

CHAPTER SIX: THE FINDINGS

I. INTRODUCTION

The general hypothesis of this study is that it appears that many Reformed Christians not only do not experience what living a God-generated life of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is, but also do not intentionally live this kind of life. Instead, they appear to live self-generated, dis-embedded lives. However, going through a ten-week learning experience meant to equip (young) adults to live this kind of life will serve as a stepping stone in moving them from this kind of self-generated, dis-embedded living to more God-generated, embedded living with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

This God-generated life was introduced, reflected upon and practised during a 10-week learning experience. The general hypothesis was subdivided into 10 smaller hypotheses, one for each of the lessons in the 10-week learning experience. The hypothesis for lesson one is that Christian faith sometimes or often feels like a distant relationship for many Christians perhaps because in their Bible reading the emphasis is more on information than formation. The hypothesis for lesson two is that Christians sometimes or often do not feel the presence of God in Christ perhaps because they may not have surrendered every dimension of their soul to God in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis for lesson three is that the Christian faith sometimes or often feels more self-generated than God-generated perhaps because Christians may tend to busy themselves too much with giving to God and others before they have first intentionally received God's grace and Spirit. The hypothesis for lesson four is that Christians sometimes or often do not feel close to God perhaps because they tend to communicate more verbally with God than

through visualizing his love. The hypothesis of lesson five is that Christians sometimes or often experience the Christian faith more as a private relationship than a public one perhaps because they consider the gospel primarily to be about forgiveness of sins and the life of heaven. The hypothesis of lesson six is that Christians seldom experience the Christian faith as a mystery to be discovered perhaps because they consider the gospel primarily to be about right beliefs and right conduct. The hypothesis of lesson seven is that Christians sometimes or often experience that the hope they have to offer this world makes little difference in the day-to-day affairs of this world perhaps because they consider the gospel to be primarily about forgiveness of sins instead of being the presence of God's Father-Son love in the world. The hypothesis of lesson eight is that Christians sometimes or often feel as if they live detached from the Father's love in Christ perhaps because they place more emphasis on what Christ did *for* them than what He does *in* them. The hypothesis of lesson nine is that Christians feel they do not daily pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit perhaps because they are not very receptive to and expectant of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis of lesson ten is that Christians sometimes or often experience restlessness in the Christian life perhaps because the starting point of their Christian life is characterized more by doing than resting in the presence of God's Father-Son love.

In order for the general hypothesis to be verified or falsified, three research questions need to be answered. First, "To what extent was or is the spirituality of (young) adults in my congregation and in a neighbouring congregation characterized by various forms of detachment or dis-embeddedness between Christ and themselves?" Second, "To what extent do Reformed Christians live self-generated, dis-embedded lives?" Third, "To what extent will going through a 10-week spiritual learning experience meant to equip (young) adults to

learn to live a God-generated life of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit serve as a stepping stone to move Christians from living self-generated, dis-embedded lives to God-generated live of being embedded with Christ in the Father?”

In order to determine the answers to these research questions, the participants were asked to fill out a 40-item questionnaire before the 10-week learning experience and a slightly modified version of this first questionnaire immediately after the learning experience. Since these questionnaires addressed the whole person, the questions focused on the affective, cognitive, volitional and behavioral dimensions of each participant. The participants had four options. (1) Y = yes (2) N = no (3) S = sometimes or somewhat (4) U = unsure. In addition to choosing for one of the four options on the second questionnaire, the participants were encouraged to give qualitative feedback in the comment boxes provided at the end of each set of four questions

This chapter first presents the results of each individual lesson and applies these results to the individual hypothesis of each lesson. Second, it presents the overall results of the learning experience and a breakdown of these overall results and applies these overall results and breakdown to the general hypothesis of this study. In both cases, evaluation and analysis of the data is done and conclusions are drawn.

II. RESULTS AND THE INDIVIDUAL HYPOTHESES

In identifying the results of the individual lessons, the following sequence is used. First, the form of affective detachment is evaluated on the basis of the answers given to the first question of each set of four questions in the first questionnaire.¹ Second, the movement

¹ That is, questions 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 29, 33 and 37.

from affective detachment to affectively living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is evaluated on the basis of the answers given to the first question of each set of four questions in the second questionnaire.² Third, the results identifying the forms of affective detachment and the move from affective detachment to embedded living with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit are analyzed with a view to drawing a conclusion concerning the hypothesis of each lesson. Fourth, a conclusion pertaining to the hypothesis of each lesson is drawn. Fifth, a conclusion is drawn regarding the helpfulness of each lesson with a view to moving from affective detachment to embedded living with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. It should be noted that the percentages do not refer to the *level* of detachment or increase in embeddedness, but to the *percentage of the participants* who experienced either detachment or increased embeddedness.³

² That is, questions 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 29, 33 and 37.

³ There were 27 participants in the learning experience. Three had an Evangelical upbringing and had or were attending an evangelical church. The results of their questionnaires are included in appendix 10. The remaining 24 were made up equally of 12 males and 12 females. The first questionnaire of two of the males mysteriously disappeared. Thus, this questionnaire tabulates the results of 10 males and 12 females. Since one of the Reformed male participants missed quite a bit of the learning experience, he did not fill out the second questionnaire. Thus, the second questionnaire measures the results of 11 males and 12 females. One Reformed female participant did fill out answers to lesson 6 of the second questionnaire since she missed this lesson. Thus, this lesson measures the results of 11 males and 11 females.

A. Lesson one: Being Embraced by God’s Father-Son Love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit

1. Detachment: the Christian faith feels like a distant relationship

1. The Christian faith feels more like a distant relationship to me than an intimate one.

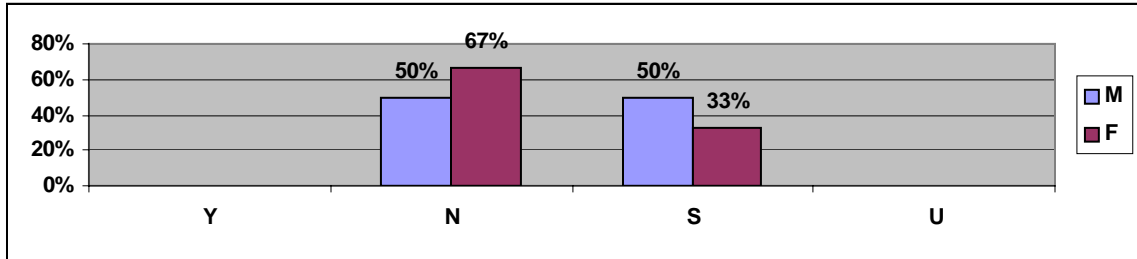


Figure 1: Not feeling the embrace of God’s Father-Son love

2. Intimate union with God is the heart of the Christian faith.

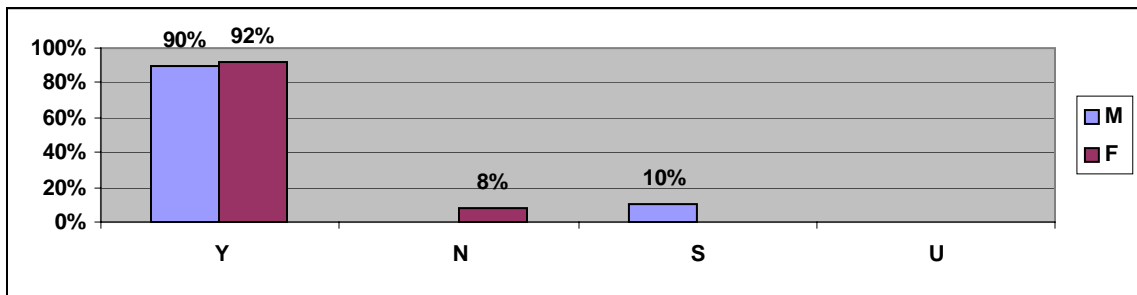


Figure 2: Understanding about the embrace of God’s Father-Son love

3. I would like to learn to live in union with God.

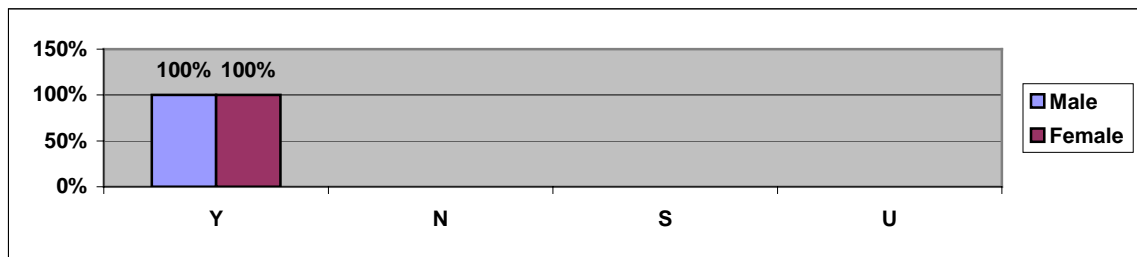


Figure 3: Desire to learn to live in the embrace of God’s Father-Son love

4. I live in intimate union with God.

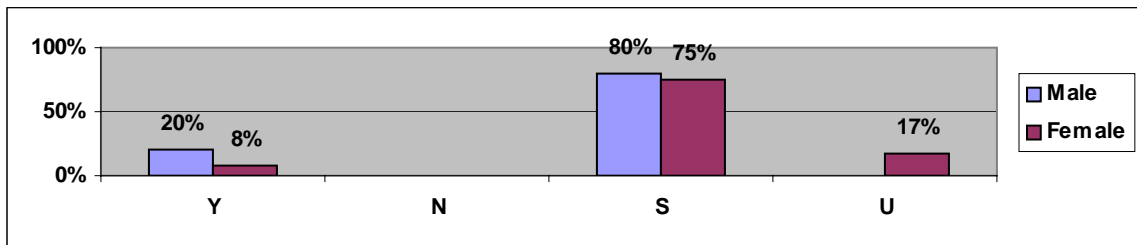


Figure 4: Living in the embrace of God’s Father-Son love

2. The learning experience: moving from distance to intimacy

1. The Christian faith feels more like an intimate relationship now than before the 10-week learning experience.

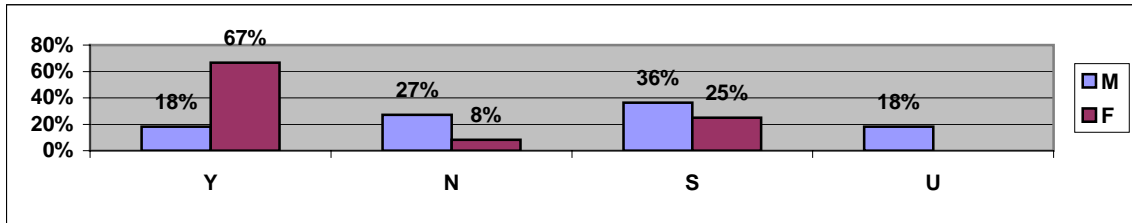


Figure 5: Increase in feeling the embrace of God's Father-Son love

2. I understand better now that intimate union with God is the heart of the Christian faith than I did before the 10-week learning experience.

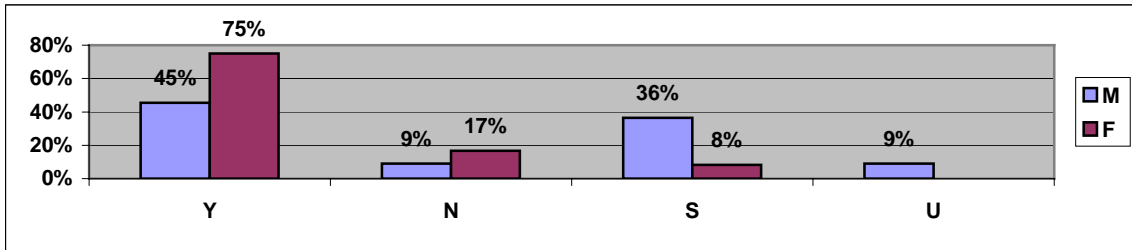


Figure 6: Increase in understanding about the embrace of God's Father-Son love

3. I now want to learn more about living in union with God than before the 10-week learning experience.

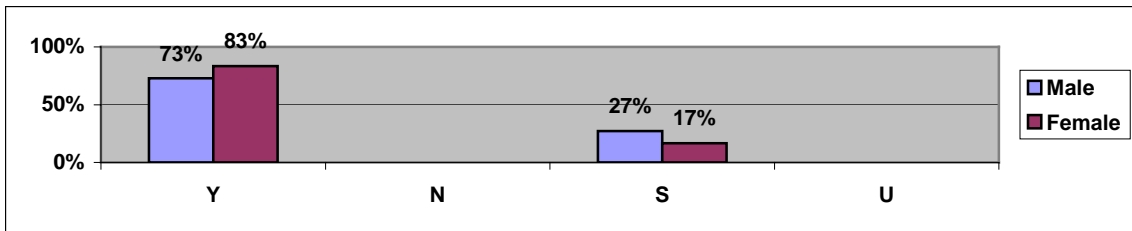


Figure 7: Increase in desire to learn to live in the embrace of God's Father-Son love

4. I live in intimate union with God more now than I did before the 10-week learning experience.

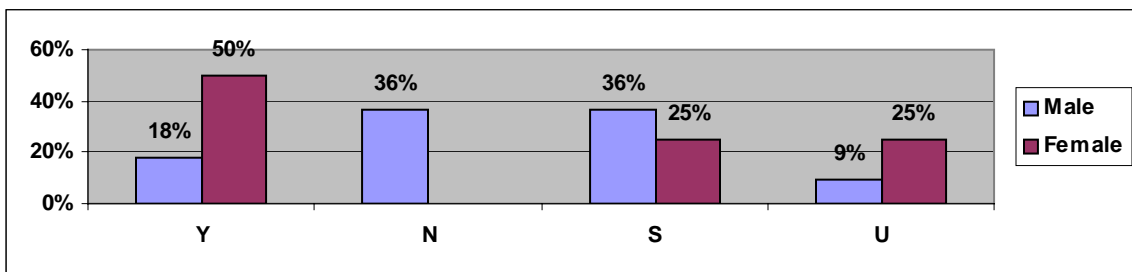


Figure 8: Increase in living in the embrace of God's Father-Son love

3. Evaluation, analysis and conclusions

Hypothesis	<i>The Christian faith sometimes or often feels like a distant relationship for many Christians perhaps because in their Bible reading the emphasis is more on information than formation.</i>					
Did not feel the embrace of God's Father-Son love	Males	Y	S	Females	Y	S
			50%			33%
Increase in feeling the embrace of God's Father-Son love	Males	Y	S	Females	Y	S
		18%	36%		67%	25%
Narrative response						
There is quite a difference between knowing about the embrace and experiencing and/or feeling the embrace itself. I absolutely believe that God wants to embrace me and does embrace me. However, I am learning or trying to learn what it means for me in every day circumstances (F). ⁴						
Analysis						
Detachment: There was no significant affective detachment or dis-embeddedness before the learning experience either among the males or females.						
Learning experience: While there was no significant affective detachment in feeling the embrace of God's Father-Son love before the learning experience, the learning experience did significantly move 18% of the males and 67% of the females to an increased experience of the Christian faith as an intimate or embedded relationship. Other factors may also have influenced the outcome.						
Conclusions						
Since formational Bible reading seeks to move the text deeper into the depth of our being as the seed of regeneration, allows the text to control us as a womb (Luther), views the text as subject of the reading relationship or as Christ (Calvin), is receptive and willing to yield to the text, there appears to be to a causal connection between this manner of reading and feeling the embrace of God's Father-Son love.						
This lesson of the learning experience was not very helpful in moving to increased intimacy with God for the males, but very helpful for the females.						

Table 1: From distance to intimacy

⁴ Five males including the one male Evangelical (41%) and ten females (83%) gave narrative responses to one or more of the individual lessons. In order to avoid identification, I included the male Evangelical response with the responses of the Reformed participants. See appendix 7 for more narrative responses to individual lessons.