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# The "Christian Faith Factor" and the African American Child During the Early Childhood Years

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**“THE CHRISTIAN FAITH FACTOR” AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILD  
DURING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS**

**By**

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Education**

**Department of Instruction and Leadership in Education**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **“The Christian Faith Factor” and the African American Child During the Early Childhood Years**

The purpose of this research was to determine if African American children progressed through developmental faith stages in the same manner as the subjects described by Fowler in his seminal work on faith development (1981). In *Developmental Psychology*, many theories with stages have been developed and many studies conducted in the areas of cognitive, psychosocial, creative, and moral development. These studies have explored Erickson’s stages of psychosocial development, (1963); Kohlberg’s stages of moral development, (1969); and Piaget’s stages of cognitive development (1967). There remains, however, limited research examining faith development and faith experiences with African American children during the early childhood years. This investigation sought to explore how African American children understand and express their concept of faith, and to determine if they were congruent with the first two faith stages in the construct developed by Fowler (1981). The use of case study and ethnography as a qualitative research methodology was used to investigate these questions. The case study method provided a rich context in which to view the lives of four urban African American children, two boys 7 and 10 years of age and two girls, 5 and 8 years of age. The method used also provided “a voice” for the participants and the researcher to explore their unique understanding of their faith development. Also, in order to understand the role of inter-generational faith transmission, an interview was conducted with four African American women related to two of the participants. The four children

selected attended an urban public school in a mid-size northeastern city. All of the subjects attended and participated in activities at the same church. The interviews with the children and their parents were tape recorded for further analysis. Each of the recorded interviews was analyzed using a construct derived from the indicators of Stage One and Stage Two faith development described in the original Fowler study. In addition, the children were asked to create a pictorial representation of their faith. These drawings were also analyzed using a construct derived from the works of Coles, (1990); Deleon, (1983); Eng, (1959); Kellogg, (1967); Levick, (1988); & Lowenfeld, (1982). A finding of the study is that the African American culture and world view seem to have a significant impact on faith stage development in these children. Although the children were in varying stages of cognitive development all of them responded to the age/stage of faith development at a higher level than the stages described by Fowler (1981). All of the children provided a rich pictorial representation of their faith that is unique to the African American culture. Furthermore, all of the children described God anthropomorphically and assigned other attributes of a friend or parent which differed from the Fowler study. These findings suggest that stages of faith development are specific to the African American culture and could be used to further investigate the phenomenon of childhood faith/spirituality within the constructs of the African American culture and world view. Furthermore, early childhood educators can improve classroom environments for these children by recognizing the significance of the “faith factor” as an integral cultural component. African American children operate within the construct of being connected to others and they are guided by the principal of “community”. These children probably

thrive better in classrooms that provide opportunities for collaboration, working in small groups, discussing social justice issues as well as having generational experiences. These opportunities help the children develop a feeling of “oneness” which can have significant impact on their self esteem and ultimately have an impact on school achievement.

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## DEDICATION

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**“...only faith can hold back the tears when necessary. Only faith can inspire the dream of a better day. Faith and faith alone stands as a mighty sword to defend as well as a mighty arm of comfort and a mighty trumpet declaring to the world that this child, black, white, brown, or any other color, is God’s child. The story of black America is a story of faith fulfilled.” (Williams & Dixie, 2003, pp. 302-303)**

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Train up a child in the way he should go  
And, even when he is old, he will  
not depart from it (Proverbs 22.6).

According to Wesley (1998, 1999), “although we still must teach skills to prepare students and further their education, we also need a broader vision of education that fosters the development of whole human beings” (p. 48). The debate between the school’s role to create a curriculum that emphasizes academic performance, or one that develops the “whole child,” has been an historical debate for educators (Haiman, 1991; Kessler, 2000; Lewis, 2000; Roger, Hill & 2002). Academic performance involves a focus on the cognitive abilities of a child and provides a curriculum that fosters the development of cognitive growth. Other educators state that the focus should be on developing the whole child curriculum, which includes cognitive, social, emotional, physical and creative development. The focus on the whole child is thought to be interrelated and should be integrated in the curriculum (Bredekamp, S., and Copple, C., 1997; Cromwell, 2000; Feeney, Christensen, Moraveik, 2006; Hendrick, 1998; Kessler, 2000; Noddings, 2005 & Youst, 2003). In agreement, Kimes & Martin (1993) state:

“If we are to work with the whole child as we say we do, then we must consider the faith dimension of their lives. We can not deny that children will bring religious language and elements of faith into various settings including school/centers. These can be teachable moments.” (pp. 49, 54)

Educators have relied on theorists and educational groups such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Association for Childhood Education International to guide them in determining appropriate educational experiences. These groups provide a structure for educators to gain a better understanding of the role of development in early childhood. It also allows educators to review traditional models of developing the whole child, including cognitive and intellectual development, as well as to review other theories that examine moral or faith development in children.

### **Statement of Problem**

James Fowler (1981) states that faith is a human universal. How it is activated and grows depends on the kind of environment an individual grows in. Faith is not always religious. It is a way of finding coherence and meaning to life experiences (Coles, 1997 & Hart, 2001). Fowlers' original intent was to "communicate to others an investigation into faith as a complex mysterious phenomenon and especially investigate the nature and workings of faith. It was Fowler's hope that this investigation would cause others to look at their own patterns of trust and commitment that shape and sustain their lives. Faith is interactive and social; it requires community, language, ritual and nurture" (Fowler, 1981, p. xi). This study used a case – study approach to the development of how Christian African American children during the early childhood years describe their thinking about religion, spirituality, and the meaning of life. The proposed study was twofold: (a) to replicate, with modifications, Fowler's study (1981). The original study

was done on a limited number of children, 97.8% of them white. Also, the original study was retrospective. The adults in the study recounted their early faith experiences. This study included four African-American children in kindergarten through second grade and (b) also allowed the children to express their cognitive and emotional understanding of their faith through pictorial representation (Cole, 1966; DeLeon, 1983; Eng, 1959; Goodenough, 1926; Harris, 1963; Horovitz-Darby, 1994; Kelepsch and Logie, 1982, 1994; Kellogg, 1979; Kessler, 2000 & Lowenfeld, 1982). This component of the study was important because some young children do not have the literacy skills to express what they are thinking and feeling. The pictorial representation about their faith allowed the children to express their faith experiences in another way.

### **Significance of the Study**

In the field of early childhood development, researchers have looked at children through different lenses. Some primary theorists have developed stages of intellectual growth, some social and emotional growth, others in moral growth, which includes subsets of character education and resiliency. Others have the idea of a whole child approach, and a few have researched faith/spirituality.

The determined population for this study was not a focus in the research of Piaget (1967), Erickson (1963), Kohlberg (1969), and Fowler (1981). This study was particularly interested in the faith factor in the development of Christian African American children ages five through eight years. This was an area that was under researched and the original study on faith by Fowler (1981) had a very small representation of African American children and adults. Most of the interviews were

with adults who reflected on their earlier faith experiences. This study was designed to replicate some of the original study with five through eight year old children and augmented Fowler's original study by including an additional aspect of pictorial representation. Although the interview format for children replicated the original study, the results of the interview focused only on the descriptions introduced by Fowler in stages one – intuitive/projective faith (ages 3 through 6) and two – mythic/literal faith (ages 6 through 12). The study also was limited to only two of the seven aspects of faith, ethical and world view perspective introduced in Fowler's study. Furthermore, the pictorial representation was included in the study to allow children who may need other ways to express their faith experiences. The literature review includes a section on creative expression, which describes the usefulness of drawings as an aide in communication for young children.

Faith is a cultural heritage that has been largely neglected as an integral part of child development, specifically in African American children (Billingsley, 1992; Coles, 1990 & Hale, 1991; McDermitt & Ormrod, 2004 & Marshak, 1997). Unfortunately, this faith heritage has been considered synonymous with religion. Religion is how a person chooses to embrace faith verses examining faith as a universal element that permeates all aspects of life.

The African American community has allowed faith to be a separate or isolated factor instead of considering it holistic. It is interesting to contrast this view with two particular bodies of research that focuses on faith/spirituality. In the United Kingdom, spirituality or faith is considered a universal concept that is not necessarily connected with a particular religion and is taught in the public school system (Lewis, 2000; Rogers,

Hill, 2002 & Yust, 2003). Children are encouraged to investigate and discuss in a communal relationship the universal questions: “Who am I ?” “What is my purpose ?” “What is my relationship with nature and the universe?” “Is there a higher being?” “What is life and death?” (Wenman, 2001; Hay, D & Nye, R. 1998, 1996). The second example is the field of health where a significant body of research identifies the positive impact spirituality has in the life of a patient’s physical and social, emotional health (Bruce & Stellern, 2005; Jang & Johnson, 2005; Plante & Boccoini, 2005; Reid & Harrell, 2002; Underwood & Terese, 2002; Woods & Jagers, 2003).

There is a growing body of research investigating the strength of African American families and the belief that spirituality/faith is a significant factor as a source of strength. (Billingsley, 1992; Coles, 1990; Hale, 1991, 1994; McDermitt & Ormrod, 2004; Myers, L. 1998 & Walker, 2002). A significant body of research focuses on older adolescents and young adults.

This study examined faith in urban Christian African American children during the early childhood years, specifically ages 5 through 8. It was intended to investigate how Christian African American children perceive their faith/spirituality and compared it to the first two stages of faith developed by Fowler (1981).

The terms faith and spirituality have been used interchangeably in some research literature. Both are defined as a universal belief system and both were used interchangeably in this study. Jagers & Mock (1993) provide a summary of spirituality based on a review of literature.

It entails believing and behaving as if non observable and non material life forces have governing powers in one’s everyday affairs. Thus a continuous sensitivity to core



spiritual qualities take priority in one's life and indeed are vital to one's personal well-being. Although often expressed in God concepts, this ongoing spiritual sensitivity is not necessarily tied to formal church doctrine or participation. (p. 394)

Spirituality operates as a belief system that guides daily behavior and can be practiced in a personal and private way (Walker, 2002). The summary based on literature review provided by Jagers & Mock (1993) was the guiding definition for this study.

“... Black children have a strength to maintain high hopes, to keep spirit up, no matter the serious obstacles. Whence such strength? ...” Coles, 1986 (p. 33).

African American children are exposed to faith issues as a part of their cultural heritage. They are introduced to a belief in a higher power early in their life and usually are a witness to many faith practices such as prayer, healing services, communal meetings, Bible studies, choir practices, Christian education summer camp, and church community meetings about prayer being a catalyst for social change (Hale, 2001 & MBiti, 1990). Many researchers (Erikson, 1963; Kohlberg, 1985 & Piaget, 1969) suggest that children go through stages of cognitive, psychosocial, and moral development. These theories are useful in understanding how to foster a child's development.

Other theorists, such as Berryman (1991), Coles (1990), Elkind (1979), Fowler (1981,1993), Hale (2001), Hart 2001, and Horovitz-Darby (1994) have focused on how spirituality can impact a child's development. Experts in spiritual/faith development of children insist that those who work with children should have an understanding of cognitive, psychosocial and spiritual development (Berryman, 1991; Cromwell, 2000; Hart, 2001; Haiman, 1991; Jeynes, 2005; Lewis, 2000; Kimes, Myers and Martin, 1993; Scheindlin, 2003; Wesley, 1999; Westerhoff, 2000 & Yust, 2003).

Specifically, Fowler (1981) established stages in faith development similar to those found in the theories of Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg. He said that people go through six stages of faith development that shape who they are as a person and reflect their attitudes, values, and life experiences. The stages are: Stage One – Intuitive Projective Faith – occurs between age 2 and 6 when children begin to ask endless questions about life and existence. Parents are the most powerful influence at this point in a child's development. During this questioning stage, a parent's response can have a significant impact on what their child perceives as reality. Children in this stage think in images. Stage Two – Mythic Literal Faith – occurs between age 6 and 8 when children's thinking and questioning are not bound by perception. They now view things by cause and effect, and understand the world through narrative or stories. Stage Three – Synthetic Conventional Faith – occurs between ages 10 and 12. Children begin to construct and understand the perspective of others. They want to conform to all significant groups in their lives. God must take on a personality, becoming a companion of a sort. Belief and trust is based on a relationship. In Stage Four, Individuative Reflective Faith, teenagers and adults realize that others have world views which may be different from their own. They have to choose between their own beliefs and the views of others. This stage involves critical reflection. In Stage Five, Conjunctive Faith, adults who have not yet reached mid life, are not ready to subject themselves to another point of view without losing their own identity. Stage Six is Universalizing Faith and affects people chosen by the Providence of God. According to Fowler (1981), these are people chosen to meet the needs of history. People like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mother Theresa, who are drawn to respond in a leadership capacity. These people practice a lifestyle that many

hope to follow in the Kingdom of God. They see the vision, and create ways for people to become part of the process. They are called to loving the world and the Kingdom more than themselves.

This study focused on Stages One and Two, which center on the early childhood through the middle childhood years or from 2 to 8 years of age. Current research has indicated the importance of the early years and how positive experiences and knowledge about child development have an impact on later development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Children's Defense Fund, 2004; Cromwell, 2000; Essa, 2003; Morrison, 2001; NAEYC, 2004 & Ormrod, 2004).

Faith development research has had an impact on education. Researchers in the field of education, spend a significant amount of time learning about the cognitive, physical, social and emotional developmental stages of children and how to implement appropriate curricula based on an understanding of them (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Cromwell 2000; Essa, 2003 & Morrison, 2001). In recent years, professionals who work specifically with African-American children in an urban setting, have sought ways to help the children reduce or cope with negative factors that impact their education (Childrens' Defense fund, 2003, 2004; Essa, 2003; Hale, 2001; Marshak, 1997; NAEYC, 1993; Ormrod, 2004 & Parham, 2000).

Seeking interventions to reduce or cope with these negative factors has become an area of focus for parents, educators, community leaders, and faith-based institutions who are concerned about the plight of children and youth in urban settings, and about how to intervene effectively (Haberman, 1991; Hale, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Olemedo, 1997 & Parham, 2000). There is a growing concern about increasing incidences of drug

and alcohol abuse, suicide, and violence in and outside of school among children beyond the early childhood years. (Haberman, 1991; Leave No Child Behind Act 2003; Ogbu, 1991 & Watson, 1989). The National Research Council (1992) and the Children's Defense fund (2001) further echo moral decay and the concern about the impact it has on the lives of children. The Dodd-Miller comprehensive Act to Leave No Child Behind supported by the Children's Defense Fund (2003) focuses on five aspects to ensure every child has a Healthy Start, Fair Start, Head Start and Moral Start. More than seven million children ages five through fourteen are left home alone after school when they are more likely to engage in risky behaviors like smoking, drinking, sex or crime (Children's Defense Fund, 2003). African-American children are disproportionately represented among the millions of children who are neglected, abused or killed. Although these negative factors are influencing children, there are some children who are able to avoid these influences; they are more resilient, and ultimately, live very successful lives. The critical question to ask: "Does faith, which is a factor in the lives of African-American children, help them succeed against difficult odds?"

Educators agree that certain values should be taught and nurtured based on the founding principles of our nation (Bernard, 1995; Hale, 2001& Lickona, 1983). Children need opportunities to learn the difference between what is right and wrong and to have empathy for others. "If we as educators are silent about the teaching of these basic moral issues, then the other voices will have exclusive call on children's minds" (Etzioni, 1998, p. 448).

It already has been determined that social and emotional and intellectual experiences during the early years of life can have a significant impact on future

development (Coles, 1996; Hendrick, 1998; Hergenbahn, 1972 & Morrison, 1998, 2002). Although historically, in the field of early childhood education, the focus of developing the whole child has been emphasized, the primary focus has been on cognitive and academic issues (Hale, 2001; Kessler, 2002). Now, educators and researchers are discovering the importance of the social and emotional development of the child and are suggesting that these are the most important areas of learning (Haiman, 1991 & Myers & Martin, 1993).

There have been several areas of social and emotional development represented in the research. These include character education, faith and resiliency.

Milstein and Henry (2000), define resiliency as the “process of coping with disruptive, stressful, or challenging life events in a way that provides the individual with additional protective and coping skills than prior to the disruption that results from the event. The capacity to bounce back, to withstand hardship and to repair yourself.”

Werner and Smith (1982) stated that resilience was a common trait found in successful children. Resilient children were significantly more likely than non-resilient children to have an inner focus of control, and an intrinsic confidence in their ability to shape events. These children developed both confidence and hope. Wesley (1998, 1999), suggests that students should connect with their deeper sense of self, the source of wisdom and compassion. If teachers are to build a less violent and more compassionate world, they need to nurture this deeper sense of self in children. Within the deeper sense of self is faith.

Butler (1997) suggests another common characteristic caused resiliency in children. He states that faith helps children to thrive in adverse circumstances. McDevitt

& Ormrod (2004), agree with Butler. “African American families often show positive attributes that sustain children in difficult environmental conditions ... deep religious connections fostered at home can help children deal with life’s stresses” (p. 507) Faith is a confident belief that circumstances in life can change, and a driven inward hope for positive possibilities and good will. As defined by Fowler (1981), “faith undergirds us when our life space is punctured and collapses, when the felt reality of our ultimate environment proves to be less than ultimate.”(p.xii). Faith helps us to find life meaningful and purposeful. More specifically, it is believed that African-American children’s cultural value of faith is a factor in resiliency that in turn builds the self-esteem of the child (Coles, 1996; Haiman, 1991& Hale, 1991).

“Children have an innate capacity for philosophy that is for asking the big questions about life and being, about ethics and values, reality and death...children’s openness, vulnerability and tolerance for mystery enable them to entertain questions regarding existence and being, radical metaphysical questions. By encouraging and taking seriously the big questions of little people we invite the growth of inner wisdom” (Hart, 2001, p. 142).

The faith factor has been a topic of study for a number of years (Coles, 1986; Elkind, 1979; Fowler, 1981 & Lickona,1991). Previous theorists have studied the stages of faith, including how children express their faith (Fowler, 1981 & Helminiak, 1987), spirituality through drawings (Coles, 1986), how faith is a factor in developing character education (Lickona, 1991), and how children interpret their faith through their respective religious denomination (Elkind, 1979). Yet, with all the significant work that has been done, no research has exclusively studied (a) the expression of faith in urban African-

American children during their early childhood years and (b) if faith development stages researched by Fowler applies to African American children.

### **Questions for Investigation**

Researchers, practitioners, and educators differ in the theory on how children develop and what positive factors can be implemented to have an impact on the whole child. Researching the faith factor may indicate a significant influence to consider in educating African American children in how they achieve excellence against difficult odds.

Several questions can be explored when interviewing children about their faith or spiritual experiences. The key questions in this study were:

Q1. Is faith in African American children in a different conceptual framework?

Q2. Will the responses of the children represent the description of the responses of stage one and two children described by Fowler?

Q3. Will the children be able to draw a pictorial representation of their faith experience?

### **Hypotheses**

The general hypotheses of this study were that Christian African American children do not represent stages one and two of Fowler's study and their world view perspective reflected their African American culture instead of the perspective described by Fowler. Also the use of pictures provided additional insight into the faith experiences of these children.

### **Definition of Terms**

A definition of terms is appropriate to clarify words and concepts that will be used throughout the study. The terms and their definitions are explained as they are to be understood by the reader.

**BULWARK:** Something serving as a defense against attack or encroachment. To strengthen physically, emotionally; to strengthen against attack (Witman, 1976).

**CHARACTER:** Character describes the moral or ethical structure of a person (Lickona, 1991).

**COSMOS:** All beings are interrelated and interdependent (Richards, 1980).

**CULTURE:** Behaviors and belief systems that characterize a social group and provide a framework for how group members decide what is normal and appropriate (McDevitt, Ormrod, 2004).

**ETHNICITY:** Refers to a group of individuals with common ancestors who have given their descendents values, beliefs, and behaviors that influence their lives (McDevitt, Ormrod, 2004).

**ETHOS:** The emotional substance of a cultural group; to their collective emotional tone when a group of people share a common heritage, a common set of experiences and a common culture, an emotional bond is created between them (Richards, 1980).

**FAITH:** Faith, rather than belief of religion, is the most fundamental category in the human quest for transcendence. It is a universal feature of human living. It is an orientation of the total person, giving purpose and goal to one's hopes and strivings, thoughts and actions (Fowler, 1981).

**FICTIVE KIN:** A strong bond element in the African American community (Hale, 2001)



**HOPE:** A desire accompanied by some confident expectation. According to the Heartwood Project, hope is linked to faith and aspiration. It elevates one beyond the plans of selfishness to nobility as it reaches out to the future. Also, hope can be defined as the assured sense that one can transcend the present situation. Hope is what helps us when we worry about the future (Myers Kimes, 1997).

**MORAL:** Moral indicates being or acting in accordance with established standards of good behavior (Lickona, 1983).

**NOETIC:** Experiences that are based on feelings, but also have a certainty of intellectual absoluteness. This feelings-based experience has a significant impact on the person.

(Priestley, J. as cited in Erricker, Ota & Erricker, 2001)

**RESILIENCE:** Resilience is bouncing back from an adversity, being able to recover your previous shape after you have been stretched; an inner locus of control – an optimistic confidence, recognition that not all people are destroyed by bad events (Krovetz, 1999).

**SOCIAL PROSPECTIVE:** Describes the way in which the person constructs the self, the other and the relationship between them (Fowler, 1981).

**WORLD COHERENCE:** Describes how a person constructs the object world, including the sense of the ultimate environment. It also includes the elements of social prospective taking. (Fowler, 1981)

**WORLDVIEW:** Refers to the way in which a people make sense of their surroundings, make sense of life and of the universe (Richards, 1980).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section is divided into several subsections that reflect the whole child concept in relation to the Christian African American child. The first section includes an overview of the child development theories introduced by Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg. The next section will include another view about stage development introduced by Fowler. Following the child development stage theories is a section about African American children as it relates to their culture, worldview perspective and experiences in urban schools. The final section will be a closer review of the developmental stages in the areas of cognitive, psychosocial, moral, creative, and faith or spiritual development.

#### **Theories of Child Development**

Piaget noted in his research that children's cognitive development passed through a number of fixed sequences or stages. Each level or stage is defined by how children view the world. One stage covers cognitive development, the sensory-motor stage that occupies the first 18 to 24 months of life. At this stage, the child's behavior is based on using his senses and his motor skills to explore and make sense of his environment. The preoperational stage, 2 to 7 years of age, is marked by prelogical thinking and increased language. In the concrete operational stage, seven to eleven years of age, the child is able to apply logic to problems in the present. In the last stage, formal operations, beyond age eleven, the child is able to apply logic to all situations (Piaget, 1967).

Erikson developed the eight stages of man in psychosocial development, which are: Stage One: Basic Trust vs. Mistrust; Stage Two: Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt;

Stage Three: Initiative vs. Guilt; Stage Four: Industry vs. Inferiority; Stage Five: Identity vs. Role Confusion; Stage Six: Intimacy vs. Isolation; Stage Seven: Generativity vs. Stagnation; and Stage Eight: Ego Integrity vs. Despair. (Erikson, 1963).

Kohlberg said children's moral thinking occurs in developmental levels. The levels are: the Preconventional Level – ages 4 through 10; the Conventional Level -- ages 10 through 13; and the Post Conventional Level – age 13 and older (Kohlberg, 1981) .

This study focused only on the stages that reflect early development in children ages 5 through 8. These theories included Piaget's Pre- Operational and Concrete Operational Stages, Erikson's Industry vs. Inferiority Stage, and Kohlberg's Preconventional Level.

### **Other Theories**

In addition to the traditional stage theorists, there is another perspective in developing the whole child. Fowler (1981) has proposed that there are stages of faith just as there are stages of psychosocial development as described by Erikson, cognitive development by Piaget, and moral development by Kohlberg. There are six stages in Fowler's theory and each has seven aspects. While the study focused on Stages One and Two, a brief description of all the stages of Fowler's theory will follow. The stages of Faith are:

- Stage One: Intuitive-Projective Faith;
- Stage Two: Mythic-Literal Faith;
- Stage Three: Synthetic-Conventional Faith;
- Stage Four: Individuative-Reflective Faith;

- Stage Five: Conjunctive Faith;
- Stage Six: Universalizing Faith.

Fowler names the period before Stage One as Primal Faith. During this three-year period he refers to nursed faith that is fostered by the adult caregiver.

**INTUITIVE-PROJECTIVE FAITH:** (Ages 3 through 6) During this period, the child perceives his world based on rewards or punishments and imitates the actions of significant adults. The expression of comprehension is through images and narratives.

**MYTHIC-LITERAL FAITH:** (Ages 6 through 12) The child's moral reasoning is based on reciprocal fairness, and reasoning is intrinsically concrete.

**SYNTHETIC CONVENTION FAITH:** (Ages 12 through 18) The child has the desire to conform to society, has the ability to think more abstractly, and wants to conform.

**INDIVIDUATIVE-REFLECTIVE FAITH:** (Ages 18 and older) This stage involves critical reflection, can receive the perspective of others and considers the world view in relation to situations.

In addition to the stages, Fowler has developed seven aspects in each stage of faith:

- Cognitive
- Perspective
- Ethical
- Social
- Authority
- Worldview

➤ Symbolic

He also shows that there is a connection between faith development and the other stage theories (Fowler, 1981). It has already been determined that the social/emotional and intellectual experiences of a child during the early years of life can have a significant impact on future development (Coles, 1996; Haiman, 1991; Hendrick, 1998; Hergenbahn, 1972; McDevitt, Ormrod, 2004 & Morrison, 1998). The factors that influence the positive and negative aspects of a child range from home environment, preparedness of teachers, relevancy of the subject matter to life experiences, and developmental ages of children (Haberman, 1995; Milstein & Henry, 2000 & Weiner, 1993). It appears that the stages of faith as identified by Fowler (1981) have as significant an impact on the development of the whole child as the other stage theories.

Currently, educators and researchers Bruce, Stellern, (2005); Berger, (1995); Kohn, (1997); Lickona, (1991); Noddings, (2005) are re-evaluating the possible positive impact of character education, which has a faith-hope component, and includes the notion of community building. The review of these theories is based on past research studies which did not include a diverse ethnic or cultural population. It is difficult to generalize from the research because the original study (Fowler, 1981) was not implemented with a diverse population.

In some cases, faith or spirituality is considered an issue that should not be addressed in education. However, some of the attributes of faith are character development and values. Character building and values are integral in the process of how one feels and relates to others in a social environment. Contributing to the dearth of research in this area are other practices introduced to affect character and values

education. These practices have focused on changing the learning environment of the urban schools, instructional practices, and stressing the importance of early education (Allison, 1997; Bruce & Stellern, 2005; Haberman, 1991; Hendrick, 1998; Noddings, 2003 & Scherer, 1996). Most students have little identity beyond home and school.

“To the world, they are anonymous nobodies. It is through the way they are treated, challenged, and coached that they become some bodies ... helping students on their journey from being nobody to becoming somebody who is unique and special” (Wesley, 1998, 1999, p.42).

These researchers believed enhanced social development would make a positive impact on academic achievement.

Lickona (1991) influenced by Kohlberg and Whitman, has identified eight values he contends should be taught in schools. Kessler (1998, 1999), states that, “to the generation at risk; drugs, sex, gang violence, and even suicide may be both a search for connection and meaning and an escape from the pain of not having a genuine source of spiritual fulfillment” (p. 49). These theorists support stages of moral development and provide a conceptual framework for preparing curriculum and materials for classroom instruction.

Although the above educators and researchers raised relevant questions, their framework for the answers were based on theories that were very narrow in scope and only provided partial solutions (Darby-Horovitz, 1994; Elkind, 1978; McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004 & Myers Kimes, 1992).

As stated, several theorists have studied the stages of development in the areas of cognitive, affective, spiritual and character development (Coles, 1996; Erikson, 1963; Fowler, 1981; Lickona, 1991 & Piaget, 1967). Others have studied the environment and

quality learning experiences Comer, (1968); Haberman, (1991); Ogbu, (1991).

Although all of these studies provide significant insight, they do not consider how to structure the framework that can be applied to the diverse population of students in a school setting that would enhance the quality of their educational experience.

Whitman (1976) and Lickona (1991) suggest that faith protects, provides direction and can serve as an inner voice or light. Fowler (1981) suggests how faith provides purpose and meaning. This description of faith and how it can guide or strengthen the child is another dimension to consider in identifying components that develop the whole child; habits of mind, heart, and actions (Fay, 1993; Helminiak, 1997; Kessler, 2000; Lickona, 1991 & Myers & Myers, 1992). The limited research specific to African-American children in urban schools and the suggested significance faith can have on the overall development of the child and his academic success may signal a need to re-examine the faith factor.

### **African-American Culture**

**“We’ve come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord;  
Trusting in His Holy Word,  
He’s never failed us yet.  
Oh, can’t turn around.  
We’ve come this far by faith.”  
-African American gospel song by Albert G. Goodson  
(as cited in Hale, 1991, p.7)**

As teachers, we must recognize that each child brings his own home culture to the learning environment. This culture will be influenced by ethnicity, race, and social class. Teachers need to be educated about the values and cultural heritage of children so they

will understand the effects the home culture has on the child (Marshak, 1997). Deep within the heritage of the African American experience is spirituality, the main driving force that helped the ancestors of the past survive the horrors of slavery. “To deny the history of a people is to deny their humanity. To say that a people have no culture is to say that they have no common history which has shaped them and taught them.” (Billingsley, 1968, p. 37). The strength of the distinctive African American culture is our African spiritual history, and this has provided for us the vitality to survive in the European culture (Richards, 1980). The enslaved African experience was incompatible with the African people’s religious principle of having the Divine within them. Through this, African Americans discovered their humanity in spite of the European Christianity assertions. In discovering this divinity, a new African cultural expression unique to North America emerged -- the African American spiritual music, dance, thought patterns, laughter and walk. The uniqueness of the African American spiritual experience is the belief in oneness and coming together as a community. The first expression of this was the prayer meetings to feel the Spirit within them (Cone, 1970, 1984; Frazier, 1948 & Hale, 2001).

“The conversion of African Americans to Christianity lacked equality. Many whites wondered if their religion should be shared with bondsmen. They struggled with the issues of freedom through baptism, not working on Sundays and the notion of religious equality” (Hale, 1994, p. 138). A redefining of the meaning of Christianity was created by African Americans. This new version embraced equality, dignity, self-worth, and change. Oppressive acts would be dealt with by the Devine in this world and the next. The gospel of the oppressed spoke of freedom, ultimate justice of God. Jesus is a



personal deliverer and warrior (Cone, 1970, 1984). “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke: 4:18-19, Isaiah: 42:7, Hale, 1994, p. 140). Many African American Christian church services are based on the Hush Harbors practiced by enslaved Africans. In Hush Harbors, the church services considered a sacred place where people seeking salvation come together as a community to be enlightened, uplifted and transformed. The congregation is composed of church members including children, the deacons, the choir and musicians. The prayers, music, and community singing brings everyone to one accord and lifts them from their humanness to spiritual beings. The preacher using oratorical flair brings a message of hope, love, faith, and freedom (Richards, 1980). “They defeated the death of European oppression and European culture. They survived as spiritual beings and as Africans” (Richards, 1980, p. 27).

The African American church historically is a strong organization. It embodies community, it embraces African American values, and identifies with the struggles and achievements of African Americans. The Black church represents freedom, independence, respect for leadership, self-esteem, self-development, leadership and recreation. The church is the one place where African Americans can find unconditional positive regard. (Billingsley, 1992; Frazier, 1948; Hale, 1994, 2001 & Hill, 1999). “The height of religious expression, the most profound metaphysical statement for a person of African descent is that eternal joy in which they feel themselves to be the receptacle of a spiritual being ‘Filled with the Holy Ghost.’ For there is no closer bond than a group of

Black people can feel than that which comes from the experience of feeling and expressing their deepest emotions together. African Americans are a spiritual/emotional people” (Richards, 1980, p.29).

Spirituality helped families stay focused on the hope and promise of a brighter tomorrow. It taught this particular ethnic group that a force within them and outside of them will help them through any situation. Embodied in spirituality is the importance of family and the community. African American families draw great strength from uniting together for a common goal, a drive for purpose and meaning in their lives.

Historically, African American families instill in their children the importance of faith, trust in God and the belief that all things work together for the common good. Deep within the culture of this group is a sense of ethnic pride and unity. Unfortunately, outside their community, the uniqueness of the culture is not as valued. This attitude has historically caused many African American children to feel inferior to or less important than the dominant cultural group. This sense of inferiority and the lack of recognition about the great qualities this ethnic group has to offer the greater community has caused some of its members to fall short of their dreams. Children will bring their culture into their life experiences, including the classroom. During the early childhood years, the child is seeking opportunities to be accepted and recognized for his unique abilities.

“It is important that African American children engage in religious ritual. It is even more important that African American children understand, respect, and obey the supreme spirit which makes them human. The sense of the supreme being will help these children realize that there is a power and a will that is greater than all else ... their natural path is to grow in understanding toward the supreme force” (McAdoo, 1981, p. 84; Cone,

1984 & Hale, 1982, 2001). Deep in the heritage of African Americans is the African belief, an Ashanti proverb, “No one shows a child the Supreme Being,” meaning that everybody, even children, knows of God’s existence almost by instinct. (MBiti, 1990, p.29). Strong religious orientation is deeply embedded in Black child rearing (Hale, 2001). In this religious culture, God is believed to be omniscient, that is to know all things. He is omnipresent, that is to be simultaneously everywhere. And He is omnipotent, that is to be almighty, all-powerful. Therefore, God knows everything, observes everything and hears everything without limitation and without exception. In the African American religious culture, God is a Spirit. But in thinking and talking about Him, African Americans often use anthropomorphic images. Within this culture, God is a personal Father (Abba Father or Daddy). He can be angry or grieved. And He has a sense of humor. In the stages of faith identified by Fowler (1981), anthropomorphic images of God \usually are identified only in the early to late-early stages of childhood faith development. But in the African American culture it is throughout the life span (Fowler, 1981; Hall, 2001 & MBiti, 1990).

A vehicle that is used to teach African American children the nuggets of their faith is the use of proverbs and folk beliefs. These oral traditions serve to preserve religious principles and transmit folk wisdom across generations. For example, “What is done in the dark will come to light.” “Where there is a will, there is a way.” “If you can’t take it, you can’t make it.” “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.” “You must take the bitter with the sweet.” “You have to crawl before you walk.” “You can’t have your cake and eat it, too.” Folktales such as these illustrate the importance of

faith and perseverance. They teach children that they can achieve power in the midst of a powerless community. (Hale, 1994, p. 149).

### **Afrocentric Worldview**

In order to understand the Christian faith in the African American culture, we must consider the afrocentric worldview or, as Fowler (1981) states, the form of world coherence, which he describes as the way a person constructs the object world, including the sense of the ultimate environment. It answers the question, “How do things make sense?” It also includes elements of the social world. Social perspective describes the way in which the person constructs the self, the other, and the relationship between the two. Another aspect is the bounds of social awareness, which is the person’s group identification. (Fowler, 1981, pp. 22-24). Fowler proposed that religious and philosophical beliefs develop in a predictable sequence. Initially, the trust that children establish with parents predisposes them to accept parents’ beliefs. As children grow older, they make sense of preaching in accordance with their current reasoning abilities. In Stage One, the early childhood years, children apply an intuitive, projective, and active imagination to construct their own interpretation of religious ideas and symbols. In Stage Two, during the middle childhood years, children continue to make sense of religion, now striving for logical coherence. Religious ideas in mythical literal faith reflect a dependence on concrete reality that characterizes thinking during middle childhood. Children during middle childhood unquestionably accept religious doctrines and practices that their parents and others pass down to them (Fowler, 1989; McDevitt & Ormond, 2004).

“The conceptual system of how we relate to reality determines the way we perceive, think, feel, and experience the world.” (Myers, 1988). “The Afrocentric worldview is all people are called through a process of deification to the attainment of everlasting peace and happiness” (Myers, 1988, p.63). Myers also said that Fowler’s system of world perspective was a move toward a more optimal conceptual system which assumes that reality is at once spiritual and material. All things are interrelated; the material realm is merely the most outward manifestation of the spiritual.

Experts in Afrocentric studies (Azibo, 1996; Billingsley, 1968, 1992; Frazier, 1948; Hale, 2001; Hill, 1999; MBiti, 1990; Myers, 1988; Parham, 2000 & Richards, 1980) say that African Americans need to have a “Sankofa” experience in order to comprehend how the Afrocentric worldview permeates every aspect of their life.

“Sankofa is a Twi term derived from the Akan people of Ghana, West Africa. It means to go back and fetch what has been lost or stolen. As expressed as a cultural axiom, Sankofa is understood to mean that as one reflects on or returns to his or her source or origin, one ascends” (Parham, 2000, p. 91).

Hale (2001), Myers (1988), and Richards (1980) perceive the Afrocentric worldview as opposite of the western worldview. The African universe is cosmos (Richards, 1980) meaning all beings are interrelated and interdependent. The western worldview is power, control, and destruction. The human response to the universe is reason and emotion. Reason is the valued aspect of humanity and we are to control or deny emotion. Scheindin (2003) admonishes this world view perspective and contends that theorists who research emotional development, such as Goleman, stress the control of emotions instead of focusing on the deeper understanding of emotions and how they

relate to spirituality. The African conception is different. Spirit and emotion are the essence of humanness.

“The African worldview is characterized by unity, harmony, spirituality, and organic interrelationship. The European worldview is characterized by compartmentalization, isolation, separation, control (power relationships), conflict (tension), materialism and mechanical relationship. The two world views are in conflict with one another. The spiritual ethos that inherits a sacred cosmic view is forced to adjust to a materialistic society” (Richards, 1980, p. 9).

In the Afrocentric world view, the basic humanity principles are based on the belief that every life is important, and the community helps each person thrive. Cooperation and collaboration are valued above competition and individualism. More importantly, the core of a person is spiritual, which permeates the cognitive, social, and emotional development as well as their behavior (Hale, 1994; MBiti, 1990 & Richards, 1980). The Afrocentric worldview and culture needs to be considered in the education of the African American child. This will be reviewed in the next section.

### **African-American Children and Achievement in Urban Schools**

**Children today face an extremely challenging social environment. They experience growing economic disparity, the increasing acceptance of violence and abuse, a sense of disenchantment with government and society’s hopelessness, helplessness, and powerlessness. (Berreth & Berman, 1997)**

When considering African-American children in the urban school, the environment should be taken into consideration. Haberman (1996) states that urban education commonly is used as a catch-all category and euphemism for conditions

perceived as undesirable, such as violence, poverty, drug use, crime, dysfunctional families, inadequate housing, and poor schools.

One issue in urban education is teacher preparation. The lack of understanding and respect for the children and their home environment becomes a hindrance to the basic structure of education (Allison, 1997; Gestwicki, 2004; Williams & Woods 1997). Historically, the educational process has been a key focus in the African American community. Ancient Africans built a system of education on their belief in the greatest good. For these ancestors, the purpose of education was to teach ways to achieve everlasting peace and happiness. Now, however, African Americans consider education as an avenue to a successful and independent life. Families stress the importance of education and parents want their children to get more education than they did (Hale, 2001; Myers, 1988). Some pre-service teachers take jobs in to urban schools as a last resort. They come to the school unprepared to relate to the culture, setting, and family structure. Because of their lack of experience, they become frustrated with the conditions and feed into the old assumption that urban children are not intelligent, are violent, and lack family support. (Boykin, 1983; Essa, 2003; Haberman, 1996; Hale, 2001; Olmedo, 1997 & Parham, 2000). Furthermore, Hale (1982) states that the American educational system has not been effective in educating African American children. She reports that the system is not working because a disproportionate number of African American children are labeled hyperactive, mentally retarded and are suspended, expelled and pushed out of schools. She further reports that the orientation of American social scientists has been to define African American home environments as pathological and

African American parents as deficient in preparing their children for school. (Hale, 1982, pp.1 and 2).

Many veteran teachers working in urban schools are white suburbanites who lack experience in relating to African American children and their families (Hale, 2001; Parham, 2000; Scherer, 1996; Watson, 1989). As a result, teachers are on one side of the fence and children on the other with a great chasm between them. Because of this lack of understanding, some teachers perceive urban school children as extremely undisciplined, almost impossible to educate, and with parents who are not interested in education. Students perceive teachers as uncaring individuals who only want them to conform to their way of thinking and gaining knowledge (Allison, 1997 & Ladson-Billings, 1992). This situation is not conducive to an open and rich educational environment.

Another problem to be considered is the issue of the expectation level of student performance in the urban school setting. Some teachers have very low expectations for the urban child. They expect most urban students to be unsuccessful in acquiring minimal educational knowledge, have little to offer in the classroom experience, and their culture and background to have little significance in acquiring an education (Brenzel & Kantor, 1992; Hale, 2001; Olmedo, 1997; Ogbu, 1992 & Watson, 1989). Just as disturbing, students begin to believe or internalize what is said and believed about them, and begin to respond to the expectations (i.e., self-fulfilling prophecy).

The urban students become apathetic in the classroom, have low attendance or high tardiness, believe it is the teacher's responsibility for them to learn, feel their education is irrelevant to their daily life, and express that they are suffering institutional discrimination (Bamburg, 1994; Brenzel & Kantor, 1992; Haberman, 1997 & Ogbu,



1992). Those who want to raise educational standards and improve classroom learning must acknowledge, especially for the one student in five who live in poverty, that the out-of-school lives of these students cannot be ignored. Children spend most of their time beyond the schoolhouse walls. Even inside the school, their learning bears the indelible stamp of outside influences. The support system of students in need has to be shored up so they will have a sturdy foundation on which to stand. The school should be viewed as part of a youngster's life. Families and communities, too, need help if they are to structure relationships that provide children with values and opportunities in harmony with productive learning (Maeroff, 1998).

Educators and researchers (Billings, 1992; Bredekamp and Copple, 1997; Cortes, 1996; Cromwell, 2000; Gestwicki, 2004; Haberman, 1991, 1997; Kozol, 1971; Lake, 1990; Morrison, 2001; Scherer, 1996; & Williams & Woods, 1997) have indicated changes that may offer solutions to the problem of curriculum. These researchers have discussed the importance of knowing the family and culture of the children. Boykin (1983, as cited in Parham, 2000) developed the "Triple Quandary Theory."

He states that African American students must successfully navigate three distinct but interrelated realms of experience: (1) the main stream experience typified by the European American cultural experience as normative, (2) the minority experience as typified by the African American marginalized status in American society, and (3) the Afro-cultural orientations, as typified by the nine Afro-cultural dimensions (p. 89). African American children can be successful only if they can navigate the two world perspectives. The high rate of failure in schools is due to the discontinuity between the school culture and the social, and cultural experiences of the children. Schools need to

build on cultural strengths that African American children bring with them to the classroom. “They grow up in an environment that encourages extemporaneous speaking, memory development, musical genius and oratorical flair” (Hale, 1999, p. 9). African American children do not receive a manual on how to be White. They realize that if they are to have success in school they must abandon the speech and behavior of the people who love and raise them. These children can become more successful in school when the curriculum more closely reflects the environment and learning styles of their cultural background (Hale, 1982; 1984; 2001). In addition, involving the children in the educational process is of equal importance. Children in urban environments have something to offer and, given a chance, teachers will find these children to be very creative and willing to share their experiences as well as the ability to relate them to current lessons in the classroom. Urban children need connections between what they are experiencing within their environment and what is expected of them in the classroom (Allison, 1997; Weiner, McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004). These children have the same desires as children from other schools. They desire respect, concern, love, compassion, and genuine awareness that comes from the teacher being interested enough to know about their life in the community where they live.

A caring climate is an essential element in promoting a conducive environment for young children to learn. Children respond to the warm and positive regard teachers display toward them that is not based upon the behavior the child may exhibit. The teacher shows the child unconditional caring by responding in a concerned, compassionate manner, even in the most difficult circumstances (Hendrick, 1998; Morrison, 2001 & Oladele, 1999). When teachers show such regard to the child and his

family, it can have a significant impact on his achievement, especially during the early years (Berger, 1995, 2004; Hendrick, 1998; Morrison, 1998, 2001; Stevenson & Stern, 1997). Watson, Lewis, & Schaps (1996) believe that providing an environment that has characteristics of caring and a sense of family can have a significant impact on educating children. In addition, higher academic performance, stronger motivation to learn, greater liking for school, less absenteeism, greater social competence, fewer conduct problems, reduced drug use and delinquency, and a greater commitment to democratic values are some of the benefits of providing support. However, in order for these considerations to be effective, there needs to be an understanding of the developmental stages of children and how development is a consideration in educating and evaluating achievement of the child during the early years.

### **Developmental Stages in Early and Middle Childhood**

Development is a biological term referring to physical growth over time. Applied to psychology, development involves the growth of an individual's thinking, emotions, and strategies for coping with the environment (McDevitt & Ormond, 2004 & Singer, Revenson, 1978). In all aspects of a child's life there seems to be a developmental sequence (Fowler, 1981; McDevitt & Ormond, 2004 & Morrison, 1998). In this section, the developmental stages will be reviewed in two categories: traditional and alternative theories.

The traditional theories that will be reviewed are: cognitive, (Piaget, 1967); psychosocial, (Erikson, 1963); and moral, (Kohlberg, 1981). The alternative theories are: creative, (Lowenfeld, 1982; Kellogg, 1967; Gardner, 1980; Levick, 1998); spiritual/art, (Darby-Horovitz, 1994); spirituality, (Elkind, 1978; Myers & Kimes, 1993, 1997, 1999;

Coles 1989, 1996, 1997); and faith, (Fowler 1981). These theories were reviewed in relation to how each may impact academic achievement and the whole child perspective, specifically, African-American children. For the purpose of this study, the emphasis will be on development during the early to middle childhood years, children five through ten years of age.

## **Traditional Theories**

### ***Cognitive Development***

According to Piaget (1967), the mental structures necessary for intellectual development are genetically determined. These mental structures, which include the nervous system and sensory organs, set limits for intellectual functioning at specific ages. As these structures become more developed through maturation, the child can use them more effectively to deal with the environment. Piaget conceives development as a sequence of stages through which all children pass in order to achieve an adult level of intellectual functioning. Later stages evolve from and are built on earlier ones. The sequence of stages is fixed and unchangeable (Singer & Revenson, 1978).

Piaget (1967, pp. 5, 6) describes the developmental stages of intelligence:

**STAGE ONE:** This is the reflex or hereditary stage, at which the first instinctual nutritional drives and first emotions appear.

**STAGE TWO:** At which the first motor habits and the first organized percepts, as well as the first differentiated emotions appear.

**STAGE THREE:** The sensor motor or practical intelligence (prior to language) of elementary external affective fixations. These first three stages constitute the infancy period from birth until the age of 2.

**STAGE FOUR:** The stage of intuitive intelligence, of spontaneous interpersonal feelings and of social relationships in which the child is subordinate to the adult (ages 2 to 7, or early childhood).

**STAGE FIVE:** The stage of concrete intellectual operations (the beginning of logic) and of moral and social feelings of cooperation (ages 7 to 12, or middle childhood).

**STAGE SIX:** The stage of abstract intellectual operations, of the formation of the personality, and of affective and intellectual entry into the society of adults (adolescence).

During early childhood, from 2 to 7 years, with the appearance of language, behavior is modified both affectively and intellectually. Specifically, it has an impact on mental development by the possibility of verbal exchange with other persons, the onset of socialization of action, the internalization of words (that is, the appearance of thought itself) supported by internal language and a system of sign. And last and most important, the internalization of action which, rather than being purely perceptual and motor as before, can represent itself intuitively by means of pictures and mental experiments (Piaget, 1967). During this time in the child's life, he is developing affectively. Closely linked to interests or activity-related values are the feelings of self-evaluation, the well-known feelings of inferiority or feelings of superiority. All of the successes and failures of the child's own activity become registered in a kind of permanent scale of values, successes elevating his pretensions and failures lowering them with regard to his future actions. As a result, the child is led to evaluate himself, a factor, which may have great

repercussions on his whole development, particularly in the area of intellectual development, or how he perceives his intellectual ability (Piaget, 1967).

The age 7 (middle childhood), coincides with the start of formal education and marks a decisive turning point in mental development. In all aspects of the child's psychological life, new constructs begin. At this age, the child becomes capable of cooperation because he no longer confuses his own point of view with that of others. True discussions are now possible in that the child shows comprehension with respect to the other's point of view, and search for justification or proof with respect to his own statements. This is important and the beginning of logical reasoning within the child (concrete operation). The child no longer relies on intuition or his senses, but is able to group, compose, and reverse a series of data (Piaget, 1967).

Another way to understand the stages of Piaget is summarized by Wadsworth (1996, pp. 26-27).

**STAGE ONE:** The stage of sensory motor intelligence (birth to 2 years). During this stage, behavior is primarily sensory and motor. The child does not yet internally represent events and think conceptually, although cognitive development seen as schemata is constructed.

**STAGE TWO:** The state of preoperational thought (2 to 7 years). This stage is characterized by the development of language and other forms of representation and rapid conceptual development. Reasoning during this stage is dominated by perception and is thus pre-logical or semi-logical.

**STAGE THREE:** The stage of concrete operations (7 to 11 years, middle childhood). During these years, the child develops the ability to apply logical thought to concrete problems.

**STAGE FOUR:** The stage of formal operations (11 to 15 years or older). During this stage the child's cognitive structure reaches its greatest level of development and the child becomes capable of applying logical reasoning to all classes of problems. Development is thought to flow in a cumulative manner, each new step in development built on, and becoming integrated with, previous steps.

Another view in comparison to Piaget's cognitive theory is Vygotsky. Both Piaget and Vygotsky were concerned with intellectual development, but each pursued different problems and questions. Piaget was interested primarily in how knowledge is formed or constructed (Wadsworth, 1996, p. 10). Piaget's theory was on construction within the mind of the individual. Vygotsky was interested in how social and cultural factors influence intellectual development. His theory dealt with how interactions within the culture affect the child's intellectual development.

**Psychoanalysis today is implementing the study of the ego, a concept denoting a man's capacity to unify his experience and his action in an adaptive manner. (Erikson, 1963, p. 15).**

### *Psychosocial Development*

The "Eight Stages of Man" (Erikson, 1963, pp. 247-268 & Morrison, 1998) is a description of how a person develops the identity of self in relation to his environment.

**STAGE ONE:** basic trust vs. mistrust, birth to 2 years. Trust is born of care beginning in infancy, in fact, the touchstone of the actuality of a given religion. All

religions have in common the periodical childlike surrender to a provider or providers who dispense earthly fortune as well as spiritual health. Adults exemplify the faith one can have in God (Erikson, 1963, p. 250). Children learn to trust or mistrust their environment and people who care for them. Trust develops when children's needs are met consistently, predictably, and lovingly (Morrison, 1998).

**STAGE TWO:** Autonomy vs. shame and doubt, 18 months to about 3 years. A sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem comes a lasting sense of good will and pride. This is the stage of independence, when children want to do things for themselves. Lack of opportunities to become independent and overprotection result in self-doubt and poor achievement. As a result, instead of feeling pride about their ability, they will feel ashamed.

**STAGE THREE:** Initiative vs. guilt, 3 years to about 5 years. The child exhibits new hope and responsibility and is actively involved in the environment. During the preschool years, children need opportunities to respond with initiative to activities and tasks, which gives them a sense of purposefulness and accomplishment. Children can feel guilt when they are discouraged or restricted from initiating activities.

**STAGE FOUR:** Industry vs. inferiority, the elementary school years. The child wins recognition by producing things. If the child despairs of his tools and skills or of his status among his tool peers, the child may be discouraged from identification with them and with a section of the tool world. The child wants opportunities to build things, discover, manipulate objects, and find out how things work. Productivity and recognition of productivity are important during this stage. Children need positive responses from



adults and peers, which help to develop a positive self-concept. Feelings of inferiority result when children are criticized, belittled, or have few opportunities for productivity.

**STAGE FIVE:** Identity vs. role confusion, middle school years through high school. The focus for the child is his concern about how he appears to be to others as compared with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect the roles and skills learned earlier with the occupational prototypes of the day. During this stage, the adolescent is faced with the same trials/concerns from the earlier stage of trying to integrate all or solidify all of his previous identification of self. He is in search of an occupation. If he has doubt about himself, and the ability to settle on an occupation, he experiences role confusion, i.e. cliques, crowds, and so forth.

**STAGE SIX:** Intimacy vs. isolation, young adult. The young adult emerges from the search for and the insistence on identity, and is now eager and willing to fuse his identity with that of others. He is ready for intimacy, that is, the capacity to commit himself to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments, even though they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises.

**STAGE SEVEN:** Generativity vs. stagnation, adult. Generativity is the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation, although there are individuals who, through misfortune or because of special and genuine gifts in other directions, do not apply this drive to their own offspring.

**STAGE EIGHT:** Ego integrity vs. despair, mature adult. The mature adult is seeking order and meaning. It is the acceptance of one's life as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted no substitutions. It means a new, different love for one's

parents. It is the comradeship with the ordering ways of distant times and different pursuits, as expressed in the simple products and sayings of such times and pursuits. For the purpose of this study, stages one through four were considered. In taking a closer look, stages one through four look at the beginning of identity for a child, which is connected to his self-esteem.

The growing child must, at every step, derive a vitalizing sense of actuality from the awareness that his individual way of mastering experience is a successful variant of group identity and is in accord with its space-time and life plan ... a child's ego identity gains real strength only from wholehearted and consistent recognition of real accomplishment of achievement that has meaning in the culture (Erikson, 1963, pp. 235-236).

Society demands and schools stress the importance of academic competence and high achievement. Erikson said identity, self-esteem and achievement cannot be separate from the cultural perspective of the child. He questioned, "How can a child succeed in his environment if he has to abandon his identity, which is grounded in his culture?" This was a profound question from Erikson in 1963 that has great insight in to the difficulties African American children continue to face today. The world view perspective and culture that makes up the identity of the African American child is something that is not valued in the dominant white culture (Allsion, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Gestwicki, 2004; Hale, 1994; McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004; Myers, 1988 & Watson, 1989).

Erikson gives an example of Black identity. He explains that deep in the historical culture of the Negro child is a rich sensory and oral tradition that builds the child's identity and emancipated him from the race that enslaved his ancestors. Furthermore, after slavery, the dominant race depleted the strength of Africans' identity

by characterizing them, as dark, dirty and dumb, versus light, clean, clever, and white.

This fragments the identity of the Black child, causing him to regress into a “hypochondriac invalidism as a condition which represents an analogy to the dependence and the relative safety of defined restriction in the South: a neurotic regression to the ego identity of the slave” (Erikson, 1963, p. 242).

This type of perception of self, or identity fragments, makes it difficult for the Black child to identify and participate in the American identity of self. As a result, it has an impact on the stage which Erikson believes has a significant impact on adult life; the state of initiative and industry. The rich culture of the African American child becomes threatened during the school age years, when the White culture rejects his experiences and attempts to replace them with a more American personality. A lasting ego identity cannot exist if the child is forced to forget or ignore his past, which includes the social content that will develop a strong identity.

A contemporary of the same theory relating to African-American children and achievement is Kunjufu (1988).

We came out of slavery, by and large, with a European frame of reference. Many of us define beauty as light skin, long hair and blue eyes. We have envisioned Jesus in the same image. An unacceptable percentage of our youth believe they are inferior to Caucasians in education and economics ... one of the major repercussions of slavery was the public characterization of African being intellectually inferior ... The expectation of intellectual inferiority is one effect of slavery and its continued psychology effect of eroding confidence in our youth to the point of attributing academic achievement to being white ... (pp. 12, 13).

Erikson and Kunjufu have similar views that African-American children have to combat against the prediction of failure based upon the African part of their self, as depicted in the American dominant culture. A sense of self for the African-American child in part comes from embracing his culture and his sense of community. For the purpose of this study, we will focus on Stage Four, industry versus inferiority, which occurs during the elementary school years.

### ***Moral Development***

Kohlberg (1969, 1971, 1981) has proposed a comprehensive scheme for developmental and comparative research on moral understandings. The scheme builds upon the work of Piaget (1932, 1965) by identifying three major levels in the attainment of moral understandings and dividing each level into two stages (Kagan & Lamb, 1987, p.5)

Kohlberg has identified three levels and six stages.

**FIRST LEVEL:** Pre-conventional, ages 4 to 10. Morality is based on good versus bad, in a system of punishment and reward from adults in authority positions. In Stage One of this level, the child decides his actions on whether the consequence of his actions will lead to physical punishment. In stage two, individualism, the child's actions are motivated by satisfaction of needs. Will it meet the immediate interest of the child? Also, right is what is fair, an equal exchange, an agreement.

**SECOND LEVEL:** Conventional, ages 10 to 13. Morality is doing what is socially accepted, approved. Stage Three in this level is the attempt to live up to what is expected by family and peers or what generally is expected of people in the role of girl, boy, son,

daughter and so on. Stage Four, social system and conscience, is an emphasis on respect for authority and recognizing that laws are to be followed and upheld.

**THIRD LEVEL:** Post-conventional, or principle, ages 13 and older. Morality goes beyond the group or authority structure. Now the child develops a moral system that reflects universal consideration of rights. Stage Five, social contract, the child becomes aware that people hold a variety of values and opinions. Also that most values and rules are relative to a particular group, which includes democracy and personal values. Stage Six, universal ethical principles. Decisions are made by the universal principles of justice: the equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984; Kagan & Lamb, 1987 & Morrison, 1998). For the purpose of this study, the focus was on level one, pre-conventional and level two, conventional.

All three theorists, Piaget (1967), Erikson (1963), and Kohlberg (1981, 1983) have similar beliefs about the development of how children perceive themselves and the importance of the positive interactions with others. Children need to be active learners, and engage in interactions with others. Through these interactions, they will be able to construct their own knowledge (Fowler, 1981; McCarthy, Gallagher & Reid, 1983).

The understanding of how children construct knowledge can help us understand how children can work through and understand moral dilemmas.

DeVries & Kohlberg (1987) completed research with children from kindergarten to second grade. They discovered that even children at this age can engage in a lengthy discussion about dilemmas that are appropriate for their age. The framework for their dilemmas were based on the following issues; truth telling, taking turns or reciprocity,

promise keeping, property rights and rules. DeVries & Kohlberg state that social moral development can best be fostered in a classroom that has an atmosphere of community. Other educators also have stressed the importance of establishing a community within the classroom and school (Kozol, 1997; Lewis & Schapps & Watson, 1996). In addition to the important factor of community, DeVries & Kohlberg (1987), contend that children need to be able to internalize in order to construct their own moral reasoning. This is done by coming to terms with their own understanding when they interact with others. Piaget (1967), would call this assimilation and moving away from egocentrism.

The coming to terms with their own understanding and the process of moral development through the use of dilemmas, allows children to work through conflict and rethink their perspective based on their interactions with peers. In this process, teachers are the facilitators of the dialogue by providing the situations or dilemmas and presenting reasoning at a higher level. The teacher allows children to discuss these issues with their peers, which helps them construct new meaning (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987).

## **Other Theories**

### ***Creative Development***

**A drawing captures symbolically on paper some of the subject's thoughts and feelings ... It makes a portion of the inner self visible (Klepsch & Logie, 1982, p.6).**

Goodenough (1926) published the first test, and Harris (1963) revised the test, which evaluates children's drawings on a point scale, which is known as the

Goodenough-Harris Draw A Man Test (Goodenough, 1926; Harris, 1963 & Klepsch & Logie, 1982). This test is used by educators to evaluate development based on details in a person's drawing. If the drawing is of a person, the legs, arms, trunk, and head will reveal clues about the development of the person who drew it. Research shows that each detail reveals the same clues regardless of the artist's cultural, ethnic, or national background (DeLeon, 1983; Eng, 1959; Goodenough, 1926; Harris, 1963; Kellogg, 1967, 1979; Klepsch & Logie, 1982 & Lowenfeld, 1982). Researchers agree that all children go through developmental stages in their drawings. Eng (1959) stated that "drawing for the child is like talking, a means of expression which reflects what is meaningful, and interesting to them. Adults can enter into the inner world of the child by recognizing the stages in their drawings" (pp.101, 187).

### **Developmental Stages (Lowenfeld, 1982)**

**THE SCRIBBLING STAGE:** Age 2 through 4 is a stage described as the child making random marks to controlled scribbles. This early pictorial work will produce circles, triangles, and squares in a combination of designs (Kellogg, 1979; Eng, 1959 & Klepsch & Logie, 1982).

**THE PRESCHMATIC STAGE:** Age 4 through 7 is the child's first attempt at representational art. Typically, the drawing is a head-feet representation of man, and the beginning of drawing objects familiar to them. Between age 3 and 4, the scribbling changes to circles representing the head and, later, will include a smaller head to represent a person. Human figures are indicators of cognitive growth (DeLeon, 1983). The more identified human body will be drawn by the five year old. The body will now include a head, eyes, nose, mouth, arms and legs. As the child gets older, additional

features will appear, neck, fingers, ears, pupils; and one-dimensional features will become two-dimensional (Klepsch & Logie, 1982).

**THE SCHEMATIC STAGE:** From age 7 through 9, the child develops a definite form concept. The drawings become the environment in a descriptive way. Objects are portrayed in a straight line at the bottom of the page. This adaptation occurs between 7 and 8 years of age and changes from intellectual realism to visual realism, that correlates with Piaget's concept of a shift from preconceptual to concrete operational stage (DeLeon, 1983).

**THE DRAWING OF REALISM:** The years 9 through 12 are the gang age. Peers become important. During this stage, the drawings remain symbolic of how the child sees his world.

**THE PSEUDONATURALISTIC STAGE:** This is the stage of reasoning and self-criticism. The child is no longer interested in sharing his drawings. Work is more detailed and reflects an increased interest in color. Researchers contend that this stage marks the end of artistic development. Most adults when asked to draw something, will make a drawing that is very typical of the twelve year old (Lowenfeld, 1982, p. 39).

Drawings are a good indication of the child's growth and intellectual development. They indicate the child's awareness of surroundings, amount of knowledge he possesses, and his ability to portray relationships to his environment. The artistic ability of a child closely parallels intellectual growth up to age 10, and gives greater insight into the inner thoughts of the child (Cole, 1966; DeLeon, 1983; Eng, 1959; Kellogg, 1967; Levick, 1988 & Lowenfeld, 1982).



*Spiritual Development*

**We are what we believe in and what we allow ourselves to become (Horovitz-Darby, 1994, p. 30).**

Horovitz-Darby (1994) has followed the work of other researchers in the area of an individual's belief or concept of God (Coles, 1990; Elkind, 1979; Erikson, 1963; Fowler, 1981; Kohlberg, 1969 & Piaget, 1969). In 1994, Horovitz-Darby researched how an individual's perception of God can have an impact on his life, and how that individual can use his spiritual base to make sense of what happens in his everyday life. Horovitz-Darby developed a scale called the Belief Art Therapy Assessment (BATA), which recognizes the spiritual dimension of a person and how such information can affect those in a therapeutic setting.

The researcher tested a 4-year-old child by asking him to draw what God meant to him. The child drew a crown. When asked how a crown meant God to him, the child replied, "A crown is a treasure and God is a treasure to me."

Horovitz-Darby reflects on the work of Coles (1990), who has done extensive work in the pictorial representation of God in two-dimensional drawings. Horovitz-Darby state that the directive of Coles for children to draw a picture of God may be offensive to Jewish principles. Therefore, she decided to re-design Cole's directive and include multiple two- and three-dimensional material for creative expression. She found the use of the BATA has had an affect on her personal search for the meaning of life. Just sharing this issue with another, can cause a connection between people (p. 29). Kozol (2000) refers to the same phenomena in his book.

Ordinary Resurrections.

Holy water blesses children who receive it, but the faces of the children also bless the one who gives it. The spirit of the children and the longings of the grownup intertwine and wrap themselves around each other. In this way, the healing that the blessing brings goes back and forth (Coles, 2000, pp. 69-70).

Some of the art materials Horovitz-Darby uses for her assessment, which are different from Coles, are two-dimensional drawings, drawing pencils, colored pencils, ink pens, colored markers, crayons, tempera paint, watercolor, oil paint and brushes of various sizes. The three-dimensional materials are glue or glue sticks, scissors, clay, plasticene, cardboard, scrap wood, sculpt mold plaster and all sizes of paper in white, manila and colored construction.

As with all artwork, the drawings in the BATA can be scored cognitively according to Lowenfeld & Britton (1975), which has already been discussed in this chapter. However, Horovitz-Darby's interest is not to evaluate the cognitive development of people, but to connect with the spiritual belief system of the person. However, a representative of a cognitive delay in the artwork may also represent an arrestment of spiritual development (p.34). She also agrees with other researchers that moral reasoning for a child can begin as early as eight or nine years of age. At this time, the child is trying to fit in and make sense of his world, which is reflected in the work of Piaget (1966) concrete operations, Kohlberg (1969), heteronymous, and Fowler (1981) mythic-literal faith. The reference to Fowler (1981) as a connection between cognitive and spiritual development will be reviewed later in this chapter of review.

A loss of faith, having lost some hope for the future, and the evidence for this loss of faith appears in our children ... the most endemic problem of your people today is not so

much a crisis of identity as it is a search for faith (Elkind, 1979, p.11).

Elkind (1978, 1979) also has researched how children search for expression, not only through language, but with symbols. He contends children seek ways to represent their thoughts and those of their physical and social environment. The school-aged child is in the age of reasoning and relations, which is a time when children are reflecting on how they relate themselves to God (1979, pp. 274-277). The specific research by Elkind in this area is how children understand religion in two areas; personal religion, which is the feelings, concepts and attitudes that children may manifest, and institutional religion, the beliefs and practices of established religions (1978, p.5). He has interviewed and compared the interpretation of religion based on children's religious affiliation, for example, Catholic, Protestant, etc. Other researchers have given their interpretation of spiritual development in children. These researchers state that spirituality is a way for children to interpret and to respond to the everyday occurrences, how to handle stressful situations, and how they perceive themselves (Buckley, 1997; Coles, 1986; Fay, 1993; 1990; Hart, 2001; Heller, 1998; Helminiak, 1997; Hergenhaun, 1972; Magaletta, 1976; Mayer, 1997 & Nelson, 1997).

Coles (1990, 1997), a professor of psychiatry and medical humanities at Harvard University and the Pulitzer-Prize winning author of the "Children in Crisis" series, has done extensive research in the field of children and spirituality. Coles was influenced by Anna Freud, daughter of Sigmund Freud, and a teacher-colleague of Erik Erikson. Coles' emphasis is on the stories that are shared by children. In his book, The Spiritual Life of Children, he stressed that he was interested in the child as a seeker, recognizing that life

is a finite journey, and children are anxious to make sense of it all. He is not interested in stages as was Fowler (1981); or psychopathology as was Horovitz-Darby (1994), but rather in the phenomenological and existential aspect of development. Coles has interviewed children on the topic of spirituality and allowed the child, through pictorial representation, to explain who God is, what God might be like, and to express at times the inexpressible (1990, p. 169). However, in his book, The Moral Intelligence of Children (1997), Coles describes the “moral archaeology of childhood,” and, in the description, he reflects on the various stages and behaviors that children may exhibit during various ages/stages. In particular, he describes the elementary school child as the “age of conscience.” This is when the child knows right from wrong and is trying to determine from the many voices and influences in his life what is truly “good,” to look inward in search of meaning and purpose, and what truly matters in life (p. 178). This is level two, the conventional level, according to Kohlberg (1981).

Another researcher, who wrote about child development and human growth, is Gesell (1949). In his book, Child Development: an Introduction to the Study of Human Growth, he has a developmental section on how God is perceived. Gesell describes the following characteristics during the early elementary years. The perception of God for a child 6 years old is that God is the creator of the world, of animals, and of beautiful things.

At this age, prayer becomes important and the child feels confident that prayers will be answered. The seven-year old child is increasingly concerned with God’s place in the world, even as he is concerned about his own place in the world. The child wants to know where Heaven is, and how does God live; i.e. does God have a house, and can God

see everything and be everywhere. The child goes through a period of being a skeptic about God. The eight-year old child has a resurgence of active interest in religion. The child has begun to work out his own personal questions and begins to believe what he has been taught during ages six and seven. He becomes especially interested in Heaven. To a child, Heaven is a place where people go after they die (pp. 128, 157, 186).

It was not the intention of this study to investigate how children practice or understand their established religion, but to investigate their faith and its stages; how they may express their faith through pictorial representations and, if it had an affect on academic achievement. Although spirituality, faith, and religion had been researched for years, no one had explained how faith was developed. One psychologist, Fowler (1981), suggests there are developmental stages in faith that begin in early childhood. The following section describes the stages he has developed according to his research.

### ***Faith Development***

**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for; evidence of things not seen.**

**(Hebrews 11:1)**

Fowler, Director for Research in Faith and Moral Development at Emory University, is considered by many to be the Father of Faith Development. His pioneer work, *Stages of Faith*, integrated cognitive developmental psychology with the quest for meaning (faith). Fowler describes faith as “a coat against the nakedness.” Faith undergirds us when our life space is punctured and collapses ... faith is a human universal. We are endowed at birth with nascent capabilities for faith. How these capabilities are activated and grow depends to a large extent on how we are welcomed into the world and what kinds of environment we grow in. “Faith is interactive and

social; it requires community, language, ritual and nurture” (p.xiii). Fowler constructs his theory on the foundations of development of Piaget (1967); Kohlberg (1987); and the social aspect as developed by Erikson (1977).

Fowler has proposed that there are stages of faith, just as there are stages in psychosocial, cognitive, moral, and creative development. He states that these stages are common to all people and religious traditions. For Fowler, faith is a verb, something we do. Faith has seven aspects, each of which works together to form a stage or style of faith.

#### **THE SEVEN ASPECTS ARE:**

**COGNITIVE:** This aspect of faith describes the processes of thought. For young children, thought is less systematic, jumping from one topic to another. Older children develop the capacity to draw cause and effect relations and logical implications. Later, thought patterns exhibit concrete, observable operations. Finally, the capacity for abstract reasoning emerges.

**PERSPECTIVAL:** As we mature, our ability to see things from the perspective of others increases. We become less egocentric and we discover that other people are not always like us.

**ETHICAL:** This aspect of faith describes the processes of moral choice. Young children view right and wrong in terms of reward and punishment. Older children view it in terms of reciprocal fairness. Later, morality is viewed conventionally, conforming to fixed rules for the individual’s own sake. In later stages, morality is understood as a matter of individual rights with principles, which stand in judgment of society itself.

**AUTHORITY:** This aspect of faith describes the way a person interprets and relies on sources of authority regarding ultimate concerns. Our earliest authorities are our parents. Then teachers, peers, the church, colleagues, and other groups begin to influence our values.

**WORLD VIEW:** At first, we inherit world views. But there comes a time when we choose our own world view. After adopting a world view, some adults examine, expand, reconfigure, and modify their world views. Adults that develop open, flexible, and inclusive world views are no less committed or rigorous than others.

**SYMBOLIC:** There is no faith without symbols. For little children, symbols are magical. With the emergence of concrete thinking, the power of symbols are not completely restored. Symbols regain their power for some adults.

**THE STAGES OF FAITH:** The stages of faith are a way or style of engaging in faith. Each one of the six stages integrates elements of the previous stage into new ways of thinking. However, the transition from one stage to the next is not inevitable. Some will stabilize in earlier stages than others. But, the direction of faith development does proceed along an order from primal faith through the remaining stages. Later stages of faith can take place only if developments have happened at earlier stages.

**Primal Faith** can be thought of as Stage 0. It corresponds to the faith of infants and very young children (ages birth through 3). Faith begins in the context of being held, nursed, and cared for. Primal faith grows out of learning trust, which provides the foundation for further levels of faith. This stage is similar to the trust versus mistrust stage of Erikson (1977).

**STAGE ONE -- INTUITIVE-PROJECTIVE FAITH:** From age 3 through 6.

**Cognitive:** Thinking is more intuitive (immediate, unreasoned) than discursive (rational, logical).

**Perspective:** The child lacks the ability to adopt another's perspective.

**Ethical:** Moral judgments are based on the child's observations of rewards and punishments.

**Social/Authority:** Like everything else at this stage, faith is a matter of imitation.

**World View:** The child's subjective world is created by unordered images that are more episodic and impressionistic than narrative in structure. Real and fantasy objects exist side by side.

**Symbolic:** Symbols are viewed magically – they are what they represent.

**STAGE TWO -- MYTHIC-LITERAL FAITH:** From age 6 through 12.

**Cognitive:** There is an emerging power to think, to unify experience, to trace cause and effect, and to follow a story. But the thinking is very concrete, so abstract reflects critical evaluation, and drawing "the moral" out of a story is difficult at this stage. Narratives or stories become a way the child gives meaning to the world.

**Perspective:** The person is generally unable to see from another's perspective.

**Ethical:** Moral thinking is largely based on reciprocal fairness and imminent justice.

**World View:** The unordered fantasy world is still part of the person's subjective universe, but it is now coming under control. Because reasoning is intrinsically concrete, God is viewed anthropomorphically.

**STAGE THREE – SYNTHETIC-CONVENTIONAL FAITH:** Conforming faith.

From age 12 through 18 and many adults.



**Cognitive/Perspective:** The ability to reflect abstractly and the power to view things from different perspectives allows for a new stage of faith, but individuals in this stage have not started to think for themselves.

**Ethical:** There is desire to conform to the expectations of significant others. This is the stage of conformity. Moral thinking involves living up to social expectations, usually a law-and-order morality.

**Social-Authority:** The desire to conform produces a dependence on other's faith, usually a dependence on traditional authority figures and sources concerned about how they are perceived by others. Their identity is based on who they are with.

**World View:** Faith is synthesized, not analyzed. People at this stage have difficulty seeing their assumptions. Images of God are no longer physically anthropomorphic, rather they are based on "personal" qualities of deity, such as friend, comforter, guide. God takes on a personality for the child. The struggle is to juggle all the opinions of significant others.

**Symbolic:** Symbols and rituals are not separated from the things symbolized.

**STAGE FOUR – INDIVIDUATIVE-REFLECTIVE FAITH:** From age 18 onward, usually 30s and 40s. Fowler regards the transition from the third stage to the fourth as the longest, the most significant, and the most traumatic. Like all transitions from one stage to another, this involves a loss of faith (a loss of stage three faith for stage four faith). This transition can be precipitated by contact with cultures and world views other than one's own.

**Cognitive:** This stage involves critical reflection, a critical challenging of previous values and beliefs. In an attempt to find coherence, people tend to justify their own view of truth by misrepresenting the faith of others.

**Perspective:** The desire to find coherence at this stage may result in tensions. The perspectives of others, while considered, often are rejected hastily.

**Social-Ethical:** Convictions are examined, however, there is a danger of pretended independence, forgetting who (parents, church, ethnic group) had so much influence on the new “self-chosen” values.

**Authority:** At this stage, those who agree with “me” are authoritative. The person is taking responsibility for choosing what authority they will submit to and begin to have internal authority.

**World View:** The person feels compelled to choose world view. They have to decide to accept the views of others or continue to embrace their own view of the world.

**STAGE FIVE -- CONJUNCTIVE FAITH:** Inclusive faith. From mid-life, rarely before 30.

**Cognitive:** The truth is not viewed as either/or, rather it must be approached from two or more angles at the same time. The stage-five individual seeks real empathy with others. They are truly open to the insights of others. They seek understanding.

**Perspective:** The individual at Stage Five is capable of keeping many ways of thinking in perspective. He is able to submit to another point of view without losing his identity, and he recognizes that others can embrace his point of view.

**Social-Ethical:** Individuals at this stage are ready for community identification beyond tribal, racial, class, or ideological boundaries.

**Symbolic:** There is also a new openness to symbol, myth, and story.

**STAGE SIX -- UNIVERSALIZING FAITH:** Usually later in life. The way of faith is relinquishing of the self, a vision of the unity of all things through the multiplicity of faith and being. Here there is a mystical and spiritual unity, a union of opposites that is no longer experienced as paradoxical. Stage six individuals are in the world, but not of the world. They are persons who are chosen by the providence of God, or needs of history to complete a task. They seek to transform the world. Fowler points to Mother Theresa and Martin Luther King, Jr. as examples of this stage. Everyone will not reach Stage Six. These people are called to loving the world and the Kingdom more than they love themselves.

The work of Fowler (1981) has influenced others to investigate the concept of faith. Westerhoff, III (2000) was influenced by Fowler and developed four distinctive styles of faith which are experienced faith, affiliative faith, searching faith and owned faith. These styles are based on Fowlers stages of faith. There seems to be an accepted view that there are developmental stages. All of the theorists believe their view of the stages has an impact on the concept of developing the whole child.

Furthermore, the premise is that the understanding of the stages is crucial in understanding how the child relates to his environment and how well he will do in his environment. However, the research thus far was limited in the scope of African-American children in an urban setting. The researcher was motivated to research the faith factor as it relates to development in children during the early childhood years. Specifically, the researcher was interested in how faith may be similar or different from the faith stages theory of Fowler (1981) in urban African American Christian children

during the early childhood years, and how they used pictorial representations to express faith.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

In early childhood education, educators have espoused to the development of the whole child. Most of the focus, however, has been on the cognitive and academic development of the child. Researchers now believe the social/emotional development of the child is very significant and has an impact on the development of the whole child. Many researchers have studied moral development, character education, faith and resiliency. However, there was a lack of study in the faith factor in urban African-American children, and how it may impact their overall development. The qualitative research method was used to provide a rich narrative description of the participants' faith beliefs and experiences. Shank (2002) noted that “ the goals of qualitative research are insight, enlightenment, and illumination ... we are searchers of meaning where no meaning has been clearly understood” ( p. 11).

#### **Purpose of Study**

The overall purpose of this study was to replicate, with modifications, the faith research completed by Fowler (1981). Because Fowler's research had a dominant representation of white participants (97.8%) and few children, this study specifically focused on African-American children ages five through eight living in an urban setting. The study also allowed children to express their cognitive and emotional understanding of their faith nonverbally.

### **Sample Population**

The participants in this case were four African-American children selected from a kindergarten, a first-grade, second-grade, and a third-grade classroom. They were enrolled in an urban school in Northwest Pennsylvania. The four children were selected by recommendations from each grade-level teacher and school principal based on at least one of the following:

### **Selection Criteria**

(a) The child had exhibited faith behavior in the school; (b) The child participated in the after-school Bible study group; (c) The child attended church. The school had a population of 315 children with 96% of them receiving a free or reduced-rate lunch. This school had been identified as having the highest number of households headed by a single parent, and the highest (96%) attendance rate in the district (Myers, 2001 & Wiley, 2003).

Prior to selecting participants, the study, purpose, and selection criteria were discussed with the school principal. Parental permission forms were developed and sent home. Forms requested (a) participation of the child and the parent in the case study, and (b) permission to use the pictures created by the child in the final print of the study, and for any other publications related to the study.

The four children in the study were African American between the ages of 5 and 10. The gender composition of the population was two boys and two girls. One intergenerational family related to two of the children was interviewed for further insight. Some faith questions were adapted from the original study by Fowler (1981). The

prompting questions for the pictorial representation were adapted from the work of Horovitz-Darby (1994).

### **Data Collection Tools**

#### ***Interviews***

The interview was divided into Stage One and Stage Two situations. The situations in the case study were from the original study by Fowler (1981). The children responded to the two situations, then answered some key questions derived from a primary base of 19 + 19 questions about how they perceived themselves, their life and what they valued. In addition, following the completion of the discussion, the researcher shared a page from the story “All Things Bright and Beautiful.” Then the researcher asked the children, “When you think of God, where and how He lives, who He is, and what matters to Him, what do you think of?” (Coles, 1996).

#### ***Artifacts***

Draw a picture showing what God means to you (Horovitz-Darby, 1994). The drawings served as a representation of the children’s internalized belief system and how they perceived their world. The second phase of the case studies was to interview the child’s parent. The second-phase questions were designed to determine what experiences has the child been exposed to by the parent to nurture faith.

#### ***Procedure***

1. Met with the principal to discuss the case study.
2. Sent a letter of introduction and permission form to the identified parents.
3. Visited the participating classrooms so the child had an opportunity to meet the evaluator in a familiar setting.

4. Visited the church the children attended and observed their participation.
5. Scheduled times to meet with the parents and the children.
6. The evaluator introduced herself and explained the reason for meeting was to ask them a few questions about the things they did and what they thought about. “I would like to ask you a few questions about the activities that you do and what you think about. Your answer can be whatever you think. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions. I would like to thank you for being here.”
7. The evaluator showed the child the tape recorder and explained that it would be used to help the evaluator remember what they talked about.
8. After responding to the questions, the child was given paper, colored pencils, and colored crayons for drawing.
9. The evaluator showed the child a page from the book, “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” and asked the child, “What would God think about this? When you think about God, where and how He lives, who He is, and what matters to Him, what do you think of? Draw a picture showing what God means to you.”
10. After the child had indicated he/she had completed his/her drawing, the evaluator allowed the child to explain his/her drawing. The evaluator wrote on the drawing exactly what the child explained about the picture.

The evaluator presented the following opening scenario to each child. “I would like to tell you a short story. A brother, Alex, age five, and his sister, Jessica, age seven, went on a picnic with their family in a large park. After they had lunch with their family,



Alex and Jessica wander off from the family and became lost in the deep woods that border the park. Tell me some of the things Alex and Jessica might see and experience in the woods.” After the response from the child, the evaluator continued with a series of questions:

***Stage-One Questions***

1. How did all those things get there?
2. Why do we have trees and animals?
3. Why do we have people?
4. Do you think there is a reason for people in the world?
5. Do you think it is important that you are in the world?
6. What do you do when someone gets sick?
7. What happens when the hospital cannot help the person get well?
8. What do you think happens when you die?
9. How can people know who God is?
10. How can we know when God is happy?
11. How can we find out about God?
12. When you do something bad, does God know?
13. Does God know you?
14. Have you ever gone to church? How do you feel about going to church?
15. Do people ever talk to God?
16. Can God do anything He wants to?
17. Do you believe in God? Why?
18. Is God real to you?

19. What does God look like?

***Stage-Two Questions***

First, the evaluator told the child the Heinz dilemma (Kohlberg, 1981). In Europe, a woman was near death from a, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could get together only about \$1,000, which was half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. The researcher asked the children, "Should the husband have done that?" "Was it right or wrong?" After a discussion about the dilemma, the evaluator asked the following questions:

1. Why are there people in the world?
2. Are they here for any purpose?
3. What would the world be like without you?
4. What does God do with people?
5. Does God expect anything from us?
6. What does God look like?
7. How do you get to be a good person?
8. When you do something wrong, does God know?

9. Can God be with you all the time?
10. Does God care when you do something wrong?
11. What if somebody just came up to you and said, "I've heard lots about God. Can you tell me what God is?" What would you say to them?
12. What is Heaven? Can anyone go to Heaven?
13. Where does God Live?
14. Why do people die?
15. Does God always know what is best for people?
16. Do parents always do the right thing?
17. How do parents find out what is right?
18. Why do some people seem luckier than other people?
19. Does God have anything to do with whether people get what they want or not?

***Questions for All Participants***

1. Do you enjoy your schoolwork?
2. Would you consider yourself an A, B, or C student?
3. Do you think God cares about your schoolwork?
4. Do you think God can help you with things that are hard for you to do?
5. Do you think He helps you do your best?
6. Do you think you are doing the best that you are able to do in school?
7. Do you see yourself as being in the top, middle, or bottom of the class?

***Parent Interview***

1. Evaluator thanked the parent for the opportunity to meet with them about their child.

2. Evaluator informed the parent that the session would be recorded.
3. Evaluator asked the parent a few demographic questions about their house, family and neighborhood.
4. Evaluator asked the parent what they felt they had done to nurture faith in their child.
5. Evaluator asked the parent, “What experiences has the child participated in to nurture faith.”
6. Evaluator asked, “When there is a crisis or problem, how do you explain to your child how it should be handled?”
7. Evaluator asked, “Do you believe there is a plan for your life?” “Your child’s life?”
8. Evaluator asked, “Are you accountable to anyone about how you choose to live your life?”

*Additional questions that can be asked of the parent*

1. Does the child enjoy his/her schoolwork?
2. Would you consider the child and A, B, or C student?
3. Do you think the child is doing the best he/she is capable of in school?
4. Do you see the child as being in the top, middle, or bottom of the class?

Once the interviews were completed the researcher transcribed the recorded interview and made notations on the transcribed notes that indicated stage one or stage two characteristics. The artifacts were used to support the evidence of the faith stages expressed by the children.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

This chapter is divided into five key sections. **Section one: Description of Participants** will include demographic information about each participant and descriptions about this school and church. **Section two: General Issues of Faith and Faith Development** will include common themes shared during the interviews. **Section three: Informed Perceptions** will include deeper insights perceived during the interviews. **Section four: Unanticipated Findings** will include information gathered during the interviews that was unsolicited and unexpected. **Section five: A Unique Multigenerational Dialogue of Faith** will include a deep discussion with the mother, grandmother and great-grandmother of two of the children about their faith experiences. I employed a qualitative case-study approach that is situated in the ethnographic tradition of educational inquiry and individual interview methodology. The case study paradigm promotes discovery, insight, and interpretation in context and offers a significant contribution to the knowledge base and practice of education. The data was analyzed by transcribing the tapes and identifying common themes and differences as compared to the stage theory introduced by Fowler (1981).

#### **Original Faith Study**

Fowler (1981) researched and identified stages of faith development from infancy through adulthood. In his study, participants were mostly White/nonHispanic adults (97.8%) and few were children reflecting on their earlier faith experiences. This case study investigates the key premise of Fowlers' faith stages study. His study revealed that

as children grow and develop there is an identifiable sequential faith development.

According to his study, during the early childhood years ranging from birth through age 8, children are in Stage One – Intuitive Projective -- and Stage Two – Mythic Literal -- or Stage Three – Synthetic Conventional. The key factors in these stages are that children are affected by the moods, actions, and stories of the visible faith of the primary related adults. Children develop strong images and work at sorting make-believe from what is real. As a child progresses through to stages two and three, he becomes a more concrete thinker, with the ability to take on the perspective of another.

These three stages of Fowler also relate to the identified stages of Piaget and Kohlberg as shown in Chapter Two. Piaget (1967) describes the child during the early childhood years as moving from pre-operational stage, where he is not able to think abstractly, to concrete operations with the ability to comprehend abstract concepts. Kohlberg (1987) suggests the child moves from pre-conventional to conventional moral development. During the early childhood years the child changes in his thinking about moral issues from good versus bad, and punishment verses reward to being able to take on the perspective of others, and embrace other points of view. Furthermore, the identifiable stages are interpreted as discrete or separate stages. It is assumed the child completes one stage and moves on to the next stage; but in reality, the stages do not have discrete boundaries. Each stage phases in to the next stage and builds as the child develops.

This study was a phenomenological research design that goes deeper than the Fowler study. The interviews with the children, their families, and experiencing their church service provided a rich context, as well as being a powerful experience. The

study also provided an opportunity to explore what impact, if any, faith had on the overall development of the child and his school success. The primary foci of the study were to investigate the Christian faith factor that was embedded in the African American culture, and to consider its world view perspective. The case study design included opportunities to observe the school environment and culture, the church environment and culture, as well as the family culture. The study was to investigate if the African American Christian faith experience has an impact on the stage development theory. This study seeks to identify examples of a belief system that guides daily behavior and that is practiced in a personal and private way. It is a belief that non observable and non-material life forces have great powers (Walker, 2002).

### **Description of Participants**

For the purpose of this study, the interview questions were prepared beforehand and requested open-ended responses. The interviews, designed to last 30 minutes, were conducted one on one in a quiet, private area, and were taped recorded. Four children (**Deborah, Thomas, Naomi and John**) their parents, and a multigenerational group related to two of the participants were interviewed. The children ranged from 5 through 10 years of age and, respectively, are enrolled in kindergarten, first grade, second grade and third grade in same urban elementary school. All of these children were involved in the school's after-school Bible study group which was my original point of contact. Every child participant was given a Biblical pseudonym, which was used throughout the study. I met with all of the participants twice before the interview. I also observed or asked about the church activities.

**Deborah** was a 5-year-old child in kindergarten. The Biblical name of Deborah found in Judges 4:5 was a prophetess and the only female judge. I chose this name because this particular child had an adult-like demeanor. She was accustomed to having conversations with adults and she was often pseudo supervising other children under the care of her great-grandmother. She was a bright-eyed, energetic, and inquisitive child.

During the initial visit, the subsequent interview, as well as the church experience she smiled, asked questions, shared information, and was conscious of her appearance. She asked on several occasions if I liked her dress, hair adornments, and shoes. She wanted me to pay particular attention to the details, such as the print, design and color coordination. Deborah appeared to be involved in, and comfortable with adult-led conversations. During one of my visits with her family, she was reminded often to go play for a moment so adult conversation could continue. She often blurted out personal information that I assumed the adults did not want to share. For example, she talked about how her father, who did not live with them, often argued with her mother, and her great-grandmother did not like him. These comments brought an comfortable silence and frowns to her mother and great-grandmother.

**Thomas** was a 7-year-old first grader. Thomas, found in the book of John, was a disciple who doubted Jesus had risen from the dead. This name came to mind immediately because this child often was unsure of how to respond and often looked to his mother to validate his responses. He needed reassurance and he appeared to doubt the Biblical lessons he learned. He was a slow to warm up child.

At the initial visit he seemed shy, but interacted with everyone by the end of the visit at the school. He was shy during the visit at his home as well, but not as reserved.



He smiled when I came and he talked with me about the pictures displayed in his living room. However, his eyes shifted toward his mother when he answered general questions. After this visit, I talked with his mother about having one of the other children from the study join us when we conducted the interviews. I explained that it might help Thomas feel more comfortable. During the interview, the responses from Thomas were limited. He needed a great deal of prompting to respond to some questions. Adjustments were made during the interview to help him feel comfortable in responding.

**Naomi** was an 8 year old child in the third grade. The name of Naomi is found in Ruth 4:21-22. She had a close relationship with a kinsman. I chose this name because this child seemed to have a close relationship with her mother. She was a bubbly child who was open when answering my questions. During our visits and the interview, she was neatly dressed in casual clothes. She was interesting to interview because her comments took us down different paths of discussion that centered on the concept of faith issues. Her responses demonstrated her ability to express her own thoughts, and she seldom looked at her mother for approval or assurance during the interview. Even her physical gestures indicated an unspoken presence of feeling good about herself.

**John** was a 9-year-old third grader. In the Bible, John “the breasted one,” was one of the disciples who had a close relationship with Jesus. John’s writings were different than other writings about Jesus. John was focused on the word of God and the power of God. I chose this name because this child seemed to be focused on the word of God, and he spoke like he believed the word was active and living within him.

He was the typical 9 year old, having teeth in the different stages of development. His arms were long and his feet were big. His middle torso did not seem

to match the rest of his body. He had large ears, which seemed even larger because of his short, detail-edged hair cut. When he talked, he also moved about, or he was putting something in his hand to move around. I was surprised to learn that he was an usher at his church. The usher position requires discipline in body control. He always greeted me with a smile saying, "Hello, Ms. Julie." I enjoyed the interview with John. He was able to articulate his own personal faith experiences in such detail and deep understanding that I wished I could continue to track his personal faith development into adulthood.

### **Description of the School**

The urban elementary school was located in Northwestern Pennsylvania. The school had a population of 315 children with 96% of them receiving free-reduced lunch. This school had been identified as having the highest number of households headed by a single parent, and had the highest (96%) attendance rate in the district (Myers, 2001; Wiley, 2003, 2005). All of the children interviewed attended this elementary school.

The initial meeting of the children and their mothers/guardians was at the school in the teacher resource room. As discussed in Chapter Three, the school was in an urban setting on one of the main streets in the city. The facility was in an older building with a small frontage, a small parking lot, a limited outdoor play space with just the basic outdoor play equipment. The front of the school had sparse grass and a few trees. The building was across the street from one of the cities main playgrounds, which was designed for children living in urban areas and in public housing. The playground was in poor condition. It had a basketball court, a swimming pool, and a grassy open area. Just beyond the park was one of the cities largest subsidized housing units. This area, historically known for drug traffic, violence, and excessive loitering, was known by local

residents as the “Holly.” The police had targeted this area for systematic surveillance.

Five bars and four small churches were within a 3-mile radius of the Holly. The churches were established by ministers and congregations that left some of the traditionally established African American churches from various denominations. This recreational area was also an identified location for an annual city wide tent revival, which was created by one of the local Full Gospel Baptist churches in the area. This week-long summer revival included various religious activities as well as several educational creative activities for young children and teens.

As I entered the school for the initial meeting with the families, I walked down a long hallway that led to the resource room. The walls were lime green and had few pictures or artifacts created by the children. The resource room was long and narrow. Part of it was filled with literacy materials. The other part had small tables and chairs with four book shelves filled with children’s literature. I supplied a snack consisting of sub sandwiches, chips, pop and cookies. All of the parents and children who attended agreed to participate in the study. At this initial meeting, I discovered that the parents knew each other, and that two of the children were siblings, but resided in different households. The parents were responsive and willing to participate. I also spoke with each child, asking them to agree verbally to participate. Each family signed the appropriate consent forms. As a result of our initial visit, it was decided that two of the children would be interviewed at their homes and two at my home.

### **Description of the Church**

Three of the children attend the same church and participate in the church youth-related activities such as Sunday school, the children's choir and usher board. The fourth child attended a newly established church and was awaiting participation in its youth activities. Prior to the individual interviews, I wanted to view the children's church experience with a different lens.

The church was one of the largest and oldest (95 years) African American churches in the city. It was located on a corner of an aging urban neighborhood. This 95-year-old church was a brick building with an addition that was added in 1975. The building provides social services to the community. It had two parking lots, one beside the church and one across the street. It also had an administrative building, an apartment complex and an outreach community center.

Inside, the church was designed in three levels. The lower level was divided into six classrooms separated by folding doors. The middle of the area was set up for group activities with rows of folding chairs facing a podium and stage. The back of the lower level housed a fully equipped commercial kitchen. This level was used for Sunday morning Bible classes for children and youth and Junior church on the first and third Sunday's. Junior church was a service designed for children aged 5 through 16. It provided a Biblically based child-oriented service for children and youth that closely replicated the morning service held upstairs.

There was an adjoining door leading to the additional space that was built in 1975. This area the lower level had another small commercial kitchen, one classroom used for infant and toddler care, and a large outer area filled with shelves, tables, chairs,

and chalk boards. This area appeared to be a multipurpose room that served the congregation. There were bathrooms located in both areas of the lower level.

The main level of the church was the sanctuary. The outer waiting area had an ushers' room with a window for guests of the church to ask questions or receive additional information about weekly activities. Pictures of past pastors hung on one of the walls. There also were pictures of past church activities showing various members smiling and enjoying themselves. The cream-painted walls, stained-glass windows, and wine-colored carpeting complimented the oak chair rails, benches, and decorative ceiling frames. The oak pews faced the front of the sanctuary that faced the pulpit and a very large choir loft behind the pulpit. A burgundy velvet curtain behind the choir loft hid a baptismal pool. There was a door that led to the second level of the attached building. This area had three classrooms, a conference room and two office spaces. From the outer greeting area congregants had access to an upper level that provided additional seating as well as an area for the audio/video technician to record the services and monitor the sound system.

The congregation came from a mixed socio-economic status and ethnic background. The majority of its members were African American adults and seniors who came from a lower- to middle-economic background. However, some of the members appeared to have an upper-middle economic background based on their employment and residence status. Some of the members were clearly in the lower economic status and were from the surrounding neighborhoods. Most of the members who were in the upper-middle socio-economic status were adults who had been members of the church since their youth or had parents/grandparents who were long-term members of the church.

### **Description of the Church Service**

This Sunday was youth emphasis day which is held monthly and provides an opportunity for the children and youth to be active leaders and participants in the morning service. There were three choirs: Kay's Angels, a choir for children ages 3 to 8; The Junior Choir, for ages 9 through 18, and the Young Adult Choir, for ages 19 through 25. All of the choir members were dressed in white blouses/shirts and black skirts/pants.

The service began with a congregational hymn, scripture reading, and intercessory prayer. The scripture and prayer were led by a designated youth. Children dressed in blue and white monitored each of the doors. They were the youth ushers and their responsibilities were to greet people as they entered, direct those who needed assistance to a seat, pass out the church program, and assist in the collecting the offering. All of the children participating in the study attended the service. John was serving as an usher, Deborah was in Kay's Angels, while Naomi and Thomas sat with their mothers.

After the opening activities, Kay's angels sang. The children knew the song well, however, the adult leader prompted them with the words just in case someone forgot. The songs were upbeat, and were accompanied by the pianist and organist. The congregation clapped in beat to the music, some saying "Amen," while others stood and swayed the beat. When the song ended, the congregation gave the children a standing ovation.

After the song, one of the ministers stood and asked for visitors to stand to be welcomed. In addition, they asked for those who had celebrated a birthday or an anniversary to stand so everyone could honor them. Following this, everyone greeted one

another. This was followed by two contemporary musical selections by the Junior and Young Adult choirs.

The choir sang, led by a song leader, who directed the members when to move to the music. The choir was accompanied by a pianist, organist, drummer, and guitar player. As the choir sang, many people in attendance stood, swaying to the music, singing, raising their hands, clapping and jumping about. The children appeared to be comfortable with the experience, some participating in the same manner as the adults.

The experience, although lively and interactive, resulted in a variety of responses from the congregation. Tears streamed down the face of some. Others raised their hands in prayer, saying "Praise the Lord," or "Thank you Jesus." Still others sat quietly rocking from side to side or nodding their head. All in their own way participated in the worship experience.

During this experience, I noticed Deborah was in the choir singing along with the older children and she was clapping her hands. John was standing at his post as an usher and had a big smile on his face and clapped. Thomas and Naomi also clapped their hands with their mothers. After the musical selections it was time for the offering. The pastor of the church stood and talked about the goodness of God and how all blessings come from Him. He instructed the congregation to prepare for tithes and offering. Six children, including John walked down the center aisle with trays to receive contributions from the congregation. John was assisted by an adult usher in leading the people from the pews to the front of the church and back to their seats. John walked very straight and tall with one of his hands behind his back.

After another selection from the Young Adult choir it was time for the sermon presented by the pastor of the church. The congregation listened intently to the sermon with a few members saying, “amen” during the sermon. At the end of the sermon the pastor offered an invitation for someone to come forward to accept Jesus as their personal savior. During this time the choir sang softly and the congregation bowed their heads in prayerful anticipation. During this service no one came forward. The service ended with the congregation singing a song and shaking hands with the person next to them.

### **The Spiritual Faith Factor in the life of Thomas**

#### **Description of Home Environment and Neighborhood**

The first child I interviewed was a 7-year-old first grader named Thomas, who lived with his 25-year-old mother and, for a significant amount of time, also lived with his 78-year-old grandmother. His mother worked part time in a nursing home. His grandmother was retired. They received subsidized funds for food and housing. They lived in a two-story house on a block where the houses sat close together. Thomas’s home appeared to be maintained, a sanctuary in the midst of urban blight.

The neighbors sat on their porches during the day, talking to one another and waving at people who went by. Dusk to dawn, however, this urban neighborhood took on a different demeanor. The older adult and senior residents were seldom outside after dark. In the late evening to early morning, young adults and youth hung out on street corners. There were frequent disturbances and violence that required police attention. However, the residents established a neighborhood watch program to help secure safety; they effectively petitioned for one of the neighborhood bars to close due to several years of drug trafficking, the use of guns during violent acts, robberies and violent force acts



against the neighbors. Essentially, the neighbors gained the support of the local commercial establishments such as the grocery stores, barber and beauty shops, child care centers and a chain department store.

According to Thomas's mother, he was a quiet, shy child. This was confirmed during the interview. At their request, I interviewed them at my home. Thomas's interview was conducted with one of his relatives and one other participant from the study to help him feel more comfortable.

### ***Interview***

Thomas's mother works on weekends, so we met late one Saturday late afternoon. Thomas arrived with Naomi, another child in the study who he knows from school. Naomi was smiling broadly. Thomas, however, had a tentative smile, looking up at me and then at his mother. He walked with his mother as I led them to the lower level of the house to the family room. The family room was divided into three sections. Entering the room was the sitting area. In this space were overstuffed chairs and a couch by an entertainment center. Along the way and toward the back of the room was a small play area with toys and books. Further back was a small office space. The families were invited to come and sit on the couch to talk for a moment about what we were going to do.

I reviewed the interview procedures, which were explained during our initial meeting and phone conversations. I explained that I was going to ask questions about them, people, nature, their church experiences, and God. I reminded them that there were no right or wrong answers, and that I was interested in their thoughts on different topics.

I also told them that they could stop the interview at anytime, and that they did not have to answer any question they did not want to. The children were reminded that they would be asked to draw a picture at the end of the interview. I also explained that I would tape record the interview so I could keep a record of everyone's answers. I asked the parents and the children if they understood, then told them to reply orally. Thomas volunteered to go first, so Naomi went to the play area to await her turn.

### *Faith Stage Development Interpretation*

Based on Thomas's age, 7, he should be in Fowler's Stage Two -- Mythic-Literal Faith. In this stage, the child thinks concretely and has difficulty drawing the moral from a story. Children at this age and stage generally are unable to understand from another's perspective. Their moral thinking is based on reciprocal fairness and imminent justice, and their perception of God is anthropomorphic.

I sensed that Thomas's responses would not fit this stage because his behaviors reflected a person of a much younger age. He seemed to be a preoperational thinker according to the stages described by Piaget, and he also seemed to exhibit Fowler's Stage One -- Primal Faith -- which needs to be nurtured by the primary caregiver, in Thomas's case, his mother. However, I read Thomas the Heinz dilemma (Kohlberg, 1981) the scenario used by Fowler for this age group.

In Europe, a woman was near death from a very bad disease, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200.00 for the radium and charged

\$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could get together only about \$1,000, which was half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.

I asked Thomas, "Should the husband have done that? Was it right or wrong?"

Thomas replied, "No. It was wrong."

Thomas was unable to give any further information when I asked, "Is there another way you think he could have helped his wife from being sick and needing medicine?"

He shrugged his shoulders and shook his head .

During the the story and his comments on it, Thomas often looked at his mother as if he were looking for cues on how he should respond. He displayed some of Fowler's Stage Two and Stage One, preconventional morality in Kohlberg's theory, in that he only saw the actions of Heinz as wrong. Thomas also did not consider the perspective of Heinz. However, I am not convinced that his response was not based on his overall behavior and how he seems to be in the stage of initiative verses guilt in his social/emotional development as described by Erikson (1967).

Continuing the interview, I asked Thomas a series of questions from Fowler's original study. The questions could be divided into two categories, those about people and their purpose in life and those about God and Heaven. These questions were asked of all the children in the original study and the responses were evaluated according to the

stages of faith development. For Thomas, some of the questions were modified so I could follow his lead and ask questions that would not make him uncomfortable.

Questions:

Why do you think there are people in the world?

“For God.”

Can He get to know you?

He shrugged his shoulders

What about animals, trees and birds. How did they get here?

“God.”

Do you think He cares about the animals?

“Uh-huh.”

Does He care about people?

“Uh-huh.”

Does He care about you?

“Yeah.”

How do you know he cares about people?

“He loves them.”

What do you think God looks like?

Shrugs

Do you think God wants people to be good? Do you think He can help people to be good?

“Uh-huh.”

I asked Thomas questions that would indicate anthropomorphic thinking. I asked him if God could be anywhere He wanted to be. If God was a person like us, and if He could talk to us.

Thomas's response was "No."

It was also interesting that Thomas only saw God being able to care about people doing right behaviors and not about people doing wrong behaviors. Thomas also was not able to articulate what he thought about the word Heaven or where people go when they die.

### ***Pictorial Representation of Faith***

To conclude the interview, I asked Thomas to draw a picture of what he thinks about God or Jesus. It could be what Thomas would do with God if He came for a visit, or it could be a picture of what God looks like or what He would like to see. The pictorial representation is an addition to the original study by Fowler. As discussed in Chapter Three, children sometimes use pictures to express their deeper thoughts, which they may not be able to articulate otherwise. Pictures also can give a deeper understanding of what the child considers important or how he perceives his world.

(Kellogg, 1967; Lowenfeld, 1982; Levick, 1998; Coles, 1966; Horovitz-Darby, 1994 & Kozol, 2000).

See Figure 1 for the drawing by Thomas.



*Figure 1* He described the picture as “friends holding hands.” His drawing, in my opinion, was a drawing typical of a child in kindergarten. The people were all smiling and holding hands. To read the entire interview refer to Appendix C.

## **The Spiritual Faith Factor in the Life of Naomi**

### **Description of Home Environment and Neighborhood**

The second child I interviewed was 8-year-old Naomi, who was in the third grade and was the older of two children. Naomi resided with her 3-year-old brother, 30-year-old mother and her 29-year-old father. The mother worked full time as a phlebotomist for one of the major hospitals in the area, and her father was unemployed. Naomi spent a significant amount of time before and after school and on weekends at her grandmother's house. They lived in a three-bedroom ranch house that was nicely decorated and well-maintained. The living room was neat and had pictures of the immediate and extended family. The neighborhood was relatively crime free, and quiet with well-maintained houses. Although the environment was conducive to raising children, Naomi said she preferred to go to her grandmother's house to play with her cousins while her mother was at work.

In the past, Naomi's family attended the same church as the other participants. While the mother has had an active faith throughout her adulthood, she was now beginning to pursue regular attendance at a new church and a renewed faith journey with her children. The father occasionally attended church. According to her mother, Naomi was an active child who enjoyed conversation, which was confirmed during the interview. At her mother's request I interviewed Naomi at my home.

### ***Interview***

Naomi was interviewed at the same time and place as Thomas. Naomi arrived with Thomas and his mother. I met them at the door and invited them in. Naomi had a

big smile on her face. The procedure for the interview was discussed with Thomas and Naomi. Again, I went over the procedures for the interview that was described to them during our initial meeting and our phone conversations. I explained to them that I was going to ask them questions about themselves, people, nature, their church experiences and God. I told them that there were not any right or wrong answers and that I just wanted to know what they thought about different things. I also instructed them that they could end the interview anytime they wanted to and they did not have to answer any question that they felt they did not want to answer. I asked the parents and the children if they understood and asked to them to verbally reply. I asked Thomas and Naomi who would like to go first; Naomi was the second child interviewed.

Once again I explained to Naomi that I was going to ask her a few questions about what he thinks about why people are here, his church activities, and God. I also stressed to her that there are not any right or wrong answers and that she can stop the interview any time she wanted to. She did not have to answer any question that she did not want to answer. After the questions I would ask her to draw a picture for me. I also told her that I was going to tape record the interview so that I would be able to remember what we had talked about. I asked her if she understood what we were going to do and was she alright with the taping of the interview. She replied “yes”.

### ***Faith Stage Interpretation***

Naomi was 8, so, like Thomas, she should have been in Fowler’s Stage Two -- Mythic-Literal Faith – where the child thinks concretely and has difficulty drawing the moral from a story. Children at this age and stage generally are unable to understand from another’s perspective. Their moral thinking is based on reciprocal fairness and



imminent justice, and their perception of God is anthropomorphic. I sensed that Naomi would give responses that would fit this stage.

Naomi displayed behaviors that were appropriate for her age. She seemed to be in the beginning stages of concrete operational thinking according to the stages described by Piaget. Her behavior demonstrated her attempts to feel confident about what she was doing. At times, she applied logic or attempted to give logical reasons for her answers. I shared with her the scenario that was used by Fowler for this age group, the Heinz dilemma (Kohlberg, 1981).

In Europe, a woman was near death from a very bad disease, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200.00 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could get together only about \$1,000, which was half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.

I asked Naomi, "Should the husband have done that? Was it right or wrong?"

Naomi replied, "No. It was wrong because he thought he got to steal it"

Is stealing wrong?

"Yeah. Because God will punish you. He'll punish you, just like other people do."

Oh, so like your mom, if you do something you're not supposed to do, your mom will punish you. So is God like mom or dad?

“Yeah.”

Who’s more in charge?

“God.”

Naomi exhibited behaviors identified in Fowler’s Stage Two. She perceived the world based on rewards and punishments/good verses bad. She also was pre-conventional in her morality (Kohlberg, 1981) in her perception that authority figures are all-powerful. However, she saw God as the ultimate authority. I also identified responses that reflected Fowler’s Stage Three – Synthetic Conventional Faith – where youth and young adults have the desire to conform to social expectations, usually a law-and-order morality. However, in regard to images of God being physically anthropomorphic, which at this stage is usually replaced by God having personal qualities such as deity, friend, and comforter, Naomi described God as having both characteristics.

To continue the interview, I asked Naomi a series of questions from the original study done by Fowler. The questions could be divided into three categories; questions about people and their purpose in life, questions about God and Heaven, and school work. These questions, except for the questions about school work were asked of all the children in the original study and the responses were evaluated according to the stages of faith development.

Questions:

Why do you think there are people in the world?

“Because, God made them.”

What does God do with people?

“He takes them to Heaven if they die.”

What do you think is up in Heaven?

“People, and Heaven and God.”

And are they okay in heaven after that?

“Yeah, they’re safe with Jesus.”

How does he make them safe?

“He puts His arms around them like this (arm gesture is being demonstrated).”

Does God expect anything from us?

Yeah, He expects good behavior in school, and He expects to be nice to each other, and He expects to like, what does obey mean?

To listen, to follow the rules.

“To obey parents, and to obey Him.”

What do you think he looks like? What does God look like?

“He looks like He has a scar on his hands, and His face looks like, the ones, I saw Jesus before, and I got the book of Jesus.”

If Jesus were not in a book what do you think He would look like?

“He looks like He has some hands that are longer than mine, and He has some arms that are stronger, and His face looks like it like, skinny, and mouth looks like, the one from the book. He has long hair.”

Do you think God wants people to be good? Do you think He can help people to be good?

“You get to be a good person by Jesus and good person, you do nice things for people, and you make them happy, and you make them feel better when they’re sad.”

When you do something wrong, does God know?

“Yeah.”

Can God be with you all the time?

“Yes. He’s in your car. He’s in your house. He’s everywhere.”

You mentioned heaven before in our conversation.

“Heaven is like, like a sunshine, and it’s cool up there, and it’s like grapes and people and grapes ... If you die, you go to heaven.”

Like Thomas, Naomi also believed that Jesus is the ultimate authority and He tells parents what is the right thing to do. But parents are not always right. Our conversation continued about her school experience.

Do you think God cares about your school work?

“Yes. He cares about learning, about you learning and doing your work in school.”

Do you think that He can help you with things that are hard for you to do?

“Yes. He’ll like, tell me, but I don’t know what He’s saying, because I’m little.”

Can God be happy or sad?

“He can be happy, and He can be sad. Like if you do something wrong, and you weren’t supposed to do it, then you made Him sad.”

Naomi appeared to be between stages two and three. She still used narratives and stories to make sense of her world, but she also was attempting to align her thinking with basic moral expectations. She also made a comment that was definitely a stage three. She commented that in heaven were “grapes.” The child in Stage Three -- Synthetic-Conventional faith -- is still struggling with symbols. Rituals and symbols are not

separated from the things symbolized. I believe the grapes Naomi mentioned represent the wine that is taken during communion. She associated "grapes" with Jesus.

### ***Pictorial Representation of Faith***

To conclude the interview, I asked Naomi to draw a picture of what she thinks about God or Jesus. The instructions were the same as those given to Thomas.

See Figure 2 for the drawing by Naomi.



Figure 2 She described the picture as "Jesus is right here. And I'm making a rainbow, and I'm putting in some clouds" Why did you decide to make a rainbow? "Because that's what it looked like when Jesus was alive." Her drawing was detailed. She drew clouds and a colorful rainbow. Jesus had hair, clothes, and his skin was colored brown. To read entire interview, refer to Appendix C.

## **The Spiritual Faith Factor in the Life of John**

### **Description of the Home Environment and Neighborhood**

The third child I interviewed was a 9-year-old third grader I call John. His primary caregiver was his grandmother. However, he spent a significant amount of time with his great-grandmother. This arrangement is not unusual in the African American community. Many children are raised by their grandparents or great-grandparents. At the time of the interview, John, his mother and sister, whom I call Deborah, were living with his great-grandmother. During the school week and part of the weekend, John lived with his 46-year-old grandmother and her 18-year-old daughter in a modest apartment complex. The neighborhood was composed of mostly retirees who had lived there for several years. Because of limited traffic, people in this area often walked their dogs, rode bikes, or walked with a partner for exercise. The apartment was sparsely furnished with only the basic necessities. The grandmother explained that they were saving to buy a house the following year. However, it was clear that family was of great importance. Several pictures of all of the children, cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents hung in the living room. The household provided a stable environment for John. His grandmother worked as a parole officer. His 33-year-old mother was unemployed. His 77-year-old great-grandmother, a retired cashier from a hospital, provides care for several of her infant and toddler great-grandchildren in her home. John's 35-year-old father was incarcerated, and the two have had little contact with each other. According to his grandmother, John was an active child, who was easily distracted. She also said he loved to play and talk, which was confirmed during the interview. I interviewed John at his home.

### ***Interview***

John's grandmother worked a variable schedule so we agreed to meet Thursday at about 7:00 p.m. The grandmother met me at the door and I followed her to the living room we would be able to work without any interruptions. John was in the back of the house and his grandmother informed him that I had arrived. He entered the room with a big smile and said, "Hello, Ms. Julie." I said hello to him and we all sat down on the couch to review the procedure.

I went over the procedures for the interview that were described to them during our initial meeting and our phone conversations, each item in detail as I had with Thomas and Naomi. I asked John if he understood what we were going to do, and if it was all right to tape record the interview. He replied, "Yes."

### ***Faith Stage Interpretation***

As with the previous two interviewees, John, 9, should be in Fowler's Stage Two -- Mythic-Literal Faith, thinking concretely, and having difficulty drawing the moral from a story. Children at this age and stage generally are unable to understand from another's perspective. Their moral thinking is based on reciprocal fairness and imminent justice, and their perception of God is anthropomorphic. John was alert and attentive. He seemed to be eager to get started and was excited to talk. John was the oldest child interviewed, so it was interesting to observe a child in the stage of concrete operations (Piaget, 1967) and conventional morality as defined by Kohlberg. I read John the Heinz dilemma (Kohlberg, 1981).

Should the husband have done that? Was it right or wrong?"

John replied, “Wrong.”

Why do you think it was wrong?

“Because he shouldn’t have broken into the store and stolen the drug because it was against the law and it wasn’t right.”

John’s response clearly reflects Kohlbergs’ conventional morality – stage four. He appears to believe in following the Golden Rule, and that correct behavior involves obeying the law. His response also relates to Fowler’s Stage Three – Synthetic-Conventional Faith. John’s moral thinking involves living up to social expectations, including law-and-order morality. This stage is well above the age identified in the Fowler study.

Next, I asked John a series of questions from Fowler’s original study. The questions could be divided into three categories; those about people and their purpose in life, about God and Heaven, and school. All of the questions, except for the ones about school, were asked of all the children in the original study, and the responses were evaluated according to the stages of faith development.

Questions:

Why do you think there are people in the world?

“Because if there was only one person in the world, the person would be lonely, and if there were no people in the world, the world would be an empty place. People take care of the animals and the environment around them so the planet would just be all waste.”

Who made the animals and the planet?

“God.”

What does God do with people?



“God gives people a lot of things to do, and things that are not against Him.”

Does God expect anything from us?

“Yes. He expects us to follow his holy word and to be kind to one another and proudly take Him in.”

How do you get to be a good person?

“You get to be a good person when you do good things to other people. Then other people will do good things to you, and then you will turn out better.”

When you do something wrong, do you think God knows?

“Yes. “

How?

“Because He made us and He can see all. He knows it before we even do it.”

Does He care if you do something wrong?

“He doesn’t care if you come to Him and ask for forgiveness.”

What is Heaven?

“It’s a place where people will be rewarded for following the word of God.”

Where do people go when they die?

“They go to Heaven if they follow the rules of God and are kind to everyone and don’t disrespect Him. And, if they weren’t bad and disrespected God and never asked for forgiveness, they go where the devil is.”\

Where does God live?

“He lives above the world and all the people in Heaven.”

What do you think Heaven looks like?

“It would be somewhere like, like something a good place like a happy place where everybody lives good.”

Can anyone go to Heaven?

“Everyone can go to Heaven if they do the right thing.”

What do you like about church?

“I like in my church that, if you don’t understand what they’re saying, they have a place where you can go so they can show you what they’re talking about.”

What else do you like to do at church?

“I like to go to Sunday School. I like that we learn cool things about God, and, if we don’t understand, then we get to do something fun that lets us understand it better.”

Does God talk to people?

“Yes, if you listen.”

Has he ever talked to you?

“Yes.”

What did He say?

“I was asking Him for help because I didn’t know what to do because I needed help because I was taking a test and I didn’t think I could do it. I asked Him for help.”

And what happened?

“He just told me to try my best, and I did good.”

Do you think God is concerned about your schoolwork? Do you think you do better at school because He’s helping you?

“Yes, because He gives you courage to do things that you think you can’t do.”

John was sharing such deep insights about his faith and God that I wanted to follow his lead and ask more questions to determine if he was operating at a higher stage, possibly Stage Four – Individuative-Reflective faith. This stage is identified as young adults into mid-adulthood. This stage involves critical reflection where the person will take responsibility for choosing what authority they will submit to and begin to have internal authority. They have decided to accept the views of others or continue to embrace their own view of the world.

Do you ever hear people talk about God?

“I hear people praise Him and thank Him for the things He did, and they say they wouldn’t be where they are right now if He didn’t help them.”

Have you heard anything else about Him?

“Some people don’t believe in Him. They think God doesn’t exist.”

What do you think about that? People who don’t think that God exists?

“I think they just don’t want to believe because they don’t want to devote all of their time in praising someone they don’t even see.”

So how do you know He’s real if you don’t see Him?

“Because He does things that can help you when you pray for forgiveness, and good things happen to you when you pray and believe in Him.”

If you could tell me anything about God, what would you tell me?

“I would tell you that He is our Savior and without Him we wouldn’t even be here. And that everyone should praise Him because He made us. Without Him we wouldn’t be here. And that He gave His only son for us so that means He loves us a lot. So, we should show the same love back to Him.”

Clearly, John was transitioning through stages two through four. He was exhibiting behaviors in all of the four stages. Some were more developed, and some were just beginning.

### ***Pictorial Representation of Faith***

To conclude the interview, I asked John to draw a picture of what he thinks about God or Jesus. As with Thomas and Naomi, I reviewed the instructions with John.

See Figure 3 for the drawing by John.



*Figure 3* He described the picture as, “My picture is about God in Heaven, and I’m down

here.” Are you praying to Him? “Yes.” In my opinion, the drawing was appropriate for a child in third to fourth grade. John drew God on top of the clouds with sun beams streaming down, and lined His entire body in gold. John drew himself kneeling with outstretched arms. To read entire interview refer to Appendix C.

### **The Spiritual Faith Factor in the life of Deborah**

#### **Description of Home Environment and Neighborhood**

The fourth child I interviewed was a 5-year – old kindergartener named Deborah, John’s younger sister. She resided with her 77-year-old great-grandmother and her 33-year-old mother. The great-grandmother provided the primary care for Deborah. Since Deborah’s toddler years, she has lived off and on in the great-grandmothers’ home with various extended family members. Her 31-year-old father was incarcerated for child support at the time of the interview. She has a relationship with her father. He takes her to see her other grandparents.

The neighborhood was one of the older urban communities in the city. Several neighbors had lived on the block for more than 30 years. Many of them were elderly. Several of the homes were vacant. The homes that were occupied by elderly neighbors had character and potential. They had lawns that were edged, sidewalks that were freshly swept, hedges freshly trimmed, and beautiful, colorful, flower gardens in the front and side yards. The neighbors were friendly. On the day of the initial visit, two neighbors were talking with each other on the sidewalk. The conversation was filled with laughter, hand gestures, and hugs.

Deborah attended the neighborhood church with her great-grandmother. She participated in the children's choir and Sunday school. She was talkative and outgoing with adults and often was in the midst of adult conversation. Her family lived in a two-story home. The outside was in different stages of repair. New wood that had replaced old wood and some worn pieces needed to be painted. The house had an addition that also was under different stages of renovation. They had a spacious yard with several trees, bushes, and flowers. The inside of the house was neat and clean. It was modestly decorated with knick knacks and pictures on the walls. There was an area in the living room devoted to family pictures. The living space appeared to be crowded for the number of adults residing in the home, as well as, the great-grand children who came daily for the great-grandmother's childcare. Deborah's mother was unemployed at the time of the interview.

### ***Interview***

It was a sunny afternoon. We were scheduled to meet after Deborah came home from school. The great-grandmother met me at the door and led me to the living room. We decided to interview Deborah in her mother's upstairs bedroom.

Deborah was excited to lead me to the bedroom. The upstairs also was under renovation. The bedroom was crowded, but served as a cozy place to talk. Deborah seemed to be comfortable with the setting. Once again I went over the procedures for the interview. I asked Deborah if she understood what we were going to do and if it was all right to tape record the interview. She replied, "Yes."

*Faith Stage Interpretation*

As with the previous interviewees, Deborah, 5, should be in Fowlers' Stage One-- Mythic-Literal Faith where the child thinks concretely and has difficulty drawing the moral from a story. Deborah was excited to talk and record our discussion. She is a bright and interesting child.

I began the interview by reading the story, "All Things Bright and Beautiful." This story is about all of the creatures in nature and how each makes the earth a beautiful place. Deborah and I talked about the different animals in the story, and about the ones she had seen before. I continued our discussion telling a brief story about a boy and girl who were on a picnic in the woods with their parents. The boy and girl wandered off and went deeper in the woods. After telling the story, I asked Deborah, "What do you think the children might see in the woods?" She mentioned some forest animals, and trees. She also included some animals that might be in the zoo. This was a Fowler Stage-One response, typical for her cognitive development. She mixed reality and fantasy in the same discussion. I continued the discussion by asking:

Why do we have trees and animals?

"Because, God made trees and animals."

What about people?

"People, too. God makes people because that's what God's supposed to do. He makes dogs and cats and all people."

What do you think happens when someone gets sick?

"They call a doctor. They can go to the hospital."

What happens if they can't get well and they die? Where does the body go when they die?

“Up in Heaven.”

What do they do there?

“They make another body.”

How do you get to know God? How do you know who He is?

“Because, we saw God before, and we heard God’s voice before.”

What did He say?

“That we are part of God’s family. We can learn about Him. That’s why we go to church.”

What do you do at your church?

“We pray and learn about God. We go downstairs, and we make snacks, and we go to the nursery. And they let us sing about music, church music.”

Do you sing church music sometimes?

“I go in the choir.”

Do you think God can be happy?

“Yes.”

What do you think can make Him happy?

“That we always be good.”

Do you think God knows you?

“Yes, because He saw us before in Heaven.”

Can God do anything He wants to do?

“Yes.”

Do you believe in God?

“Yes.”



Why do you believe in Him?

“Because He made us, and He loves us.”

What do you think He looks like?

“He looks like Jesus, and Jesus looks like God. He looks like people. Like us and my Nanna, and my Grandma.”

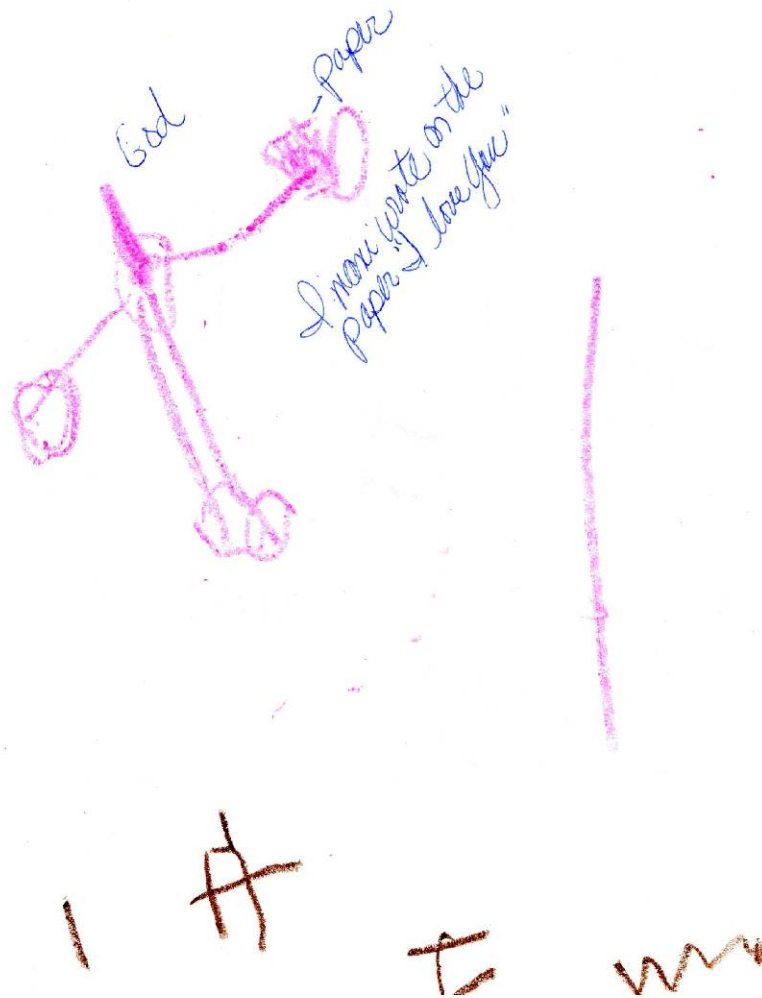
Is He tall or short?

“He would be strong! Because He’s big.”

### ***Pictorial Representation of Faith***

At the end of the interview, Deborah drew a picture of what she thinks about God or Jesus.

See Figure 4 for the drawing by Deborah.



*Figure 4* I asked her to tell me about her picture. “This is God. He is picking up some paper so He can read it.” What does the paper say? “That I love you.” Who’s the paper from? “Me.” Oh, you drew a picture, a message for God. And it says “I love you,” and it is from you. How do you think that makes Him feel? “Happy, and He smiles.” Are you praying to Him? “Yes.” Deborah’s comments were stage one. She saw God anthropomorphically, and believed He was all-powerful and knowing. Her moral judgments were based on what was considered good and bad. Her understanding of God was that He wanted people to be good. This perception was also strengthened in her

church experience. The drawing in my opinion, was typical for a preschool/beginning kindergarten child. She drew God at the top left of her paper; possibly representing Him in the sky. To read entire interview refer to Appendix C.

## **General Issues of Faith and Faith Development**

### **Common Themes Discovered from the Interviews**

This section shares the responses from the participants, but from a collective view point. The responses are grouped by commonalities. Before each collective response, a brief comment is provided to share how the responses reflect stages identified by Fowler, and if the responses reflect the African American Christian Faith experience. It is interesting to note that the responses also reflect the diagram shared in Chapter Five. The wider the faith realm, the more impact it seems to have on the life of the child in the areas of social, emotional, and cognitive development. The comments John made throughout his interview were an example of this. He had belief that the spiritual realm exists, he acted on his belief and, as a result, it had an impact on his social, emotional and cognitive development. “He helps me with things that are hard for me to do,” John said. All of the children were asked the same basic questions. Additional questions were asked based on each child’s responses.

The basic questions were:

1. Why do we have people?
2. Do you think there is a reason for people in the world?
3. What do you think happens when you die?
4. How can people know who God is?
5. Can God be Happy? Sad?
6. Can God be with us all the time?
7. How can we find out about God?
8. Do people ever talk to God?

9. Is there a Heaven, and what is in Heaven? Can anyone go there?
10. Can God do anything He wants?
11. What if somebody just came up to you and said, "I heard a lot about God. Can you tell me who God is?" What would you say?

### **Why do we have people?**

This question and the one following demonstrate that all of the children believe God made people, and that they are made for a reason. This response went beyond what would be considered a stage, but it represented more closely the quest some researchers suggest are the ultimate questions of "Who am I," "What is my purpose" (MBiti, 1990; Fowler, 1987; Hale, 2001; Nye and Hay, 1998).

Deborah -- "God made everything, people, trees and animals. We are part of God's family. God made people because that's what God's supposed to do."

Thomas -- "For God."

Naomi -- "Because God made them."

John -- "If there was only one person they would get lonely, the world would be empty. God gives people work to do. Work that is not against Him or the law."

### **Do you think there is a reason for people in the world?**

Deborah -- "Because that's what God's supposed to do. He makes all people."

Naomi -- "He loves them. People are for God."

Thomas -- "No."

John -- "God gives people work to do. He has them take care of the animals, the planet. Everything He made, people are supposed to take care of."

### **What do you think happens when people die?**

All of the children said they believe there is a Heaven and people go there.

However, the oldest child believed there was a condition to being able to go to Heaven.

In the original study by Fowler, a child about John's age also referred to Heaven and Hell (Fowler, 1989, p. 140).

Deborah -- "If you don't eat, you die. People go up in Heaven. They live there and make another body."

Thomas -- Shrugs shoulders.

Naomi -- "God takes them to Heaven when they die."

John - "When you die, you go to Heaven if you followed rules of God, you were kind, and you didn't disrespect Him, and asked for forgiveness. If you don't, you go to the devil,"

### **How can people know who God is?**

The children seemed to rely on their church experience as well as what they believed to be true. All of them answered the question with what seemed to be the belief that God is real and can be known. Their belief did not seem to be based on an ability to see Him.

Deborah -- "Because we saw God before. We heard God's voice before. Because that's why we go to church. We pray and learn about God."

Thomas -- "Yes."

Naomi -- "I got the book of Jesus."

John -- "Tell them to go ask God. I believe in Jesus even though I can't see Him. Because I see the things he does."

### **How can we know when God is happy or sad?**

All of the children said they believed God can be happy, and that His happiness is based on good behavior. But Thomas said he did not believe He could be sad.

Deborah -- "When we always be good."

Thomas -- "God can be happy. I don't know if He can be sad."

Naomi -- "You get to be a good person by Jesus and good person, you do nice things for people, and you make them happy, and you make them feel better when they're sad. God knows everything. He's everywhere. He cries and is sad when you do something wrong, and you weren't supposed to do it. Then you made Him sad."

John -- "When you do good things for people, follow His word, be kind, follow the Ten Commandments. You should come to Him for forgiveness. He knows all, sees all, knows things before we do it."

### **How can we find out about God?**

The church experience and especially the child oriented activities that each was involved in had a significant impact on the children and their knowledge about God.

(Hale, 2002).

Deborah -- "Because we go to church to learn about God. We're part of Gods family."

Thomas -- "Yes."

Naomi -- "Church and the pastor."

John -- "Church, Sunday school to learn about God."

The following three responses reflect a Stage-Three response according to the Fowler study. The participant is able to perceive God as having inexhaustible depths, and to construct God's perspective. (Fowler, 1989; pp. 143 and 153). However, these responses also reflect the African American Christian experience. (McAddo, 1981; Hale, 1982, 2001 & MBiti, 1990).

### **Do people ever talk to God?**

Deborah -- "We can talk to God. We can hear His voice. And because He saw us before in Heaven. We pray."

Thomas -- "He can't talk to us. We can talk to Him."

Naomi -- "He talks to us and you can talk to Him. He talks, but I don't know what He is saying because I'm little. He tells the pastor. Anybody who wants to talk, we can hear Him."

John -- "If you listen to His word He will talk to you. I asked Him for help once to know what to do. I asked Him for courage to take a test that I thought I couldn't do. I asked for help. He said try your best. He helped me and I did good on my test."

**Can God do anything He wants to do?**

Deborah -- "Yes."

Thomas -- "Uh-huh."

Naomi -- "Yes. He's everywhere."

John -- "Yes. He knows all, sees all."

**Can God be with you all the time?**

Deborah -- "Yes."

Thomas -- "No."

Naomi -- "Yes. He's in your car. He's in your home. He's everywhere."

John -- "Yes. God knows all, sees all, knows things before we do it."

**Is there a Heaven? What is in Heaven? Can anyone go there?**

Deborah -- "Yes, people go to Heaven when they die. People are happy in Heaven. He saw us before in Heaven."

Thomas -- "Yes, anyone can go there."

Naomi -- "People go to Heaven when they die. Jesus lives in Heaven. People are safe in Heaven. He puts His arms around them like this (arm gesture is being demonstrated)."

John -- "Yes, a happy place. People can go there if they do right and ask for forgiveness. Rewarded for following the Word, follow rules of God, be kind, don't disrespect Him. Heaven is above the world."

### **Things I like about going to church**

For these African American children, their faith had a significant impact on them. All of them found the church experiences to be enjoyable, They said they felt they were part of the community, and felt they learned from the experiences. When children have the opportunity to believe that someone loves and cares for them, and they have opportunities to participate in a community experience where everyone is valued, and all are welcome, they begin to feel good about themselves and want to continue the community experience, even in a classroom setting. These positive feelings have an impact on their coping skills. (Hale, 2001; Coles, 1990; Kozol, 2000; Paley, 1999; Gallagher, 2001; Goleman, 2003 & Jang & Johnson, 2005).

#### **Responses from the children:**

Thomas -- “We pray and learn about God.”

Deborah – “We go downstairs and we make snacks, and we go to the nursery. And they let us sing about music, church music. I go in the choir.”

Naomi -- “I go to Bible study.”

John -- “I like children’s church because they explain what is being taught during the morning service. I also like Sunday school to learn about Gods’ word.”

#### **Informed Perceptions**

Shank (2005), defines “informed perceptions” as perceptions that inform the reader who has a more intense particular interest in the topic. Therefore, this section can be useful for those who have a particular interest in spirituality research and would like to glean information from this case study that may be useful for future research.



In their early faith development, Christian African American children perceive Jesus as a human being, reaching out His arms to signify strength and protection. They liken their relationship with Him to that of a loving parent who guides, punishes, and protects them. This is consistent with the Stage-One description outlined by Fowler, (1987). However, unlike Fowler's experience, the children and the adults interviewed here continue to perceive Jesus with human characteristics, not just abstractly as described in the Fowler study.

Also, in Fowlers' study, when children were read the Heinz dilemma, stage one children responded consistent with the moral stage development outlined by Kohlberg. However, in this study, all of the children said stealing was wrong. The 9-year old did not rationalize the decision that Fowler described would happen in Stage-Two and Stage-Three children. It appears this difference may be attributed to early faith experiences. The children in this study seemed to be clear about their perceptions in writing and in their drawings. Their faith experiences seemed to have a stronger influence than the traditional stage development theory that child educators follow.

The only exception was in the psycho-social development outlined by Erikson (1967). The children likened Jesus to themselves and their family members. They believed they could develop a trusting relationship with Him because they had experienced trusting relationships in the past. In the area of faith development, it also appears that early teachings about Jesus build a foundation for further relationships with Him. This will be discussed more thoroughly in the multigenerational discussion.

### Unanticipated Findings

I did not anticipate the rich information I received from interviews with the parents' of the participants about what they were doing to nurture faith in their children as well as their own faith journey. All of the parents said they believe there is a plan for their life. The basic questions that I asked all of the parents were:

- What have you done to nurture faith in your child?
- What experiences has the child participated in to nurture faith?
- When there is a crisis or problem, how do you explain to your child how it should be handled?
- Do you believe there is a plan for your life and for your child's life?

All of the parents had their child participate in some type of church activities such as the children's choir, children's church and Sunday school. They said they believed this type of involvement is a way of nurturing faith in their child.

Naomi's mom:

I try and take her to church, try talking about God and Jesus and letting her know that there's wrong stuff to do. She can't do everything everyone else does. Try and read the Bible and pray at night.

The parents took different approaches to teaching their child how to handle a crisis or problem. All of them said they felt it was important to rely on God and ask for direction, but some of the parents said they felt they did not model this behavior consistently.

Deborah and John's mom:

A lot of my children's spiritual background will come from our grandmother. Because here lately my spiritual walk has weakened, so I

have not been pressing the issue with my children regarding the Lord. But, in a crisis, I will try to get my children to follow their heart. Like a lot of times, for myself, I have a problem doing it, so I go to different people to get their opinion of the situation, when in all actuality, I should just look into myself to come up with the answer that I need. In the past, I sought God for helping me make decisions, but lately I have not.

Naomi's mom and Thomas's mom agreed:

I try to tell her to be calm. Try not to get mad or anything. Pretty much just to stay calm. At school, she had a problem last year, but I try and teach her to be a leader and not a follower, and that, basically, she can't do everything everyone else does. She can't get mad because you can't do something where somebody else gets their way and you don't. So I just try to teach her that.

The question, **Do you believe there is a plan for you and your child's life?**

seemed to cause deep reflection in some of the parents. All of them believed there was a plan designed by God for their life and their child's life, but some were not sure how to share this philosophy with their child. One parent, Deborah's mom reflected on her own faith/spiritual journey and what was lacking:

I feel I have strayed away. This has had an impact on my children, in a negative way, because we are responsible for the child's well being, physically, mentally, as well as spiritually. And if one of those areas is lacking, it brings down the counterparts. Everything works together, so if there's a weakness in one of those parts, it throws everything off. So I have not been able to instill in my children the same belief values that were instilled in me. To an extent He does but, I you have to, I feel like, okay He has a plan for you, if you deviate from that plan, it's gonna be, you're going to feel more alone, than if you were doing things the way that He had planned out for you. So if you walk away, if you go away from His plan, you are by yourself because you're not doing what He wants you to do. It's just like parents telling their children this and this and this to do, and if they don't do it, then you have no choice but to back up and let them see what's going to happen to them. And I think the Lord does the same thing.

### **Multigenerational Dialogue of Faith**

The multigenerational interview was conducted with three female relatives ages 25, 45, and 77. They were the parent, grandparent, and great-grandparent of 5-year-old Deborah and 9-year-old John. The adults had all on occasion returned to the great grandparent's home to live. Deborah lived with her great grandmother. The women lived within the urban community. The 45-year-old lived approximately 10 minutes from her mother. They all attend the same church where the great-grandmother has been a member for approximately 45 years.

This in-depth look at one of the families provided an opportunity to see how faith has been taught and expressed through the generations. It also provided an opportunity to determine if there were any comments that would reflect the other stages of faith as identified by Fowler that are exhibited during adulthood. Although the intent of this study was not to seek any correlations between the previous study by Fowler and this one as it relates to adults, I felt it provided an opportunity to identify any unifying characteristics.

I had the opportunity to have a discussion with Deborah's and John's extended family members. The members were the mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. This dialogue was held in the home of the great-grandmother where Deborah lives.

The discussion began with outlining the questions I would ask. However, I explained that it would not be limited to those questions. First, I talked with the great-grandmother and the granddaughter (Naomi's and Thomas's mom) about how long they have attended church.

Great-grandmother: I have lived here about 57 years and I have been a member of my church for around 47 years.

Granddaughter: I have been a member of the same church for 27 years.

Both seemed to be proud of their longevity at the church. My next question was about how they handle a crisis and how the situation is shared with the child.

Great-grandmother: Well, usually, I'm a firm believer in prayer. And Latoya, growing up, she was okay, but then I had most of the responsibilities for her because her mother worked. And then her mother was going to school. And she listened very well, and you know, she does pretty good from what I've taught her to do, except, go to church. So I'm kind of disappointed in that when she's not attending church like she should be, and you know, I think that everybody should attend some church of some kind. This gives you more value and more stability in your life. Because everyone should have God in their life.

Is there a plan for your life?

Oh, definitely, yeah definitely. Well you kinda make, kinda guide them through it, not make decisions for them. But just talk and let them make their own decisions by what you've been talking about, and usually, they will relate to it, by that way they will be making their own decisions.

During this conversation Deborah's and Thomas's mother seemed to be uncomfortable, almost saddened by the response of her grandmother. When I asked her if there was a plan for her life she responded:

To be honest, right now, I think that there is a plan, but I think that I have deviated from what the plan that was put in place for me. A lot of my children's spiritual background, will come from our grandmother. Because here lately I haven't, my spiritual walk has weakened, so, I have not been pressing the issue with my children regarding the Lord.

Do you ever seek God's help in helping you to make a decision?

In the past I have, but lately I have not.

How did you go about the process in the past?

Through prayer, um, through fellowship, scripture.

Do you feel that the straying away, of not being as active, has had an impact on your children?

Yeah. Yes I do.

In what way?

In a negative way. Because, we have children, you are responsible for the child's well-being, physically, mentally, as well as spiritually. And if one of those areas are lacking, it brings down the counterparts. Everything works together. If there's a weakness in one of those parts, it throws everything off. So I have not been able to instill in my children the same belief values that were instilled in me.

If you can reflect back on being a child, and what your grandmother had told you about Jesus and God, has your perception of Him changed now?

Yes, as a child, you think like, God, He protects you from everything. He wouldn't let anything bad happen to you. But as an adult, as bad things happen. I have found I felt alone? Oh like my grandmother didn't know what she was talking about. All those times that she was telling me that the Lord don't ever leave you and He'll protect you from this and that. And when bad things happen to you, you find it hard to believe that it's somebody or something watching over you to protect you. As an adult, you also learn that the Lord gives you choices, and it's up to you, what it is that you do.

So do you think that He doesn't protect and guide? What do you think about that?

To an extent He does. He has a plan for you. If you deviate from that plan, you're going to feel more alone than if you were doing things the way that He had planned out for you. So if you walk away, if you go away from His plan, you are by yourself because you're not doing what He wants you to do. So He has, just like, parents with children, you're telling them this and this and this to do, and if they don't do it, then you have no choice but to back up and let them see what's going to happen for themselves. And I think the Lord does the same thing.

Do you think knowing Him, your faith upbringing has strengthened you in your life, even though you strayed away from it? Or do you think it didn't really strengthen you?

Yes, I think faith and spirituality does strengthen the individual. As children we're brought up with different beliefs instilled in us, and, as adults our belief systems might change. You know, being brought up with a spiritual background, it enables you and empowers you to do things that, if you were brought up a different way, you wouldn't see it as that?

So, you think because you were exposed to a faith-based lifestyle, it caused you to respond to things in a different way?

As opposed to someone being brought up without it. I hope for my children to be stronger individuals than I am.

Stronger personally, spiritually? What do you mean by stronger?

In every aspect. I want my children to be able to count on themselves. It's okay to depend on other people, but I would like for them to be independent? To know that I drive my own ship, that another person, while they may have influences on the direction that you're going, you are the captain of your ship. Nobody can steer you this way. Like my grandmother was speaking about earlier, how with being a parent, you have to be able to talk to your children, to lead them, to tell them that this is the right thing to do. But, also, you want them to be able to make decisions on their own. You see, for me, when I was coming up, teenage years, adolescent years, I wasn't able to do that, to be independent. And I think that has a lot to do with me now, why I'm so indecisive about things. Because my mother never let me make my own decisions or anything. She was, she is still, the type of person, very strong-willed, this is the way it is, this is the way its' going to be. But I try not to do that with my children. And I hope and I pray that I've taken some good things from my childhood and instilled that into them. But the bad things from my childhood I would like to change, just to do it different for them.

So, spiritually, what would you like to have happen in your life?

Spiritually, what would I like to have happen in my life? I would like to strengthen my walk with the Lord. I would like to find the mate that the Lord has for me.

And, spiritually, what do you want for your daughter, and your son?

For them to know that it's okay to love the Lord. You don't have to be ashamed of your love for the Lord, or your faith. Because in these days and times, you find a lot of people being led astray. I would like for my children to know the truth about the Lord, and what He has in store for them.

The mother of Deborah and John provided comments that reflected the characteristics of Fowler's stage 4 – Individuative-Reflective Faith. This stage is characterized by the person experiencing a critical reflection and a critical challenging of previous values and beliefs. Individuals in this stage justify their own point of view by giving examples of the faith of other significant people (Fowler, 1989). She was critically evaluating her choices and desired a more positive outcome for her children.

I was curious to know what the grandmother thought about the conversation with her granddaughter. So I asked her, "What do you hope for your granddaughter and your great-grandchildren in regards to their awareness of faith and their spirituality?"

Great-grandmother: To always know that God is always with them, and no matter what happens, He's always there. You can always depend on Him. This is what I would hope that they would do. I would like for them to have choices to do, but not the wrong choices, not negative, anything positive I think would be good for them. And my great-granddaughter, I think is going to be a strong-willed person, because she's such a strong little girl now. And she remembers. I can tell her anything about God or Jesus and she remembers it. And she's going to be very strong in that area.



During the discussion, the grandmother of Deborah and John entered the house. As shared earlier, John resided primarily with her. I asked her to join in our discussion. We began our discussion about how to handle a crisis.

Grandmother: Well I believe that in order for the crisis to resolve, you have to have faith that God is going to see you through it. In order to understand the good, you have to experience the bad. And to understand how God brings you through things, you have to go through turmoil so that He can take you through it. And you have to believe that He's going to see you through it.

We also talked about her involvement in church. She had attended the same church as her mother and daughter for 45 years. She said that her mother (the great-grandmother of the 5 year old) started them going to church.

From your own children to your grandchildren to your great-grandchildren, that's quite a legacy. And a nice heritage to pass on, a spiritual heritage. So how has that made an impact on your life, your faith? (question posed to the grandmother of Deborah and John).

Grandmother: I don't believe I'd be where I am today if I didn't have faith. It is the backbone of how I've lived my life. How I interact throughout the day. I believe God changes things, and God changes people. You have to trust and believe that when you can't handle things, you take your hands off it, and you allow Him to do what He's going to do, because our time isn't His time. His word does not come back void, so what He says He does.

Do you think you would have been a different person if you didn't have a faith-based background?

Grandmother: Oh yeah, I'd be a different person.

What do you hope for your child and for your grandchildren, spiritually?

Grandmother: Spiritually, I pray that my daughter gets saved and comes to know Christ for herself. I pray that she raises her children and walks by faith so that she can lead by example, and that they will follow in her footsteps. Because I try to be a living example, as my mother has been for me. And I just pray that that is passed on.

The grandmother expressed the same desire as the mother of Deborah and John.

The grandmother and the great-grandmother are concerned about the chosen life direction of Deborah and John's mother. Deborah and John's mom also recognized her direction was not positive, but she was not sure how to get back or reclaim the faith principles she had learned.

To the grandmother, "How can you help a person get back to where they feel they want to be spiritually?"

Grandmother: You have to just talk to them, and show them how God works, has worked in their lives, things that God has shown you in your life and the revelations He has had in your own personal life. And then you have to show them that they have to learn how to pray, and that God will speak to them as He does to you. But in order for Him to do that, you have to be open to hear God's word.

I asked the grandmother if her perception about Jesus has changed now that she is an adult.

Grandmother: Well I can't say that I have ever experienced those things, but I pray for those things. And I can't say that He has been a husband to me, because I don't feel that. But I do believe that God will bring people into your life that you need. And I think in that respect He's a father, and He looks out for His children. I think that we are Godly children and we are children of the King. So He's not going to want anything bad for His children, because we're royalty.

Do you think He has a sense of humor, or can be sad?

Grandmother: I think God grieves for us, I think He grieves for us when He sees that hurt that we experience from our children, and just things that happen in life. I think God cries for His children because any parent would.

Great-grandmother: I agree with that!

What do you think of when you think about Him?

Deborah and John's mom: I can't put it into words.

Great-grandmother: Well I think of Him as, He's really everything, He's always been everything to me. Because, once you have God in your life, you can almost do anything. And you can really do anything with your faith, if you have that faith. And God is there for you all the time. He is a person, but I wouldn't know how to describe Him, height, width, or whatever. But He's a person, God is a person. He's always there, and He will always be there for you. You only have to trust in Him, because He trusts in you.

Grandmother: I see Him as a spiritual being. I see Him as this big, gigantic, ominous being. And I think that He is so huge that, there's no room for anybody else. You know that He is just so gigantic. (the grandmother makes a gesture with her arms showing how big she sees Him)

The grandmother described Jesus in the same manner as her granddaughter Naomi. As previously stated, Naomi described Jesus as huge, strong, and with big muscles.

In the study conducted by Fowler (1987), he states that stage-one and -two children have an anthropomorphic view of Jesus and God that becomes more abstract during adolescence and adulthood. In this study, all of the participants had what Fowler would consider as stage one and two perceptions.

The conversation then moved in the direction of faith, and how they perceived it as an important factor in their lives.

Do you think faith protects you in your life?

Great-grandmother: Well, yes, yes. Without faith, you have nothing. If you don't have any faith, then you don't have anything. So faith is a substance, you have to have that in order to do almost anything. Faith applies to a lot of things in yourself, faith in God, your family, and faith does so much and it means so much to me.

Grandmother: Yes, I do. I think that without faith, you can't accomplish anything. I connect faith to self-esteem, how you see yourself. If you don't have faith in God, you don't have faith in yourself. You can't do it on your own. All you have to do is have faith the size of a mustard seed and you can move a mountain. And by mountains I mean things that are happening in your life.

The literature on African American faith states that scriptures and proverbs are a central part of understanding and acting on faith experiences. Scriptures, parables and proverbs are a part of the African American spiritual experience (Hale, 2001). The grandmother used the parable in the book of Matthew to apply it to her own situation.

Do you think faith can grow? Are there levels or stages of faith?

Grandmother: Yeah. Some days you have more faith in something or situations than other days. I think sometimes your faith is stronger. Sometimes you feel down, you get down. Life has a tendency to beat us down. But when you look at it from a spiritual sense, God gives us rewards. He rewards our souls, our spirits. He gives us that vibrance to move on.

Final comments about faith:

Great-grandmother: Well, they need faith in themselves in order to do what they're supposed to do. Like I said, without faith you have nothing. And children really need it nowadays because things are so different. Even when my children were coming up, things were so different. And how many generations do I have? I have three generations right?"

Grandmother: My mom's faith was stronger than mine. And my faith grew as I matured. And I think I did my children an injustice because, early in my life, I wasn't as spiritually grounded as I am now. I think that when you raise your kids with a spiritual base, you teach them to have morals and ethics, and a sense of being, and a sense of what's right and

what's wrong. God is all good and, in order to get that across, you have to believe, and you have to educate your family, your children. And you have to work together to grow spiritually as a family. I think that, when you do that, your family is more together, is more joined, everybody is more on the same page. And I think that you resolve issues a lot better when things are based spiritually on the Word. And that's how you deal with people.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This chapter begins with an overview of each of the preceding chapters. It includes a description of the problem and a summary of the literature review for this study. The second portion of the chapter focuses on the procedures and findings of the study. The findings are organized around the question this study set out to answer, as well as any limitations that were found in the study. The chapter concludes with suggestions and recommendations for further research.

The purpose of this study was to examine how the faith stages one and two identified by Fowler (1981) related to the experiences of Christian African American children. Four African American children, ages five, seven, eight and nine and their families were selected from an urban school that had an after-school program. A pilot study was conducted with a 5-year-old child to make sure the questions asked were understandable to this age group.

Faith as a factor is believed to help African American children thrive in adverse circumstances (Butler, 1997; McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004 & Nakhid, 2003). More specifically, it is believed that African American children's cultural value of faith is a factor that builds self-esteem (Coles, 1996; Haiman, 1991; Hale, 1991; Obiakor, 2005 & Steger & Frazier, 2005). Hart (2001) says children have an innate capacity for inviting the growth of inner wisdom because of their inquisitive and open nature (Crompton, 1992 & Hay, 2002). This inner wisdom and its impact need to be explored.

This study investigated the original faith stages study by Fowler (1981). The qualitative research method was used to provide a rich narrative description of the

participants' faith beliefs and experiences. Shank (2002) noted that "the goals of qualitative research are insight, enlightenment, and illumination ... we are searchers of meaning where no meaning has been clearly understood" (p. 11). The study focused on the stages of development, history, and culture of the participants, their participation during their church service, and the narrative description of the participants' faith beliefs and experiences.

The case study was shaped and defined through the dialogue and interaction of the researcher and the participants. This was done through a series of interviews, an observation and a collection of artifacts. A preliminary interview was held to determine if the participants could comfortably interview with me. The second interview, held in the home of each participant, was used to gain background information about the child and family, the educational background of the parents, employment, and the number of children in the family.

Next, I observed the church service of the participants to observe their interactions and participation. I also obtained a copy of the Sunday school and vacation Bible school curriculum (see appendix D). The final interview was held at my home. The location of the interview was selected by each parent. The questions for the interview were based on the original questions Fowler (1981) used. From the sample questions, key questions were selected for all of the children to answer. I allowed the interview to be modified during the interview to allow for spontaneity. The intergenerational interview was held at the home of the great-grandmother of two of the participants. All of the interviews were recorded, then transcribed by a typist. The transcriptions were read and reread in an attempt to identify any faith characteristics.

Fowlers' work on faith stages, particularly, stages one and two, was used in the interpretive process of searching for similarities or differences in the responses of the children in his study. Specifically, I attempted to identify responses that reflected a stage-one child or a stage-two child. A child in stage one should have an overall response that reflects symbols that are magical, a cognition that is more intuitive, not logical, a worldview perspective that represents real and fantasy existing together, and moral thinking based on rewards and punishments. A stage-two child (ages 6 through 12) should have an overall response that reflects symbols that are less fantasy based in nature, a cognition that is more logical in thought, a world view perspective that is more concrete, and a view of God that is anthropomorphic. According to Fowler, the anthropomorphic view diminishes as the child enters stage three, where God takes on personal qualities of deity such as friend, comforter and guide. The responses from the participants provided a clear framework and an underlying structure to a whole child view of early childhood.

Although numerous studies on religion, faith, and spirituality have been researched, there has been limited research conducted on the Christian African American faith during the early childhood years. In addition, the original study conducted by Fowler (1981) had limited child subjects as well as those who were African American. The question for this study was to investigate if Christian African American children respond in the same manner and stages as identified by Fowler, and if children were able to use drawings to express their faith experience. This research was significant because, as discussed in Chapter two, the original study had a small percentage of children, and an even smaller sample of African Americans. Furthermore, the interviews were mostly of



adults who recounted their earlier faith experiences. The pictorial representation was important because of the ages of the participants. This study provided an opportunity for the children to express their cognitive and emotional understanding of their faith nonverbally. Several researchers suggest that drawings of young children provide insight into their thoughts and perceptions as well as their cognitive development, which is important when considering the whole child perspective. (Cole, 1966; Horovitz-Darby, 1994; DeLeon, 1983; Eng, 1959; Goodenough, 1926; Harris, 1963; Kelepsch & Logie, 1982; Kellogg, 1979 & Lowenfeld, 1982, 1994).

In considering the whole child perspective, it is believed that the focus should consider faith as a significant factor in providing a source of strength for the child (Kimes & Martin 1993; Walker, 2002). Specifically, Fowler (1981), who established stages in faith development similar to those identified in the theories of Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg, said that people go through six stages of faith development, which reflect their attitudes, values, and life experiences, and shape who they are as a person. Fowler (1981) stated that faith is a human universal. How it is activated and grows depends on the kind of environment an individual grows in. Faith is not always religious in its content or context. It is a way of finding coherence and meaning to life. Fowlers' original intent was:

... to communicate to others an investigation into faith as a complex mysterious phenomenon and especially investigate the nature and workings of faith. It was his hope that this investigation will cause others to look at their own patterns of trust and commitment that shape and sustain their lives. Faith is interactive and social; it requires community, language, ritual and nurture (Fowler, 1981, p. xi).

Current research has indicated the importance of the early years and how positive experiences and knowledge about child development have an impact on later development (Bredekamp, Copple 1997; Children's Defense Fund, 2004; Cromwell, 2000; Essa, 2003; Morrison, 2001; NAEYC, 2004 & Ormrod, 2004). In recent years, professionals who work with children, specifically African American children in an urban setting, are seeking ways to help them reduce or cope with negative factors that have an impact on their education (Children's Defense Fund, 2003, 2004; Essa, 2003; Hale, 2001; Marshak, 1997; NAEYC, 1993; Nakhid, 2003; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005; Ormrod, 2004; Parham, 2000 & Yeakey, 2002).

Seeking interventions to reduce or cope with these negative factors has become an area of focus for parents, educators, community leaders, and faith-based institutions that are concerned about the plight of children and youth in urban settings, and about how to intervene effectively (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Eisner, 2005; Haberman, 1991; Hale, 2001; Jeynes, 2005; Olemedo, 1997 & Parham, 2000).

This case study cannot provide evidence of faith stages in Christian African American children that are different from the original study. However, this study and other case studies suggest that the Christian African American child's world view perspective and how the child applies Biblical principles to his daily life has an impact on his faith experience. (C. Barbour, N. Barbour, P. Scully, 2005 & Hale, 2002).

The four children interviewed attended the same church for a period of time covered by the study, however, two of them left and are now members of another church. Three of the children perceived God as having an all-knowing presence and had ultimate power.

However, it was John who was able to articulate his understanding of God.

John described how he applied his knowledge of God in his daily life. He provided several examples of what God expected of people, saying, "People have to believe in Him and do what was right." He also said he believed God was concerned about him and helped him in time of need. For example, John said he asked God for help when he was having trouble learning in school God helped him. Deborah, although she was only 5 years old, was able to share what she thought about God. She described Him as being like other people in her family, but He was strong.

In addition, the opportunity to be present with the children and experience with them their spiritual community was powerful. The children seemed to be relaxed, confident, and comfortable during the church service. They were active, responsive, and seemed to be filled with joy. The children heard and sung scripture. They also learned how the scriptures were alive in them and a part of their lives. An example of the Sunday school and vacation Bible school curriculum that provided a foundation for their beliefs can be found in (Appendix D).

The key questions for investigation were:

**Q1. Is faith in African American children in a different conceptual framework?**

**Q2. Will the responses of the children represent the description of the responses of stage one and two children described by Fowler?**

**Q3. Will the children be able to draw a pictorial representation of their faith experiences?**

### Guiding Questions Addressed

**Question 1:** *Is faith in African American children in a different conceptual framework?*

The four children had different responses to some of the questions during the interview. All of them, except for Thomas, described and demonstrated by their actions during church that faith was a communal and community experience. Deborah said, “We go to church to learn about God because He knew us before in Heaven.” John said he liked Junior church because, “They explained scriptures and the learning was fun.” The children also explained that God was anthropomorphic and had personal qualities. These two concepts seemed to develop together regardless of whether the child was in stage one or two. This is different from the work by Fowler. Deborah, John, and Naomi described God as having human features, and the personality of being loving, kind, and a friend.

**Question 2:** *Will the responses of the children represent the description of the responses of stage one and two children described by Fowler?*

According to the Fowler, a Stage-One child’s faith is a matter of imitation. His thinking is not logical, and symbols are viewed magically. Stage-Two children are similar in their view of faith, but God is viewed anthropomorphically. It is not until stage three that God is viewed as having personal qualities. This replaces the anthropomorphic view. This was an area that seemed to be significantly different. The oldest child, John, who would be considered to be in stage two, described God and had a world view perspective of stage three. John described God as having a physical nature and having attributes as being kind, loving, and a friend.

Naomi and Deborah described God in a similar way. The children seemed to have characteristics of several of the stages, although some elements seemed to be more

developed than others. For example, some of Deborah's responses were fantasy, a Stage-One characteristic. She said, "You can find elephants in the woods," however, she also shared stage-two responses that were similar to the responses made by Thomas and Naomi. Deborah said, "we are part of God's family. He made us and He loves us. And He is happy, and smiles when we do something good."

**Question 3:** *Will the children be able to draw a pictorial representation of their faith experiences?*

All of the children were able to draw a picture that represented what they thought about God. Each of their drawings represented the key elements from the interview. Deborah drew a picture of God that said "I love you." She said she believed the drawing would make Him smile. Deborah viewed God as anthropomorphic. He had human abilities. In her drawing, He was picking up the paper to read the message she had written. Naomi drew a picture of God standing by a rainbow. She said, "He likes rainbows, and He lives in the sky, and He makes rainbows." She said that rainbows were important. I believe she was referring to the Bible story about Noah and the Ark and the meaning of a rainbow. Thomas drew a picture of people holding hands because the people in the drawing were friends. John drew a picture of God in Heaven and himself kneeling in prayer.

### **Findings on the Faith Factor**

In all of the research that has been reviewed, the faith factor has been a constant element mentioned in the research literature in the areas of resiliency, character education, achievement in school, self-esteem, and building a sense of community within the classroom. As discussed in chapter two, the faith factor also has been an element to be considered across various disciplines, such as education, counseling, art therapy, religion, and psychology. All of these disciplines provide multiple examples of research that demonstrate how the faith factor should be considered, as well as its impact when working with children and adults.

Some educators believe children have an untapped resource that is missed in their education. This untapped resource is faith/spirituality (Crompton, 1992; Fisher, 1999; Miller, 2000; Moore, 2002; Williams & Dixie, 2003). This universal spirituality children possess allows them to be optimistic, accepting, caring for others, possess the ability to work through despair, and have a special wonder about the world, and a belief in goodness (Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Coles, 1990; Gallagher, 2001; Goleman, 2003; Jang & Johnson, 2005; Noddings, 2005 & Paley, 1999). In this case study, there seemed to be positive benefits to faith. However, the faith factor was embedded in the overall Christian African American experience and included all aspects of life, even school. “When parents and teachers have faith in children, young people pick up that faith like a contagion. They learn to deal with obstacles and face their lives with confidence...Emotional trust leads seamlessly into spiritual faith” (Moore, 2002, p. 46).

It is important to note that stages identified by Fowler were not as discrete and concrete as described by the age/stage. The moralistic view of right versus wrong based

on punishment and reward or what society prescribes was different. The children, regardless of their age, had a clear interpretation of right and wrong, and it included punishment and reward. According to the stages of Fowler, this way of thinking is preoperational and is prior to stage three. I believe the Christian African American faith experience is reason for the differences in responses from the described stages of Fowler.

### **Discussion about the Drawings**

DiLeo, (1983); Kellogg, (1967, 1979); and Lowenfeld, (1982), identified stages and development in the drawings of children. It is believed that the drawings of young children parallel cognitive development up to the age of ten. During the early childhood years, children four through seven years of age attempt to draw objects from their environment. The human figures they draw represent head and feet and the other parts of the body are gradually included. The drawings of children seven through nine years of age represent the ability to create drawings that symbolize descriptive representation of the environment.

#### ***The Drawing by Deborah***

Deborah's drawing represented a typical early 5 year old. She drew God with the basic human characteristics of a head, arms, hands, legs, and feet. In the picture, God received a letter from Deborah that read, "I love you." Sending this note to God represents her understanding of Him as a parent just like a child who writes an "I love you" message to her mom or dad. To Deborah, God represents a loving parent, someone who is nurturing.

### *The Drawing by Thomas*

Thomas' drawing represented a typical 5- to 6-year-old child's drawing. Although Thomas was 7, he appeared to be younger developmentally. Thomas had drawn a picture of children holding hands. In the picture, the children had only a head with lines to represent the body and hands. He chose to use different colors to draw each person, which might represent different races. All of the children in the drawing were smiling. Thomas also included clouds, a sun, and a tree, representing nature. Moore, (2002); Hay (2002); Bone, (2005); Crompton, 1992; and Coles, (1986) suggest that children have an interest and wonder about the environment, and in nature they see God.

### *The Drawing by Naomi*

Naomi's drawing represented a well-developed plan, and was full of possible interpretation. At first glance, the drawing was typical for an 8 year old. She was able to draw a person with a head, extremities, and clothing. A closer look at the drawing provided insight in to how she perceived Jesus. First, His skin color was brown. She identified herself in Jesus. He was a part of her world view perspective. This was significant because several researchers, religious and secular educators believe children of all races need to be able to identify Jesus as a person who can relate to them, and know them because they are from Him (Williams & Dixie, 2003).

Self-esteem for some children begins with knowing Jesus loves them for who they are, and because He made them. "I am fearfully, and wonderfully made" (Ps. 103). In this drawing, Jesus had open arms and a broad smile. This represented His loving, caring, and nurturing nature. The arms with hands seemed to call her to Him just like the refrain from one African American hymn, "Come to Jesus ... He will save you. He is able ..."



Naomi also included elements of nature, clouds, and a rainbow. The rainbow was large and colorful. She said, "Jesus makes rainbows." I believe she was recalling the Biblical story in Genesis, Noah and the Ark, and God's promise never to destroy the earth again by water. The seal of this promise was the rainbow.

Another significant interpretation was the gold clothes Jesus wore. Several times in the Bible, Jesus is described as having a bright light around Him, a glow or radiance. I believe she chose gold to represent his glorified body. Finally, children at her age usually will draw a picture that includes elements of the sky and the ground. She did not include any elements such as grass, trees, or flowers that would represent the ground. This could signify her belief that Jesus lives up beyond the sky and clouds, and that was more important to draw than including the other elements.

### ***The Drawing by John***

Because John was almost 10, I expected him to draw a more detailed picture, but what he did include provided significant insight. First, John drew Jesus above the clouds, which, like Naomi, represented Jesus being in Heaven. Jesus also was drawn with human characteristics; a face, arms, legs, and hair. But, what was interesting was the use of a gold crayon, just like Naomi. John outlined the entire body of Jesus and the clouds in gold. Again, this could represent Jesus in His glorified body. Second, John drew Jesus standing at the edge of the cloud and looking down at him. This could be interpreted as Jesus lives above the clouds, is always looking down, and watching us. From the clouds beneath Jesus, John drew gold lines that came down toward him. John also drew himself in a kneeling position. The largest part of his body were his arms, which were outstretched toward Jesus. The long outstretched arms could represent the desire to

receive the power he needs from Jesus, and his desire to be heard. Ultimately, I believe the drawing represented the scripture that describes Jesus as omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. All of the drawings made by the children provided insight in to their inner world.

### **Supplemental Findings**

These children used their faith as a foundation for their responses. Some African American children are introduced to spiritual experiences early in life. In the African-American tradition, some young children accompany their mothers/grandmothers to church. Church is a place for community building and sharing life experiences. Spirituality is taught as a way to encounter life experiences (Raboteau, 1995 & Williams & Dixie, 2003). Children are taught values and how to interact with others. They learn how someone else bigger than this world cares for them and helps them. God is someone who is everywhere at all times to guide and help them. Hale (2001) states, “Black children are taught God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent; God knows, sees and hears everything” (p.153). African American children learn at a young age the power of prayer, that there is unity through song, and the belief that the world has connectedness and purpose. In addition, they learn to ask questions about life situations in a different way. Instead of asking, “Why did this happen to me?” They learn, “This happened for a reason, help me to be guided to the purpose or lesson the Lord would have me learn from this situation.”

At this particular African American church, the children have been taught their Christian faith was based on the following foundational scriptures:

**Genesis 1** ..God created the heavens and the earth...

**John 3:16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. That whosoever would believe in Him would have everlasting life.

**Romans 3:11** There is none righteous, no not one....

**Romans 3:23** For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God....

**Romans 8:24** For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope....but if we hope for that we see not, then we do with patience wait for it.

**Romans 8:27** And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is in the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

**Romans 10:8-10** ...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead....

**Ephesians 2:8&9** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and not of yourselves: it is the gift of God...Not of works, lest any man should boast.

**Romans 8:35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...

These Biblical principles can be divided into five aspects to show how these children explained their faith experience.

In the first aspect, children learned that Jesus is God's son and He loves them, John 3:16. Deborah said that, "God and Jesus look alike and He loves us." Thomas, Naomi and John mentioned the love Jesus has for them. In the second aspect, children learned that, without Jesus, we are all in sin. Our belief in Him redeems us; and our belief in Him takes faith and action to belong to Him, Romans 10:8-10, Romans 10:13&17, Ephesians 2:8-9. John explained it the best when he talked about Jesus

saving people from sin, and being saved means going to Heaven. He also said that some people do not believe in Jesus because they do not want to devote all of their time in praising someone they don't see. But he said he believes even though he cannot see God because he prays to Him and He helps him.

The third aspect the children learned was that the Holy Spirit is the one that will be their teacher and guide, Romans 8:27-28. The children, except for Thomas, said it is possible to hear God's voice and that He can help you. John and Naomi talked about how He can help with school work. The fourth aspect they learned was that they can go to God about anything because He knows all and is always near and forgiving, I John 1:9, Romans 8:35, 37, 38, Psalms 3:4, Psalms 18:6, Psalms 139:3, 4, 14, Psalms 121, Psalms 27, Psalms 34:4. All of the children said they believe that God is everywhere and knows everything. Naomi said, "God is everywhere. He is in your car. He's in your house. He's everywhere." John made similar comments and said that, "God knows what we are going to do even before we do it." The fifth and last aspect the children were taught was that they have spiritual weapons to fight against temptations, trials, and bad situations, Ephesians 6:10-18, Philippians 2:8-11, Psalms 91:5, Psalms 91:11. John talked about having trouble learning in school. He said he prayed to God for help and He helped him. Deborah and Naomi shared how Jesus can put His arms around them. These scriptures seem to be an integral part of their lives, something embedded in their souls. These children seem to be developing a particular lens on how they perceive their world based on their faith.

During this study, I learned four important findings. The first one was the stages identified by Fowler. In this study, faith was beginning to shape the relationships the

children had with others and how they responded to emergencies. Fowler (1981) referred to this as “triadic dynamics of faith.” He defined this as how we construct the knowledge of self, others and the world, and the ways we image the character of the power determining the ultimate conditions of our lives. In other words, who do we imagine causes the unforeseen circumstances that happen in our lives. And due to these circumstances, how do we perceive the power. This study was designed to determine how the children were constructing their own images of God, and the impact their own personal level or range of faith as depicted in illustration had on various aspects of their lives. Fowler suggested that everyone struggles with this dynamic, but that it is a more explosive process in children. These perceptions about the crises have an impact on the ways we make plans, and on our efforts to live our lives with integrity. These are the triadic dynamics of faith (Fowler, 1981).

The stages identified by Fowler included the process of transition, regression, and conversion. Each successive stage is linked to, and adds to the previous ones. He stated that life issues caused a person to go to a new level of complexity. Each stage represents a widening of vision and values. This spiraling to the next stage has behavioral indicators. The children transitioning from Stage One to Stage Two will have the desire to know how things are, and to clarify the distinctions between what is real and what only seems to be. They also are not in concrete operations. Children transitioning from Stage Two to Stage Three exhibit behaviors of disillusionment with previous teachers and teachings. They have conflicts between authoritative stories such as the creation theory and the evolution theory. The children in the case study responded similarly to the

children in the original study, but the characteristics of each stage appeared at a younger age than identified in the original study. Although the characteristics of the previous stage were revisited, I believe the responses also were based on the breadth and depth their faith experiences, and the impact their faith had on how they reacted to, and interpreted later life experiences.

The second finding was that all of the children perceived God anthropomorphically, and that other dimensions were added with the older children. God was described with human characteristics as well as personal attributes like friend, loving, kind. The children said God knows all things and can be everywhere. Although Fowler said this is considered Stage Two thinking, the children in Stage One in the study also expressed this belief. It was interesting that the adults related to two of the children in this study also described God as having the same characteristics, although they also expressed perceptions that reflected the later stages.

The third finding was that faith has a significant impact on how these children feel about themselves, how they feel connected to community, and how their faith experiences are a part of their daily life. It also serves as a bulwark against challenging circumstances in their lives.

The fourth finding was that the Christian faith experiences in the life of the African American child may be a factor in improving the positive cultural self-image of the children. This is because the sense of belonging they feel in their church that provides a community environment, as well as how they are able to be active participants, and at times, even leaders during the church service.

The children in this study demonstrated how spirituality promotes the feeling of oneness with the earth, life, and people. In the today's society, ways to foster universal oneness and commitment to the common good of all people are needed (Hay, 2002 & Rovai, Gallien, Wighting, 2005).

I propose below a description and a pictorial representation of faith/spirituality as it relates to child development based on what was learned from this case study. As shown below, I suggest spirituality is all-encompassing and surrounds us. It represents a belief in a life force. Faith is the vehicle that accepts or believes in the life force. There is a window in the faith factor. The width of its opening is unique to the individual. The wider the opening, the more spirituality can enter into the life of the person. The next layer is the outside forces that can hinder or have a negative impact on the child. However, the window opening of faith can help buffer or serve as a bulwark against the negative forces. Finally, the inner core of the circle is the developmental characteristic of a child, the intellectual, social, emotional, physical and creative development. Spirituality and faith reach all the way to the core of the child to enable positive growth and development.

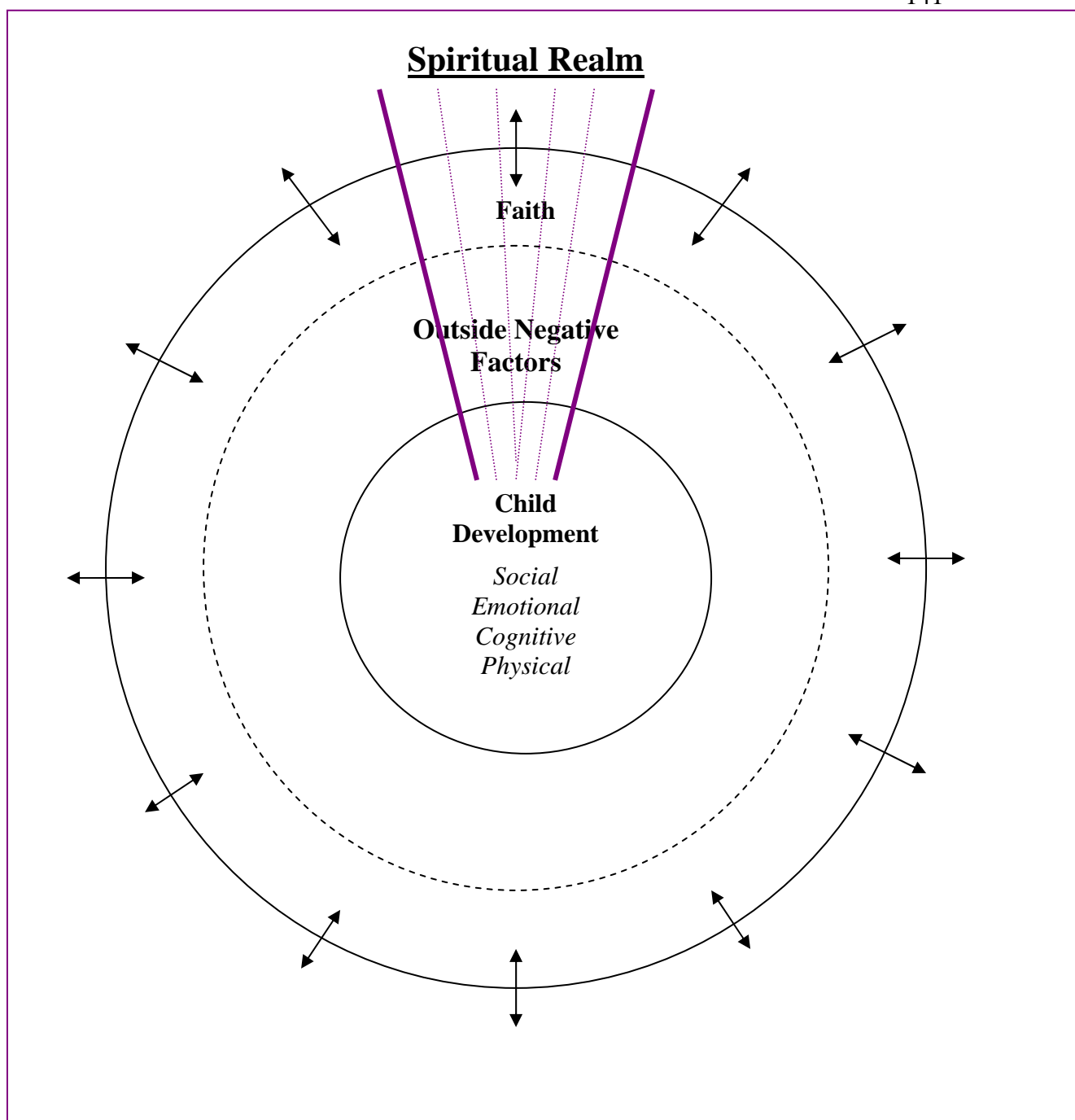


Figure 5 Spiritual Realm



### Considerations for Further Research

**“... education is not at all the same as teaching. It is accomplished by love and faith in the very soul of the child who stands before us crammed with unmanifested talent ...” (Miller, 2000, p. vii)**

I suggest a larger sample of students should be studied to test whether the conclusions found in this study concerning faith stages remain stable. This case study focused on the faith stages in Christian African American children to determine if their faith responses were typical of the original study by Fowler. There needs to be further case studies to continue the dialogue between children and adults to get a deeper understanding of how children perceive their faith and how it impacts their daily lives. This information will provide guidance on how to identify specific faith exercises within the church that will help strengthen the child.

In addition, as an educator it is important to further this investigation because it could provide additional support that faith stories shared by children in a school environment can have an impact on issues such as school violence, academic achievement, emotional development, and, possibly, provide a buffer to decrease disruptive and dysfunctional behavior (Fisher, 1999; Hill, 2000 & Rovai, Gallien, Wighting, 2005). Spirituality and connectedness is important to the African American child (Rovai, Gallien, Wighting, 2005 & Williams & Dixie, 2003). As a whole, children use their intuitive sense to read the unspoken presence in any room, and they seek to find connections with others in their environment (Miller, 2000 & Bone, 2005). They are drawn toward environments that are open to the Spirit, and they welcome opportunities to come together (Kendall, 1999 & Lewis, 2000).

Teachers can nurture spiritual growth in a variety of ways. At the beginning of the school day, teachers can have the children respond to a thought for the day question for reflection, then write in a journal. They can have a sharing time to discuss issues that concern them. Teachers can use the content areas of science, social studies, music and art for children to experience wonder in their world, the importance of being connected to people, and how to release their inner thoughts and feelings through creative activities. Building a sense of community can be fostered by reading relevant literature (Erricker, et. al., 2001; Miller, 2000 & Obiakor, 2005). Also, classroom guidance can be established to teach how we care and respect others because of our connectedness and emphasis on social justice. Finally, teachers can connect with faith-based institutions.

Furthermore, research should be continued in this area to move away from the cognitive framework. It should continue to investigate the phenomenon of childhood spirituality within the constructs of the Christian African American world view perspective to continue to discover the answers children give to the universal spiritual questions such as, “Who am I?” “Where do I belong?” “What is my purpose?” and “To whom or What am I connected?”(Nye, 1998 & Miller, 2000).

In conclusion, continued research in this area may help faith-based institutions discover what causes people to leave or abandon their faith, and to determine what can be done to keep people encouraged and strengthened in their faith journey. Paley, (1999) said it best, “The task of listening to every voice is not for saints alone, it is not too hard for ordinary people, in ordinary places. What is more ordinary than a classroom? ... the moral universe rests upon the breath of school children” (pp. 57-58).

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APPENDIX A:

LETTER TO SCHOOL DISTRICT



Dr. Tempestini  
School District of the City of Erie, Pa.  
Child Study Department  
148 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street  
Erie, Pa. 16502

Dear Dr. Tempestini,

As per our conversation enclosed you will find my request for research to hopefully be conducted at Burton Elementary School.

I have included a brief overview of the study, the research questions , the permission letters that will be used and the formal approval letter from the Institutional Review Board of Dusquesne University.

Last year I did meet with Mr. Greg Myers, and this academic school year Mrs. Barbara Wiley to have an informal discussion about my research and the possibility of working with them. They both directed me to your office so I could request the proper forms and follow all procedures for possible consideration.

I have a need to implement the study before the end of the school year, as soon as this month and completing by the end of April. The actual time with the students will not be time consuming. I would really appreciate being exempt from the timeline that was indicated on the form.

I want to thank you in advance for your prompt consideration of this request. When it is time for submission of this request to Dr. Barker I would like to schedule a meeting with him so I can answer any questions he may have about the study.

If you have any questions I can be reached at 824-2163 (work) or 454-8526 (home)

Sincerely,

Julia Williams

APPENDIX B:  
LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

## MERCYHURST COLLEGE



Dear Parent/Guardian,

Currently, I am an education doctoral student at Dusquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pa. For my dissertation I have chosen to study the relationship between faith and academics and the expression of faith in African/American children.

For the study I would like to have the opportunity to meet with your child for approximately twenty minutes. The session will include a brief interview of the child consisting of questions about their perceptions of a Deity, caring and helping. In addition, I will need to briefly meet with you and at another time with your child's teacher to ask about your and the teacher's perception of your child's faith and academic achievement.



I want you to know a little about myself. I am a professor at Mercyhurst College and I have extensive experience in working with children. I am a mother of three children who attend Erie City Public Schools and I am also active in my church. If you have any questions about this study I would like to try to answer them.

Sincerely yours,

Julia Ann Williams



# DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

## Parental Consent Form To Participate In A Research Study

- Title:** "Christian Faith Factor" and the African/American Child During the Early Childhood Years"
- Investigator:** Julia Ann Williams, Instructor - Education Department  
Mercyhurst College  
501 East 38<sup>th</sup> Street  
Erie, Pa. 16546  
(814) 824-2163
- Advisor:** Dr. Williams Barone  
Instruction and Leadership, Education Department  
Duquesne University  
600 Forbes Avenue  
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15282
- Source of Support:** This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Instruction and Leadership in Education at Duquesne University.
- Purpose:** You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate how African/American children understand life situations, how they may possibly apply their faith, and how they may know and understand God. The students who participate in this study will listen to a brief story and answer a few questions about how they would react to the situation. (\*please see attached interview guide and questions that I will ask your child). Then the students will answer a few questions about God and their school work. Finally, I will read a page from the story "All Things Bright and Beautiful" and the students will draw a picture of their thoughts when they think about God. Another part of the study is to interview you and the teacher for you to share any insights about the faith behaviors/activities of the student and their academic

achievement. I am asking permission to review the academic achievement of your child. The entire study ( the interviews with the child, you and the teacher) will be taped and transcribed. These are the only requests that will be made of you.

**Risks and Benefits:**

This is a unique study to the education field. I believe the students involved will enjoy listening and responding to the story as well as providing a drawing. There is minimal risk for all participants. At the end of the study the parent and child will have an opportunity to have a follow up session with the interviewer to make sure they are ok about what transpired during the study. Furthermore, parents/guardians are welcome to sit in during the study. The contents of the interview is attached.

**Compensation:**

In order to thank you for your participation, I will offer at the completion of the study a book for your child . The parent/guardian will receive a coupon for a large pizza for their family and the teachers will receive a \$10 gift certificate to Barnes and Nobles. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you. An envelope is provided for return of your response to the investigator.

**Confidentiality:**

Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. No identity will be made in the data analysis. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's home. The only persons viewing the raw data will be the researcher and her supervisor. Your responses will not be linked to your name. All materials will be destroyed after two years.

**Right to Withdraw:**

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

**Summary Of Results:**

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

I give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the study conducted by Julia Ann Williams. I further give permission for my child's teacher to talk to Julia Ann Williams about my child's academic achievement.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to the homeroom teacher.**

# DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

## Child Assent Form to Participate in a Research Study

- Title:** "Christian Faith Factor" and the African/American Child During the Early Childhood Years"
- Investigator:** Julia Ann Williams, Instructor - Education Department  
Mercyhurst College  
501 East 38<sup>th</sup> Street  
Erie, Pa. 16546  
(814) 824-2163
- Advisor:** Dr. William Barone  
Instruction and Leadership, Education Department  
Duquesne University  
600 Forbes Avenue  
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15282
- Source of Support:** This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Instruction and Leadership in Education at Duquesne University.
- Purpose:** I am looking for students to volunteer to help me learn more about what you believe in (faith). You were recommended by your teacher to help me because of your school and home activities related to faith. You will be answering a few questions about how you would react (what you would do) based on a story that will be read to you. You will answer a few questions about God and your schoolwork. After your response to the story, I will show you a page from the story "All Things Bright and Beautiful", and I will ask you to draw a picture of your thoughts when you think about God.
- I will tape our time together so that I can go over it later on. This is so I can remember all of your answers throughout the course of the time we spend together. I will ask your parent/guardian if it is ok to use your responses

and your drawing in the final writing of the study. The things that you tell me during the study no one else will know by your name that you are the person answering the questions. The information will not say "Michael said" (using your name). Also, your parents can look at everything you're going to do before the study. Your parents can even watch the study if they want to. Also, I want you to know that I will meet with your parent and teacher for them to tell me about your activities and your schoolwork.

**Risk and Benefits:  
Compensation:**

I think sharing a story together and talking about the activities that you do will be fun. You will even get a book to take home! Also at the end of the study I will meet with you and your parent to make sure you are ok. about the stories and the questions I asked you.

**Confidentiality:**

All of the answers that you share with me and all other information will be stored in a locked file in my home. Your information by name will only be seen by myself and my teacher. Your name will not be seen by any other people reading about the study. The information will be kept in a safe place for two years and then destroyed (thrown away).

**Right to Withdraw:**

One very important thing to remember: if you feel at any time during the study that you don't want to continue you can quit the study, and that's completely ok, after all, you are volunteering to help me.

**Summary of Results:**

The results of this study will be shared with your parent, at no cost, if they ask to see it.

**Voluntary Consent:**

I have read and/or listened to the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that I am doing this because I want to and I can stop being in the study any time I want to. I am willing to help with this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



APPENDIX C:  
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

**JW:** I want you to know that I'm going to ask you a few questions and anytime that you don't want to answer a question, you can just say that you don't want to answer. If you don't know the answer, that's fine. There's no right or wrong answers to any of the questions I give you. Okay? And you can stop at anytime. If you want to be all done, you can say I'm really all done and you can stop at anytime. Are you okay for me to ask you a few questions?

**John:** Yes.

**JW:** I'm also going to have you draw a picture for me at the end. Are you willing to draw a picture for me?

**John:** Yes.

**JW:** And I'll be saving that picture to show other people after I get done writing up my report. Is that okay?

**John:** Yes.

**JW:** Okay. Thank you.

**JW:** I'm going to read you a story. It's called a Heinz's dilemma. Then I'm going to ask you a few questions after I tell you the story. Okay?

**John:** Okay.

**JW:** In Europe, a woman was near death from a very bad disease, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought would save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was not expensive to make, and the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make it. He paid \$200.00 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could get together only about \$1,000, which was half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and he asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. The druggist said, "no" I discovered a drug and I'm going to make the money from it. Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should the husband have done that?

**John:** No.

**JW:** Was it right or wrong?

**John:** Wrong.

**JW:** Why do you think it was wrong?

**John:** Because he shouldn't have broke into the store and steal the drug because it was against the law and it wasn't right.

**JW:** I'm going to ask you some other questions now about your activities and things that you like to do and your involvement that you have and the way that you think about things. Okay.

**JW:** Why are there people in the world?

**John:** Because if there was only one person in the world, the person would be lonely, and if there was no people in the world, the world would be an empty place. People take care of the animals and the environment around them so the planet would just be all waste.

**JW:** Who made the animals and the planet?

**John:** God.

**JW:** What would the world be like without you?

**John:** Different in some way.

**JW:** Okay.

**JW:** What does God do with people?

**John:** God gives people a lot of things to do and things that are not against....

**JW:** That's not against what?

**John:** Him.

**JW:** So we can do anything that's not against Him?

**John:** And it's not against the law.

**JW:** Does God expect anything from us?

**John:** Yes. He expects us to follow a holy world and to be kind to one another and proudly take Him in.

**JW:** How do you get to be a good person?

**John:** You get to be a good person when you do good things to other people. Then other people will do good things to you and then you will turn out better.

**JW:** When you do something wrong, do you think that God knows?

**John:** Yes.

**JW:** How?

**John:** Because He made us and He can see all. He knows it before we even do it.

**JW:** Okay.

**JW:** Does God care if you do something wrong?

**John:** He doesn't care if you come to Him and ask for forgiveness.

**JW:** What is Heaven?

**John:** It's a place where people will be rewarded for following the word of God.

**JW:** Where do people go when they die?

**John:** They go to Heaven if they follow the rules of God and are kind to everyone and doesn't disrespect Him. And, if they didn't be bad and disrespect God and never ask for forgiveness, they go where the devil is.

**JW:** Okay.

**JW:** Where does God live?

**John:** He lives above the world and all the people in Heaven.

**JW:** What do you think Heaven looks like? Where is Heaven?

**John:** It would be somewhere like, like something a good place like a happy place where everybody lives good.

**JW:** Can anyone go to Heaven?

**John:** Everyone can go to Heaven if they do the right thing.

**JW:** Do you go to church?

**John:** Yes.

**JW:** What do you like about church?

**John:** I like in my church that if you don't understand what they're saying in the sanctuary, they have a place where you can go so they can show you what they're talking about.

**JW:** What else do you like to do at church?

**John:** I like to go to Sunday School.

**JW:** What do you like about Sunday School?

**John:** That we get to learn cool things about God and if we don't understand then we get to do something fun that lets us understand it better.

**JW:** Can you hear that? Does God talk to people?

**John:** Yes, if you listen.

**JW:** Has He ever talked to you?

**John:** Yes.

**JW:** What did He say?

**John:** I was asking Him for help because I didn't know what to do because I needed help because I was taking a test and I didn't think I could do it. I asked Him for help.

**JW:** And what happened?

**John:** He just told me to try my best.

**JW:** And how did you do?

**John:** I did good.

**JW:** So you did better, huh, you did good on your test? So do you think He helped you?

**John:** Yeah.

**JW:** What other activities do you do at your church?

**John:** Sometimes at church we have a place where you can go...

**JW:** The harvest party?

**John:** Cause the devil's birthday is on Halloween. So, if you don't like celebrating the devil's birthday, you go there and you celebrate God.

**JW:** And who told you that?

**John:** I just know from going there a lot of Halloweens.

**JW:** Alright.

**JW:** So do you think that God's concerned about your schoolwork always and you think that He's concerned about your schoolwork? And do you think you do better at school because He's helping you?

**John:** Yes, because He gives you courage to do things you think you can't do.

**JW:** Okay. What if somebody came up to you and said, "I've heard a lot about God." "Can you tell me what He is or who He is?" What would you say to them?

**John:** I would tell them that (inaudible) everything about him. I would tell them to go ask God.

**JW:** Okay, now I'm going to have you draw a picture of what you would imagine God looking like, or what you would imagine yourself doing if you were able to actually see Him. Then you can talk to me about your picture after you draw it, okay?

**John:** Okay.

**JW:** Do you ever hear people talk about God?

**John:** In a nice way?

**JW:** Well, whatever way. Do ever hear people talk about God?

**John:** I hear people praise Him and thank Him for the things He did, and they say they wouldn't be where they are right now if He didn't help them.

**JW:** Okay. Have you heard anything else about Him?

**John:** Some people they don't believe in Him. They think that God doesn't exist.

**JW:** What do you think about that? People who don't think that God exists?

**John:** I think that they just don't want to believe because they don't want to devote all of their time in praising someone they don't even see.

**JW:** So how do you know He's real if you don't see Him?

**John:** Because He does things that can help you when you pray for forgiveness and good things happen to you when you pray and believe in Him.

**JW:** I'll wait for you to finish drawing your picture and we'll talk about it.

**JW:** Okay. Can you tell me about your picture?

**John:** My picture is about God in Heaven and I'm down here.

**JW:** God in Heaven and you are praying to Him?

**John:** Yes.

**JW:** If you could tell me anything that you wanted about God, what would you tell me?

**John:** I would want to know.

**JW:** What you would want to tell me. If you could say anything you wanted to about God and Jesus, what would you say? Anything more you want to tell me about Him.

**John:** I would tell you that He is our Savior and without Him we wouldn't even be here. And that everyone should praise Him because He made us. Without Him we wouldn't be here.

**JW:** Anything else you want to say?

**John:** And that He gave his only son for us so that means He loves us a lot. So, we should show the same love back to Him.

**JW:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**John:** You're welcome.

JW: Thank you very much. As I talk to you and your mom before, I'm going to be asking you some questions about things that you think about, and there aren't any right or wrong answers, you can just answer me according to whatever you think, If there's any question that you don't want to answer you don't have to, if there's any time that you want to stop and you don't want to do anymore you can just tell me "I want to be all done". Do you understand?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: Do you agree to answer the questions for me and draw a picture?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: Thank you very much, I really appreciate it. Okay I'm going to tell you a story, okay? In Europe was a woman who was near death from a very bad disease, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid two hundred dollars for the radium, and charged two thousand dollars for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Hines, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could get together only about one thousand dollars, which was half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper, or let him pay it later. Hines got desperate and broke into the man's drug store and he stole the drug for his wife. Should the husband have done that?

NAOMI No.

Q: Was it right or wrong?

NAOMI It was wrong.

Q: Why was it wrong?

NAOMI Because he bought the drug for his wife because he like, he wanted the drug because it was for the lady.

Q: Right it was for his wife but he didn't have the money to buy it, and the drug store was charging too much money for it so he thought he would have to steal it.



NAOMI Yeah.

Q: But that was a wrong thing to do?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: Why was it wrong though?

NAOMI Because he thought he got to steal it.

Q: Is stealing wrong?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: Oh, ok.

NAOMI Because God will punish you.

Q: Why? Do you think God will punish you for that? What will he do?

NAOMI He'll punish you, just like other people does.

Q: Oh so, like your mom, if you do something you're not supposed to do, your mom will punish you. So is God like our mom or dad?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: Who's more in charge, God or mom?

NAOMI God.

Q: God's more in charge. Is God in charge of mom?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: Oh, okay. Why are there people in the world?

NAOMI Because God made them.

Q: Okay. Are they here for any purpose?

NAOMI No.

Q: People aren't here for any purpose?

NAOMI No.

Q: Ok. What would the world be like without you?

NAOMI Um, the world would be like, they like food and stuff and they got healthy food.

Q: If you weren't here at all in the world, what would it be like without you?

NAOMI My mom would just take care of Jamie and just my mom and my dad.

Q: Would the world be different without you?

NAOMI Uh huh.

Q: What would be missing?

NAOMI Me.

Q: You would be missing, that's pretty important, right?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: That's very important. What does God do with people?

NAOMI He takes them to heaven if they die.

Q: Is that where they go? Is that where people go when they die? What do you think is up in heaven?

NAOMI People, and heaven and God.

Q: And are they okay in heaven after that?

NAOMI Yeah, they're safe with Jesus.

Q: They're safe with Jesus. How does he make them safe?

NAOMI He puts his arms around them like this (arm gesture is being demonstrated).

Q: Alright. Does God expect anything from us?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: What does He expect?

NAOMI He expects good behavior in school, and He expects to be nice to each other, and He expects to like, what does obey mean?

Q: To listen, to follow the rules.

NAOMI To obey parents and to obey Him.

Q: Okay. What does God look like?

NAOMI He looks like He has a scar on his hands, and His face looks like, the ones, I saw Jesus before, and I got the book of Jesus.

Q: Okay. So what does He look like to you, what do you think? Even if it wasn't in the book, what does He look like to you?

NAOMI He looks like, He looks like He has some hands that are longer than mine, and He has some arms that are stronger, and His face looks like it like, skinny, and mouth looks like, the one from the book.

Q: Okay. Does He have hair?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: What kind of hair does he have?

NAOMI Long.

Q: Long hair. Okay. How do you get to be a good person?

NAOMI You get to be a good person by Jesus and good person, you do nice things for people, and you make them happy, and you make them feel better when they're sad.

Q: When you do something wrong, does God know?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: Can God be with you all the time?

NAOMI Yes.

Q: He can?

NAOMI Yeah, He's in your car, He's in your house, He's everywhere.

Q: He's everywhere. What if somebody just came up to you and said "I've heard lots about God, can you tell me what God is?" What would you say to them?

NAOMI I would say I don't know, because I've never saw Him before.

Q: Okay. So, would you tell them anything else or just that?

NAOMI Just that.

Q: Okay. What is heaven? You mentioned heaven before in our conversation when we were talking...

NAOMI Heaven is like, like a sunshine, and it's like cool up there, and it's like grapes and people, and grapes.

Q: Can anybody go to heaven?

NAOMI If they die, yeah.

Q: Okay. Where does God live?

NAOMI He lives up there.

Q: What's up there?

NAOMI Heaven.

Q: Okay. Why do people die?

NAOMI Because cancer, like when grandpa, he had cancer, and like, sickness, and like if you've never smoked before, and you did, you die. And if you drink wine and you never did will die.

Q: Wow okay. Does God always know what is best for people?

NAOMI Yes.

Q: How does He know?

NAOMI Because He sees you from up in Heaven.

Q: Do parents always do what is right?

NAOMI Sometimes.

Q: Okay. How do parents find out what is the right thing to do?

NAOMI From Jesus.

Q: Okay. How does he talk to us? How do we find out what he wants?

NAOMI Because I was at Bible study, and the woman, the pastor, she said God said that, um, Kirsten was climbing up a ladder up to the clouds where Jesus was at.

Q: Okay. Does God have anything to do with if people get what they want or not?

NAOMI No, not all the time.

Q: Why?

NAOMI Because it's not the right thing to do. If you're parents say no that means you don't do that.

Q: Okay. Do you enjoy your schoolwork, when you're in school?

NAOMI I like math.

Q: You like math. Why do you like math?

NAOMI Because you can get the answers from questions that's on it.

Q: Do you think God cares about your schoolwork?

NAOMI Yes.

Q: What does He care about?

NAOMI He cares about learning, about you learning and doing your work in school.

Q: Okay. Do you think that he can help you with things that are hard for you to do?

NAOMI Yes.

Q: How does He do that?

NAOMI He'll like, tell me, but I don't know what He's saying, because I'm little.

Q: Do you think eventually you'll understand what He tells you? And how does he tell you?

NAOMI He tells you, like, He tells the pastor.

Q: Okay. So He can talk to people even if they're not a pastor? He can talk to you, He can talk to your mom, He can talk to me?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: Anybody he wants to talk to, and we can hear Him?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: Can he be happy?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: Do you think He laughs?

NAOMI I don't know.

Q: Do you think he cries?

NAOMI No. I don't.

Q: You don't think He cries? Do you think he's ever sad?

NAOMI Yeah.

Q: What would make him sad?

NAOMI Like if you do something wrong, and you weren't supposed to do it, then you made Him sad.

Q: Okay. Alright thank you very much. Now the next thing I would like you to do, I would like you to think about what we talked about, Jesus and God, and I'd like for you to draw me a picture of what God means to you. Can you draw me a picture of what God means to you with the crayons and paper? Thank you.

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Q: Again thank you very much Naomi's mom for being willing to be with me and for your daughter to answer my questions and draw a picture. I wanted to ask you a few questions if I could.

Mom: Okay.

Q: What do you believe you have done, or your family has done to nurture faith in your child?

Mom: I try and take her to church, try talking about God and Jesus and letting her know that she can't, there's wrong stuff to do, she can't do everything everyone else does. Try and read the Bible and pray at night.

Q: Does she enjoy those activities?

Mom: Yes.

Q: Does she go to church?

Mom: Yes.

Q: What church does she belong to?

Mom: We just joined (unable to recall the name of the church)

Q: Is it a new one that you were going to?

Mom: Yeah it's a new one,

Q: Okay. And is it in your neighborhood or...

Mom: No, it's, it's not in the neighborhood, you have to drive.

Q: And is your child involved in any activities in the church?

Mom: Not yet (inaudible) – ministry.

Q: Oh ok. What do you think she might get involved in, what would you like for her to get involved in at the church?

Mom: Choir maybe, she's getting baptized on Tuesday.

Q: You're getting baptized on Tuesday, what does that mean, may I ask you what being baptized means?

Mom: It means that you've got the pastor to put your face in the water and she takes it out.

Q: So what does that mean when you go in the water and she takes it out? What does the baptism mean?

Mom: She puts your face in the water.

Q: Do you know why you're doing that, why are you doing that?

Mom: Because I've never been baptized before.

Q: Do you know what getting baptized means?

Mom: No.

Q: Okay so she's going to tell you all about why you're doing that.

Mom: I don't know.

Q: Yeah she'll explain why you're doing it. What else will she be involved in at church?

Mom: Um, Well it's a small church now, she hasn't really given us too many activities.

Q: When there's a crisis or a problem, how do you explain to your child how it should be handled?

Mom: I try to tell her to be calm, try not to get mad or anything. Pretty much just to stay calm.

Q: Do you include any faith elements in your explaining to her how to solve a problem?

Mom: Not necessarily. I just try to teach her, like, at school, she had a problem last year, but I try and teach her to be a leader and not a follower, and she, basically she can't do everything everyone else does, she can't get mad because you can't do something where somebody else gets their way and you don't, so I just try.

Mom: And when I was in summer school, I had some threes and some twos.

Q: Alright.

Mom: I try and teach her not to fight.

Q: Okay.

Mom: But you know how most kids get bullied, I don't want her to get bullied either. But I want her to defend herself.

Q: Do you believe there's a plan for your life?



Mom: Yes, but I don't know exactly what that plan is right now. I know that it's something.

Q: Alright, and is it faith based, or..

Mom: Yes, yes.

Q: Ok. Do you believe that there's a plan for your child's life?

Mom: Yes.

Q: So you're in the process right now of...

Mom: Trying to figure it out.

Q: Alright. Who is in the household with her?

Mom: It's um, me, my husband, sister and her brother.

Q: Alright. And does she have grandparents in the area?

Mom: Yeah, my mother, and her other grandmother, and her step-grandfather, J.P., and her other grandfather.

Q: And does she see them often? (response from daughter, "who's K?")

Mom: My mom she does yes, but her other grandmother, once in a while, and her other grandfather very seldom.

Q: For your life, what do you think was the greatest impact in your faith upbringing?

Mom: Mine...

Q: Why did you decide to follow up with your faith?

Mom: Um, I think it was when, maybe I was eleven or twelve and I was asleep. I felt like I couldn't move, like there was something on my back. Then my mom, I jumped up and went crying to my mom and she read the Bible to me, and from that point she started sending us to church. And then that's when we decided to get baptized, and that's when all of my fears started fading away.

Q: And at that time, was baptism explained to you?

Mom: Yes.

Q: So how will you explain it to your child? Was it explained to you in a way you felt was really good and you want to pass that on to her or do you want to explain it in a different way?

Mom: Um, probably the same or something because it's something easy to remember.

Q: I want to thank you very much for sharing your experiences with me and allowing your child to be interviewed, and I look forward to meeting and talking with you again.

Mom: Thank you.

Q: Thank you.

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Q: Naomi can you tell me about your picture?

Naomi: Jesus is right here and I'm making a rainbow and I'm putting in some clouds.

Q: Alright. Why did you decide to make a rainbow?

Naomi: Because that's what it looks like when Jesus was alive.

Q: Okay. Were there rainbows everywhere or what do you mean?

Naomi: It was a big thing.

Q: Oh, alright. And what is He doing in the picture?

Naomi: He's standing by the rainbow.

Q: And why is he standing by the rainbow?

Naomi: Because, He, He likes rainbows and He lives in the sky and He makes his rainbows.

Q: Alright. Well thank you.

Naomi: You're welcome.

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Q: Hi.

Thomas: Hi

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Q: Hi Thomas. Thank you very much for being willing to come over and talk to me today. I just wanted you to know that I'm going to ask you some questions and the questions, there aren't any right or wrong answers, if at any time you don't want to answer a question just say you don't want to answer it. If you want to be all done with it and not talk anymore just say you want to be all done and that's okay. Alright? Do you understand what I'm telling you? Can you say yes or no?

Thomas: Yes.

Q: Do you agree to answer the questions and draw a picture for me?

Thomas: Yes.

Q: Thank you very much. First I want to tell you a story. Listen to the story and tell me what you think about the story. In Europe was a woman who was near death from a very bad disease, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid two hundred dollars for the radium, and charged two thousand dollars for the man to buy the drug. The sick woman's husband, Hines, went to everyone in town to try to find someone to borrow him the money, but he could get together one thousand dollars and the medicine cost two thousand dollars. So he had only half the money of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper, or let him pay it later, but the druggist said no. I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it. Hines got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should the husband have done that?

Thomas: No.

Q: Was it right or wrong?

Thomas: Wrong.

Q: Why was it wrong? Why do you think it was wrong? Is there another way you think he could have helped his wife from being sick and needing medicine? Don't know, that's okay, it's alright. Why do you think there are people in the world? Do you know why people might be here?

Thomas: For God

Q: Do you think so? Do you think that He knows about you? Can he get to know you? Don't know. What about animals and trees and birds. How did they get here?

Thomas: God.

Q: Do you think so? Okay. I don't know, maybe so. Do you think that he cares about the animals?

Thomas: Uh-huh.

Q: Does he care about people?

Thomas: Uh-huh.

Q: Does he care about you?

Thomas: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. How do you know he cares about people?

Thomas: He loves them.

Q: He loves them, alright. What do you think he looks like? What does God look like?

Thomas: \*shrugs\*

Q: You have no idea, okay. Do you think He's good? Do you think He wants people to be good? Do you think He can help people to be good?

Thomas: Uh-huh.

Q: How does He help people to be good? What do you think, how does he help people be good? You want to think about that one? Do you think God can be with you all the time?

Thomas: No.

Q: No, can't be. Why can't he be with you all the time? Is he a person like you and me? Or is he something else? You think he's a person like you and I? And, can he talk to us?

Thomas: No

Q: No He can't talk to us; we just know that he's a person, okay. Does God care about if you do something right or wrong?

Thomas: Yeah.

Q: He cares about if you do something right. Do you think he cares if you do something wrong?

Thomas: No.

Q: Okay, only if you do something right. Can God be happy or sad?

Thomas: Happy.

Q: He can be happy, can he be sad. What do you think would make him sad?

Thomas: I don't know.

Q: If people were being bad, do you think that might make him sad? Wonder if someone came up to you and said "I've heard lots about God, can you tell me about him or what God is?" what would you say? What is God, who is God, what would you say? What do you think? Tell me, I want know who God is, what can you tell me about him? You want to think about that one? Well that's fine, that's good. What is Heaven? Have you heard of that word before? What is it? Do you know what it is? You just have heard it before. Where have you heard it, or who has said that word to you before? Has anyone ever said that word to you before? Who was it? Do you remember? No? Okay. Can anyone can to Heaven?

Thomas: Yes.

Q: They can? And where is it? Where do you think it is? Everyone thinks different things, not even the same answer all the time. What do you think it is? Not sure, okay. Is there anything else that you want to tell me that you know about God of Jesus? What do you want to tell me? I've asked you a lot of questions. I'm going to listen to you tell me something. What do you want to tell me about God or Jesus? You want to say one thing about them what would you say? You want to tell your Aunt what you might say? If your mom asked you that question, what would you say, what would you tell her? You'd have to think about what you'd tell her? Well that's fine.

Are you going to draw a picture for me? I would like for you to draw me a picture of when you think about God or Jesus, what would you write or what would you draw in thinking about Him? Or if He came to visit you, what would you do with Him, if He came to visit you? Anything you want to draw about God or Jesus, what He looks like, what you would do with Him, or what you think he would like to see, or what are some things that make you think about Jesus, you can draw anything you want to about those things. Okay, alright? Don't just shake your head to me, say something.

Thomas: Yes.

Q: Yes, okay great. Hold on one second.

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Q: Eric, can you tell me about your picture? What did you draw?

Thomas: (inaudible) I draw some trees, sun, and people.

Q: And what are the people doing? You have their hands, are they holding hands, tell me about their hands.

Thomas: They're holding hands.

Q: They're holding hands, why are they holding hands? Why did you decide for them to hold hands?

Thomas: Because they're playing.

Q: Oh ok they're playing with each other. I see you drew smiles on their faces so they're pretty happy huh? Do you think God likes to see people playing nicely? Is that why you drew children, are these children or people or, children, adults, or is it you and your family? Who are the people? Are they friends? They're just friends. Are they children or all adults, big people.

Thomas: Friends.

Q: Friends, they can be children and adults. You drew a very, very nice picture, thank you very much for sharing that with me.

**Deborah:** I'm 5.

**JW:** Hi , I'm going to read you a story, and look at some pictures in a story book, I'm going to also tell you a story and ask you a few questions. Are you willing to do that with me today?

**Deb:** Yeah

**JW:** Now, any question that I ask you, and you don't feel like answering, you just say, "Oh, I don't think I want to answer that, okay?"

**Deb:** Okay.

**JW:** And if at any time while we're doing this, if you feel like you want to stop, you can say, "I don't want to do it anymore, I'm all done, I wanna stop, and that will be okay too. Alright?"

**Deb:** Okay

**JW:** There aren't any right or wrong answers. You can just tell me whatever what you're thinking about, whatever you think about my question, okay?

**Deb:** Okay

**JW:** Okay. Let's take a look at this and let's take a look at this pictures in it. What do you see here?

**Deb:** Duck.

**JW:** Those are ducks, beautiful ducks aren't they?

**Deb:** Yeah.

**JW:** Yeah. What's that?

**Deb:** Dog.

**JW:** And what is this one?

**Deb:** Cat

**JW:** Okay, let's look at one more picture. Oh boy, what's this?

**Deb:** That?

**JW:** Uh-huh

**Deb:** Cow.

**JW:** Those are cows. Where do you think all of these animals came from?

**Deb:** The animal shelter

**JW:** The animal shelter. And where do you think they came from before they were at the animal shelter?

**Deb:** mmmmmm, cats and dogs.

**JW:** Okay

**Deb:** And, hmmm....

**JW:** You can think about it, and you can tell me later what you think, okay?

**Deb:** Okay

**JW:** Alright. I'm going to tell you a very short story. It's about a brother whose name is Alex, and he's five. Just like you, right? And his sister Jessica and she's seven. They

were on a picnic with their family in a large park. After they had lunch with their family, Alex and Jessica wandered off from their family and became lost in the deep woods that bordered the park. Tell me some of the things that Alex and Jessica might see while they're walking around in the woods?

**Deb:** Mmm..k, they might see a dog and a cow, or...

**JW:** What else might they see in the woods?

**Deb:** A cat.

**JW:** Okay, what else do you think they might see in the woods?

**Deb:** hmmmmm, maybe, some rocks

**JW:** A rock. Okay, what else might they see in the woods?

**Deb:** uuuuummm, hmmmmm, people.

**JW:** Some people. Okay, what else might they see in the woods?

**Deb:** hhhmmm, elephant.

**JW:** An elephant, maybe. Wow, that would be....

**Deb**(inaudible)

**JW:** Oh, okay, do you think you would see elephants in the woods? Do elephants belong in the woods?

**Deb:** No.

**JW:** Where would you find an elephant?

**Deb:** hmmmmmm...

**JW:** Do you think, in the jungle, or at the zoo?

**Deb:** At the zoo.

**JW:** Oh, maybe. How do you think all of those things got there? People, and you said a dog and a cat, how do you think those things got there in the woods?

**Deb:** Last time I was at the um, hmmmm..



**JW:** How do you think they might have gotten there in the woods?

**Deb:** Last time I was at the um, I was riding with my grandmother, and I saw an elephant in the woods.

**JW:** How do you think the elephant got there?

**Deb:** Cause maybe the elephant, um, hmmm.

**JW:** Do you want to think about that one? Why do you think we have trees and animals?

**Deb:** (laughter)

**JW:** Why do you think we have trees and animals?

**Deb:** Because, (pause) God made trees and animals.

**JW:** Okay, so God makes trees and animals. What about people?

**Deb:** People too.

**JW:** God makes people too? Ok. Do you think there's a reason for people to be in the world today?

**Deb:** hmm, yeah

**JW:** Why do you think God made people?

**Deb:** Because that's what God's supposed to do.

**JW:** What're you think are some things God's supposed to do?

**Deb:** hmmm, Up in the sky.

**JW:** Okay, what else is he supposed to do?

**Deb:** And, make dogs.

**JW:** He makes dogs?

**Deb:** And cats.

**JW:** Okay, so he makes all the animals do you think? Oh, Okay.

**Deb:** And all the people.

**JW:** He makes all the people. What do you think happens when someone gets sick?

**Deb:** They call a doctor.

**JW:** They call a doctor, and where do they usually go sometimes?

**Deb:** hmmmmm, to the hospital

**JW:** Oh, so sometimes they can call a doctor, they can go to the hospital, and they go there to get well, right?

**Deb:** mmmhmmmm.

**JW:** Okay, what do you think happens when people die?

**Deb:** hmmmmm. If (long pause), if you don't eat, you die.

**JW:** Oh okay. So do you think that, where does the body go when you die?

**Deb:** Up in heaven.

**JW:** Oh you think the body goes in heaven when they die. Okay. What do they do there?

**Deb:** Make another body.

**JW:** Oh alright. Do you think they're happy up there?

**Deb:** uh huh

**JW:** Alright. How can people know God? You said God made all the people, and that's his job and...

**Deb:** He does this, God

**JW:** Okay, and how do you get to know Him, how do you know who he is?

**Deb:** Because we saw God before.

**JW:** How did we see Him before?

**Deb:** 'Cause, hmmmmm

**JW:** Do you know who He is?

**Deb:** mmmhmmm.

**JW:** You do? Well how do you know who He is?

**Deb:** Because, we saw Him before and we heard God's voice before.

**JW:** Oh you heard Gods voice before. What did He say?

**Deb:** That we are part of God's family

**JW:** Alright, we're part of Gods family, that's right. Okay.

**Deb:** We are.

**JW:** Oh we are. Can other people find out about God?

**Deb:** Yes.

**JW:** How can they find out about God?

**Deb:** Because, hmmm.

**JW:** How did you learn about God?

**Deb:** Because that's why we go to church.

**JW:** Do you go to church? What do you do at your church?

**Deb:** We pray and learn about God.

**JW:** Anything else you do at church?

**Deb:** Yeah.

**JW:** What?

**Deb:** hmmmm. We go downstairs and we make snacks, and we go to the nursery. And let us sing about music, church music.

**JW:** Okay.

**Deb:** Church music.

**JW:** Church music, you like church music? Do you sing church music sometimes?

**Deb:** I go in the choir.

**JW:** You sing in the choir. What's your favorite song to sing?

**Deb:** hmmm.

**JW:** Think on that one. Do you think God can be happy?

**Deb:** Yes.

**JW:** You think He can?

**Deb:** Yes.

**JW:** What do you think can make Him happy?

**Deb:** That we always be good.

**JW:** Do you think when you do something bad, God knows about it?

**Deb:** Yes.

**JW:** Do you think he knows when you do something good?

**Deb:** Yes.

**JW:** Do you think God knows you?

**Deb:** Yes.

**JW:** How do you know He knows you?

**Deb:** Because, He saw us before in heaven.

**JW:** Do you like going to church?

**Deb:** Yes. (inaudible)

**JW:** You do, oh okay. Can God do anything He wants to do?

**Deb:** Yes.

**JW:** He can? Do you believe in God?

**Deb:** Yes.

**JW:** You told me that you did, right. Why do you believe in Him?

**Deb:** Because he made us, and He loves us.

**JW:** What do you think He looks like? What do you think God looks like?

**Deb:** He looks like Jesus.

**JW:** Okay. What does Jesus look like?

**Deb:** God.

**JW:** Okay. And do they, if you were to meet him, standing right in front of you, what do you think He'd look like?

**Deb:** hmmm. Like people.

**JW:** He would look like what people?

**Deb:** Us.

**JW:** He would look like you and I?

**Deb:** And my Nanna, and my Grandma, and (inaudible)

**JW:** He would look like all of those people all in one? Would he be tall, would He be short, what do you think?

**Deb:** He would be strong!

**JW:** He's strong, with his muscles huh, so He'd make muscles.

**Deb:** Yep.

**JW:** Why do you think He would be strong?

**Deb:** Because He's big and...

**JW:** Anything else you want to tell me about what you know about God, or Jesus?

**Deb:** hmmm, no.

**JW:** Okay. Thank you very much Deb.

**PART II**

**JW:** Okay now Deb we're going to go over to the table, and I want you to draw a picture showing me what God means to you.

**Deb:** And then I'm going to write my name.

**JW:** And you'll write your name for me too? Okay. So maybe you can draw me a picture showing me what God means to you, or showing me maybe what God's house might look like. What does God mean to you? Draw me a picture of that. Okay. Thank you.

**JW:** Okay Deb tell me about the picture you just drew. Who's this?

**Deb:** God.

**JW:** And what is he doing?

**Deb:** Picking up some paper.

**JW:** Okay, why would He be picking up paper?

**Deb:** So He can read it.

**JW:** And what do you think it's going to say?

**Deb:** That I love you.

**JW:** Oh, and who's the paper from.

**Deb:** Me.

**JW:** Oh, you drew a paper, a message for God. And it says I love you on it, and it's from you. How do you think that makes Him feel?

**Deb:** Happy!

**JW:** So he has feelings, He can feel happy or sad?

**Deb:** Yes.

**JW:** Do you think He smiles?

**Deb:** Yes.

**JW:** Oh, okay. Would He be able to give you a hug?

**Deb:** Yes.

**JW:** Alright, I'm sure He will really love that picture, it's a very nice picture. Thank you.

**Deb:** Welcome.

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**JW:** Hello Great grand mother, how are you today?

**Great Grand mother:** I'm fine thank you.

**JW:** And hello Ms. **Mother**, how are you today?

**mother:** Fine.

**JW:** Thank you so much for letting me come over and talk to you, and to meet with Deb, and today I just want to ask you a few questions about, you all living together, and how you were raised, and you were raised by Grandma, and the influence she had on your life, and how your daughter has been raised by both of you all, and what type of influence that has had on her life and the decisions and choices you've made, what do you think has influenced you to make those decisions and choices? Can you tell me how long you have lived in Erie?

**Great grand mother:** About 57 years.

**JW:** 57 years you've been in (     ), and are you affiliated with any church?

**Great grand mother:** Shiloh Baptist Church.

**JW:** And how long have you been a member there?

**Great grand mother:** I've been a member for about, probably, roughly, 47 years.

**JW:** Do you belong to the same church Mother?

**Mother:** Yes.

**JW:** And how long have you been a member there?

**Mother:** 27 years.

**JW:** Wow, that's a very long time as well, both of you all. And is your daughter in the same church?

**Mother:** Yes.

**JW:** She told me she's in the choir. Does she enjoy doing that?

**Mother:** Yeah, she likes to sing and participate in church activities.

**JW:** Very good. Now anytime I'm talking to you and asking questions, if you feel that you don't want to answer, that's fine. If you feel you want to stop or not continue, that's fine as well. There's not right or wrong answers, and we don't have to continue. Anytime you want to stop the interview, we can stop. I just want you to be aware that we don't have to continue if you don't want to.

When there's a crisis or problem, how do you explain to your child how it should be handled? How did you explain to Mother when she was being raised how she should solve problems?

**Great grand mother:** Well usually, I'm a firm believer in prayer. And Mother, growing up, she was okay, but then I had most of the responsibilities for her because her mother worked, and then her mother was going to school, and she listened very well and you know, she does pretty good from what I've taught her to do, except, go to church. So I'm kind of disappointed in that when she's not attending church like she should be, and you know, I think that everybody should attend some church of some kind, this gives you more value and more stability in your life. Because everyone should have God in their life.

**JW:** Do you think that there's a plan for our lives, a plan for your children's lives?

**Great grand mother:** Oh, definitely, yeah definitely.

**JW:** And how do you help them to define that plan for their lives? How does that happen?

**Great grand mother:** Well you kinda make, kinda guide them through it, not make decisions for them. But just talk and let them make their own decisions by what you've been talking about, and usually, they will relate to it, by that way they will be making their own decisions.

**JW:** Do you think there's a plan for your life Mother?

**Mother:** To be honest, right now, I think that there is a plan, but I think that I have deviated from what the plan that was put in place for me.



**JW:** How do you, when there's difficult decisions that you have to make in your life, how do you show your daughter, Deb, that this is the way you should go about making decisions? And is God a part of that decision making process or not?

**Mother:** A lot of my children's spiritual background, will come from our grandmother. Because here lately I haven't, my spiritual walk has weakened, so, I have not been pressing the issue with my children regarding the Lord. But, in a crisis, I will try to get my children to follow their heart. Ya know what I mean? Like a lot of times, for myself, I have a problem doing it, so I go to different people to get their opinion of the situation, when in all actuality, I should just look into myself to come up with the answer that I need.

**JW:** Do you ever seek God's help in helping you to make a decision?

**Mother:** In the past I have, but lately I have not.

**JW:** How did you go about the process in the past?

**Mother:** Through prayer, um, through fellowship, scripture.

**JW:** Do you feel that the straying away, of not being as active, has had an impact on your children?

**Mother:** Yeah. Yes I do.

**JW:** In what way?

**Mother:** In a negative way. Because, we have children, you are responsible for the child's well being, physically, mentally, as well as spiritually. And if one of those areas are lacking, it brings down the counterparts. You know what I'm saying? Everything works together, and without, if there's a weakness in one of those parts, it throws everything off. So I have not been able to instill in my children the same belief values that were instilled in me.

**JW:** Has your perception, if you can reflect back on being a child, and what your grandmother, Great grand mother, had told you about Jesus and God, has your perception of Him changed now from what your beliefs were?

**Mother:** Yes, as a child, you think like, okay, God, He protects you from everything, like He wouldn't let anything bad happen to you, but as an adult, as bad things happen to you, you find, well I have found myself, that, you know, I felt like, alone, you know what I'm saying? Oh like my grandmother didn't know what she was talking about. All those times that she was telling me that the Lord don't ever leave you and He'll protect you from this and that, and when bad things happen to you, you find it hard to believe that it's somebody or something watching over you to protect you. As an adult you also learn that

you're given, um, the choice, the Lord gives you choices, and it's up to you, what it is that you do.

**JW:** So do you think that He doesn't protect and guide? What do you think about that?

**Mother:** To an extent He does. But, you have to, I feel like, okay He has a plan for you, if you deviate from that plan, it's gonna be, you're going to feel more alone, you know what I'm saying, than you if you were doing things the way that He had planned out for you. So if you walk away, if you go away from His plan, you are by yourself because you're not doing what He wants you to do, so He has, just like, parents with children, you're telling them this and this and this to do, and if they don't do it, then you have no choice but to bag up and let them see what's going to happen for their selves. And I think the Lord does the same thing.

**JW:** Do you think knowing him, your faith upbringing has strengthened you in your life, even though you strayed away from it, or do you think it didn't really strengthen you?

**Mother:** Yes, I think, faith and spirituality does strengthen the individual. As children we're brought up with different beliefs instilled in us, and as adults we, (long pause, let me see how I want to say this) as adults our belief systems might change. You know, being brought up with a spiritual background, it enables you and empowers you to do things, you know what I'm saying, things that if you were brought up a different way you wouldn't see it as that, you know what I'm saying?

**JW:** Ok. So you think because you were exposed to a faith-based lifestyle, it caused you to respond to things in a different way.

**Mother:** Right.

**JW:** Ok.

**Mother:** As opposed to someone being brought up without it.

**JW:** So what do you hope for your children?

**Mother:** I hope for my children to be stronger individuals than I am.

**JW:** Stronger personally, spiritually? What do you mean by stronger?

**Mother:** In every aspect. I want my children to be able to count on themselves. I mean it's ok to depend on other people, but I would like for them to be independent, you know what I'm saying? To know that I drive my own ship, that another person, while they may have influences on the direction that you're going, you are the captain of your ship. Nobody can steer you this way. I want them to be able to...

**JW:** So what's going to help keep them strong in that? Where do you think that inward strength comes from, do you think it just comes from the air, where does the inner strength come from, to know to....

**Mother:** Like my grandmother was speaking about earlier, how with being a parent, you have to be able to talk to your children, to lead them, you know what I'm saying. To tell them that this is the right thing to do, but also, you want them to be able to make decisions on their own. You see, for me, when I was coming up, teenage years, adolescent years, I wasn't able to do that, to be independent, you know what I mean? And I think that has a lot to do with me now, why I'm so indecisive about things. You know, because my mother, never let me make my own decisions or anything, she was, she is still the type of person, very strong willed, this is the way it is, this is the way its going to be. But I try not to do that with my children. And I hope and I pray that, I've taken some good things from my childhood and instilled that into them, but the bad things from my childhood, I would like to change, you know what I'm saying, just to do it different for them.

**JW:** So spiritually, what would you like to have happen in your life?

**Mother:** Spiritually, what would I like to have happen in my life? I would like to strengthen my walk with the Lord. I would like to find the mate that the Lord has for me.

**JW:** And spiritually, what do you for your daughter, and your son?

**Mother:** I would for them to know that, that it's okay, to love the Lord, you know, you don't have to be ashamed of your love for the Lord, or your faith. Because in these days and times, you find a lot of people being led astray. I would like for my children to know the truth about the Lord, and what He has in store for them.

**JW:** What do you hope for your granddaughter and your great grandchildren in regards to their awareness of faith and their spirituality?

**Great grand mother:** What I would like for them, to always know, that God is always with them, and no matter what happens, He's always there. You can always depend on Him. This is what I would hope that they would do. And then, I would for them to have choices to do, but not the wrong choices, not negative, anything positive I think would be good for them. And Deb, I think is going to be a strong-willed person, because she's such a strong little girl now. And she remembers, you know I can tell her anything about God or Jesus and she remembers it. And she's going to be very strong in that area.

**JW:** I think so, and I enjoyed interviewing her and she told me right away that God made trees and animals and plants, without my even asking her, she prompted that question that was very good. Oh, I see we have the mom and the grandmother here, so we have three generations in this room. Do you mind if you answer a few questions for me as well?

**Mother's mother:** Sure

**JW:** Well thank you. I met with Great grand mother, your mother, Mother, your daughter, I met with your granddaughter Deb, and she just answered some questions. And we were discussing spirituality and faith. And I want to know, when you have crisis' in your life, and you have your children, your grandchildren, you mom watching you go through a crisis, how do you go about solving it? And does your faith come into play in any way when you're trying to solve a crisis?

**Mother's mother:** Yes it does.

**JW:** In what way?

**Mother's mother:** Well I believe that in order for the crisis to resolve, you have to have faith that God is going to see you through it. In order to understand the good, you have to experience the bad, and to understand how God brings you through things, you have to go through turmoil so that He can take you through it, and you have to believe that He's going to see you through it.

**JW:** Do you believe that, well, how long have you lived in Erie?

**Mother's mother:** All my life.

**JW:** Ok. And you are how old?

**Mother's mother:** 45

**JW:** Are you affiliated with any church?

**Mother's mother:** Yes I am.

**JW:** And how long have you been affiliated with that church?

**Mother's mother:** All my life.

**JW:** Okay, so for 45 years.

**Mother's mother:** Ever since I can remember.

**JW:** Who got you involved in the church?

**Mother's mother:** My mother.

**JW:** Same mom wow, you've been three, four generations strong! From your own children to your grandchildren to your great grandchildren, that's been a huge

responsibility. And a nice heritage to pass on, a spiritual heritage, that's wonderful. So how has that made an impact on your life, your faith?

**Mother's mother:** I don't believe I'd be where I am today if I didn't have faith.

**JW:** And what does it mean to you?

**Mother's mother:** It is the backbone of how I've lived my life. It's based on how I live, how I live my life, how I interact throughout the day. I believe God changes things, and God changes people. You have to trust and believe that when you can't handle things, you take your hands off it, and you allow him to do what He's going to do, because our time isn't His time. His work does not come back void, so what He says he does.

**JW:** Do you think that you would have been a different person if you didn't have a faith based background?

**Mother's mother:** Oh yeah, yeah, I'd be a different person.

**JW:** What do you hope for your child's, and for your grandchildren, spiritually?

**Mother's mother:** Spiritually, I pray that my daughter gets saved and comes to know Christ for herself; I pray that she raises her children and walked by faith so that she can lead by example, and that they will follow in her footsteps, because I try to be a living example, as my mother has been for me, and I just pray that that is passed on generationally.

**JW:** And you know what's interesting, if you don't mind me saying Mother, in interviewing mom, she spoke of that same desire, recognizing where she was, recognizing where she is now, and having a desire to get back into this spiritual base. Recognizing the rich spiritual heritage you have in this family, how does your faith, what does your faith tell you about helping people to get where they need to be, or back to where they desire to be?

**Mother's mother:** I think that you can't force anybody to be, you have to accept people where they're at.

**JW:** But if they have a desire, how do you help them?

**Mother's mother:** You have to just talk to them, and show them how God works, has worked in their lives, things that God has shown you in your life and the revelations He has had in your own personal life. And then you have to show them that they have to learn how to pray, and that God will speak to them as He does to you. But in order for him to do that, you have to be open spiritually to hear God's word.

**JW:** I have a question and it's not part of the listing of things, but part of the conversation. When you think about God, when you were raised about who God was and Jesus was as a child through your mother, has your perception of him changed from who you thought He was as a child to who He is now? Does He have human characteristics to you, like do you think he has humor, does he you know, can he be a father and a husband, or are those just terms people use?

**Mother's mother:** Well I myself can't say that I have ever experienced those things, but I pray for those things, and I can't say that He has been a husband to me, because I don't feel that. But I do believe that God will bring people into your life that you need, and I think in that respect He's a father, and He looks out for his children. I think that we are Godly children and we are children of the King, so he's not going to want anything bad for his children, because we're royalty.

**JW:** Do you think he has a sense of humor, or can be sad?

**Mother's mother:** I think God grieves for us, I think He grieves for us when He sees the hurt that we experience from our children, and just things that happen in life. I think God cries for his children because any parent would.

**JW:** Do you agree with that Great grand mother?

**Great grand mother:** I agree with that.

**JW:** That he does have feelings?

**Great grand mother:** Yes.

**JW:** Does He have, and you feel he has a sense of humor. If you were to say what He would look like or what he would be doing, can you picture him in any particular way; do you picture him doing anything?

**Mother's mother:** Yeah

**JW:** And are those thoughts as if you were a child, or are they more..

**Mother's mother:** I think they're more as a child, in that being, they are abstract for me, because I tend to think abstractly. I don't think in the linear, I don't think concretely, my thoughts are very abstract.

**JW:** So do you believe, how do you picture him?

**Mother's mother:** I see Him as a spiritual being, I see Him as this big, gigantic, ominous being. And I think that He is so huge that He, there's no world for anybody else. You know that He is just so gigantic.

**JW:** Now that's interesting that you said that and what you just said with your arms. When I interviewed your granddaughter, she did the same thing, but she made muscles. And she said "He's huge, He's like this, He's strong." So, interestingly enough, although you're many, many years apart, you still have a similar view of who He is, His strength, what his physical appearance might be like, almost matches her description of how she sees him.

**Mother's mother:** That's kind of funny.

**JW:** Isn't that something? How do you picture him Mother? Ok, He doesn't have a face, does He, what do you think of when you think of Him?

**Answer:** I can't put it into words (?).

**JW:** What do you think of when you think of Him, Great grand mother?

**Great grand mother:** Well I think of Him as, He's really everything, He's always been everything to me, because once you have God in your life, you can almost do anything. And you can really do anything with your faith, if you have that faith, you can really do things. And God is there for you, all the time, but really I can't describe Him as uh, well He really is a person, He is a person, but I wouldn't know how to describe him, height, width or whatever. But He's a person, God is a person. So uh, spiritually, He's always there, and He will always be there for you, you only have to trust in Him because He trusts in you.

**JW:** So do you think that faith is a protecting force that protects you in your life?

**Great grand mother:** Well, yes, yes. Without faith, you have nothing. If you don't have any faith, then you don't have anything. So faith is a substance, you have to; you have to have that in order to do almost anything. Faith applies to a lot of things in yourself, faith in God, your family, and faith does so much and it means so much to me, anyways.

**JW:** Do you agree with that grandmother?

**Mother's mother:** Yes I do, I think that without faith, you can't accomplish anything, because you don't...I connect faith to self-esteem, how you see yourself. If you don't have faith in God, you don't have faith in yourself, because I think God gives us what we need to accomplish whatever it is that we're trying to accomplish in life. I think that without that faith, you can't do it on your own, you know, all you have to do is have faith the size of a mustard seed and you can move a mountain. It's just, and by mountains I mean things that are happening in your life.

**JW:** So do you think that faith, do you grown with faith, can faith grown? Are there levels or stages of faith?

**Mother's mother:** Hh yeah, because you, some days you have more faith in something or situations than other days, because I think sometimes your faith is stronger. Sometimes you feel down, you get down. Life has a tendency to beat us down, and if you deal with in the carnal, then you'll get beat down, but when you look at it from a spiritual sense, God gives us rewards, He rewards our souls, our spirits. He gives us that vibrance to move on.

**JW:** And one last question, thank you for being so patient, in regards to your children's schoolwork, when you think about your children Great grand mother, do you think that, having a faith in their life helped them in their schoolwork, helped them to be more grounded in who they are, or were at that time and who they became as adults?

**Great grand mother:** Oh yeah

**JW:** In what way do you think?

**Great grand mother:** Well, if they did not have faith, they need faith in themselves in order to do what they're supposed to do. Like I said, without faith you have nothing. And children really need it nowadays because things are so different. Even when my children were coming up, now things are so different. And how many generations do I have...I have three generations right.

**JW:** Right, right, three generations sitting right here.

**Great grand mother:** Four if I counted ( ) and (inaudible) four, four

**JW:** And do you think faith and spirituality when you were raising your children had an impact on their lives?

**Mother's mother:** I think so because I think that my mom's faith was far more strong than mine, and my faith grew as I matured in my life. And I think I did my children an injustice because early in my life I wasn't as spiritually grounded as I am now. I think that if you raise your kids with a spiritual base, when you raise your kids with a spiritual base, you teach them to have morals and ethics and a sense of being and a sense of what's right and what's wrong, and I think because spirituality is all good, God is all good and in order to get that across you have to believe and you have to educate your family, your children, and you have to work together to grow spiritually as a family. I think that when you do that your family is more, together, is more conjoined, everybody is more on the same page, and I think that you resolve issues a lot better when things are based spiritually on the word and that's how you deal with people.

**JW:** Ok. Anything else that anyone else wants to add to our discussion about faith and spirituality? Thank you so much for your time and patience today. I enjoyed working with you all.



APPENDIX D:

SAMPLE SUNDAY SCHOOL/VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

# BE TRUE TO YOUR CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

Bible Background • 2 TIMOTHY 1  
 Printed Text • 2 TIMOTHY 1:3-14  
 Devotional Reading • 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-17

## LESSON AIM

By the end of the lesson, we will:

- KNOW how our faith is often directly tied to or derived from our ancestors;
- FEEL the responsibility of passing our faith onto the next generation; and
- DECIDE to implement the MAKE IT HAPPEN section.

## LESSON OVERVIEW

- LESSON AIM
- KEEP IN MIND
- FOCAL VERSES
- IN FOCUS
- THE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND TIMES
- BACKGROUND
- AT-A-GLANCE
- IN DEPTH
- SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES
- DISCUSS THE MEANING
- LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY
- MAKE IT HAPPEN
- FOLLOW THE SPIRIT
- REMEMBER YOUR THOUGHTS
- DAILY BIBLE READINGS

then paraker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.

9 Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

14 That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

## IN FOCUS

Dean got out of bed late Sunday morning. He stayed in bed as long as he could, but the noise his three younger brothers and sister made getting ready for church was too much for him. When his father came knocking at the door, he

was ready with the excuse that would keep him home; he was 16 and determined.

"Why aren't you dressed, young man? It's Sunday, and we always go to church. Are you sick?" "Dad, I'm tired of going to church Sunday after Sunday."

"Tired?" His father's eyes showed a little fire. "Why would you say something like that?"

Dean straightened himself on his bedside. "My point is this: I been going to church since I was 6 or 6 years old. I've heard something like 2,000 sermons, and I can't remember a single one of them. So I think we are wasting our time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving all those sermons."

His father's voice became a little stern. "Listen, son, your mother and I have been married for 25 years now. In that time, she has cooked over 25,000 meals. But just like the sermons you can't remember, I can't recall every course of even one of those meals. But I do know that each meal nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to provide for this family. If your mother had not prepared those meals, I might be dead today. Likewise, if this family was not a church-going family and was not receiving the nourishment that the church offers, we would be spiritually dead today!"

In 2 Timothy, we are blessed with the understanding that faith is the head of immortality. Do you understand the importance of passing the faith along from generation to generation?

## THE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND TIMES

**Timothy:** He was a disciple of Jesus Christ and a co-laborer with the apostle Paul in the ministry. Timothy worked extensively with Paul, traveling and preaching the Gospel. Paul often refers to Timothy as his son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 2 Timothy 1:2). Timothy was the product of a mixed union. His mother was Jewish, and his father was Greek (Acts 16:1). However, it appears that at some point Timothy's mother became a Christian, and she ensured that her son was instructed in the Scriptures. The Bible gives us various insights into the life and character of Timothy: Timothy, from the scriptural account, was faithful, loyal, and trustworthy. Paul entrusted him to instruct the saints in Thessalonica, Ephesus, and Corinth.

## BACKGROUND

Second Timothy is known as one of the pastoral epistles (letters) written by the apostle Paul. Paul uses this second letter to Timothy, as an opportunity to encourage his young protégé in the Gospel. This letter was written during Paul's second imprisonment in Rome, shortly before his death. Paul's love for and trust in Timothy is evident in his correspondence to him, and he longs to see his son in the faith one more time. While this second epistle is predominantly a letter of encouragement, Paul does not neglect the opportunity to warn Timothy to be aware of false teachers and incorrect doctrine.

## AT-A-GLANCE

1. Paul Expresses Love Toward Timothy (2 Timothy 1:3-4)
2. Paul Reminds Timothy of His Heritage of Faith (vv. 5-7)
3. Paul Reminds Timothy of His Purpose and Calling (vv. 8-10)
4. Paul Speaks of His Personal Afflictions (vv. 11-12)
5. Paul Admonishes Timothy to Continue in the Work (vv. 13-14)

## IN DEPTH

**1. Paul Expresses Love Toward Timothy (2 Timothy 1:3-4)**  
 Paul was imprisoned, and others, who had once served faithfully, had forsaken him. It was during this time that he was especially grateful to Timothy for his faithfulness to him and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul remembered Timothy in his petitions and supplications to the Lord, and his times of prayer reflected on Timothy and all they had experienced as co-laborers in the ministry. As Paul remembered the tears of Timothy, he longed to see his son in the faith so that he could once again experience the joy they shared together.

Paul and Timothy are examples of how to build a Christian family and leave an eternal spiritual

## FOCAL VERSES

2 Timothy 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.

4 Greedy desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy.

5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be

legacy. The apostle Paul took time with his disciple to encourage him in ministry, allowing Timothy to travel with him and experience the pain and joy that comes with serving the Lord. Paul's work would not go unrewarded. Because this elder was willing to take time to pour himself into the next generation, Timothy was now equipped to continue the work which the apostle started. God showed righteousness toward Paul and remembered his labor of love toward the saints (Hebrews 6:10). He reminded Timothy that he was praying for him continuously because he knew firsthand the persecution that comes with being an ambassador for Christ. As Paul prepared to pass the torch of ministry to this next generation, he was not neglectful in his prayers for Timothy. Paul was aware that the task set before Timothy was too big for him alone, but that through Christ Jesus he could do all things (Philippians 4:13).

**2. Paul Reminds Timothy of His Heritage of Faith (vv. 5-7)**

Paul took time to encourage Timothy in the faith. He reminded Timothy of the heritage of his faith and the source of his gift. Paul spoke of Timothy's faith as unfeigned, meaning that Timothy's faith was lourest and sincere. Timothy did not have to be timid in his faith. He could find strength in knowing that the same faith that had sustained and equipped his ancestors was present in him to sustain and equip him also.

The faith within Timothy had been tried and proven over generations. So Paul admonished him to stir up the gift of God inside him and refrain from walking in fear. In essence, Paul was simply instructing Timothy to rekindle the flame of his passion to serve the Lord. It seems as though Timothy had been discouraged by various events. It could have been the mission in Corinth, the rise of Gnosticism, or other false teachings in the church. Paul does not tell us the actual events that may have contributed to the young man's discouragement. Paul did not judge, belittle, or degrade him for becoming discouraged. On the contrary, he simply encouraged Timothy to rekindle the flame. Paul reminded the young pastor that the God he served does not deal in fear or timidity. He

is a God of faith. The spirit of fear does not come from God. The Spirit of God is one of power, love, and sound mind (v. 7). Fear comes to rob you of your power, your love, and your soundness of mind. The apostle John reminds us that there is no fear in love and that perfect love (that is, the love from God) removes fear (1 John 4:18). It is the love that we receive from God that enables us to overcome fear and to walk in the power, love, and sound mind that He provides for us.

**3. Paul Reminds Timothy of His Purpose and Calling (vv. 8-10)**

Timothy did not have to be ashamed of the trials and persecutions that came with serving Jesus Christ. Nonbelievers and false teachers would say that Christ's death on the Cross proved He was not the Messiah. So they would work to shame those who served and followed Him. However, Paul encouraged Timothy to not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but to partake in His afflictions. It is an honor to share in Christ's afflictions.

The same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in us (Romans 8:11). Paul reminded Timothy that the power of God had saved him and called him to do a work in the ministry. Now Timothy was called to fulfill the purpose of God by the grace of God. Such purpose and grace had been designed for Timothy before the foundation of the world and was made available to him through Jesus Christ. So Timothy did not need to be ashamed of Christ, for Christ was his Source. Similarly, it is through Him that we now have access to the grace and purpose of God. Everything we need to do the will of God is available to us through Christ.

**4. Paul Speaks of His Personal Afflictions (vv. 11-12)**

Paul reminded Timothy that he (Paul) was not alone in his suffering. However, this was not because of anything he had done; it was simply because the One He served, Jesus Christ. Paul was aware that his appointment and service to ministry came from Jesus Christ. Isn't it ironic that the source of his appointment is also the source of his pain and affliction? Paul was writing this letter to Timothy from a Roman jail. He was in jail because he was a

Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ. This did not bring Paul shame. His hope was in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:27), and he was fully persuaded (confidently believed and trusted) that Christ would keep all that Paul had given in service to Him.

**5. Paul Admonishes Timothy to Continue in the Work (vv. 13-14)**

Our study of this passage ends with Paul admonishing Timothy to follow after sound doctrine. Some of Paul's previous followers had succumbed to false teachers and erroneous doctrine (2 Timothy 1:15). However, Paul warned Timothy to not turn toward any teaching different than what he (Paul) had taught him about Jesus Christ. However, Paul knew that this could not be done on Timothy's own accord. It was only with the assistance of the Holy Spirit that Timothy could discern sound teachings and hold fast to the truth given to him by Paul.

**SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES**

1. What does Paul tell Timothy to do with the gift that has been given to him by God (2 Timothy 1:6)?
2. What does the Holy Spirit give to those who follow after Him (v. 7)?
3. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Timothy as stated in verse 14?

**DISCUSS THE MEANING**

1. Why do you think Paul felt the need to remind Timothy of the heritage of his faith?
2. What do you think Paul meant when he told Timothy to stir up the gift of God he had received by the laying on of hands?

**LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY**

The themes of heritage and legacy are prevalent in Jewish culture and are referred to on numerous occasions in both the Old and New Testament writings. God is often referred to as "the God of our forefathers" or "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Genealogy was not just a listing of kinsmen. Genealogy represented one's identity. The Children of Israel would find strength and encouragement as they read about the battles and struggles of their forefathers. In Jewish culture, the prevailing attitude was, "If it happened to my forefathers, it happened to me."

There is a great sense of strength and pride that comes from knowing one's heritage. Take time during the celebration of Black History Month to learn more about an African or African American ancestor who changed the course of history or made a positive contribution to society. Think about what things you can learn from him or her. Ask yourself about the legacy you are leaving for the next generation.

**MAKE IT HAPPEN**

Using the principles of today's lesson and in commemoration of Black History Month, develop a project that puts your faith into action and allows you to share your Christian heritage with someone of a younger generation.

**FOLLOW THE SPIRIT**

What God wants me to do:

**REMEMBER YOUR THOUGHTS**

Special insights I have learned:

**DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

**Me God Gives the Heritage**  
Psalms 111

1: We Can Lose Our Heritage  
Jeremiah 17:1-8

W: Stand Firm, Hold Fast

2: Thessalonians 2:13-17

T: Timothy's Mother Was a Believer  
Acts 16:1-5

F: I Am and I Have Passed On Faith  
2 Timothy 1:1-5

S: Be Not Ashamed of Your Heritage  
2 Timothy 1:6-10

S: Guard the Good Treasure Given You  
2 Timothy 1:11-18

# DEVELOP CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

Bible Background • 2 TIMOTHY 2  
 Printed Text • 2 TIMOTHY 2:14-26  
 Devotional Reading • 1 PETER 2:1-10

## LESSON AIM

By the end of the lesson, we will:

- KNOW that our inward redemption should manifest itself in outward change;
- FEEL the need to live godly before Christ and others; and
- DECIDE to acknowledge one ungodly habit and align it with our confession of Christ.

## KEEP IN MIND

"Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

## FOCAL VERSES

2 Timothy 2:14 Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

16 But shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus:

18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity;

20 But in a great house there are not only ves-

## LESSON OVERVIEW

### LESSON AIM

### KEEP IN MIND

### FOCAL VERSES

### IN FOCUS

### THE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND TIMES

### BACKGROUND

### AT-A-GLANCE

### IN DEPTH

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

### DISCUSS THE MEANING

### LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY

### MAKE IT HAPPEN

### FOLLOW THE SPIRIT

### REMEMBER YOUR THOUGHTS

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

sets of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

22 Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

## IN FOCUS

The park was under a blazing hot sun where Jamal, his wife Karen, and a few friends picnicked one summer afternoon. Their 7-year-old son, Patrick, ran from his screaming young friends and sat on his father's lap, announcing that he wanted to have lunch with God. He said he had seen God sitting all alone. Giving her husband a wink, Karen placed a few cookies and two cans of soda in a small bag.

The couple watched as their son walked two picnic tables over and sat next to an older woman who was sitting alone staring at some birds. Patrick sat on the bench next to her and opened his bag. His parents looked on as he offered the elderly woman one of his cookies. She accepted them and beamed. Then he offered her a soda. Again, she smiled at him. Patrick seemed so happy to be sitting with her.

Patrick and the old woman sat there eating, drinking, and watching the birds as his parents looked on. Neither Patrick nor his elderly friend said a word. After awhile, Patrick got up to leave. After he had gone just a few steps, he turned around, ran back to the old woman, and gave her a big hug. Laughing, the old woman hugged him back.

Patrick ran to his parents excited and giggling aloud. Karen asked, "Why did your visit make you so happy?"

Patrick replied, "Because she was God!"

*Development of our Christian character should start early in life. How often do we let our children express the love of Christ toward others?*

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to lead the church toward the Lord Jesus. Paul knew the importance of godly character and growth in the life of the Christian; therefore, he instructed Timothy to remind the believers of those things that produce godliness as well as those things that produce ungodliness.

## AT-A-GLANCE

1. Strive to Win God's Approval (2 Timothy 2:14-15)
2. Stay Away from False Teaching (vv. 16-21)
3. Stick with Those Who Practice Godliness (vv. 22-23)
4. Show Gentleness to Those Who Oppose the Truth (vv. 24-26)

## IN DEPTH

1. Strive to Win God's Approval (2 Timothy 2:14-15)

The apostle tells his son Timothy he should make every effort to win the approval of God. God wants His children to develop godly character in both word and deed. Words are living and powerful. Proverbs 18:21 tells us that "death and life are in the power of the tongue." Empty, vain talk does not lead to godliness. Arguing over what is right or wrong does not bring someone to righteousness. Truth does not come through vain babbling. We can only access truth by taking time to study the Word of God.

The apostle Paul tells Timothy to instruct the saints to refrain from arguing with each other. Such arguments only work to undermine the faith of those who hear them. Timothy was instructed to teach the saints, not to argue about the truth, but to study, Jesus also spoke about the need to be cautious about the words we speak. Matthew 15:18-20 reminds us that the words that proceed from the mouth come from the heart and can work to defile the one speaking. Such vain babbling leads to ungodliness, including evil thoughts, fornication, and blasphemy.

2. Stay Away from False Teaching (vv. 16-21)  
 Empty words led to a falling away from the truth

for Hymeneus and Philetus. They had once walked in the truth of the Gospel. Now, however, they embraced false teachings and walked in error instead of continuing in the Word of God. Suffer, false teachings and vain babblings set away at the truth and open the door for erroneous doctrine to grow, take root, and eventually bring destruction in the body of Christ.

Many Christians put great effort into separating their church life from their non-church life. However, God wants to be involved in every aspect of a Christian's life. Stay away from useless arguments and strife. Instead build a strong foundation in the Lord.

A vessel of honor is a vessel of character. We have the ability to choose what we will and will not do; we choose what we will and will not say. Many of us are familiar with the saying, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all." We also have the ability to choose the type of Christians we will be. Will we choose to be weak Christians, walking after the things of the flesh? Or will we choose to be strong Christians, guided by the Holy Spirit—a vessel of honor that can be used by the Master?

**3. Stick with Those Who Practice Godliness (vv. 22-23)**

In order to be a vessel of honor, we must choose to follow after righteousness. As New Testament believers, we understand that righteousness is a result of what Christ has done, not our works. However, every individual who has confessed Christ as Lord and Saviour should seek to develop character that reflects such a confession.

Righteousness is the position of the believer in Christ Jesus. We are made righteous not because of our own actions, but because of the actions of Christ. While our actions do not make us righteous, our righteousness should be visible in our actions. The moment we confess with our mouth and believe with our heart (Romans 10:9) that Christ died and was resurrected, we are saved. While we are immediately saved from the guilt of sin, we are not yet completely saved from the power of sin. The physical nature of man does not immediately reflect one's new status in the Lord. Thus, believers become committed to the process of having their lives reflect their position in Christ. To do so, we must choose to walk in faith, love, and peace. There are times when we must choose to walk in love instead of proving a point or being

"right." There are times when we have to choose to not partake in certain conversations because they will lead to strife or other forms of ungodliness.

In his letter to the church in Corinth, the apostle Paul spoke about not being carnal Christians (1 Corinthians 3). A carnal Christian is a Christian who gives in to the desires of the flesh and who is not committed to a lifestyle that reflects Jesus Christ. God does not want His children to be carnal or remain immature. For example, a daughter of just 18 months old exhibits behavior that is typical of someone her age. However, the parent does not desire her to continue with the same behavior when she is 7, 12, or 18 years old. It is expected that with proper nurture and teaching, she will mature, grow, and learn. The same is true of the spiritual growth and development of the Christian. Some level of immaturity is expected when we are newly saved and young in the Lord. However, it is expected that we study the Word of God and develop character that is more representative of Him, just as natural growth and maturity require proper nurturing, so it is with spiritual growth and maturity.

**4. Show Gentleness to Those Who Oppose the Truth (vv. 24-26)**

Paul instructs Timothy to avoid quarreling over God's Word and to be gentle toward those who respect the truth.

In certain Christian circles, the title "servant of the Lord," is reserved for a special group of people, usually clergy or other church leaders. However, all Christians are servants of the Lord. As such, Christians are instructed to conduct their lives in gentleness and meekness. Notice that verse 24 does not say "the preacher, the pastor, or the Sunday school teacher." It simply says "the servant of the Lord." That includes every believer. So every believer should be kind to others. Every believer should be able to teach someone something about the Word of God, even if they have had the chance to attend seminary, and be a preacher or pastor.

However, the responsibility that comes with being a Christian is yours. Such responsibility is outlined in verse 24: Be kind to all men, be able to teach, and be patient. As a workman (v. 15), or servant of the Lord, we are expected to study the Word and develop the ability to "teach" or share it properly with others. Studying the Word of God is not reserved for the

pastor. It is for everyone, from the pulpit to the pew. As more Christians begin to own the responsibility that comes with being a Christian, they become vessels that God can use to bring salvation to others. No, Christians should not argue with others about the Word of God. Instead, we are called to teach the Word with gentleness and meekness and leave the results up to God. As we humbly teach God's truth, God through the Holy Spirit can provide illumination to the one who hears the teaching.

**SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES**

1. What is it that every Christian is expected to do with the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15)?
2. What do empty words and vain babbling produce in the lives of those who engage in idle talk (vv. 16-18)?
3. What is the outcome or reward for someone who chooses to become a vessel of honor in the house of the Lord (v. 21)?
4. What is it that the Christian is told to avoid (v. 23)?

**DISCUSS THE MEANING:**

1. Why do you think idle talk has such a negative effect on both the one speaking and the one listening?
2. Suppose that you are out with some friends from church. You all begin to engage in conversation about another lady from church who is not present. The conversation is very unkind, and the facts of the conversation may or may not be true. How should you respond? What does God expect you to do?
3. Think about a time when you have taken part in or listened to a negative conversation about someone else. What did you do? How did you feel? What type of atmosphere did the conversation produce?

**LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY**

Godly character is not a very popular topic in many Christian circles. It is great to hear messages on purpose, healing, destiny, and other topics of interest. However, we cannot afford to continue to neglect the role of godly character in the life of a Christian. God is concerned about the character of His children. He wants us to allow His Spirit to permeate every area of our lives, including our speech. I am sure that every one of us, if we would examine our lives, can find an area in which gossip or idle chatter produced a negative outcome for us or for someone we know. Let me challenge you to take a stand against that which does

not produce godly fruit in your life. It is not always the popular thing to do, and it can take a lot of courage to follow after righteousness. However, as you follow after righteousness, you will become a vessel of honor in the house of the Lord.

**MAKE IT HAPPEN**

On a sheet of paper, list those areas in your life in which you have seen tremendous growth since giving your life to Christ. On a separate sheet of paper, list those areas in your life in which you are struggling to follow after righteousness. Then, list several things you can do to change those areas in which you are presently struggling to produce righteousness. It is said that it takes 21 days to break an old habit and make a new one. Therefore, make it a goal to work on one area for a month, choosing a new area each month, and watch righteousness develop in your life.

**FOLLOW THE SPIRIT**

What God wants me to do:

**REMEMBER YOUR THOUGHTS**

Special insights I have learned:

**DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

**My God's Promise Is Realized Through Faith**  
Romans 4:13-25

**I, So You May Grow into Salvation**  
1 Peter 2:1-10

**We Grow in the Knowledge of God**  
Colossians 1:3-10

**Trusting a Good Soldier of Christ Jesus**  
2 Timothy 2:1-7

**Remember Christ Jesus**  
2 Timothy 2:8-13

**Be a Worker Approved by God**  
2 Timothy 2:14-19

**Pursue Righteousness, Faith, Love, and Peace**  
2 Timothy 2:20-26

# LIVE THE TRUTH, TEACH THE TRUTH

Bible Background • TITUS 2

Printed Text • TITUS 2

Devotional Reading • EPHESIANS 4:11-16

## LESSON AIM

By the end of the lesson, we will:

**FEEL** strongly that God desires and expects us to live godly;

**COMMIT** to display faith in God through acts and deeds, living out God's Word; and

**SET** a godly example for others to follow.

## KEEP IN MIND

"In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works" (Titus 2:7).

## FOCAL VERSES

**Titus 2:1** But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

**2** That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

**3** The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things:

**4** That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

**5** To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

**6** Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.

**7** In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorrupt-

## LESSON OVERVIEW

### LESSON AIM

### KEEP IN MIND

### FOCAL VERSES

### IN FOCUS

### THE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND TIMES

### BACKGROUND

### AT-A-GLANCE

### IN DEPTH

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

### DISCUSS THE MEANING

### LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY

### MAKE IT HAPPEN

### FOLLOW THE SPIRIT

### REMEMBER YOUR THOUGHTS

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

ness, gravity, sincerity,

**8** Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

**9** Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again;

**10** Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;

**11** For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, **12** Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

**13** Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

**14** Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

**15** These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

## IN FOCUS

Today we can see how Dr. King's strong Christian attitudes and sound doctrine guided

his single-minded efforts to break down Jim Crow laws of the South. Often we forget how difficult it was for Dr. King to fulfill his calling.

We tend to forget the throngs of influential people who told him, "Wait." But it's important we remember that part of his story.

Many older Black ministers in the early years thought he was too radical, that his marches and sit-ins caused too much violence. White church leaders who had never felt the stinging darts of segregation wrote, telephoned, and pleaded with him to wait. They argued that the time was not right, or that this was not how one handled the Southern problem.

Dr. King's posture remained dignified even while some tried to hold him back. He wasn't mean-spirited when he spoke out against vicious mobs who were lynching mothers and fathers and drowning "insolent" teenagers on a whim. Dr. King demonstrated how the gospel of Christ could combat police filled with so much hate; they would kick, brutalize, and kill marchers who wanted to vote. It was the tireless example Dr. King set that finally won over all of his detractors.

*The book of Titus reminds us regardless of the circumstances or how many well-meaning persons we find ourselves at odds with, we must teach the truth by example, and like Dr. King hold fast to the characteristics of a Soldier of Christ.*

## THE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND TIMES

**Titus.** He was a minister of the Gospel and a co-laborer with Paul in the ministry. Titus was a Greek who served with Paul on several missionary journeys. In other writings, Paul refers to Titus as his partner and fellow helper. Titus had served with Paul on a mission to Corinth and was sent to Crete to continue his service in the ministry. Paul wrote while Titus was on assignment in Crete. Paul's pastoral epistle to Titus seems to have been written from Corinth after his first imprisonment. Paul's epistle to Titus was similar to Paul's first epistle to Timothy and is believed to have been written around the same time from the same place.

## BACKGROUND

Contaminated teachings began to develop within the Cretan church. Paul left Titus in Crete to establish proper church government and to ordain other ministers in the Gospel. In his letter to Titus, Paul speaks of the qualifications for elders and warns Titus to be aware of false teachers.

## AT-A-GLANCE

1. The Need for Sound Doctrine (Titus 2:1)
2. The Call to Teach the Next Generation (vs. 2-5)
3. The Responsibility to Live the Life You Teach (vs. 7-8)
4. The Duty to Comply with the Social Structure (vs. 9-10)
5. The Mandate for Godly Teaching and Righteous Living (vs. 11-15)

## IN DEPTH

### 1. The Need for Sound Doctrine (Titus 2:1)

Paul urged Titus to faithfully teach sound doctrine. Paul was aware of how different doctrines serve to bring division and confusion in the body of Christ. He tells us to not be like children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). Sound doctrine always results in a life centered around Jesus Christ. The first chapter of Titus ends with Paul's warning against false teachers. He then goes on in chapter 2 to remind Titus to not be moved by false teachers and their inaccurate doctrine.

False teachers began to deny that Jesus was the Son of God. They doubted the reality of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Such teachings caused many to turn away from sound doctrine and begin to embrace the doctrine espoused by the false teachers. While false teachers may say that they represent Jesus and that they know God, their actions often



Model good works.

contradict a faith in God. One cannot claim to be a representative of God and deny the resurrection of Christ.

**2. The Call to Teach the Next Generation**

(vv. 2-6)  
Each generation has a responsibility and an obligation to teach the next generation. Paul

Often times we see younger couples make mistakes early in marriage that could have been avoided if an older couple had taken the time to mentor and teach them. The body of Christ will benefit as we fulfill our responsibility to give to others, share what we have learned, and train others in the faith and teachings of Jesus Christ.

**3. The Responsibility to Live the Life You Teach (vv. 7-8)**

"Do as I say, and not as I do" is a popular quote within our society. However, Paul reminds Titus of the importance of living a life that is in line with what we teach. "Fruit without works is dead also" (James 2:26). Therefore, we can't just say we believe in Christ and in the Word of God. We must follow the teachings of God if we say we are children of God. Genuine faith moves from belief to action. Our actions of faith produce fruit. Jesus tells us, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:18). Therefore, if we teach Christ, we must also live Christ. Our actions prove what we believe.

**4. The Duty to Comply with the Social Structure (vv. 9-10)**

Being a Christian does not negate our social responsibilities. Paul urged Christian slaves to remain compliant to the social laws of the land. Servants were to obey their masters and not respond to them with backtalk or sarcasm. Christian slaves in that culture were expected to follow the law and allow their lives to serve as godly examples as a testimony to their masters. However, this duty is not limited to just slaves and masters. Paul goes on to speak of a respect for those in authority. In 1 Timothy 2:2, we are instructed to pray for those in authority. Such godly instructions apply to all who rule over us in one capacity or another.

**5. The Mandate for Godly Teaching and Righteous Living (vv. 11-15)**

God does not discriminate. He is not partial to a particular group or to those from a par-

ticular background. It is the will of God that all should receive salvation. As followers of Christ, we should take every occasion to live a righteous life. We must live for Christ in this present age while we await the return of our Lord and Saviour. Don't allow anyone to despise you for teaching the truth. Speak the Word of God, encourage, and correct with authority.

**SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES**

1. What role should older men assume in the lives of young men (Titus 2:2)?
2. What behavior is befitting of a Christian woman (vv. 4-5)?
3. How should Christian slaves interact with their masters (vv. 9-10)?
4. Why did Christ give His life for us (v. 14)?

**DISCUSS THE MEANING**

1. Why do you think Paul admonishes Christian slaves to remain obedient to their masters?
2. Imagine that you work in an environment that is hostile to Christianity. How can you continue to practice your faith and remain employed at this particular company? What is your greatest witnessing tool?
3. Imagine that your best friend was recently married and is experiencing difficulty with his or her new spouse. Who could he or she turn to for godly counsel? How might Paul's letter to Titus provide guidance in this particular area?

**LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY**

Recent scandals in the business world have caused people to question the integrity of others. Individuals often say one thing and do another. This has become so common in our society today that less and less weight is given to a person's word. In fact, it almost seems expected that an individual will break a promise. Think about times when you have said that you were going to do something and failed to do it. What kept you from following up on your promise? How can you avoid a similar situation in the future?

**MAKE IT HAPPEN**

Think about a time when you have followed after godliness in both word and conduct. Then think of another time when your actions didn't represent righteous, godly living. Write down the reasons you believe you followed after godliness. Then write down the reasons you believe you didn't follow after godliness. What steps could you have taken to behave in a manner that follows the teachings of Christ? Make a commitment to take the steps that are necessary to behave in ways that will please the Lord.

**FOLLOW THE SPIRIT**

What God wants me to do:

**REMEMBER YOUR THOUGHTS**

Special insights I have learned:

**DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

M: Speak the Truth in Love  
Ephesians 4:11-16

TU: Be Established in the Truth  
2 Peter 1:5-12

W: Walk in the Light of Truth  
1 John 1:5-9

TH: Support All Believers in the Truth  
John 9:8

F: Teaching Older Men and Women  
Titus 2:1-3

S: Teaching Younger Men and Slaves  
Titus 2:8-10

S: Teach What God Expects of Believers  
Titus 2:11-15



# Intelligent Design

Andrea L. Mason

The construction of a home, town, or nation are built on the minds of architects. They draw up plans for houses, buildings, businesses and yes, even churches. They see that the plans are carried out through skilled workers—the engineers and construction crews.

Taking a look back in history, we discover that Blacks were very involved in the design and building of this nation even before colonial times. There is proven written documentation of just how much Blacks contributed.

There are well-known African Americans who left their marks for their architectural skills. Charles, a free Black carpenter, wood worker, and mason, helped build the Destrehan Plantation in St. Charles Parish, Louisiana. After the Civil War, times didn't look bright for Black architects until the twentieth century. The Freedmen's Bureau founded Hampton Institute to train African Americans, many of them former slaves, in architectural skills. Robert R. Taylor founded the program at Tuskegee Institute—he was the first Black to graduate from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). Tuskegee professor Wallace A. Rayfield designed many of our Black churches. President Thomas Jefferson's home was built by Blacks.



## in my heart

*"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made, your works are wonderful, I know that full well."*

*Psalms 139:14, NIV*

## WORD!

**Psalm 139:1-3, 7-14, 23-24, NIV**

### Busted!

**Psalm 139:1** O, LORD, you have searched me and you know me. **2** You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. **3** You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

### Can't Hide!

**Psalm 139:7** Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? **8** If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. **9** If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, **10** even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. **11** If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," **12** even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

### I'm All Yours, LORD!

**Psalm 139:13** For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. **14** I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

**Psalm 139:23** Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. **24** See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

**GOT IT!** ///**A. Made In Heaven!**

Use **WORD!** to help you with this activity.

1. Why should we want God to search our hearts and test our thoughts?  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. List three things God knows about us—we just can't hide!

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_

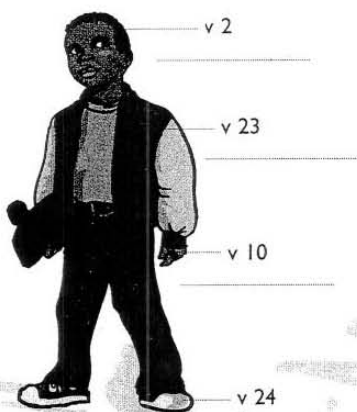
3. How are we made?  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which place did David **NOT** mention going to hide from God?

a. in the depths  
b. the heavens  
c. New Jersey  
d. darkness  
e. the far side of the sea

**B. God's Got My Number!**

God's got you covered! Check the verses given from **WORD!** and write in the verse phrase that matches the body part. We are fearfully and wonderfully made!

**SIDE BAR****God's Omniscience**

**GOD IS:**

Omniscient—God knows **EVERYTHING**.

Omnipresent—God is **EVERYWHERE**.

Omnipotent—God is **ALL POWERFUL**.

Because God is omniscient, He knows every matter from beginning to end. Nothing is hidden from God—not even our thoughts. God can never be deceived by words that are uttered contrary to our thoughts. It is therefore in the best interest of humans to be true to both self and **GOD**.

**How To "Live" With God**

1. Know with whom you are living—**GOD**. Read His autobiography (Bible). Believe what you read.
2. Ask Him about everything—**GOD** will tell you what you need to know: what moves Him, what makes Him smile, what makes Him want to spend more time with **YOU**.
3. In everything you do, everything you say, in your attitude—**GOD** is with you. He already **KNOWS**.

**JAM SESSION** ///**Grand Estate—By Design**

Isn't it amazing that there are actually humans on this planet who can't get with the notion of the intelligent design of the universe? The evolutionary theory is based on believing that everything just popped up out of nothing—big bang. **BOOM!** And there it was—the universe! Yeah, right! There was a big bang all right, but we know **WHO** set it off!

We discovered in **REALITY CHECK** that homes and buildings don't just jump up and build themselves. **SOMEBODY** has to design them and then build them. God is the great Creator, the Master Designer and Builder of the human race. Imagine all the stuff you've learned in school so far about the human body and mind . . . and you haven't even scratched the surface! We are really a piece of work! And furthermore, God knows us—He knows **HISWORK!**

When we look at a house, what we **DON'T** see are the hidden things that make the house work—plumbing pipes, electrical wiring, insulation . . . but it was all put into the design by the architect. God knows us **INSIDE OUT**. There's no getting away. **HEY!** Have you been trying to hide something from God? Have you been trying to hide yourself from God (like God really doesn't see you!). You and God need a private conference. Get on it. Quick!

**JAM ON IT!** ///**You, The Designer**

Hey! Check out your bedroom this week. How would you make it different? Get a sheet of paper, draw a floor plan (quit frontin', I know you've done the measurement scale thing in math—**HA!**) of the way your room is right now and then redesign your room. Now ask yourself, how doable is it? Share results next session. Bring your floor plan.

**JAM FEATURE ACTIVITY**

Make sure your leader checks the *Teaching Success Kit* for the session's activity.

**LAST JAM**

There is nothing that God doesn't know about us.

## Smart Move!

Kimberly Houston

All jokes about lawyers aside, attorneys are a vital part of buying a home. Real estate attorneys use their expertise to review contracts before you sign on the dotted line. Lawyers represent you at the closing when you're signing final loan documents. They make sure your legal rights are protected during such an important investment.

An attorney-at-law is an officer of the court, and is required in the United States to pledge to observe the United States Constitution and the constitution of the state in which s/he practices law. Each state regulates the training and qualifications of attorneys. Usually students go to a four-year university earning a bachelor degree, which is followed by law school, and finally, a clerkship or apprenticeship, varying from one to two years, in the office of a practicing attorney. Alas, there is an examination in law before being admitted to the bar.

The attorney then specializes in a particular field of law—in this case, real estate law. Other lawyers become corporate attorneys (business), criminal attorneys (speaks for itself), international attorneys (international law—nice money!), civil rights attorneys (protect rights under the constitution), and so on. Some folks think they don't need an attorney, especially if they've purchased a home before. But the Bible says, "He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe"—Proverbs 28:26. Or, in the words of a more contemporary proverb: "the man who has himself for a lawyer has a fool for a client."



### in my heart

*"Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding."*

*Proverbs 3:13, NIV*

## WORD!

**Proverbs 2:1-5; 3:1-6, 13-18, NIV**

### Attorneywise

**Proverbs 2:1** My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, **2** turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, **3** and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, **4** and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, **5** then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

### A Binding Agreement

**Proverbs 3:1** My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, **2** for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. **3** Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. **4** Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. **5** Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; **6** in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

### Case Closed!

**Proverbs 3:13** Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, **14** for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. **15** She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. **16** Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. **17** Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. **18** She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed.

**GOT IT!** 

**A. Better Than Silver And Gold**  
Look back at WORD! to help you with these verses from KJV.

1. If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In all thy ways \_\_\_\_\_ Him, and he shall \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Blessed is the man who finds \_\_\_\_\_ and the man who gains \_\_\_\_\_.
4. For her proceeds are better than the profits of \_\_\_\_\_ and her gain than fine \_\_\_\_\_.

**B. Spread The Wisdom**

Your leader will give you paper, pencils, and coloring pencils or markers. Get together in small groups and make a flyer encouraging others to read the book of Proverbs. Based on what you read in WORD! how would you market Proverbs?

**SIDE BAR****The Book Of Proverbs**

The book of Proverbs is power-packed with wisdom and knowledge. Proverbs are words of wisdom that are universal and can be applied to life's situations and people everywhere. The range of subjects addressed in Proverbs go from friendship to business dealings, to nature, to a closer walk with God. Much of the book of Proverbs was written by Solomon, who was endowed with great wisdom by God, and recorded his observations on life in over a thousand proverbs.

**How To Study The Book Of Proverbs**

This is gonna sound just too easy, and we've said it before: Proverbs has 31 chapters, so at the rate of one chapter a day, it would take a month to read Proverbs. SO . . . in addition to your daily devotions, read one chapter of Proverbs each day for the rest of your life. THE END.

**JAM SESSION** **Grand Estate—Digging Through The Treasure Box**

The book of Proverbs can help you get a line on living wisely and making wise decisions. It's a veritable treasure chest of good, juicy stuff! Just as REALITY CHECK suggests a real estate attorney in the purchase process of a home, seeking the wisdom of God in EVERYTHING is even wiser. Check back in WORD! and choose a particular verse that really hits home with you personally. Share with the group how that verse can really help you in day-to-day living.

**JAM ON IT!** **Oh, Wise One!**

This week, monitor the advice you give others as well as the decisions you make. Use the book of Proverbs this week to help you share and use wisdom in all you do. Share results next session.

**JAM FEATURE ACTIVITY**

Make sure your leader checks the *Teaching Success Kit* for the session's activity.

**LAST JAM**

Believers must seek and rely on the wisdom of God in all things.

