a therapeutic model. Rather than sin being viewed as a crime that needs to be punished, it is seen as a wound or illness that needs to be cured. This is true with the approach to ethics in general which in the west is oftentimes seen as the adherence to a moral code.



In the east, it is understood as “the restoration of life to the fullness of freedom and love” (Yannaras 1984, 143). St. John Chrysostom uses medical terminology while discussing the role of the Church. “For indeed the school of the Church is an admirable surgery — a surgery, not for bodies, but for souls. For it is spiritual, and sets right, not fleshly wounds, but errors of the mind, and of these errors and wounds the medicine is the word.” (Chrysostom 1994b, 235) Fr. John Romanides rejects the idea of linking sin with moral laws. He says,

The Fathers do not categorize people as moral and immoral or good and bad on the basis of moral laws. This division is superficial. At depth humanity is differentiated into the sick in soul, those being healed and those healed. All who are not in a state of illumination are sick in soul...It is not only good will, good resolve, moral practice and devotion to the Orthodox Tradition which make an Orthodox, but also purification, illumination and deification. These stages of healing are the purpose of the mystical life of the Church, as the liturgical texts bear witness. (Vlachos 1994, 30)

The fall of mankind resulted in a separation from God. Human beings lived with the consequences of sin, alienation from God, one’s neighbor, and self but did not inherit the guilt of original sin. In the fallen world, the heart of the person has been darkened. It now needs to be healed and illumined.

“When, using the woman as his accomplice, the devil deceived Adam, he divested him of the glory that enveloped him. Thus Adam found himself naked and perceived his disfigurement, of which he had been unaware until that moment since he had delighted his mind with celestial beauty. After his transgression, on the other hand, his thoughts became base and material, and the simplicity and goodness of his mind were intertwined with evil worldly concerns. The closing of paradise, and the placing of the cherubim with the burning sword to prevent his entrance, must be regarded as actual events; but they are also realities encountered inwardly by each soul. A veil of darkness—the fire of the worldly spirit—surrounds the heart, preventing the intellect from communing with God, and the soul from praying, believing and loving the Lord as it desires to do.” (Makarios of Egypt 1984, 301)

### **Heart/Nous**

For Orthodox Christians, the heart is the spiritual center of a person. (Zacharias 2008; Webber 2007; Ware 1997; Vlachos 1993) It is not to be identified with emotions or with the intellect. It is space where the relationship with God is. (see also Winnicott 2005 on potential space) It "is the place where God's communion with man is cultivated, the Spirit of God is revealed, operates and prays." (Zacharias 2006, 115) This space has been wounded though not destroyed.

After our forefather's transgression in paradise through the tree, we suffered the death of our soul—which is the separation of the soul from God—prior to our bodily death; yet although we cast away our divine likeness, we did not lose our divine image." (Palamas 1995, 363)

Once the heart (or nous) is darkened, it stops functioning normally. It is unable to perceive God, neighbor, or self as it was created to do. (Vlachos 1994) In order to heal the heart there needs to be a withdrawal from worldly thought and a concentration on God. The Greek word for repentance used in the Orthodox Church is metanoia. This literally means a changing of the nous. St. Gregory Palamas wrote:

If you raise your mind (nous) above every thought, however good, and turn it wholly towards itself, by means of constant attention and unceasing prayer, you too will truly enter into the divine rest and obtain the blessing of the seventh day. You will see yourself, and through yourself you will be carried up to the vision of God. (Palamas 2009, 138-139)

### **Being Aware of the Illness**

Repentance, or a changing of the nous, does not happen unless a person is cognizant of the illness that exists. Healing can only begin to occur when we grasp our involvement in our alienation and take responsibility for it. Speaking on the Father's

love for the Prodigal son in the parable found in Luke 15:11-32, Frederika Matthews-Greene writes,

God loves us like that; he isn't waiting for us to coax him into forgiving us. But, like the son, we have to recognize the truth about our wounded condition. We must recognize that we need the father's love. The darkened nous doesn't readily grasp this. We see that something is wrong with the world, but don't perceive that the wrongness is tangled up with, and enabled by, our own thoughts, words, and deeds. Realizing the truth about ourselves, our complicity in the world's brokenness, is the first step of healing. (Matthews-Green 2009, 42)

Fr. Sophrony is even stronger in his description of the manner of repentance. Not only ought a person recognize their own failings, but, as he says, begin to see the interrelatedness we have as human beings that allows each person to find joy in another's joy as well as to mourn when others mourn.

The ontological unity of humanity is such that every separate individual overcoming evil in himself inflicts such a defeat on cosmic evil that its consequences have a beneficial effect on the destinies of the whole world. (Sophrony 1999, 222)

...What sense is there in enjoying only the pleasurable side of love? Indeed, it is only in willingly taking upon oneself the loved one's guilt and burdens that love attains its multifold perfection.

Many of us cannot, or do not want to, accept and suffer of our own free will the consequences of Adam's original sin. 'Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit but what has that to do with me?' we protest. 'I am ready to answer for my own sins but certainly not for the sins of others.' And we do not realise that in reacting thus we are repeating in ourselves the sin of our forefather Adam, making it our own personal sin, leading to our own personal fall. Adam denied responsibility, laying all the blame on Eve and on God who had given him this wife; and by so doing he destroyed the unity of Man and his communion with God. So, each time we refuse to take on ourselves the blame for our common evil, for the actions of our neighbor, we are repeating the same sin and likewise shattering the unity of Man. The Lord questioned Adam before Eve, and we must suppose that if Adam, instead of justifying himself, had taken upon his shoulders the responsibility for their joint sin, the destinies of the world might have been different, just as they will alter now if we in our day assume the burden of the transgressions of our fellow man. (Sophrony 1999, 120-121)

Repentance is about healing, not judgment. God is a healer. God is not watching for sin in order to inflict punishment. Some Christians perhaps view God in this way, but this not only separates repentance from love of God and neighbor, but it makes repentance more difficult to do.

A God who is remote and scary and judgmental, taking offense at things that (we think) have nothing to do with him, is hard to love. The natural reaction is instead to deny the sins, or rationalize them away, or compare yourself to someone else whose behavior is worse. A barrier of mistrust lies between a person and this kind of God. (Matthews-Green 2009, 43)

The following passage from Fr. Sophrony's work *On Prayer* describes prayer as a time of battle and repentance, not one of seeking spiritual experiences. He also reminds his readers that one's sins can be quite subtle and often overlooked. The Jesus Prayer must be offered in humility and out of a desire to grow and remain close to God.

Whoever really believes that the Gospel commandments were given by the One True God, from this very belief draws strength to live in the image of Christ. The believer allows no critical approach to the Lord's word but looks to it for judgment. Like this he recognizes himself as a sinner and grieves over his wretched state. Absence of grief for one's sin indicates that one has not yet been granted the vision of how man was conceived before the creation of the world. The truly repentant sinner does not seek after sublime contemplation: he is totally preoccupied with the battle against sin, against the passions. Only after being cleansed from the passions — still as yet incompletely — naturally and without constraint do hitherto unsuspected spiritual horizons, illumined by light, open before him, and mind and heart are raptured by divine love. Then is our nature reformed, which was fractured by the Fall, and the doors to the realm of immortality are set ajar.

The way to holy contemplation is through repentance. So long as we are possessed by somber pride out of character with God — the Light in which is no darkness at all — we are not accepted into His eternity. But this passion is peculiarly subtle, and we ourselves have not the power to discern its presence in us fully. Hence our assiduous prayer, 'Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins: let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the

meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."

None of us, sons of Adam, clearly perceive our sins. Only at times of enlightenment by Divine Light are we freed from these dreadful fetters. And if this does not come about, it is well to cry out with tears: O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner.

Earnest obedience to Christ's commandments involves encountering every possible phenomenon of the spiritual cosmic sphere. By himself man is incapable of either resisting or clearly discerning what destroys and what redeems. In despair he will call upon the Name of the Living God. And blessed will he be if a ray of Light shines upon him from the unapproachable realm of Divinity which will reveal the true nature of every phenomenon. But if this Light has not come yet, he must not be alarmed but pray vigorously, 'O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy upon me' and saving strength will surely descend on him. (Sophrony 1998, 148-149)

### **15 Minutes of the Jesus Prayer.**

Sitting down, I remind everyone to be conscious of the present surroundings, where they are, who they are with, and what they hear. Then I ask them to be conscious of their breathing, and then of God's presence in our midst. I then begin by saying the Jesus prayer slowly, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." After this is said three times, we all say the prayer quietly for fifteen minutes. To close, I say the Jesus aloud three more times.

### **Class 7: Warming the heart**

Before beginning the Jesus Prayer, it is helpful to spend a few moments to warm the heart like a person used to warm a car engine on a cold day. Do not simply rush into prayer. Be aware of your surroundings. Be conscious of your breath. Choose to put aside all concerns, worries, and desires, at least as much as possible. As is heard in the Cherubic hymn sung during the Orthodox Divine Liturgy, “Let us, who mystically represent the cherubim and sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving trinity, lay aside all worldly cares, that we may receive the King of all, invisibly escorted by the angelic hosts.” (Archdiocese 2006, 104) Recognize that you are in need and that God can help. Saint John Chrysostom speaks of prayer in the following way: “I am not talking of a prayer lightly and carelessly offered but of one made in earnest, which comes from an afflicted soul and from a contrite heart. This is the kind of prayer which mounts up to heaven.” (Stăniloae 1994, 119) A prayer which comes out of affliction is one in which one recognizes their own needs as well as recognizes that they themselves are subject to sin and cause much of their own affliction. A person must not be too heavy handed in this, however, and led to despair. Again, St. John Chrysostom advises,

...let us stir up our conscience to fervor, let us afflict our soul with the memory of our sins, not so that it is crushed by anxiety, but so that we may make it ready to be heard, so that we make it live in sobriety and watchfulness and ready to attain heaven itself. Nothing puts carelessness and negligence to flight the way grief and affliction do. They bring together our thoughts from every side and make our mind turn back to ponder itself. (Stăniloae 1994, 120)

The following prayer from the Anaphora of the Divine Liturgy is another example of stirring the “conscience to fervor.”

No one who is bound with the desires and pleasures of the flesh is worthy to approach or draw nigh or to serve thee, O King of Glory: for to serve thee is a great and terrible thing even to the Heavenly Powers. Nevertheless, through thine unspeakable and boundless love toward mankind thou didst become man, yet without change or alteration, and as Lord of all didst take the name of our High Priest, and deliver unto us the ministry of this liturgic and unbloody sacrifice. For thou alone, O Lord our God, rulest over those in heaven and on earth; who art borne on the throne of the Cherubim; who art Lord of the Seraphim and King of Israel, who alone art holy and restest in thy Holy Place.

Wherefore I implore thee who alone art good and art ready to listen: Look down upon me, a sinner, and thine unprofitable servant, and cleanse my soul and my heart from an evil conscience; and by the power of thy Holy Spirit enable me, who am endued with the grace of the priesthood, to stand before this thy Holy Table, and perform the sacred Mystery of thy holy and immaculate Body and precious Blood. For I draw near unto thee, and bowing my neck I pray thee: turn not thy face from me, neither cast me out from among thy servants; but vouchsafe that these gifts may be offered unto thee by me, thy sinful and unworthy servant: for thou thyself are he that offers and is offered, that accepts and is distributed, O Christ our God: and unto thee we ascribe glory, together with thy Father who is from everlasting, and thine all-holy, and good, and life-giving Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. (Archdiocese 2006, 104-105)

### **15 Minutes of the Jesus Prayer.**

Sitting down, I remind everyone to be conscious of the present surroundings, where they are, who they are with, and what they hear. Then I ask them to be conscious of their breathing, and then of God's presence in our midst. I then begin by saying the Jesus prayer slowly, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." After this is said three times, we all say the prayer quietly for fifteen minutes. To close, I say the Jesus aloud three more times.

## Class 8: Prayer as a way of Life

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware once remarked that Christianity is not collection of teachings or a systematic theory about the universe but rather a way of life. (Ware 1986d,

8) Something similar can be said about prayer. Prayer is not something we do but something we are. Paul Evdokimov wrote in *The Sacrament of Love*,

It is not enough to *say* prayers; one must become, *be* prayer, prayer incarnate. It is not enough to have moments of praise. All of life, each act, every gesture, even the smile of the human face, must become a hymn of adoration, an offering, a prayer. One should offer not what one has, but what one is. (Evdokimov 1985, 62)

When one is prayer, it is no longer simply a part of one's life but a way of life. It becomes a way of viewing the world. The general worship of the church supports this idea. Even though Jesus tells us to go to a private place for prayer, prayer does not separate us from the world. It links us to the needs and pain of the world. Evdokimov writes again concerning the Divine Liturgy,

Liturgy... teaches the true relationship between myself and others and helps me understand the words, "Love your neighbor as yourself."... Liturgical prayer makes the destiny of every person present to us. The liturgical litanies lead the individual beyond himself, toward the assembly, toward those who are absent, those who suffer and finally those who are in their agony. Liturgical prayer embraces the city, nations, humanity and asks for peace and unity of all... every soul knows by experience that one cannot stand alone before God and that, liturgically, one saves oneself with others. The pronoun in the liturgy is never in the singular. (Evdokimov 1998, 215-216)

St. Maria Skoptsova, an Orthodox Nun who died in the Ravensbrück concentration camp towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, was known both for her love of theology and her love for the poor. Her convent had an open door for the poor and



destitute, and was filled with so many people at times that she slept in a hallway. For St. Maria, prayer and life in the world could never be separated. Regarding the Eucharist and the integration of prayer with life, St. Maria wrote the following:

But if at the center of the Church's life there is this sacrificial, self-giving eucharistic love, then where are the Church's boundaries, where is the periphery of this center? Here it is possible to speak of the whole of Christianity as an eternal offering of the Divine Liturgy beyond church walls. What does this mean? It means that we must offer the bloodless sacrifice, the sacrifice of self-surrendering love not only in a specific place, upon the altar of a particular temple; the whole world becomes the single altar of a single temple, and for this universal Liturgy we must offer our hearts, like bread and wine, in order that they may be transubstantiated into Christ's love, that he may be born in them, that they may become "Godmanhood" hearts, and that he may give these hearts of ours as food for the world, that he may bring the whole world into communion with these hearts of ours that have been offered up, so that in this way we may be one with him, not so that we should live anew but so that Christ should live in us, becoming incarnate in our flesh, offering our flesh upon the Cross of Golgotha, resurrecting our flesh, offering it as a sacrifice of love for the sins of the world, receiving it from us as a sacrifice of love to himself. Then truly in all ways Christ will be in all. (Skobtsova 2003, 185)

Certainly prayer, for St. Maria was not something she did but something she was. It was a way of life. It was also a decision. Her approach to prayer was certainly not the only approach. There were many Christians at the time who went to church and either left their piety there or called for it when in difficult times. For St. Maria, she recognized that faith needed to be something beyond occasional holy feelings. She came to believe and then chose to believe. She embraced the Church's teachings and the outlook presented in Scripture and Tradition. The choice she made was blessed with a grace of God so that she was able to continue in prayer and compassion for those around her. By allowing prayer to inhabit us through a decision and commitment, what slowly happens is

that our dependence and slavery to the self begins to slowly diminish and our likeness to Christ begins to increase. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (Jn 3:30)

The Jesus Prayer can become a way of life. It can be prayed while alone in ones room as well as in the middle of a busy city. It begins with a conscious effort and eventually moves into a self-acting event. A person can fall asleep with the prayer on their lips and wake up with the prayer again. But even more so, the prayer leads a person into a greater likeness with Christ which influences every action of life. It does this by enlarging our heart. (Zacharias 2006) As our heart grows, being filled with God’s love, it becomes more aware of the other and identifies more with the other. A paradox occurs. A person becomes more who he or she truly is - a distinct human person – and at the same time the sense of the other as separate begins to dissolve. Unity and identification with the neighbor is recognized. Love for God is at the same time a love for self and a love for the other. Listen again to St. John of Kronstadt as he describes the enlargement of the heart:

The purer the heart becomes the larger it becomes; consequently it is able to find room for more and more loved ones; the more sinful it is the more it contracts; consequently it is able to find room for fewer and fewer loved ones – it is limited by a false love: self-love. (John of Kronstadt 1967, 183)

The Jesus Prayer becomes more than an activity. Rather it helps to create a way of life and a way of being. Let us ponder the words of Paul Evdokimov as he describes the activity, not of us, but of God working in the open and willing heart of one who practices the Jesus Prayer.

In a special manner the invocation of the name of Jesus makes the grace of his Incarnation universal, allowing each of us our personal share and disposing our hearts to receive the Lord... When the divine Name is

pronounced over a country or a person, these enter into an intimate relationship with God... The “prayer of the heart” frees and enlarges it and attracts Jesus to it ... In this prayer ... the whole Bible with its entire message is reduced to its essential simplicity... When Jesus is drawn into the heart, the liturgy becomes interiorized and the Kingdom is in the peaceful soul. The Name dwells in us as its temple and there the divine presence transmutes and Christifies us... (Evdokimov 1998, 211-212)

### **15 Minutes of the Jesus Prayer.**

Sitting down, I remind everyone to be conscious of the present surroundings, where they are, who they are with, and what they hear. Then I ask them to be conscious of their breathing, and then of God’s presence in our midst. I then begin by saying the Jesus prayer slowly, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” After this is said three times, we all say the prayer quietly for fifteen minutes. To close, I say the Jesus aloud three more times.

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