



Respite for All

F O U N D A T I O N

Reclaiming Joy Together

RESPITE MINISTRY:

What we thought we knew, and what God revealed about Respite and Renewal through a recent study.

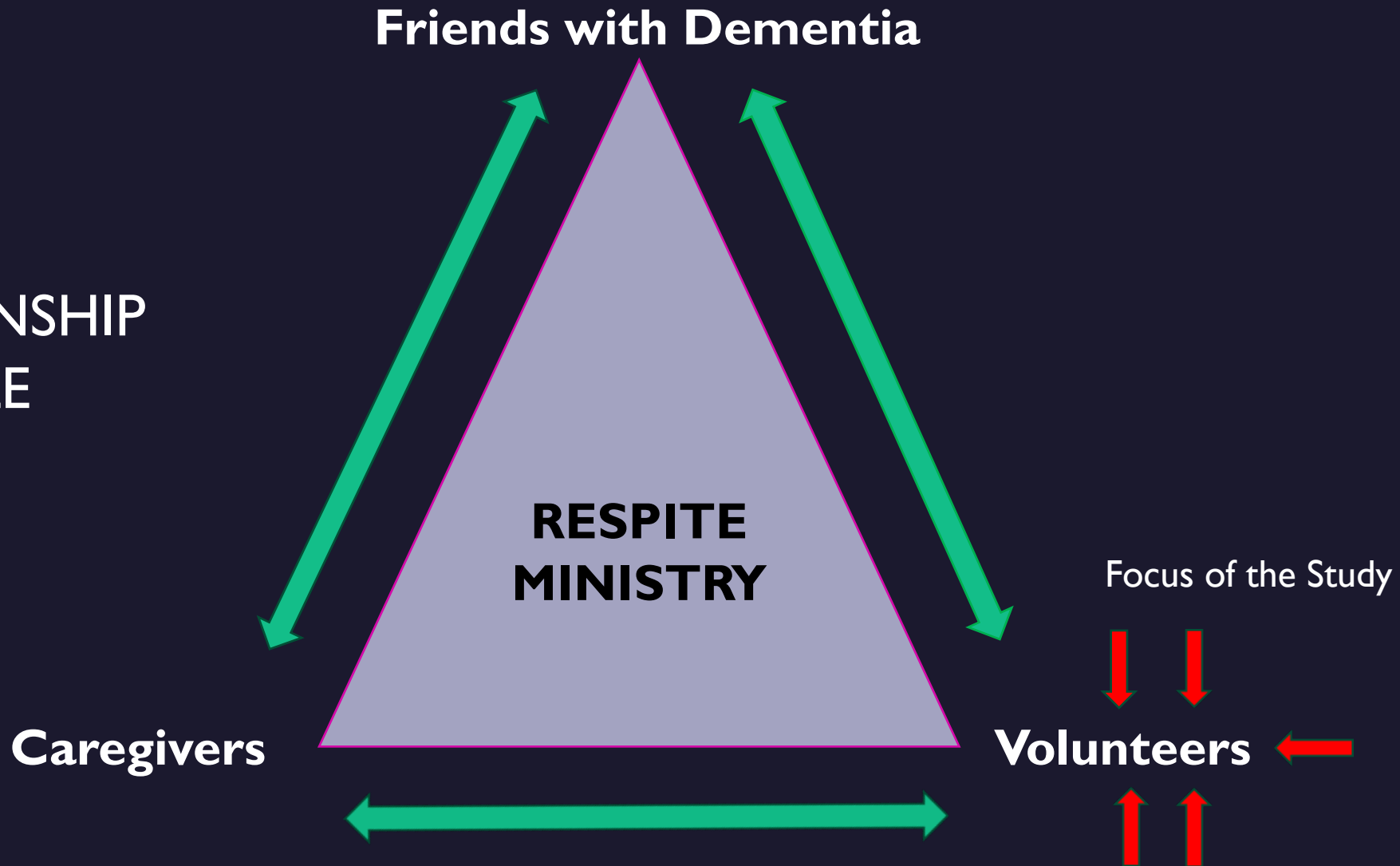


Presenters:

Bishop Lawson Bryan

Dr. John Bell

THE
RESPITE
RELATIONSHIP
TRIANGLE



What We Knew Before The Study: Caregivers:

Data tell us that our Respite Ministry is transforming for caregivers. By leaving their loved one at Respite, caregivers are afforded 4 hours per day to take care of themselves, appointments, other family members, or to simply rest. These respite hours are transforming in that they increase caregiver's patience, strength, and stamina.



What We Knew Before The Study: Friends with Dementia:

Data tell us that Respite ministries increase socialization for those with dementia. For 4 hours per day, dementia patients are active. They use skills that remain; being called by name, laughing, singing, eating together, and being reminded that they still have much to contribute. Medical studies at the University of Alabama Birmingham Medical School have shown in some cases that cognitive skills improve because of Respite stimulation.



What We Knew Less About Before The Study: Volunteers

Much anecdotal data had been collected concerning the “feel good” impact of volunteering in Respite Ministry. Little or no data had been collected to determine if volunteering at Respite has long-term impact on volunteers, especially related to discipleship.



Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of the study was to collect qualitative data from respite volunteers concerning how/if their Respite volunteer experiences have impacted them.

Use of the Data:

Data from the study will be used to better understand if/how volunteer experiences in Respite ministries are transforming for the volunteer. If data indicate a transforming power in the volunteer experience, these data will be used in discussions with those considering the implementation of a Respite ministry in their church or synagogue.



THE STUDY:

Participants: Respite volunteers

Participants read *Ministry with the Forgotten* by Bishop Kenneth L. Carder.

Participants were led through six 1½ hour discussion sessions guided by a series of questions, homework assignments, and response queries.




Study Participants:


| | |
|--------------------|----------|
| Larry McLemore | 12 years |
| Harry Curlin | 12 years |
| Bill Ellis | 10 years |
| Larry Carter | 10 years |
| Elizabeth Crum | 10 years |
| Judy Head | 10 years |
| John Bell | 9 years |
| Thomasine McDonald | 8 years |
| Linda McLemore | 8 years |
| Patricia Seay | 8 years |
| Kate Blanton | 6 years |
| Julie Kravec | 5 years |

Lawson Bryan – Co-Founder





THE DATA:
Qualitative data were collected from audio recordings of the 6 sessions, homework assignments, and other responses.



Study Results: “In their own words” --- what did the volunteers tell us?

- Respite is immediate – I regularly see the difference Respite makes in those living with dementia.
- Respite Creates a Community of Care in which habits of love, compassion, and caring are burnished into the lives of volunteers.
- We do not think ourselves into a new way of living, we live ourselves into a new way of thinking. Respite is living a process of change.
- I am less self-centered as a result my work at Respite. Respite has centered me more on the needs of others and filled me with joy in getting out of myself to focus on my fellowman.

Study Results: “In their own words” --- what did the volunteers tell us?

- Respite has freed me from smothering self-reliance; too much focus on detail; inflexible thinking. I am a more flexible servant.
- Respite has taught me to be in the moment; to appreciate small gifts and be open to the unexpected. That is where God is.
- God speaks in the unexpected, unconventional, and unplanned moments at Respite. Volunteers learn to watch and listen for these moments.
- As a Respite volunteer I have learned radical patience, to listen and make sure I understand what the friend with dementia is asking of me to do or what they are trying to do. I am more attuned to others.

Study Results: “In their own words” --- what did the volunteers tell us?

- Through Respite, one recognizes the presence of God in those living with dementia. Respite Ministry provides a Joy and Love unlike any other ministry. Respite enters the hearts of ministers, congregation, participants, and volunteers in ways one cannot imagine. All I can say is “come and see” and feel the Presence of God as never before.
- I was very hesitant to volunteer as I thought I would leave depressed and sad as I did when my mother-in-law had dementia for years and had no interaction with anyone most days. However, I learned that I as a volunteer I am the recipient of so much joy. I leave Respite now with a full heart and thanksgiving to God for the opportunity to be with all of his children. My Respite day is the highlight of my week.

Study Results: “In their own words” --- what did the volunteers tell us?

- Respite made me realize I had misjudged some of my fellow volunteers about whom I had misconceived opinions before the comradery of Respite. I now consider them close friends. The Respite Ministry offers a bond of unconditional joy and love with people that would otherwise never have been part of my life.
- I have learned to love unconditionally.
- My faith in the indestructability of love has been strengthened.
- The connections I have made at Respite in six years have been life-changing. Every time I enter the room I feel with great confidence that “surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.”

Study Results: “In their own words” --- what did the volunteers tell us?

- Respite is inclusive of religious affiliation, race, gender, personal and professional background. As volunteers, we quickly realize that all friends with dementia are facing similar challenges and the usual traits on which discrimination is based quickly fade to insignificance. In the absence of society’s prejudices, a volunteer quickly learns to focus on each participant’s common humanity with love and compassion. **RESPITE IS A TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESS.**

Study Results: “In their own words” --- what did the volunteers tell us?

- I see theology lived every day at Respite through gentle touch, genuine smiles, the holding of hands, and a LOVE felt by everyone that can only be through God.
- It has become obvious to me that God is known and experienced beyond our intellect, through my observance of friends with dementia’s “body memory” while singing hymns and particularly in taking communion. God is in every cell of our body, not just our brains.
- As a result of my volunteering at Respite, I look deeper into people now. I look deeper into people’s eyes. I try harder to discern what they are feeling or trying to tell me.

Study Results: “In their own words” --- what did the volunteers tell us?

- I first thought that I was at Respite to “take care” of our friends with dementia. It dawned on me very quickly that we all are all at Respite to share a community of love and hope as we care for each other.
- When I retired, I began studying theology, I began to study the footsteps of Jesus rather than following them. Respite reoriented my faith from passive to active. Respite has added more joy and purpose to my life.
- Volunteering at Respite has made me not just more aware of the needs of others, but that Christ has called me to serve the least, the last, and the lost, not simply to write a check.

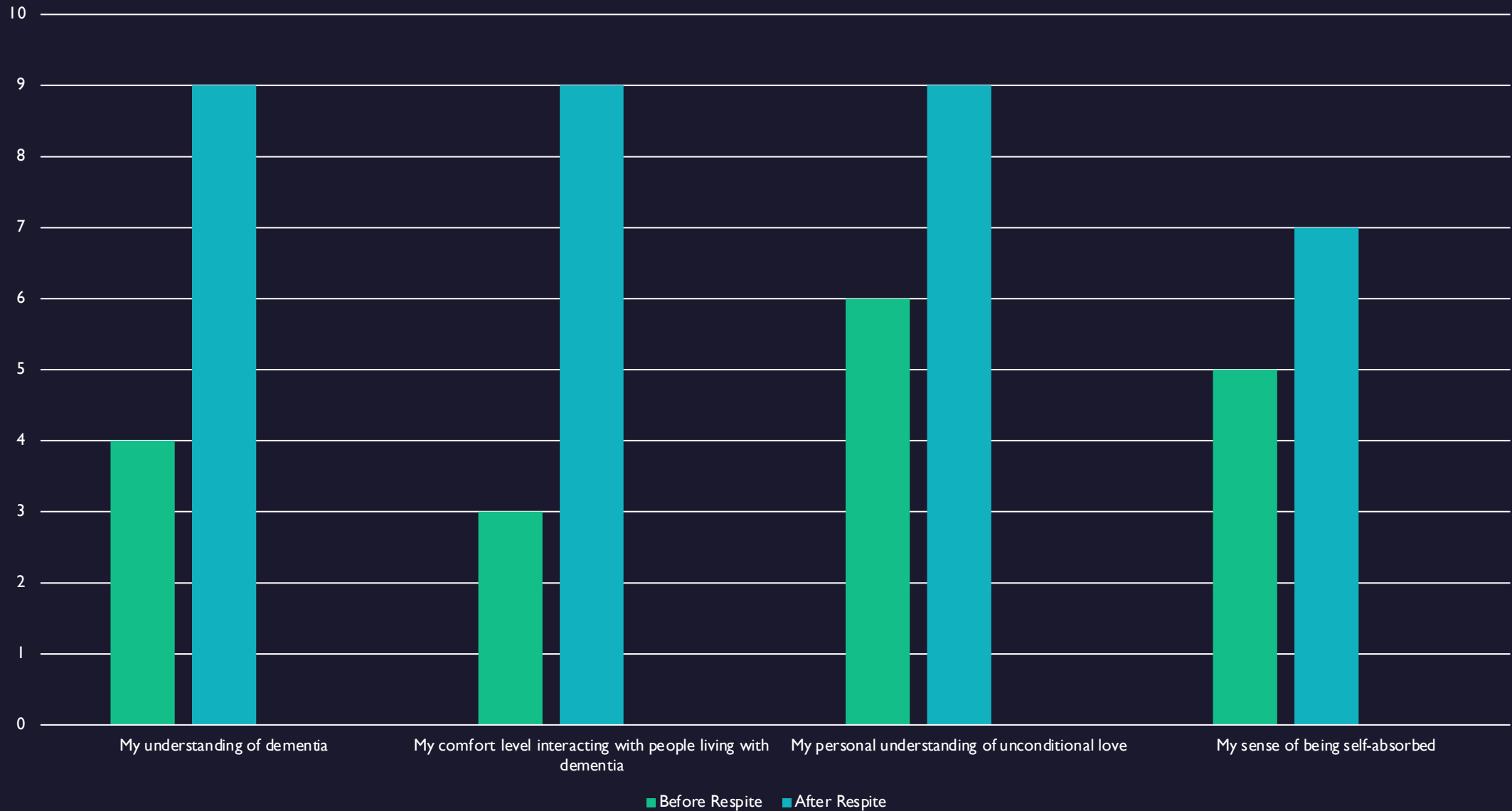
Study Results: “In their own words” --- what did the volunteers tell us?

- Respite has provided me an opportunity for the ministry of presence and a place to abandon all the “stuff” of life and love unconditionally, laugh, dance, pray , play games, work puzzles, make art and sing.
- Before volunteering at Respite, I would never have initiated a discussion that included any assessment of a dementia patient. I might say “how is she” but would be uncomfortable taking it any further. Now I have learned that care partners need to talk. I have learned to be a listening ear and am not afraid to have a much-needed conversation with a care giver.

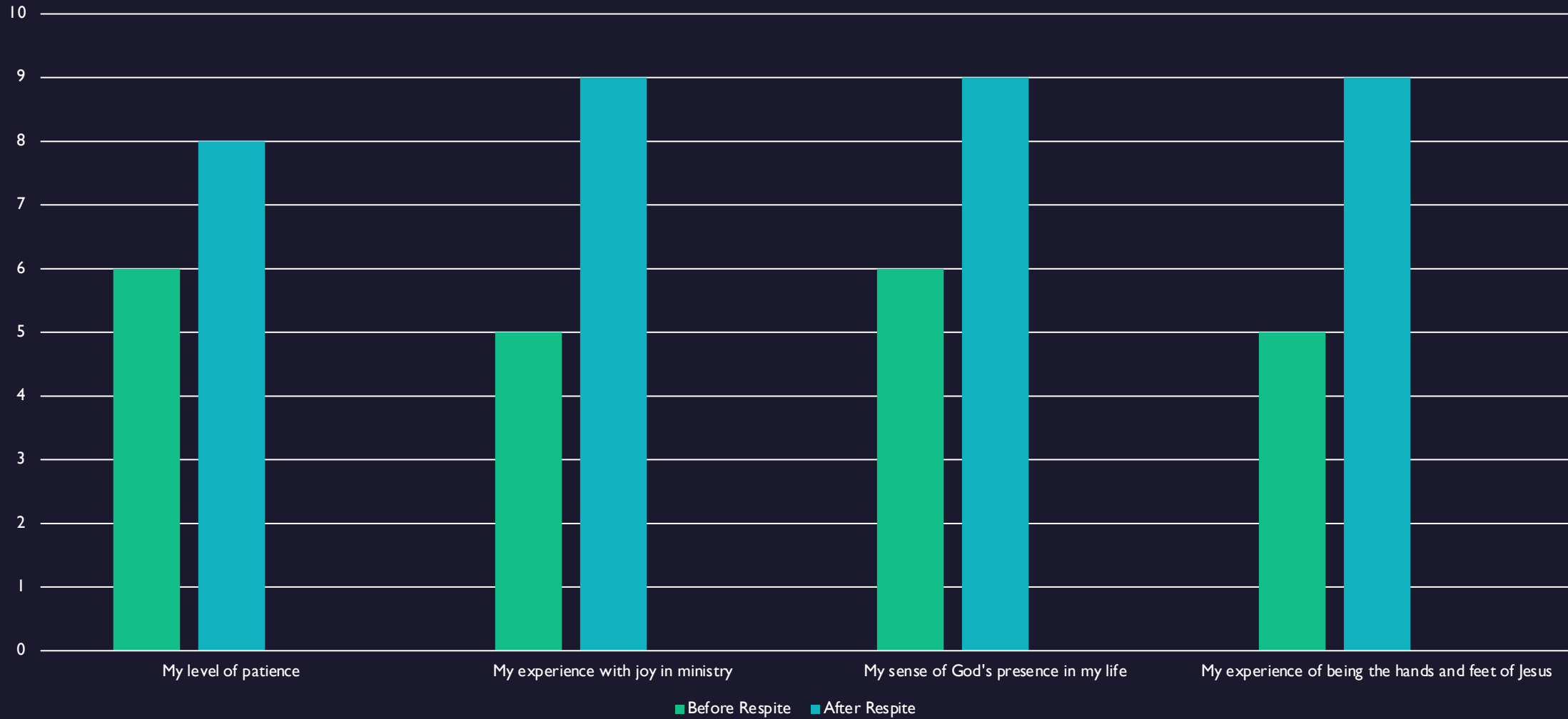
Study Results: “In their own words” --- what did the volunteers tell us?

- God has chosen the weak, the vulnerable, the powerless, as preferential recipients and means of God’s grace-filled action. We Respite volunteers, as agents of God’s salvation, are contributing to the ministry of those living with dementia, but – more importantly, perhaps – those with dementia are contributing greatly to our own ministry and to our own salvation.

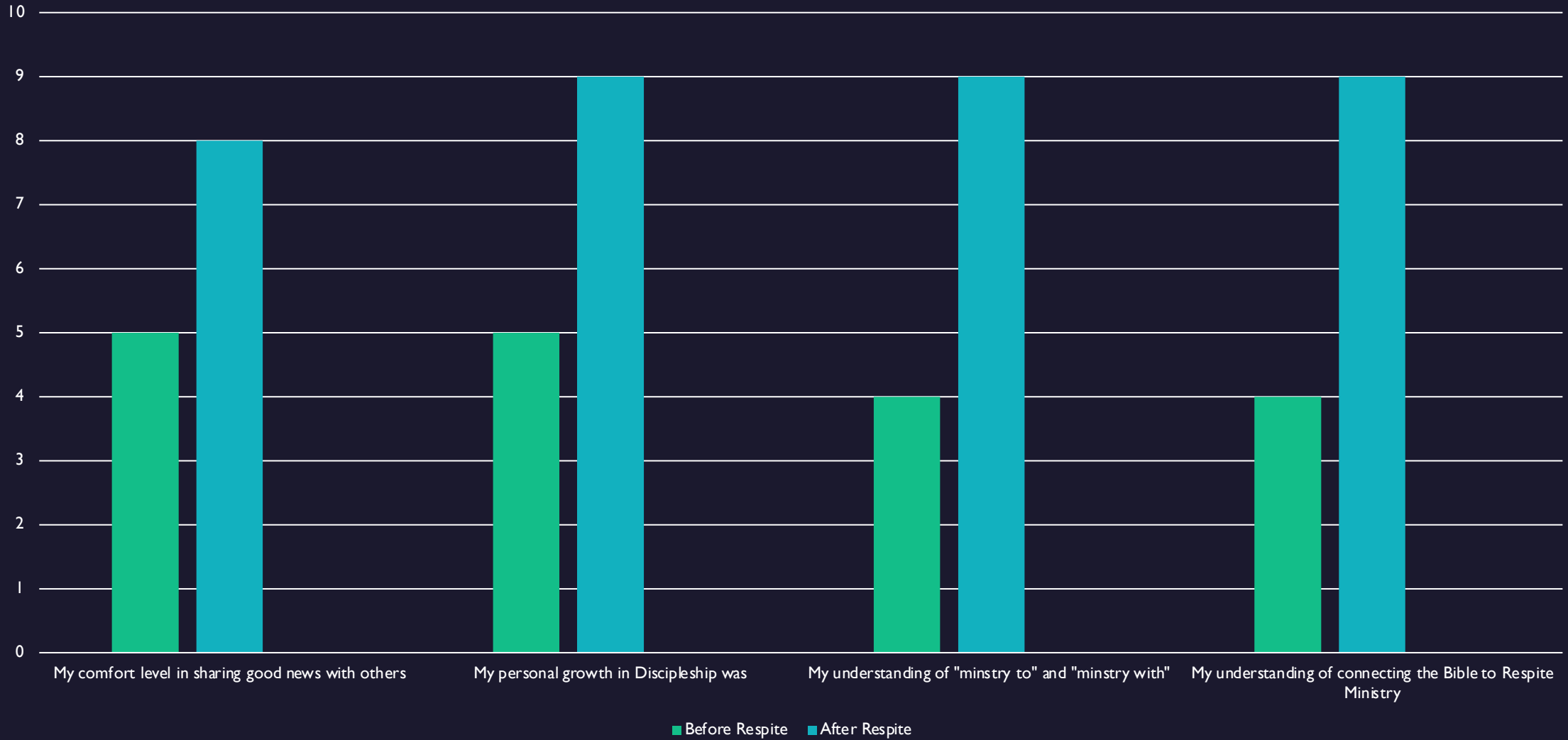
Respite Volunteer Impact on Discipleship



Respite Volunteer Impact on Discipleship



Respite Volunteer Impact on Discipleship



Galatians 5:22-23

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The Fruit of the Spirit

LOVE

Seeks the highest good of others.

JOY

Gladness that is not based on circumstances.

PEACE

Contentment, unity between people.

PATIENCE

Slow to speak and slow to anger.

KINDNESS

Merciful, sweet, and tender.

GOODNESS

Generous and open hearted.

FAITHFULNESS

Dependable, loyal, and full of trust.

GENTLENESS

Humble, calm, non-threatening.

SELF-CONTROL

Behaving well.



THE AH-HA MOMENT

- Respite is a Laboratory of Discipleship where the Fruit of the Spirit can be seen and experienced.
- Respite is a Disciple Making Ministry

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