Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Discipleship and Mentoring in Youth Retention at Crosspointe Church

A Thesis Project Submitted to

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in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

By

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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT
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Abstact: Leaders at Crosspointe Church in Monroe Michigan have identified a need to develop a more effective discipleship program to keep emerging adults involved in church after high school. Research shows that there is a growing trend of emerging adults leaving the church and the leaders of Crosspointe Church in Monroe Michigan have noticed this trend of emerging adults leaving the church after high school. It is hypothesized that a more effective discipleship program along with more parental involvement will positively correlate with Crosspointe Churches youths making the decision to stay in church after high school. This research utilized a discipleship program at Crosspointe Church which included the New Catholic Catechism, education on the importance of church membership and a parental mentoring program designed to increase youth commitment to church after high school. This study found that a focused discipleship program can increase youths' decision to stay in church after high school. Other parameters measured in the study like parental involvement and youth commitment to church were less decisive. This study also includes two interviews with Crosspointe Church leaders used to identify key concepts in helping Crosspointe develop a more effective discipleship program.

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DMIN   *Doctor of Ministry*

LUSOD *Liberty University School of Divinity*

Chapter 1

Introduction

As Crosspointe Church appears to be losing some of its young emerging adults from church attendance after high school, the question must be asked, "Why are emerging adults from Crosspointe Church leaving the church and how can the church increase retention of these emerging adults after high school?"

The transition into adulthood can be difficult for young emerging adults, with the pull of the world these emerging adults find themselves in a transition from the teen years into adulthood. Adulthood is a time to define and decide the direction of one's life. As these youths move from the teen years to adulthood many of them are choosing to make the decision to leave the church. Crosspointe Church is interested in finding ways to help keep these emerging adults entrenched in the church after high school. It is hypothesized in this research study that young adults who have parents as role models, and who are discipled in the church, are more likely to make the choice to maintain their ties to church after high school than youths who do not have these supports. It is also argued in this study that discipleship training and educating youths to the importance of church membership is a key contributor to youths making the decision to remain in church after high school.

The purpose of the research compiled in this study is to identify if there is a correlation between discipleship and parental mentoring and retention to Crosspointe Church after high school. It is hypothesized that discipleship and mentoring can lead to a more committed life in Jesus Christ after high school as these disciplines will likely enable a more defined understanding of what it means to live for Christ for those involved and this defined understanding will lead to a commitment to the church after high school.

Interviews play a role in action research in this study. Interviews were conducted with the church leaders of Crosspointe Church to gain insight into why some emerging adults are choosing to leave the church. Interviews, in line with action research, were implemented to discuss potential methods of keeping emerging adults in church after they leave high school.

This study was conducted with a small group of teens from Crosspointe Church's youth ministry. A discipleship tool called the "New City Catechism" was implemented into the youth group programming and its effectiveness was measured to gain insight into how to improve retention for emerging adults after high school. This study also utilized a parental mentoring program which measured the effectiveness of discipleship/mentoring and its effect on keeping emerging adults in church after high school.

The research was a mixed methods research, which utilized both quantitative and qualitative data. This data will be utilized to help Crosspointe Church adjust the youth ministry program in ways that increase the retention rate of emerging adults to church after high school.

Ministry Context

Crosspointe Church is in Monroe, Michigan. There are approximately 150 members at Crosspointe Church. There are approximately ten teens attending Crosspointe Church youth ministry program. The youth program includes teens from 7th to 12th grade. Crosspointe Church teens normally meet with the youth pastor on Sunday's at 9:00 am for Bible study during the first worship service. During the second service, starting at 10:45 am, the teens are asked to attend the second worship service at Crosspointe and two volunteers are asked to take up the offering. In this small area of collecting the offering the youth are encouraged to be active in the church ministry, specifically the worship service. During the 9:00 am youth program meeting the youth pastor works through a church recommended workbook that is focused on biblical insight with

some time spent in team building exercises. These youths also meet on Sunday afternoons for their discipleship class from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm.

Crosspointe church has just recently hired a new youth pastor in 2020 and he is currently meeting with the youths several times during the week including Wednesdays and Sunday afternoons. The youths separate on Wednesdays into two groups, one group for boys and one group for girls. The current youth pastor appears to be motivated to utilize a more biblically based teaching. The research was designed to utilize discipleship training focused on biblical teaching in discipling the youths at Crosspointe Church's youth ministry program. On Sunday afternoons the youth pastor is working through a discipleship workbook called "New City Catechism." The idea in this study is that the Bible can be the tool for discipling young people along with workbooks focused on discipleship like the "New City Catechism."

Volunteering has increased since the new youth pastor has been involved in the youth ministry. Several times of year Crosspointe Church teens are encouraged to volunteer in the community. Working at the homeless shelter in Monroe packing boxes is a popular volunteer option for the teens. The current youth pastor is also implementing youth participation in doing yard work for the church's elderly. The youths who participate in Crosspointe Church's youth program appear to exhibit the same congregation values as the church's adult population, including motivation to be a part of church ministry and making church friendships outside the church. The youths appear motivated to make lifelong friends as they spend time together outside of the church context. Many of the youths in Crosspointe Church's youth ministry have parents who are acquaintances, and this seems to help these youths maintain friendships outside of the church building context.

Crosspointe Church is considered a conservative protestant church and it is likely that most teens would be acclimated to the church's conservative biblical views. Research shows that of conservative protestant teens interviewed 79% reported a personal commitment to live life for God. Conservative teens scored the highest percent of those interviewed which included Roman Catholic teens, Mormon teens, Jewish teens, Mainline Protestant teens, Black Protestant teens and teens with no religious affiliation.[1] The teens at Crosspointe Church would be prompted to believe the statement, "Grace alone, by faith alone."

The structural disconnection of many contemporary American adolescents from the world of adults has potential important ramifications for the character of their religious and spiritual lives.[2] Having an adult role model is hypothesized to help these teens feel connected to the adult world of the church and aid in retention to church membership as emerging adults. In this study a parental mentoring relationship served the purpose of helping the teens connect to the adult world of the church. Other ways of teens being able to connect to the adult world of the church may be subject of further research.

Parental involvement is believed to be important and its hypothesized that minimal parental involvement with the teens in the youth ministry context would affect them negatively in response to them staying in church as emerging adults. If parents are motivated to just drop their teens off to church youth group and leave without taking personal responsibility for the mentoring and discipleship of their teens then this is hypothesized to negatively affect their commitment to church after high school. Measuring parental involvement in the discipleship of the teens will be important for any reliable outcome in this study.

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[1] Christian Smith and Melinda L. Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 45.

[2] Ibid., 185.

Having worked with this group in the past it can be said that these youths are starving for information and want to be empowered to live for Christ. The idea that these youth are biding their time in the jail sentence of youth group and then moving away from the church as adults appears to be misleading. These youth ears perk up when biblical concepts are brought up during a youth group lesson. The way Crosspointe Church youths engage with information and ask questions shows that many are starving for truth. Some of these youths appear to be asking the question, "What is being a Christian all about?" It is important to understand that these young people are expected to learn complex problems and theories in primary and secondary school and yet are dissuaded at times in church from being given the meat and depth of the gospel and biblical knowledge under the impression that they are too young to understand it. The youth group at Crosspointe Church in the past has been focused on life lessons and on how to traverse the intricacies of being young. While these are important concepts, a focus on Christlikeness has appeared to take a back seat. Biblical truth is the tool to guide the lives of these young Christians; and they can be entrusted with that responsibility.

The body of Christ at Crosspointe Church may need to do a better job of discipling these teens in the hopes that the church will not lose them after they graduate high school. Current trends appear to support the notion that many youths at Crosspointe are leaving the church after high school.

Crosspointe Church holds a college career class for those emerging adults who do maintain church membership. This class is designed for those who are of college age and who would be defined as new emerging adults. This class can be defined as a mentoring program as it is designed to couple young emerging adults with adults who have already traversed this life

transition in the hopes of increasing the retention rate at church and more importantly helping young emerging adults' transition through this stage of life.

In the same way, the idea of mentoring is attempting to be established as a helpful tool in keeping emerging adults in church. The degree to which specific, individual adolescents today are connected to or disconnected from the adult world is highly variable. These teens appear to embrace the relationships they have with an adult member of their community, especially their church body. Religious American teens do not appear to be entirely relationally isolated from other adults in their congregations. Denton and Smith argue, "Moreover, even more teenagers would like to have significant relationships with adults in their congregations."[3]

Parents who are involved in the spiritual and religious upbringing of their children appear to show better outcomes for their children, teens and on to young adulthood.

> We have come to believe that parenting is a task best left to professional. Unfortunately, this mentality is not limited to the culture at large, the church has also been affected. Just a few generations ago a man was considered spiritually responsible if he led his family before the throne of God in prayer, read and taught Scriptures at home, and led family devotions (among other things). Today parents are considered responsible if they find the church with the best-staffed nursery and the most up-to-date youth ministry.[4]

The importance of parental involvement in youth ministry cannot be ignored. The ministry context for this study will look at the effectiveness of parental involvement in youth ministry. Parental role modeling should be measured against the prevalence of emerging adults leaving the church. Parental religious service attendance and the importance of faith exhibits a

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[3] Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 60.

[4] Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Talk With God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 97.

consistent effect on teenage religiosity: the more religious parents are, the more religious their teens tend to be.[5]

The term discipleship for this Thesis is used to define the process of individuals growing in Christlikeness and the curriculum explicitly designed to move those teens toward this end. This discipleship definition includes direct interaction with scripture including reading and studying it, and direct interaction with individuals including teachers and parents who will teach and mentor biblical concepts toward Christlikeness. Discipleship does not start and end at the church doors or the youth group meeting; most of these teen lives are spent at home with their parents. Parents are the main role models for inspiring and discipling teens. Parental role modeling at home is also a discipleship tool for youths and important for young emerging adults' retention to church after high school as they are discipled and modeled to live for Jesus. The role modeling of the parent is hypothesized to play an important role in the retention of emerging adults. The parent/teen relationship is important for modeling, for example because a teen can view religion as a source of hypocrisy when their parents fail to live up to the standards professed by religion they profess.[6]

Problem Presented

Even with the widespread attention on finding ways to reach emerging adults, the number of young adults who do not identify themselves with any religious group is on the rise.[7] The research acknowledges a trend of young emerging adults leaving the church. The age range of eighteen to twenty-nine is a black hole of church attendance as these young emerging adults have

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[5] Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 108.

[6] Ibid., 188.

[7] Steven Frye, *Becoming an Adult in a Community of Faith* (New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2014), 51-61, 54.

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appeared to vanish from church.[8] The argument here is that the problem at Crosspointe Church is the lack of discipleship at the youth ministry level and the lack of parental support through mentoring is leading to Crosspointe Church's emerging adults leaving the church.

A study done at the parish of Tampere shows that at the age of 20, 7% of emerging adults had left the church after high school and five years later a total of 22% (24% of men and 20% of women) had left.[9] Pew's data shows that only 34% of American teens raised in a reformed church will continue to attend as young emerging adults.[10]

This rise of emerging adults who have left active membership in the church has been a noticing concern for the leadership at Crosspointe Church in Monroe, Michigan. Developing a philosophy that will aid in the retention of young emerging adults will be important for the future of the church. These emerging adults appear to be torn between church/faith and worldliness.

Emerging adulthood brings with it a host of responsibilities (e.g., work, school) and opportunities (e.g., increased autonomy) that simply and subtly crowd out religious participation.[11] Some of this moving away can be attributed to college and the ushering in of new ideas. The young adult years of many Americans are marked by a clear decline in outward religious expression, which is likely attributed to the college experience.[12]

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[8] David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church....And Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 22.

[9] Katie Niemela,"No longer believing in belonging: A longitidinal study of Finnish Generation Y from confirmation experience to Church-leaving," sagepub.co.uk (2015), 178.

[10] David Roth, *Vanishing (Reformed) Youth* (Faculty Work: Comprehensive List, 2015), 224.

[11] Jeremy E. Uecker, Mark D. Regnerus, and Margaret L. Vaaler, "Losing My Religion: The Social Sources of Religious Decline in Early Adulthood," *Social Forces* 85, no. 4 (Jun., 2007): 1686.

[12] Ibid., 1667.

Young adult development involves a growth process where authority moves from inherited beliefs possibly instilled by parents toward an evolving set of self-authored beliefs and values in which they want to develop a sense of their own identify. Many times, this identity comes from a world that does not line up with their Christian upbringing.

Adult learning literature has repeatedly included spirituality as an integral component of the growth of young adults. Religious organizations have an important role as adult educators in the developmental process. Crosspointe Church will need to work to find new ways to increase dedication, commitment, and Christlikeness into the lives of teens that will hopefully guide them and keep them active in church as emerging adults. Frye advocates for creating an environment and experience for youths that they will embrace and thrive in and even creating opportunities for them to share their doubts.[13]

Dean states that three out of four American teenagers state that they are Christians, and most of these young people are affiliated with local congregations, however half claim that their faith is important and less than half practice their faith as a part of their lives.[14] Creating an atmosphere of connecting to the spiritual components of life and development of teens and appreciating the benefits of intergenerational mentoring can help those developing a strategy to keep emerging adults in church.[15]

The leadership at Crosspointe Church are focused on keeping the youth active in the body of Christ long after they have graduated high school. The belief is that increasing biblically based

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[13] Frye, *Becoming an Adult in a Community of Faith*, 58.

[14] Kenda Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10.

[15] Ibid.

discipleship through mentoring in the teen years will increase emerging adult retention in church after high school.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to examine a correlation between discipleship and mentoring with Crosspointe Church's teens, and retention in Crosspointe Church emerging adults after high school utilizing both qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (pre-test/post-test survey) research methods; and to gain insight into more effective ways to keep teens in church after high school. Young emerging adults are needed for preservation of the church. Believers are said to be the salt of the earth that prevents the world from accelerated decay. The church is to be a light that draws others toward salvation. Emerging adults are the future of the church.

As emerging adults are leaving the church after their teen years; the church is attempting to find new strategies to help them through their faith journeys.[16] Relationships with these young teens through mentoring and discipleship are ways to engage them in their faith journeys and help them to forge a faith that will withstand the allure of the world. It is believed that giving teens the power to define and develop their own faith journey with the help of a parental mentor will help them commit to their faith after high school, and will increase retention of church attendance at Crosspointe Church.

The faith of parents as role models is vital in faith development. Discipleship through parental mentoring may help close the gap between those emerging adults leaving their faith for the world.

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[16] Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 19.

Basic Assumptions

Giving participants a voice and included them in "Action Research" in a collaborative effort will allow these participants to have a positive experience and enable them to gain an active voice in the study. Having an active role in the body of Christ through discipleship will allow teens to feel empowered toward their commitment to church membership at Crosspointe as emerging adults. Action research works on the assumption, therefore, that all stakeholders—those whose lives are affected by the problem under study—should be engaged in the processes of investigation.[17]

It is assumed that parental mentoring and discipleship at Crosspointe Church for students in their teen years will lead to increased retention for Crosspointe Church's teens as emerging adults after high school. Parental mentoring and discipleship will increase positive attitudes toward church membership for teens and will help increase desire and commitment to their faith.

Using anonymous questionnaires helped teens to maintain anonymity and increase the likelihood of honest responses to questions. Confidentiality agreements were utilized to help ensure students' participation.

Using a collaborative effort between adults and youths appeared to help increase teen participation and increase a positive outcome and experiences for all involved. It is the assumption that the sample is representative of the population. It is argued that parents would likely take an active role in their teen's discipleship when they understand the importance of positive role-modeling in their teens' lives.

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[17] Ernest T Stringer, *Action Research 4th Edition* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc., 2014), 13.

Using proper measuring tools helped increase the validity and reliability of the empirical data. A standard T-Test will be utilized to quantify the data. The test was implemented to quantify the difference between a group of individuals who are participating in the mentoring and discipleship program and who are not. It was also used to find if there is any significant difference in desire to continue to attend Crosspointe Church as an emerging adult.

Definitions

1. **Discipleship** – Discipleship is a surrender and commitment to Christ. Because Christ exists, he must be followed.[18] This discipleship definition includes direct interaction with scripture including reading and studying it, and direct interaction with individuals including teachers and parents who will teach and mentor biblical concepts toward Christlikeness. Christ makes everyone he calls into an individual. Each is called alone. Each must follow alone.[19] The term discipleship for this Thesis is used for both the individual growing in Christlikeness alone and growing in Christlikeness while working with a mentor.

2. **Mentoring** – the relation between an adult who has obtained knowledge and his or her working with a younger person who needs to obtain information/knowledge in this case Christlikeness. In churches, Christians seek help from others who are further down the road of the Christian journey. The church may call this mentoring or perhaps discipleship in matters of faith, ethical issues, or spiritual advice.[20]

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[18] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc, 2001), 59.

[19] Ibid., 87.

[20] Brian E.Wakeman, "A Christian Perspective on Mentoring," *Transformation* (2012): 284.

3. **Emerging Adult** – Emerging adulthood is proposed as a new conception of development for the period from the late teens through the twenties, with a focus on ages 18-25 years old. Emerging adulthood has become a distinct period of the life course for young people in industrialized societies. It is a period characterized by change and exploration for most people, as they examine the life possibilities open to them and gradually arrive at more enduring choices in love, work, and worldviews.[21]

4. **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism** – First, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is about inculcating a moral approach to life. It teaches that central to living a good and happy life is being a good moral person.[22] Second it provides therapeutic benefit for those that adhere to it, and third it is about a belief in a particular kind of God: one who exists, created the world, and defines our general order, but not one who is particularly and personally involved in one's affairs.[23]

5. **Worldliness** – Worldliness, then, is a love for this fallen world. It is loving the values and pursuits of the world that stand opposed to God. More specifically, it is to gratify and exalt oneself to the exclusion of God.[24]

6. **Ambivalence** – being caught between two conflicting ideas, attitudes, and feelings. Ambivalence in the case for this Thesis is focused on being caught between a commitment to the world and Christian faith.

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[21] Jeffrey J. Arnett, *"Emerging Adults A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties,"* *American Psychological Association Inc* (2000): 479.

[22] Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 163.

[23] Ibid., 164.

[24] C. J. Mahanay, John Piper, Dave Harvey, Bob Kauflin, and Craig Cabaniss, *Worldliness: Resisting the Seduction of a Fallen World* (Illinios: Crossway, 2008), 21.

7. **Pluralism** – the lack of truth or absolute truth. Pluralism in this Thesis defines many truths but no absolute truth. In one sense of the term, religious pluralism simply indicates the obvious: there are a plurality of religions on the planet. However, more and more the term religious pluralism is used to stand for an emerging theological viewpoint that claims that there is not one specific religion that holds access to all religious truth but that many may indeed hold elements of truth within their traditions.[25] It is also important to understand that this lack of absolute truth leads individuals away from biblical authority toward a world lacking in moral truth.

8. **Action Research** – Action research seeks to develop and maintain social and personal interactions that are nonexploitative and enhance the social and emotional lives of all people who participate. It is organized and conducted in ways that are conducive to the formation of a community of inquiry—the "common unity" of all participants—and that strengthen the democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing qualities of social life. The principles delineated in the following sections—relationships, communication, participation, and inclusion—can help practitioners to formulate activities sensitive to the key elements of this mode of research.[26]

9. **Qualitative Research** – Qualitative research uses a variety of methods, such as intensive interviews or in-depth analysis of historical materials, and it is concerned with a comprehensive account of some event or unit. Like quantitative research it can be utilized to study a variety of issues, but it tends to focus on meanings and motivations that underlie cultural symbols, personal experiences, phenomena, and detailed understanding

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[25] Matthew F. Rittgers, "Religious pluralistism: The Evangelical Christian Response," (Honors Program Thesis, Northern Iowa: UNI Scholar Works, 2008): 2.

[26] Stringer, *Action Research*, 22.

of processes in the social world. In short, qualitative research centers on understanding

processes, experiences, and the meanings people assign to things.[27]

10. **Quantitative Research** – Gathers empirical data (numbers) and uses the scientific

method of calculating and analyzing numerical data.

Limitations

The findings of this study need to be evaluated in response to some of its limitations. For

example, this study is not a longitudinal study and will not follow the teens years down the road

to evaluate continued church retention. A longitudinal study should be considered for future

studies. The immediate purpose of this study is to evaluate teens, leaders, and parental response

to current youth group discipleship programming and parental support practices at Crosspointe

Church, and evaluate these program for ways to improve teen experience with the purpose of

developing a youth program that will aid in emerging adult retention for teens after high school.

The questionnaires and surveys may lend to response bias. Response bias is when a

person answers a survey in a manner that they think the evaluator expects them to answer.

Ensuring anonymity will help to reduce response bias. Gaining honest input will be vital for the

validity of this study.

The study is focused on both qualitative and quantitative data. When it comes to

qualitative data, it is harder to make general population inferences. The qualitative data does

however help understand the participants where they are and the intricacies of their personal

experiences.

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[27] P Aspers and U Corte, "What is Qualitative In Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Sociology* (2019): 147.

This study is focused on "Action Research" allowing for a collaborative effort between participants and evaluators. The focus is on building a network of change through relationships. The empirical data or quantitative data may lend to general assumptions and relating the findings to the general population.

Delimitations

The first delimitation is the subject matter. Focusing in on discipleship, parental involvement, and mentoring in relation to retention for emerging adults to Crosspointe Church may be too narrow of a focus. Answering all the reasons why emerging adults leave Crosspointe Church cannot be answered in a study focusing only on discipleship and mentoring. More research into the reasons why emerging adults are leaving Crosspointe Church should be implemented and considered in the future.

The second delimitation is the setting. This study was implemented in a rural church in Monroe, Michigan. The setting is a moderately conservative Baptist church. Considering the demographics of Crosspointe Church, the church is predominately Caucasian with primarily Caucasian teens, which may make it difficult to make any inferences to churches that do not meet these demographics.

Another delimitation is the sample chosen for this study. There may be some sampling bias. The sample was a convenient sample chosen from the local congregation. The sample here was not a random sampling and thus loses some of its validity. Random sampling increases validity of a study. Since random samples are representative of the population, it helps ensure inference is valid. In other words, results from a random sample can be generalized to make inferences about the population. In the case of Crosspointe teens, for example, there may be

cultural bias and denomination bias as the teens at Crosspointe may not represent the cultural characteristics of other general cultures and other denominations.

The second limitation is sample size. The sample size is a limitation making it difficult to reflect the general population. The sample size of Crosspointe teens was 10 or 11 teens. With such a small sample it would be hard to generalize any findings to the general population of teens across denominations. Using such a small sample size as mentioned before will make it hard to make inferences outside the immediate context.

Thesis Statement

The theory is that emerging adults at Crosspointe Church will continue to attend church and be active in their faith after high school when engaged in a discipleship program and through parental mentoring while in the youth ministry program at Crosspointe Church.

The church needs to find a way to engage emerging adults to counter the current trend of emerging adults leaving the church. The research appears to show that emerging adults are slowly finding church irrelevant. These emerging adults appear to be embracing a world of increased acceptance and tolerance of a world of multiple truths. At Crosspointe Church in Monroe, Michigan, leadership has witnessed the exodus of many of its youths from church life after high school. Some of these emerging adults appear to be attending other churches, but many of them appear to have made the decision to abandon church membership and their faith altogether. Church leaders need to find a way to help emerging adults embrace a lasting faith and an active membership in the church.

It is argued that increasing discipleship through parental mentoring at Crosspointe Church with teen church attenders will positively increase emerging adult retention to church in these same teens after graduating high school.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

Chapter two includes a literature review that expands on the information discussed in the thesis project proposal. The project's theological context and theoretical foundation are expanded here from the thesis project proposal.

Literature Review

The research appears to support the idea that emerging adults are in a period of exodus from the church. The research into why young adults are leaving the church seems to encompass two main areas: autonomy and the battle between worldliness and their belief that the church is irrelevant. The research appears to support the idea that mentoring and discipleship for youths while still in school will increase the likelihood of emerging adult retention to church after high school. The research also appears to argue toward the importance of the youth-parental relationship in tune with mentoring for keeping emerging adults involved in church after high school.

Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood has become a distinct period of the life course for young people in industrialized societies. It is a period characterized by change and exploration for most people, as they examine the life possibilities open to them and gradually arrive at more enduring choices in love, work, and worldviews. It is the age of possibility, a period in which many different potential futures remain possible and personal freedom and exploration are higher for most people than at any other time.[28] Emerging adulthood can be distinguished from adolescence in

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[28] Arnett, "Emerging Adults," 479.

several ways, according to Arnett. Most notably he argues, emerging adulthood is a period of more intensive focus on preparation for adult status. Emerging adulthood, according to Arnett, is a clear liminal stage; a stage in which the young person is distinctly in transition. Adulthood is imminent in this stage, and emerging adults are likely to be keenly aware of how they are measuring up to cultural and/or personal criteria for attainment of adult status.[29]

According to B. Schneider et al., social and economic markers of adulthood begin at age eighteen and include working, being romantically attached—though not necessarily married—being likely to have children within 2 years after high school, post-secondary school and entering the workforce. Schneider et al., argue that these young people are not emerging adults; they are adults that still cope with many psychological and social worries found in adolescence, such as drinking, drug use, depressive symptoms, and the anxiety and stress that accompanies holding a job and the realities of everyday life.[30] There are proponents for a more systemic support for young adults which include support from family and institutional support. Schneider et al., write, "Instead of tagging a time or phase in the life course, institutions such as families and schools need to recognize that the challenges after high school are real. Perhaps more than at any other time, they need to play a more active part in helping young people plan and execute a successful course for the next decades of life."[31] This system of support can and should include the local church they attend as young people and continue to hopefully attetnd into young adulthood. The ages of eighteen to twenty-five have become a time of mind-opening opportunities, which can

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[29] Jeffry J Arnett, "Learning to Stand Alone: The Contemporary American Transition to Adulthood in Cultural and Historical Context," *Human Development* (1998): 313.

[30] B. Schneider et al., "Transitioning Into Adulthood: Striking a Balance Between Support and Independence," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* (2016): 110.

[31] Ibid., 111.

lead to thought processes with long-term impacts. It is a time when young adults question and

struggle with their beliefs.[32]

Erik Erikson was one of the first psychological theorists to emphasize the critical period

of adolescence and the conflicts revolving around one's search for an identity. He argues that

adolescents and youth adults often ask: Who am I? Where am I going? How am I going to get

there? He argues that the transition into adulthood for youths is one of "Intimacy Versus

Isolation." Erikson argues that young-adulthood ranges from 19 to 30–and is circumscribed not

so much by time as by the acquisition of intimacy at the beginning of the stage and the

development of generativity at the end.[33] In Erikson's view, if an adolescent develops a strong

sense of identity as a youth, they will develop the ability to connect to and love others while

being able to retain separate identity as young adults.[34] Being certain about one's own identify is

necessary for achieving closeness to anyone according to Erikson. Uncertain about themselves,

young adults may fear they have nothing to offer. If they are not secure, they may fear that others

will reject them.[35] Young adults who do not gain a strong sense of identity in adolescence may

struggle to make clear decisions concerning their personal ideology or their career choice. These

people may end up being characterized by low self-esteem and lack of resolution.[36]

This may be an opportunity for the church to play a vital role in helping young adults

through the transition from high school to adulthood. Developmentalists contend that there are

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[32] Church Bomar, *Worlds Apart* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 109.

[33] J. Feist and Gregory J. Feist, *Theories of Personality* (New York: Mcgraw-Hill, 2002, 247.

[34] Ibid., 248.

[35] Charles M. Sell, *Transitions Through Adult Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 55.

[36] Karen K. Kirst-Ashman and Charles H Zastrow, *Understanding Human Behavior and the Social Environment* (Belmont: Thompson Learning Brooks/Cole, 2004), 258.

inner forces shaping the way a person thinks, believes, and behaves, and that inner development is crucial. From the Christian perspective, inner development is often referred to as spiritual growth. There is an inner core of the person that needs to develop, and behavior will develop in parallel.[37] It is argued here that the church may be able to help adolescents to develop and grow in two ways: one through purposeful discipleship at the youth group level at church and second through parental mentoring as parents disciple their children at home.

Leaving the Church

Research indicates that religiosity tends to decrease after the teenage years and emerging adults are most often reported as being the least religious age group.[38] The research indicates an exodus in emerging adults from church after high school.

> The longitudinal data shows that the question of continuing to belong to or leaving the Church becomes vital during emerging adulthood. The data from young adults who were confirmed ten years earlier in the parish of Tampere shows that at the age of 20, 7% of them had left the Church and five years later a total of 22% (24% of men and 20% of women) had left. This corresponds with the estimates that can be drawn from the Church statistics. The longitudinal data also shows that the general attitude towards Church membership becomes significantly more negative and more decisive after the age of 20. At the age of 25, only 5% of those who were confirmed ten years earlier could not think of leaving the church under any circumstances.[39]

David Roth in his research found similar results as Kinnaman that only 34% of Americans raised in a Reformed church continue to attend one as adults.[40] J. M. Twenge, J. J.

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[37] Sell, *Transitions Through Adult Life*, 89.

[38] Kinnaman, "*You Lost Me,*" 22.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Roth, *Vanishing (Reformed) Youth,* 224.

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Exline and J. B. Grubbs discovered that in four large, nationally representative surveys (N = 11.2 million), American adolescents and emerging adults in the 2010s (Millennials) were significantly less religious than previous generations (Boomers, Generation X) at the same age.[41]

The research seems to agree that young emerging adults are leaving the church. According to Dortch there appears however to be some hope on the horizon as some of the research suggests that some of these same emerging adults are eventually finding their way back to the church later in life. A survey conducted by Life Way Research in 2007 revealed that 70% of 23-30-year-olds dropped out of church for at least one year between the ages of 18-22; however, 35% of those returned to the church later in life.[42]

Maryl Damon, Samuel Stroope and Jeremy Uecker agree with Christopher Dortch and argue that the church should not panic. They argue that many young emerging adults will re-engage with religious affiliation once they are married and have children. In their view marriage and other transitions like starting a family will lead many of these emerging adults back to the church. However, in their research they also found a negative correlation between church attendance and childless singles. If this be the case, then their research shows that some of those emerging adults who left the church did not return to their previous faith. They argue that the main factor to whether an emerging adult will turn back to the church has to do with their

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[41] J. M. Twenge, J. J. Exline, and J. B. Grubbs, "Generational and Time Period Differences in American Adolescents' Religious Orientation," *PloS ONE* (2014): 1.

[42] Christopher Dortch, "Best Practices For Retaining Youth Group Students In The Local Church Post-High School," (thesis project, Liberty University, 2014), 2.

transition into adulthood. They state that transitions as adults are more of a determining factor to religious reaffiliation than anything else.[43]

The research shows a clear indication that young emerging adults are leaving the church upon graduating from high school. Even is some return to the church it is a concerning that some if not most will not.

Dortch identifies three reasons that emerging adults are leaving the church: religious, ethical, or political reasons.[44] In his view emerging adults are conflicted and believe that religious views are outdated. Dortch also argues that emerging adults are developing an ethical and political view that does not match with the traditions of the church they were raised in. David Kinnaman also argues for three main reasons youths are dropping out of active church membership as he focuses in on access, alienation, and authority. He argues that youths have access to technology in a way no other generation has had access before. He argues that this access to information and to each other allows youths to engage each other and the world in a way that no other generation has before them. This access he argues leaves them in a position to question their faith and turn to the world for life answers instead of the church.[45]

Kinnaman, like Dortch, argues that youths today feel alienated from the church and see the church as outdated and disconnected with the pluralistic world they have embraced.[46] Both

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[43] Mayrl Damon, Samuel Stroope, and Jeremy Uecker, "Family Formation and Returning to Institutional Religion in Young Adulthood," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (2016): 388.

[44] Dortch, "Best Practices For Retaining Youth Group," 28.

[45] Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 39.

[46] Ibid., 44.

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Kinnaman and Dortch agree that one of the main reasons emerging adults leave the church is due to feeling that the church is irrelevant.

Another reason the youths are leaving, according to Kinnaman, is the tension in respect to the church's authority. The youth of today do not see the word of God as authoritative and their individualistic worldview has helped them or caused them to push away from biblical authority. He argues that as emerging adults transition from teen years into adulthood they tend to see their friends as moral influences.[47]

A longitidinal study of "Finnish Generation Y" also concluded that emerging adults were leaving the church as a reaction to their feelings that the church is irrelevant. Researchers found that the churches inability to change with the times and embrace social reform and tolerance of things like homosexual marriage had caused some emerging adults to question the churches relevance to their modern politcal world view. The study also identified that emerging adults felt that their lack of need for faith was another reason they are leaving the church. Lack of faith was mentioned most often in the study as emerging adults failed to find the church meaningful.[48] The church being irrelevant was continually a source of contention for some of those researching why emerging adults were no longer staying committed to church.

In her research, Joyce Henderson identified 35 reasons why young emerging adults are leaving the church:

> Thirty-five possible reasons emerging adults leave the church include, someone offended them, lack of reverence others have for each other, work commitments, lack of testimony, feel unloved, lack of calling, lack of transportation, no friends there, too far to travel, lazy, lack of enthusiasm,

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[47] Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 50.

[48] Niemela,"No Longer Believing in Belonging," 179.

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don't agree with doctrine, forced to attend, boring, lack of sufficient activities, long absence, lack of encouragement to go, embarrassed about what others think, pushy members, view others behaviors at church as negative, too difficult to live out, do others care, only baptized to please parents, Spirit not felt there, no good examples at church, no respect for meeting place, hypocrites, talks too unbelievable, only were there for opposite sex, don't feel worthy to be there, only went because it was expected of them, other obligations more important than church.[49]

A summation of Henderson's thirty-five possible reasons emerging adults leave the church would be the lack of connection with others and the church being again irrelevant.

Michelle Van der Mere et al., found that emerging adults have enormous work pressure and, with it, abundant choice for leisure, relaxation, and social activities, which could be distracting them from attending church. They argue that the transition into adulthood leaves little room for church attendance and if there is a conflict between church and other obligations the church will be the first to go. They argue that a way to counteract this fight for church relevance is for the church to entice these young people by making church attractive to their sensibilities and to make church fit emerging adults' vision of technology. They argue that the church can do this by updating its presentation toward a youthful style including a comfortable and upbeat atmosphere. They report that the church needs to market more toward emerging adults?[50]

In a study done in Australia, that focused on ways to understand how emerging adults leaving the church in Australia correlate with emerging adults leaving the church in the United

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[49] Joyce T. Henderson, *How to Reverse This Trend: Youth Leaving The Church* (Fairfax: Xulon Press, 2001), 1-4.

[50] Michelle C. Van der Merwe, Anske F. Grobler, Arien Strasheim, and Lizre Orton, *"Getting Young Adults Back to Church: A Marketing Approach," Department of Marketing Management, University of Pretoria, South Africa* (Theological Studies: 69(2) 2013): 3-4.

States, they found that the most prevalent difference between Australia and the United States was that there are fewer families attending religious services in Australia than in the United States. The researchers argue that this concept of fewer families attending church indicates a familial socialization to church attendance and retention. Their argument is that youths who are socialized to church attendance through their families are more likely to follow in their familial pattern of church attendance as emerging adults.[51]

Newmaker focuses on the importance of discipling children when they are younger to increase retention to church after high school. She argues that commitment to church comes as early as 9-10 years of age. She advocates for church programs to be engaging, relevant, and to allow for meaningful contribution from tweenagers so that church remains a significant and meaningful part of a young person's life. She argues that opportunities to contribute are one factor that keep tweens engaged in church. Newmaker argues that by providing diverse opportunities to participate in various ministries in the church tweenagers can have significant input into church programs and this input will help them commit to the church as emerging adults.[52]

Kinnaman in his research found that for a significant amount of emerging adults Christianity is no longer relevant. He states that both those who grew up in church and those emerging adults who were not associated with the church find no relevance for the church today. He argues that younger adults have little trust in the Christian faith. Esteem for the lifestyle of

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[51]Phillip Hughes, "Why Young People are Leaving the Church," *Christian Research Association Charting the Faith of Australians* (2015): 6.

[52] Meredith Newmaker, "Moving from 'Have to go to church to 'want to go to church: exploring ways to make church engaging and relevant to tweenagers," (PhD diss. 2017), 118, ProQuest.

Christ followers is quickly fading among outsiders. Kinnaman argues that emerging adults admit their emotional and intellectual barriers go up when they are around Christians.[53]

Drew Dyck describes 6 types of youths leaving the church: postmodern leavers, recoilers, modern leavers, rebels, and drifters. Post modernism is the lack of spiritual truth or truth in general. The postmodernist view holds that there is a different "truth" for each person.[54] Recoilers, according to Dyck, can include people who have been hurt by the church and those who have lost interest in their faith.[55] Modern leavers include those who struggle between worldliness and faith. Modernists believe that truth is not found through revelation but through scientific investigation and reason.[56] Rebels, according to Dyck, rebel against the authority of God.[57] His final category for emerging adults that leave their faith are drifters.[58] These are believers who just gradually drift way. Dyck believes that Christians should do their homework to provide good solid answers to the doubts of those who have left the church. He argues that relationships are essential tools that Christians can utilize in drawing young emerging youths back to the church and their faith. He reports that deconversion does not happen in a vacuum. A person's decision to leave the faith is inextricably tied to a host of relationships and the same would be true of their decision to come back.[59] His final argument is that prayer is key. Dyck

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[53] David Kinnaman, *UnChristian: What A New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity And Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 11.

[54] Drew Dyck, *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults Are Leaving The Faith...And How To Bring Them Back* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 27.

[55] Ibid., 59.

[56] Ibid., 86.

[57] Ibid., 141.

[58] Ibid., 166.

[59] Ibid., 184.

suggests that believers can give loved ones who have strayed no greater gift then time spent in the presence of God on their behalf.[60]

As the church works to keep its emerging adults motivated to stay in church, other forces appear to be pulling at the fabric of church retention and pulling emerging adults away from the church. The church is potentially losing the next generation of young people. The church is struggling to maintain a civil relationship with our children. Parents everywhere are struggling to pass their love of Jesus and the church to their children. Church youth groups even seem to be aggravating the problem.[61]

<div align="center">Worldliness Vs. Church Ambivalence</div>

It is hard to imagine the pressure young emerging adults feel, being pulled between the world and the church. Smith and Denton argue that the prevalence of worldliness in the lives of young people leaves no room for the church. Religious congregations are losing out to school and the media for the time and attention of youth. When it comes to the formation of the lives of youth, viewed sociologically, faith communities typically get an exceedingly small seat at the table for an extremely limited period.[62]

Henderson believes that the church is witnessing a defeat in the battle for our youth. As churches strive to fulfill the Great Commission to reach all nations with the Gospel and to make disciples of Jesus Christ, the world is reaching our young people and making them disciples of the devil, according to Henderson. She states, "What an irony it is that the church strives to win

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[60] Dyck, *Generation Ex-Christian*, 185.

[61] David J Seel, *The New Copernicans: Millenials and The Survival of The Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018), 200.

[62] Smith and Denton, *"Soul Searching,"* 28.

the world to Christ and lose our children to Satan. This should not be so. This is an unnecessary defeat."[63]

David Platt argues that the pull toward the world and its pluralistic ways has caused some young adults to get caught in its tide. He argues that they are drawn to social issues like poverty and social injustice and tend to be more liberal in their views of things like abortion and homosexuality. In this way these young people are at odds with the church.[64]

Dean would agree with Platt that the world is pulling our youth away. Several institutions he says are built into adolescents' lives—school, the media, peer groups—that teenagers do not even think of them as holding sway over their schedules or decisions. They simply are, and teenagers participate in them because they are insidious and pervasive. Teenagers typically view religion, on the other hand, as optional; it is not, for many of them, just there in the same way that media, school, and families are. Rather religion functions as an "add-on," an extracurricular activity, something you do if you feel like it or if you have time.[65]

According to Drescher, emerging adults are leaving the church because of their political issues, the aftermath of a life crisis and because of a delay in having children. She argues that politics tend to alienate young people from the church especially when it comes to gay rights. She also argues that the church is not equipped to help young people through some of their life struggles and fails to answer tough questions that emerging adults have when it comes to life's everyday struggles; things like hate crimes, abusive relationships, and financial troubles. She

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[63] Henderson, *How to Reverse This Trend,* 8.

[64] David Platt, *Counter Culture: A Compassionate Call to Counter Culture in a World of Poverty, Same-Sex Marriage, Racism, Sex Slavery, Immigration, Abortion, Persecution, Orphans, and Pornography* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2015), 57.

[65] Dean, *Almost Christian*, 17.

then argues that the delay in having children is cited as a contributing factor to the extended

disaffiliation of many emerging adults.[66]

Six themes that play a role in youths leaving the church, according to Kinnaman, include.

1. Overprotective-The impulse toward creativity and cultural engagement are some of the defining characteristics of the Mosaic generation that are most obvious. They see the church as a creativity killer.
2. Shallow-Among Mosaics, the most common perception of churches is that they are boring.
3. Anti-Science-Many young Christians have come to the conclusion that faith and science are incompatible.
4. Repressive-Religious rules—particularly sexual mores—feel stifling to the individualist mindset of young adults.
5. Exclusive-Although there are limits to what this generation will accept and whom they will embrace, they have been shaped by a culture that esteems open-mindedness, tolerance, and acceptance. Thus, Christianity's claim to exclusivity are a hard sell.
6. Doubtless-Young Christians (and former Christians too) say the church is not a safe place that allows them to express doubts.[67]

Seel argues that young people live in a pluralistic world where there is dissonance and

other options to their beliefs; they are caught, he says, between an immanent life and a

transcendent longing. He states, "To put it bluntly, no one today believes what they believe in the

same manner they once believed. The innocence of naïve belief is gone, dashed on the rocks of

diversity—diversity of options for belief and diversity of believers."[68] This pluralism is a push

away from absolute truth. In a world where these young people are more prone toward adversity

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[66] Courtney Drescher, "Emerging Adults And The American Church: How Brecksvile United Methodist Church Can Recapture The Attention of 18-29 Year Olds," (PhD thesis, John Carroll University Carroll Collected, 2016.), 36.

[67] Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 92-93.

[68] Seel, *The New Copernicans*, 127.

of ideas and alternative views, they are less likely to embrace absolute truth. The importance of "individualism" is taking its root in contrast to a life lived for God.

Maryl, Stoope and Uecker argue that the institutions of religion and family have both undergone significant changes in the last several decades, and they argue that these changes may have affected the well-established relationship between family formation and religion in young adulthood. Specifically, they suggest that delayed marriage and childbearing, widespread premarital cohabitation, and changing gender roles have weakened the connection between marriage, parenthood, and religious return among more recent cohorts of young adults.[69] The world is pushing away from traditional Christian beliefs and the emerging adult appears to be swept in the current against religious retainment. The world is pushing emerging adults away from traditional beliefs and toward a more liberal view of deism.

Smith and Denton label the dominant religion of teens in America today "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism," and describe it as moral view of life in general: belief in God through morality separated from absolute truth.[70]

In this move toward moralistic therapeutic deism, teens believe that being a good and moral person, and especially being kind and fair to other people, is central to living a happy and fulfilled life. It is therapeutic in that, for teens, religion is about providing therapeutic benefits, making people feel good, helping people with pain and fear, and giving them tools to deal with life's traumas. American teen religion is also a form of deism, in that God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when needed to solve a problem.[71]

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[69] Damon, Stroope, and Uecker, *Family Formation*, 388.

[70] Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 134.

[71] Rich Richardson, "Emerging Adults and the Future of Missions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (2013): 84.

Summation of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.[72]

Rich Richardson argues that young emerging adults will pick and choose what doctrine to embrace based on their world view and through the lens of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. At times, this liberal view, he argues, goes against traditional doctrine.[73] In this realm there would be a disconnect between embracing absolute truth and choosing to embrace parts of Christianity that feel good. Richardson argues that this type of mentality only leads to lack of commitment and lack of motivation to stay within the church confines.

The theme appears that young emerging adults are finding it hard to embrace the relativeness of today's church. They are being dragged into individualism and pluralism. They appear to be worshipping the God of worldliness and a type of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. The church is not called to shelter our young people and our children from the world. The church is called to instruct them in godliness and strength of character so that they will choose the path of righteousness that helps them face and overcome temptations. This is where they will evangelize: in the world.[74]

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[72] Smith and Denton, "*Soul Searching*, 162-163.

[73] Richardson, "Emerging Adults and the Future of Missions," 38.

[74] Henderson, *How to Reverse This Trend*, 32.

As the world pushes against emerging adults, the only constant is Jesus. Emerging adults are caught in the tide of meaning and wanting to make sense of life. Research has shown that discipleship through mentoring is one way to help emerging adults push against the tide of worldliness.

<p style="text-align:center">Discipleship and Mentoring</p>

What is a Christian? According to Paul, a Christian is someone who does six things: (1) treasures Christ, (2) devalues everything else, (3) puts faith in Christ alone, (4) knows him, (5) suffers for him, and (6) becomes like him.[75]

Research shows that discipleship in mentoring may help to retain young emerging adults to church services and faith after high school. Discipleship is important for every believer. Discipleship equals new life in Christ and the sanctification of Christ in each believer. It is this power of Spirit that can help enable young emerging adults to continue in their faith.

Dortch argues that young emerging adults are more likely to stay in church if friends or someone they admired are attending church. He also argues that young emerging adults would continue with church if they wanted to please family or more specifically parents. He is a strong proponent of H.A.B.I.T.S., which seeks to address this issue; defined as, hang time with God, accountability with another believer, Bible memorization, involvement with the church body, tithing commitment, and study scripture.[76]

According to Bonhoeffer, in association with the importance of discipleship, the relation of the individual believer to the "new human being" is described in terms of putting on "the new human being." The new human being is like a garment made to cover the individual believer.

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[75]Jaquelle Crowe, *This Changes Everything* Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 20.

[76] Dortch, *Best Practices For Retaining Youth Group*, 86.

The new human being is not the single individual who has been justified and sanctified; rather, the new human being is the church-community, the body of Christ, or Christ himself.[77]

For each young believer there is an opportunity to forge their lives in Christlikeness. It is in this forging of the Spirit that one becomes heart committed to following Christ. This new heart is the catalyst for retention and engagement. Research shows that this process begins early. Too many times the church separates the youth, teen, and young adult ministries from the rest of the body of believers. Roth argues that the church needs to teach young people the importance of biblical truth and stop watering down the gospel. She argues that the church treats youths as if they are too stupid to understand biblical truth. She states that often, the church's response to shrinking numbers, particularly among the youth, is to reach out and try to tailor the practices more and more to what we perceive the group wants. Roth argues that what ends up happening is a watering down of the gospel and a failure to disciple youths.[78] Roderick argues that youths are starving for knowledge and tradition and are tired of being treated like children. He argues that growing up is all about finding and establishing identity. As the church transitions from the support and constraints of childhood, young people are enmeshed in the age-old question: Who am I? What is my purpose in life?[79]

According to Newmaker, the church needs to remember that youths are members of the body of Christ. She argues that involving teens in ministry and the decision-making process will help them develop an identify in the body of Christ and help retain teens in the body of Christ

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[77] Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 219.

[78] Roth, *Vanishing (Reformed) Youth*, 2.

[79] Anne M. Roderick and Joshua Witchger, "Relevence is Not Enough," *Sojourners* (2013): 30-32.

after they leave high school. She argues that listening to and implementing young people's ideas

will make church more meaningful for them as they feel included and significant.[80]

James Shields argues that the church needs to cater youth ministry to the individual, and

states that there are levels of youth ministry: outreach level (students who would not show up to

a Christian event); entry level (students who come but are disinterested or bored); discipleship

level (students with a genuine relationship with Christ who want to grow); intimate relationship

level (students involved with small groups); and the mentoring level (students willing to be loved

and led one-on-one by an adult).[81]

 Wesley Black's research shows that those teens who were active, and even led church

groups during their teenage years, were more likely to attend church as emerging adults. Youth

ministers would do well to take note and find ways to determine gifts and skills of teenagers and

involve them in leadership whenever possible, according to Black.[82]

Youth ministers must find ways to bridge the gap between Sunday and the rest of the

week and encourage youth to develop the disciplines of personal prayer and regular Bible

reading, rather than only doing this in church meetings.[83]

Kenneth Moser advocates for getting youth involved in ministry and allowing them to act

in programming that is not considered separate from adult ministries. This involvement allows

them to have a voice in the church to feel a part of. The church may need to consider a move

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[80] Newmaker, "Moving from 'Have to go to Church,'" 121-122.

[81] James Shields, "An Assessment of Dropout Rates of Former Youth Ministry Participants In Conservative Southern Baptist Megachurches" (diss., Ann Arbor2008), 13-14, ProQuest LLC.

[82] Wesley Black, "Stopping the Dropouts: Guiding Adolescents Toward a Lasting Faith Following High School Graduation," *Christian Education Journal* (2008): 28.

[83] Ibid., 40.

away from programming that constructs a youth ministry as a separate entity that has little to no involvement with the life of the other congregants.[84]

The church as a body of believers must understand that our youths are starving for inclusion. The church needs to understand that youths are capable of sanctification and commitment to Christ. Jaquelle Crowe explains the teenager perspective from her point of view.

> Many people in our society (and even our church culture) would say that we are not ready. Teenagers are too young, we are too inexperienced, we could never understand theology, or we would be too bored. These are supposed to be our fun years, they say, our easy years. Why would we tackle the tough chicken nuggets of truth when milk is perfectly acceptable? because we love Jesus. If we love Jesus, we will love truth, and we will want to grow. We will reject the status quo. These are not our rebellious years; these are the years we rise-up to obey the call of Christ. This isn't a season for self-satisfaction' it's a season of God-glorification. Our youth is by God's grace, in God's hands, and for God's fame. He is the whole point of our lives.[85]

According to Black, relationships are important for young people. This new generation of young emerging adults' views things from a relational perspective. Building relationships for the youth in the church is an important factor in engagement and helps maintain social influence that will aid in the discipleship/mentor relationship. Part of the discipleship process would be effective socialization not only for the mentor but for the group of young people in general. According to Black, relationships are the number one contributor in whether a young emerging adult will maintain lasting faith after high school or dropout from practicing faith.[86]

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[84] Kenneth Moser, "The Connection between Youth Ministry's Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and The Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches," *Department of Practical Theology* (2019): 40.

[85] Crowe,"*This Changes Everything,"* 14.

[86] Black, *Stopping the Dropouts*, 42.

Darren Whitehead, in his research on the mentoring relationship between Baby Boomers and Millennials, found that mentoring was a way to build relationships. These relationships increased church fellowship and participation.[87] Whitehead argues that relationships are the primary means God established for learning about and preserving his commandments. According to Whitehead, mentoring is a crucial way of raising up mature Christian disciples within the body of Christ. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, mentoring is repeatedly admonished as primary practice of the Christian faith.[88]

Moser argues that the church needs to design a youth ministry focused on drawing youth in and more importantly to keep them growing in Christlikeness. The church at times appears to be more focused on quantity instead of quality. Moser believes that the old philosophy of entertaining the youths to draw them in is not working. She argues that entertainment and games in youth ministry has produced a group of youth adults who come to church for entertainment purposes. This coming to church for entertainment purposes leads to a deficiency in the spiritual development of its members and a paucity of those factors that promote longevity in the Christian life – factors such as prayer and Bible reading.[89]

Developing an effective youth discipleship program that allows for discipleship in a positive peer culture, discipleship through mentoring and active participation in church ministry is important for emerging adult retainment after high school. Young people are starving for knowledge and they thrive in relationships. One major way we can help disciple young people into Christlikeness is through mentorship and more importantly parental mentorship. Black

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[87]Darren B. Whitehead, "The Impact of Mentoring And Reverse-Mentoring With Baby Boomers and Millenials on Church Engagement," (PhD diss., Ann Arbor, 2018), 56, ProQuest.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Moser, "The Connection between Youth Ministry's Division of Evangelism and Discipleship," 2.

argues that churches and youth ministries need to develop mentoring strategies that match

spiritually strong adults (in addition to parents) with adolescents. An effective peer ministry

program could also be helpful. These significant adults and peers can help in the transition to

young adulthood.[90]

William Hardison argues for the importance of adult mentoring and states that young

adults can thrive in a mentoring relationship that allows them to ask questions and to express

doubts about their faith. Young adults value relationships where older adults allow them to

express doubts and seek answers to issues they are wrestling with—discipleship through

relationship.[91]

Dean argues that young people will thrive in relationships that will help awaken their

faith desire. What awakens faith is desire, not information, and what awakens desire is a

person—and specifically, a person who accepts His children unconditionally, as God accepts His

children unconditionally through grace.[92]

A part of mentoring is modeling. Kate Siberine and Lisa Kimball argue that modeling is

important when it comes to discipleship. They state that modeling is most effective way to

empower someone through the discipleship process. Within this context they argue a younger

believer can learn much through a relationship with an older, more mature believer. Modeling is

the mechanism for transmitting faith from one person, the mentor, to another.[93]

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[90] Black, *Stopping the Dropouts*, 44.

[91] William M. Hardison, "Effective Discipleship of College-Aged Young Adults." (PhD diss., Ann Arbor, 2019), 4, ProQuest.

[92] Dean, *Almost Christian*, 119.

[93] Kate H. Siberine, and Lisa Kimball, "Confirming Mentoring: Mutual Experiences of Incarnation ," *Theology Today* (2019): 38-49.

Black supports the premise that relationships through positive peer culture and mentoring are vital. His findings point toward a need for positive peer culture during the teenage years. He argues that the opportunity to talk about faith with peers and older adults during their teenage years correlates with faithful participation in later years. Those teenagers who did not talk with friends or adults about their faith seem to be the ones who drop out of church attendance in later years.[94]

Parental Support in Mentoring

An important part of mentoring and discipleship is making sure parents are on board and are actively involved in the youth's discipleship process. As has already been noted, youth's progress through engagement in relationships, and no relationship is more important for a youth than the parental relationship.

Uecker found that religious upbringing and maintaining relationships with parents after high school had a positive correlation with retaining church attendance and faith after high school.[95] According to Uecker, if parents do not actively affirm and transmit the oral and written traditions of a religion, their failure to "teach the language" results in young adults who cannot "speak the language" and who are at elevated risk of shedding their religious value system altogether. Thus, once adolescents leave the structures (i.e., families) that have patterned their religious lives, religiosity may simply be left behind as well.[96]

In a study on parental involvement, Brown found that most of the emerging adults interviewed stressed the importance of their parents when it comes to continued church

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[94] Black, *Stopping the Dropouts*, 42.

[95] Jessica Halliday, Lisa D. Pearce, and Melinda Denton, "The Dynamics and Correlates of Religious Service Attendance in Adolescence," *Youth and Society* (2016): 170.

[96] Uecker, *Losing My Religion*, 1686.

involvement. The study found that continued church involvement is causally linked to youth's relationship with their parents and the way they were raised. The researchers argue that it may be well to focus both on parental gifts coupled with youth's spiritual gifts to keep these young people growing and active for Christ.[97]

Henderson notes a relationship between a youth's attitude toward services and a parent's attitude toward the services. She states that parents need to be invested in their children's progress at church and that the responsibility for change lies in the lap of parents. She goes on to state that parents cannot expect that their youths will buy in to the process if they are not invested themselves.[98]

Dean argues that the best social predictor of what a teenager's religious life will look like is to ask what their parents religious lives look like. By and large, Dean notes, "parents will get what they are."[99]

Smith and Christian found in their research that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents. Grandparents and other relatives, mentors, and youth workers can be influential as well, but normally, parents are most important to forming their children's religious and spiritual lives.[100] There is considerable literature on the intergenerational transmission of religious belief and expression, states Christian

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[97] Megan Brown, "Relationships Matter: The Impact of Relationships Upon Emerging Adult Retention," *Christian Education Journal* (2002): 11.

[98] Henderson, *How to Reverse This Trend*, 5.

[99] Dean, *Almost Christian*, 203.

[100] Smith and Denton,"*Soul Searching,"* 261.

and Smith The family is traditionally the initial influence on a child's religiosity, which plays a key role before friends and wider community influences come to the fore.[101]

Neal Krause and Kenneth Paragament identified positive benefits for individuals to maintain a connection to their faith, especially when it came to positive affect and a sense of well-being. When looking at the connection between positive affect and positive affect they found that people who experience a loss of faith tend to have lower positive affect scores and they also found that church attendance and private prayer are associated with positive sense of well-being.[102]

In a study conducted by Lifeway research, the top reasons youths stayed in church were:

1. Church was a vital part of their relationship with God. (65%)

2. They wanted the church to help guide their decisions in everyday life. (58%)

3. Felt that church was helping them become a better person. (50%)

4. Wanted to follow a parent/family member's example. (43%)

5. Was committed to the purpose and work of the church. (42%)

6. Church activities were a big part of their life. (35%)

7. Church was helping them, through a difficult time in their life. (30%)

8. Was afraid of living life without spiritual guidance. (24%)[103]

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[101] Nicola Madge and Peter J. Hemming. *"Young British Religious 'nones': findings from the Youth on Religion study,"* (Journal Of Youth Studies , 2017 VOL. 20, NO. 7), 883.

[102] Neal Krause, and Kenneth I. Paragament*, "Losing My Religion: Exploring the Relationship Between a Decline in Faith and a Positive Affect,"* (Applied Research Quality Life , 2017), 897.

[103] Aaron Earls, "Did You Stop Attending Church Regularly (Twice a Month or More) for at Least a Year Between The Ages of 18 and 22?" *Culture Lifeway Research* (2019): 36.

Theological Foundations

It is theorized that discipleship, mentoring, and having positive parental support in church as youths will positively correlate with maintaining emerging adults to the church after high school.

The importance of discipleship can be found in Jesus' words. Matthew 28:18-20, "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"[104]

Nel Malan argues toward Matthew 28:18-20 being the Great Commission in youth ministry. He states that the church's call in youth ministry is toward discipleship and the making of disciples.[105] The journey of discipleship leads to sanctification and a growing in Christlikeness; it starts upon conversion and moves throughout the life of the Christian, according to Malan. He argues that discipleship does not start when a youth reaches college age; it starts upon conversion. He argues that discipleship should start for converted youths in youth ministry. 2 Timothy 2:21, "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work."[106]

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[104] John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 1415.

[105] Nel Malan, "Image-Making Disciples in Youth Ministry...that will make Disciples," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 71, no. 3, (2015): 1.

[106] MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1830.

When it comes to the church's responsibility to its youths, Malan argues, shallow, superficial, connections to Christ and the church are causing young people to fall away in front of the church's eyes. Despite many exceptions, the 'church' and it's engaging youths are in trouble.[107] He also argues that discipling youth is about celebrating initiation, giving guidance in life, and facilitating discernment on the journey. Parental mentoring is vital for youth development and youth commitment to the body of Christ.[108]

Discipleship is a relationship with the triune God. In Matthew 13 Jesus tells the parable of the Sower. Matthew 13:1-9 speaks of the importance of growing in Christlikeness and a life-long commitment to Jesus:

> The same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying 'A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose, they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.[109]

This parable speaks of longevity and it is a warning to the church of a battle between longevity and a true relationship with Jesus and those who will fall away.

According to Malan, effective churches will help young people gain longevity through discipleship and a focus on worshiping the triune God, celebrating salvation by grace through faith in Christ and relying on the power of God's Spirit for fruitful ministry. He goes on to say

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[107] Malan, "Image-Making Disciples in Youth Ministry...that will make Disciples," 1.

[108] Ibid., 2.

[109] MacArthur, *Study Bible*, 1382.

that when the church loses their focus on him, they are on dangerous ground.[110] This dangerous

ground can include losing some of the emerging adults as the world pulls them away. This

pulling away is described by Jesus in the parable of the sower:

> "Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the
> kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away
> what was sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for
> what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and
> immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures
> for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the
> word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns,
> this is the one who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the
> deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for
> what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and
> understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold,
> in another sixty, and in another thirty," (Matthew 13:18-23).[111]

The parable of the sower is a warning against the evil one and the world system that

attempts to steal away the word and gospel from the hearts of believers or to prevent the gospel

from taking hold in an individual's life. Worldliness pulls at the hearts of young believers.

Teaching the word of God and other spiritual practices through discipleship is theorized

to help aid youths in growing in Christlikeness and thus improving their commitment to the

church after leaving high school. Discipleship, thus, can be a tool to help teens fight through the

battle against worldliness.

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[110] Nel Malan, "Inviting and Initializing Youth Into a Life of Discipleship," *Centre for Contextual Ministy, University of Pretoria, South Africa* (2009): pg.8

[111] MacArthur, *Study Bible*, 1384.

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Matthew 16:24, "Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'"[112] Malan argues that the Gospel of Jesus Christ provides young people with a life they long for; a life so full that it is worth dying for.[113]

1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me, as I am Christ." Malan argues that mentoring for teens is an invitation to follow Christ. While following and discovering (learning), the church invites young people to follow Christ. As Paul wrote, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ," (1 Cor. 11:1).[114] Disciples of Jesus are called to become like Jesus, to continue his (God's) mission. Jesus is the one to be imitated, his life and his walk. Discipleship leads to sanctification.[115]

John 13:35, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."[116] Love is a key contributor to discipleship. The church lives and teaches this love through discipleship. Disciples of Christ are motivated by love. This love is taught and emulated through the discipleship relationship. John 13:35 tells us that if the church is loving (identity), all will know that its' members are disciples of Jesus (mission).[117]

> Matthew 5:13-16, "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let

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[112] MacArthur, *MacArthur Study Bible*, 1390.

[113] Malan, "Inviting and Initializing Youth Into a Life of Discipleship," 10.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Dirk Van Der Merwe, "Conceptualizing Holiness in the Gospel of John: The Character of Holiness," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 73, no. 3, (2017): 11.

[116] MacArthur, *Study Bible*, 1570.

[117] Kenneth Moser, "The Connection between," 7.

your light shine before others, so 'that' they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."[118]

Jesus in his own words reminds his disciples about the importance of living out the things that he was teaching them (through discipleship), putting their knowledge into actions (discipling others). In Matthew 5:13-16, the church is told that it is holy (identity), others will see this holiness and praise the heavenly Father (mission).[119]

1 Peter 3:15, "but, in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,"[120] Disciples will be motivated to make disciples. A part of the discipleship process is evangelizing. 1 Peter 3:15 focuses on the church being characterized by Jesus living in the hearts of believers (identity), and the church being prepared to speak about a hope in Jesus (mission).[121]

Jason Lanker argues and points toward the entire church being responsible for its mentoring and discipling young members. He uses Titus 1:11 in this argument. Lanker points out that Paul in Titus 1:11 could have very easily argued for youths to spend more time with their youth pastor. Yet, Lanker says, "Paul's solution consists of more purposefully utilizing the realm of the larger church family."[122] Lanker argues that the entire church as a body of believers is responsible for the upbringing, mentoring and discipling of its youths. Lanker states that specialized individuals like youth pastors are important to the mentoring and discipling of the

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[118] MacArthur, *Study Bible*, 1367.

[119] Moser, "The Connection between," 7.

[120] MacArthur, *Study Bible*, 1894.

[121] Moser, "The Connection between," 7.

[122] Jason Lanker, "The Family of Faith: The Place of Natural Mentoring in the Church's Christian Formation of Adolescents," *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2, (2010): 274.

church's youth, but he argues that other members from the church also need to reach out and help mentor and disciple these church youths. These mentors he says serve an essential purpose in adolescents' development as they allow adolescents the freedom to explore and find their unique identity in the presence of trusted adult guides.[123]

Scripture calls for mentoring and discipling its youths through a body of believers including parental mentoring and discipleship training.

Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it."[124]

Deuteronomy 4:9-10, "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children—how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'"[125]

Parental involvement is important for the development and discipling of the churches' youths. Parents are role models for their children. The youth-parent relationship is key in scripture. According to Lee, "Parenthood, like mentoring, is a teaching relationship, but the teaching is more than cognitive. Children orient their lives according to deep personal relationships with their parents. In the parenting relationship the youths learn not only skills and

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[123] Lanker, "The Family of Faith," 277.

[124] MacArthur, *Study Bible*, 894.

[125] Ibid., 254.

facts, but also behavioral limits, values, perceptions of self and other, and how to deal with their emotions."[126]

According to the National Survey of Youth and Religion, about three in four religious teens in the United States consider their own religious beliefs like their parents. The survey shows that youths will emulate the faith and beliefs of their parents.[127]

The research shows that discipleship, mentoring, and parental support is important for the spiritual development of youths and their battle against worldliness. It is hypothesized that the relationship between discipleship, mentoring and parental support in teen years positively correlates with church retention for emerging adults after high school. Biblical teaching and scripture both support the importance of discipleship, mentoring and parental support for young believers. Scripture teaches the importance of parental influence and Jesus' own actions in picking, discipling, and modeling behavior in relationship with twelve men shows the importance of mentoring.

Theoretical Foundations

Discipleship

The concept of discipleship was an important part of Jesus' ministry. Jesus picked twelve men as students. In the gospel of Luke chapter five, scripture reveals Jesus picking his first disciples. Jesus called Peter, James, and John out of their boat and into a changed life as his students. Jesus spent approximately three years training, teaching, and experiencing life with his twelve disciples.

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[126] Cameron Lee, "Parenting as Discipleship: A Context Motif for Christian Parent Education," *Graduate School of Psychology Fuller Theologial Seminary* 19, no. 3, (1991): 270.

[127] Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 34.

According to William Cox and Robert Peck, "The word Christian in the New Testament (Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16) means follower of Christ, i.e. 'little Christs.' In effect, these expressions signify that Christians are to demonstrate the nature of their elder brother Jesus who himself demonstrates the nature of Father God (Jn 10:30, 14:9)."[128]

Discipleship can serve as a relational tool to help young Christians become more Christlike and it is theorized that this discipling into Christlikeness will equal a commitment to Christ and a desire to continue attending and being involved in the local church for emerging adults after high school. Cox and Peck argues that youths need to learn both academically and through relational discipleship. They state, "Accordingly, Christian education is about far more than just academics; it is ultimately about discipleship."[129] Discipleship, according to Cox and Peck, is built through education, didactic learning and in relation with others.

Bonhoeffer, in his development of youth ministry, argues that youth will live in a Christ-like manner when they are incorporated into the life of Christ. Incorporation into Christ involves assisting youth through discipleship to move into the presence of Christ where they can continue to live in His presence and experience his goodness.[130]

Discipleship in the teen years both didactically and relationally is hypothesized to positively correlate with emerging adults maintaining church membership after high school. Discipleship through youth group didactic learning and processing and through parental mentorship will be the key focus in Crosspointe Church's youth ministry program in this study.

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[128] William F. Cox and Robert A. Peck, "Christian Education as Discipleship Formation," *Christian Education Journal Research on Educational Ministry* (2018): 248.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Neil Holm, "Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker, A Theological Vision for Discipleship and Life Together," *Journal of Reformed Theology* (2016): 287.

The youths in Crosspointe Church's youth ministry program will participate in small

discipleship groups (didactic and processing) led by the church's youth pastor. The youth pastor

will utilize workbooks designed to disciple teens. The youth ministry leader will also be using

the Bible as an educational tool in the teen discipleship process. The youth group will be

utilizing "The New City Catechism" workbooks as a discipleship tool. This set of workbooks is

designed to help teens grow in Christlikeness. This resource combines a group Bible study with

daily devotional readings, helping students to engage in each group session while developing a

personal Bible-reading discipline. The New City Catechism is a resource aimed at discipleship

for teens.[131]

Small groups will be implemented for discipleship training. These small groups work

both didactically (giving out educational information) and relationally (as the youths build

relationships with both adult educators and peers). Walton believes that there are good reasons

for promoting small groups as a vehicle for discipleship formation. Walton argues that small

groups give a space for the construction of faith thinking, provide support and care, empower all-

member ministry, and can encourage engagement with the Scriptures.[132]

Discipleship at Crosspointe Church will be focused on the importance of building a

relationship with the triune God. Michael Langford argues for utilization of the Holy Spirit in

youth discipleship. He states that the power of God is manifested through the working of the

Holy Spirit in an individuals' life. Langford also states that as students are immersed in Spirit-to-

spirit relationally in the body of Christ, they will slowly find that God is not predictable,

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[131] Timothy Keller, *The New Cty Catechism: 52 Questions and Answers for Our Hearts & Minds* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 1-122.

[132] Roger Walton, "Disciples Together: The Small Group as Vehicle for Discipleship Formation," *Journal of Adult Theological Education* (2015): 112.

utilitarian, distant, nor relatively impotent. Rather, God, who is also the Holy Spirit, is sovereign, missional, immanent, and relational. This will encourage adolescents toward an identity defined by hope, vocation, a sense of God's presence, and connection to the whole Body of Christ.[133]

Langford argues that to counter the cultural message of moralistic therapeutic deism, youth must come to experience and understand God as Holy Spirit. By embracing a robust pneumatology that fully embraces God as Holy Spirit, believers will apprehend religiosity according to theological discipleship and not according to moralistic therapeutic deism.[134] In other words when the church focuses on helping teens gain access to a relationship with and a full understanding of the Holy Spirit it will communicate to its youth a God that is not predictable, utilitarian, distant, nor relatively impotent. The God that is Holy Spirit—no less than God that is Father or Creator, or God that is Son or Word—is a God that is sovereign, missional, immanent, and relational.[135] Where moralistic therapeutic deism says God is a distant rule maker who only engages when He is needed and is only there to give emotional support in times of trouble, the other teaches that reliance on the Holy Spirit and the Triune God in a working living relationship focused on the sovereignty of God.

Bonhoeffer argues that active membership and discipleship in church is essential for the young person's sanctification. His theology of youth ministry drew upon Matthew 18:2-3 and Mark 9:42 as he deduced that children were not members to-be, but were members-in-formation alongside adults-in-formation. Bonhoeffer argued that youths should be treated as responsible

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[133] Michael Langford, "Spirit-driven Discipleship A Pneumatology of Youth Ministry," *Theology Today* (2014): 336.

[134] Ibid., 329.

[135] Ibid.

members in church and that youths can be expected to learn the same way adults learn. He states that youths can be trusted to learn and understand the hardest theological concepts.[136]

<div align="center">Parents</div>

It is hypothesized that parental/mentoring support for teens will positively correlate with emerging adult retention to Crosspointe Church after high school.

Discipleship involves both education and relationship building. The research shows that adult educators/mentors are vital in building relationships with church youths. It is hypothesized that a parental mentoring relationship will positively correlate with youths choosing to stay in church after high school.

Lee argues that Christian parents who wish to disciple their children must be reminded again of their discipleship to Christ, whom Paul holds up as the model of kenosis (Phil. 2:5-11.)[137] He argues that the attitude that Christian parents are called to emulate for their children through modeling is clear. It is the attitude of servanthood, whereby Christ, despite the power and privilege of divinity, chose to identify with our frailty for our benefit.[138]

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[136] Holm, "Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker," 287.

[137] Lee, "Parenting as Discipleship," 275.

[138] Ibid., 275.

Chapter 3

Methodology

How you ask the question determines how the question is answered. The methodology here is described in detail and carefully defended. The chapter includes a complete description of the intervention design and an accurate narrative on how the design was implemented.

Intervention Design

The intervention is designed as a mixed method approach, focusing on obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data. The study obtained qualitative data using interviews and quantitative data by utilizing pre-test (before discipleship and parental/mentoring intervention) and post-test (after the discipleship and parental/mentoring intervention) surveys.

The interventions included a youth discipleship program using the "New City Catechism" and a parental/mentoring program that involved parents discipling their children for 30 minutes a week at home. It is hypothesized that the interventions (youth discipleship using the "New City Catechism" and parental/mentoring) will have a positive correlation with youths' choice to remain in church as emerging adults after high school. The study also included an interview with Crosspointe Church's youth pastor and lead pastor and an interview with the two leaders of Crosspointe's college and career ministry.

The process of deciding what sample to utilize in the study was based on convenient sampling. Convenient sample of participants for this study included youths, their parents, and several leaders of Crosspointe Church in Monroe, Michigan. The group consisted of approximately twelve youths from Crosspointe Church youth ministry program ranging in ages from 12 to 18 years old. Two leaders of Crosspointe Church's college and career ministry were interviewed, and the youth and lead pastor of Crosspointe Church were also interviewed.

Parents of the youths from Crosspointe Church's youth ministry were asked to participate with their children in the study in a mentoring fashion but were not interviewed. A collaborative effort between qualitative interviews with church leaders and quantitative surveys for the youths were used to increase data reliability in this study.

Designing tools to measure qualitative and quantitative data, including questionnaires and surveys, was the first step in the study process. Having participants sign informed consent forms and explaining confidentiality to all involved was initiated at the beginning of the study. As part of the informed consent process the participants were made aware of their option to withdraw from the study at any time. An introduction to the purpose of the study was given to participants as part of explaining the informed consent process. Parents were emailed information about the study with the organizers contact information in case they had any questions. All participants including pastors, church workers, students and parents could ask questions about the research and the purpose of the research. The parents (for their students) and adults (church leaders) signed informed consent forms. The youths were asked to participate and given the chance to opt out of the study if they desired to do so. The youths were told that they could talk with the study organizer and/or the youth pastor in private if they did not want to participate in the study. The youths were also told that their parents could contact either the study organizer or youth pastor to withdraw them from the study. None of the youths chose to opt out of the study.

<div align="center">Qualitative Research</div>

The interview with Crosspointe Church's lead and youth pastor was conducted on February 4, 2021. The questionnaire used was designed to utilize open-ended questions in unison with active listening. The questionnaire was the key to dialogue and active participation and considered vital in "action research." The interview was video recorded using an iPhone. The

verbal data was written and measured using concept mapping to document themes and concepts. The interview was approximately 45 minutes in duration and began with having both the youth pastor of Crosspointe Church and the lead pastor sign informed consent forms. Informed consent was explained and both participants were given the chance to ask questions. This interview was focused on gaining qualitative data in response to the questionnaire that focused on both the definition of the problem (emerging adults leaving the church) and the solution. The interview questions can be found below:

1. Talk about emerging adults; How would you define emerging adults?
2. What are your views about emerging adults leaving the church after high school?
3. What are your views into why emerging adults are leaving the church after high school?
4. Talk about ways you would fix the problem of emerging adults leaving the church.
5. How can discipleship in youth ministry be utilized to help keep emerging adults in church after high school?
6. Explain your views on mentoring young people specifically related to keeping them in church after high school.
7. Talk about parental involvement in youth ministry.
8. Talk about how parental involvement can aid in keeping emerging adults into church after high school:.

Another interview was conducted utilizing Crosspointe Church's emerging adult ministry leaders. This ministry is called the college and career ministry. The interview was conducted on February 13, 2021 and was focused on gaining insight into why the team leaders feel emerging adults are leaving the church after high school. This interview ran approximately 1 hour and 20

minutes and was recorded utilizing an iPhone. The interview included a collaborative effort to identify solutions to the problem of emerging adults leaving the church. The interview utilized open-ended questions and active listening tools to gain subjective data from those involved. Concept mapping was used to measure qualitative data obtained in the interviews. Interview questionnaire can be viewed below:

1. Talk about emerging adults; How would you define emerging adults?

2. What are your views about emerging adults leaving the church after high school?

3. What are your views into why emerging adults are leaving the church after high school?

4. Talk about ways you would fix the problem of emerging adults leaving the church.

5. How can the discipleship in youth ministry be utilized to help keep emerging adults in church after high school?

6. Explain your views on mentoring young people specifically related to keeping them in church after high school.

7. Talk about parental involvement in youth ministry.

8. Talk about how parental involvement can aid in keeping emerging adults into church after high school.

<p style="text-align:center">Quantitative Research</p>

The study utilized the "New City Catechism" workbook and a seminar that employed specific scripture as a discipling tool. The study also included a parental/mentoring relationship as a discipleship tool. The New City Catechism workbook, a seminar utilizing specific scripture and the mentoring relationship was the "independent variable." The dependent variable was the youths' answers on the surveys. These surveys were designed to measure commitment to church

after high school and opinions about discipleship and the importance of parental mentoring. The surveys were given before the discipleship tools were administered and then again after the use of discipleship tools to measure any significant changes using the pre-test, post-test model.

Discipleship as Independent Variable

The youth pastor of Crosspointe Church utilized the "New City Catechism" workbook as the discipleship tool for this study. The discipleship phase of the study started Sunday, January 31, 2021 and went through Sunday, February 28, 2021.

On the week of January 10, 2021, an email message was sent out to the parents of the youths in Crosspointe Church's youth group discussing and describing the upcoming study along with the contact information for the study organizer. The parents were informed in this email that participation in this study would be voluntary and that they or their student could drop out of the study at any point. The study organizer also communicated with parents via phone call during that week to answer any questions the parents may have had. Confidentiality was explained during the phone call as part of the informed consent process. On January 10, 2021 students were given informed consent forms to take home to their parents and were asked to return these forms by the youth group session on January 24, 2021. On January 24, 2021, all students had returned their consent forms and were ready to begin the study on January 31, 2021.

During the first day of the study on January 31, 2021, the study organizer spent 10 minutes discussing the study and allowed the youths to ask questions about the study. The students were also given feedback on their ability to participate or drop out of the study at any point. Confidentiality was discussed during that first 10 minutes and students were notified that their answers to the survey would not be shared with anyone except the study organizer. The

study organizer discussed with the students the importance of being honest on the surveys and again reminded them of their expectation of confidentiality. The students were given the option to take or not to take the survey. All students decided to take the survey. The youths were given a pre-test survey to fill out. The independent variable is the discipleship class and the seminar, and the dependent variable is the youths' answers on the questionnaire. The survey below was given on the first day of the discipleship group on January 31, 2021.

Pre-Test Survey for Discipleship Group

Remember this is a confidential survey and your answers and will not be shared with anyone. The purpose of this survey is to help Crosspointe Church develop a more effective youth ministry program.

Circle the answer that best describes your feelings!

1. I will continue to attend Crosspointe Church after high school.

    Strongly Agree
    Agree
    Neutral
    Disagree
    Strongly Disagree

2. I will continue to attend a church after high school.

    Strongly Agree
    Agree
    Neutral
    Disagree
    Strongly Disagree

3. I will continue to practice my faith in Jesus after high school.

    Strongly Agree
    Agree
    Neutral
    Disagree
    Strongly Disagree

4. You can be a Christian and not attend church.

Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

5. Discipleship is important for growth in Christ.

Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

After the initial 10-minute discussion on January 31, 2021, Crosspointe youths began the

discipleship class at 4:10 pm utilizing the New City Catechism and this class ran until 5:30 pm.

The concept of group confidentiality was discussed during the first meeting. Group

confidentiality is vital for cohesiveness so that each youth will feel comfortable sharing in front

of others. The discipleship class lasted from January 31, 2021 to February 21, 2021 and the class

ran from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm.

On February 28th, the students participated in a 1 hour and 30 minute discipleship

seminar conducted by the study organizer and focused on the importance of church membership.

The subject matter included scriptures focused on the importance of attending a local gathering

of believers. Students had a chance to openly discuss the importance of church membership.

It is argued here that the intervention would help youths understand the importance of

church membership and a life dedicated to Jesus. This seminar started at 4:00 pm February 28,

2021 and last until 5:20 pm that same day.

A post-test survey was given to the youths on February 28, 2021 during the last 10

minutes of the discipleship group/seminar and this ended the intervention and closed the study. A

discussion was held at the end of the study thanking peers for their participation. Pizza and soft

drinks were provided. An example of the post-test survey can be found below.

Post-Test Survey for Discipleship Group

Remember this is a confidential survey and your answers and will not be shared with anyone. The purpose of this survey is to help Crosspointe Church develop a more effective youth ministry program.

Circle the answer that best describes your feelings:

1. I will continue to attend Crosspointe Church after high school.

    Strongly Agree
    Agree
    Neutral
    Disagree
    Strongly Disagree

2. I will continue to attend a church after high school.

    Strongly Agree
    Agree
    Neutral
    Disagree
    Strongly Disagree

3. I will continue to practice my faith in Jesus after high school.

    Strongly Agree
    Agree
    Neutral
    Disagree
    Strongly Disagree

4. You can be a Christian and not attend church.

    Strongly Agree
    Agree
    Neutral
    Disagree
    Strongly Disagree

5. Discipleship is important for growth in Christ.

Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

The pre-test survey was given January 31, 2021 at the beginninging of the youth

discipleship group session and the post-test survey was given to the youths at the end of the

discipleship seminar on February 28, 2021. The data was compared using a T-test.

Parental/Mentoring Relationship as Independent Variable

On January 10, 2021 parents of the youth group were sent an email discussing the

upcoming study. The study organizer also contacted each parent via telephone to discuss the

upcoming study during that week. During this initial email and call parents were asked to be a

part of the study and were asked to disciple their student by reading through the Bible with their

youth for at least 30 minutes a week. Parents were asked to talk with their youth about the

importance of their own faith. This parental/mentoring program started January 31, 2021 and

went through February 28, 2021. The youths were responsible to document 30 minutes of

scripture reading and faith discussions with their parents per week and the parents were

responsible to disciple their child.

A pre-test survey was given to the students on January 31, 2021 before the

parenting/mentoring relationship begins. The student then was given a post-test survey on

February 28, 2021. The data was measured using a T-test. The independent variable was the

parents mentoring their youths per week and the dependent variable was the youth's answers on

the survey. Below is a copy of the survey.

Pre-Test Survey for Parental Mentoring

Remember this is a confidential survey and your answers and will not be shared with anyone. The purpose of this survey is to help Crosspointe Church develop a more effective youth ministry program.

Circle the answer that best describes your feelings:

1. My parent or parents are good role-models for Christ.

   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

2. My parent or parents play a role in my faith.

   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

3. Having my parent or parents' mentor me is important.

   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

4. I model my faith after my parent or parents' faith.

   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

5. Discipleship with my parent or parents helps me commit to staying in church after high school.

   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree

Strongly Disagree

A post-test survey was administered to youths on February 28, 2021 to measure whether the parenting discipleship relationship had an impact on the questions asked in the survey. The data was measured using a T-test.

Post-Test Survey for Parental Mentoring.

Remember this is a confidential survey and your answers will not be shared with anyone. The purpose of this survey is to help Crosspointe Church develop a more effective youth ministry program.

Circle the answer that best describes your feelings:

1. My parent or parents are good role-models for Christ.

   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

2. My parent or parents play a role in my faith.

   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

3. Having my parent or parents mentor me is important.

   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

4. I model my faith after my parent or parents' faith.

   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree

Strongly Disagree

5. Discipleship with my parent or parents helps me commit to staying in church after high school.

   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

Implementation of the Intervention Design

On January 7, 2021, the study organizer met with Crosspointe Church's youth pastor and lead pastor to discuss the upcoming research project. This meeting was held at 10:00 am and the implementation protocols for the study were discussed. The lead pastor agreed to allow the researcher to conduct research at Crosspointe Church's youth ministry and the youth pastor of Crosspointe Church agreed to help with the research project.

On the week of January 10, 2021, an email message was sent out to the parents of the youths in Crosspointe Church's youth group discussing and describing the upcoming study along with the contact information for the study organizer. The parents were informed in this email that participation in this study would be voluntary and that they or their student could drop out of the study at any point. The study organizer also communicated with parents via phone call during that week to answer any questions the parents may have had. Parents were asked to talk with their youth about the importance of their own faith. Parents were asked to mentor their youths and read the Bible with them for 30 minutes a week. Parents were notified that their youths would be responsible to document 30 minutes of scripture reading and faith discussions with the parents per week. Some of the parents verbalized concern over the future attendance of youths in church after high school and all verbally agreed to allow their youth to participate in the study. Parents were notified that their student had brought home an informed consent form (see

appendix B) and were asked to fill it out, sign it and have their youths bring the form back to the study organizer on January 24, 2021. The youth group ministry at Crosspointe Church meets every Sunday from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm. It was communicated to the parents that the study would be taking place during normal youth group meeting hours. Parents were informed of the study parameters during the phone conversation. They were notified of the pre-test and post-test their youths would be taking. Parents were informed of the use of the New City Catechism as the discipleship tool and that the study would include a one session seminar on the importance of church membership. Confidentiality was explained during the phone call as part of the informed consent process. Parents were told that they or their youth could drop out of the program at any time.

On January 10, 2021 students were given informed consent forms to take home to their parents and were asked to return these forms by the youth group session on January 24, 2021. On January 24, 2021, all students had returned their consent forms and were ready to begin the study on January 31, 2021.

On January 31, 2021, the study began. During the first 10 minutes, the research organizer discussed the project and the Doctoral level program at Liberty University with the youths. The research organizer informed participants that the study involved trying to find more effective ways to keep youths active in church membership after high school. The research organizer discussed confidentiality and let the youths know that their answers to the surveys would not be shared with parents or anyone else except the research organizer and that their names would not be used in the research paper. The research organizer informed participants how their surveys would be documented using number coding so that their names would not be on the surveys. The research organizer discussed the importance of being honest on the surveys and again reminded

them of their confidentiality. Youths were given a chance to ask questions. Youths were told that they did not have to take the surveys if they did not want to take it and that no negative reprisal would come to them if they chose not to participate. The research organizer told the youths that they could either raise their hand if they did not want to take the surveys or they could just leave the surveys blank after it was passed out. The youths were also told that they could raise their hands if they did not want to be a part of the research or could write on the surveys, "I don't want to be part of the research" and that the research organizer would exclude them from project. The concept of group confidentiality was discussed during the first meeting. The youths were told that group confidentiality was vital for cohesiveness so that each youth would feel comfortable sharing in front of others. Each one of the twelve youths filled out the survey and none of them raised their hands or identified that they did not want to be involved in the project.

The research organizer used a notebook and labeled each survey with a specific number. Each survey with its respected number was passed out to a student. Surveys one through twelve were utilized during the pre-test. Each youth was given a number and the respected survey with the same number: survey number one was matched with youth number one and so on. The research organizer kept a log of which student had which number on a notebook that was kept in a locked office drawer. Each of the twelve youths took the survey. The surveys took about 10 minutes to fill out and each one of the youths passed the survey back to the research organizer. None of students asked any questions about the surveys they were filling out. The students took two pre-test surveys: one on the importance of discipleship and one on the importance of parental/mentoring.

After taking the pre-test surveys Crosspointe Church's youth pastor passed out the workbooks and spent the rest of the hour and a half on January 28, 2021 working through the

New City Catechism workbook. This workbook is focused on discipling youths. Week one and lesson one were focused on the importance of finding hope in Christ. The youth pastor asked each youth at the end of the session to memorize the next week's workbook statement and to complete the next week's homework during the upcoming week in order to be prepared for the next week's lesson. The next week's memory statement was, "God is creator and sustainer of everyone and everything."[139]

The youths met again on February 7, 2021, from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm, and worked with the youth pastor in the New City Catechism workbook. The youth pastor reviewed the previous week's lesson from the New City Catechism workbook along with the memory verse and then moved on into the current lesson. That week's lesson was "What is God?" The youths discussed the week's lesson and discussed the memory verse from the week earlier. The long version of the verse was, "God is the creator and sustainer of everything. He is eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in his power and perfection, goodness, and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth. Nothing happens except through his will."[140] Youths were involved in a discussion on "What God is?" The youths were asked to memorize the workbook statement for the upcoming week. At the end of the session the youths were reminded to read scriptures with their parents for 30 minutes a week.

The youths met again on February 14, 2021 from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm and worked with the youth pastor in the New City Catechism workbook. The youth pastor asked the youths who had memorized the memory verse from the week's lesson and a few volunteers verbally produced the verse. This week's lesson was "How many persons are there in God?" The long

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[139] Keller, *The New Cty Catechism*, 19.

[140] Ibid.

version of this week's verse was, "There are three persons in the one true and living God: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are the same in substance, equal in power and glory."[141] During this session, the youth pastor also discussed the importance of discipleship and what it looks like to live for Jesus. The youths were asked to memorize the next week's memory verse and complete the next week's homework in the workbook. The next week's memory verse was, "God created us male and female in his own image."[142] The youths were reminded to work with their parents for 30 minutes a week reading their Bibles. Also, a text was sent out to parents on February 14, 2021 reminding parents to disciple their children and read through the Bible during the week.

The youths met again on February 21, 2021, from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm and worked out the New City Catechism workbook. The youth pastor again asked the youths if anyone memorized the verse from that week's lesson and a few volunteers recited the verse. The youths then moved into a discussion about the statement, "God created us male and female in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and to glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live for his glory."[143] A discussion on the importance of living for Jesus ensued and the concept of glorifying God through spreading the gospel and through living like him through discipleship was engaged in. Students were told that they would be taking a break from the book the next week and would be learning about the importance of church membership. The youths were also notified that there would be pizza and soft drinks during the next week's

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[141] Keller, *The New Cty Catechism*, 21 .

[142] Ibid., 23.

[143] Ibid.

session and that the post-test surveys would be completed. They were again reminded to continue to work with their parents weekly for 30 minutes.

On February 28th, the students participated in a 1 hour and 30 minute discipleship seminar conducted by the study organizer and focused on the importance of church membership. The subject matter included scriptures focused on the importance of attending a local gathering of believers. Students had a chance to openly discuss the importance of church membership. The lesson was focused on helping youths understand the importance of church membership and a life dedicated to Jesus. This seminar started at 4:00 pm February 28, 2021 and last until 5:20 pm that same day. Pizza and soft drinks were passed out during the beginning of the seminar. The seminar ensued utilizing specific scriptures and a discussion on the importance of church membership after high school.

These scriptures were used and discussed during the 1 hour seminar:

Romans 12:4-5: "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."[144] A discussion was held on Romans 12:4-5 on the importance of meeting together as a working unit. The analogy of the human body was used to make the point that all parts of a person's body must work together to function properly. The youth discussed why it is important for us all to work together as believers in a church setting.

Hebrews 10:25: "Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."[145] Using Hebrews

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[144] MacArthur, *Study Bible*, 1672.

[145] Ibid., 1864.

10:25, the youths discussed how being a body of believers and meeting with other believers can help to encourage one another.

1 Peter 2:5: "You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."[146] Using 1 Peter 2:5 the youths discussed being holy priests for God and the importance of offering spiritual worship to the Father in a church setting and living our lives to glorify God in that same church setting.

John 4:23: "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit, and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."[147] The seminar ended with a discussion on the importance of living for Jesus, how important each youth is to God and how vital each one of them are to each other in a church setting.

Post-test surveys were given to the youths on February 28 during the last 10 minutes of the discipleship group/seminar. The youths taking the post-test surveys marked the end of the research project and these surveys were used to measure any change between the pre-test surveys and the discipleship group/parenting mentoring relationship and the post-test surveys. The data was measured using a T-test. The dependent variable is the parents mentoring their youths each week and the independent variable is the youth answers on the survey.

On February 4, 2021, the research organizer met with Crosspointe Church's youth pastor and lead pastor to discuss emerging adults leaving church and potential ways to keep youths in church after they leave high school. This meeting lasted 41 minutes and 50 seconds. This interview was held in the sanctuary of the church. The research organizer utilized the

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[146] MacArthur, *Study Bible*, 1891.

[147] Ibid., 1544.

questionnaire to ask both the youth pastor and lead pastor their opinions on the problem. The research organizer recorded the session with an iPhone that is password protected. The researcher also took notes on a notebook and stored the notebook in a locked drawer. The first part of the interview was to have both participants sign an informed consent form (see appendix A) and allow them to ask questions. Neither the youth pastor nor lead pastor had any questions.

On February 13, 2021 the research organizer met with the leaders of Crosspointe Church's emerging adult ministry, also known as the college and career ministry, to discuss emerging adults leaving church and potential ways to keep youths in church after they leave high school. This meeting lasted 1 hour and 20 minutes. This interview was held in a conference room of the church. The research organizer utilized the questionnaire to ask both the youth pastor and lead pastor their opinions on the problem. The research organizer recorded the session with an iPhone that is password protected. The researcher also took notes on a notebook and stored the notebook in a locked drawer. The first part of the interview was to have both participants sign informed consent form (see appendix A) and allow them to ask questions. Neither the youth pastor or lead pastor had any questions.

The researcher then identified major themes per the interviews and utilized concept mapping to measure the information obtained.

Chapter 4

Results

The results of this study are based on both qualitative and quantitative data. The study obtained qualitative data using interviews and quantitative data by utilizing a pre-test and a post-test survey format. The qualitative data in this study was measured utilizing concept mapping. This is a tool that helps identify, map and present major themes found in the interview process. This study also utilized a T-test format to measure quantitative data.

Starting with the quantitative date, the research design of using two surveys was created to measure any changes between the youths' two pre-test surveys and two post-test surveys. The pre-test and post-test surveys were designed to measure any changes between the dependent variable and the independent variable. In this particular study the dependent variable was the youths' attitudes measured on each one of the two surveys and the independent variable included the discipleship group utilizing the New City Catechism, the hour and a half seminar on the importance of church membership and their parents working with them for 30 minutes a week reading the Bible in a mentoring fashion. The surveys were utilized to measure any differences between the first set of surveys they took on January 31, 2021, the implementation of the discipleship class, the hour and a half survey, the parenting mentorship and the second set of surveys they took on February 28, 2021.

The surveys were designed utilizing a Likert scale. Numerical values were given to each answer on the survey to quantify the data. For example, to the answer "Strongly Agree" the numerical value of one was given; for the answer "Agree" the numerical value of two was given; for the answer "Neutral" the numerical value of three was give; for the answer "Disagree" the numerical value of four was given; and for the answer "Strongly Disagree" the numerical value

of five was given. The numerical values were calculated for each youth per question and then added to the other youths' values so that a numerical value could be calculated for all the youths per question.

There were twelve students answering each question. For example, if all twelve students answered "Strongly Agree" to question one, the numerical value for question one would be twelve. Youth one would get 1 point for strongly agree, youth two would get one point for strongly agree, youth three would get one point for answering question one with strongly agree, youth four would get one point for answering the question as strongly agree and so on so that all twelve youths would get one point for question one equaling twelve points. All the student's numerical values for each question were added together and given a total amount of points. If all the youths answered "Strongly Agree" on question one on the pre-test they would score a total of twelve and if the same students answered "Strongly Agree" on the same question on the post-test they would all receive a total score of twelve. In this case you can see that the total points between the pre-test and the post-test is the same, twelve points. But, if the total points for question one of the pre-test was seventeen and the total number of points for the same question on the post-test equaled nineteen, then the variance of these scores was tested utilizing the T-test format to find out how significant the variance was and if the probability of these difference was less than p<.05, showing significant difference and the probability that the independent variable influenced the dependent variable.

These numerical values of total points scored per question per test were compared using a T-test in order to measure any differences between the two tests and the probability of the independent variable. In this case, the discipleship group using the New City Catechism, the hour and a half seminar and the parent mentoring relationship, had an effect on the score differences

between the pre-test and the post-test. A T-test tells you how significant differences between groups are. In other words, it lets you know if those differences (measured in means) could have happened by chance.[148]

In the case where the numerical values between the pre-test and the post-test were significantly different (a probability value of less than .05) the researcher can argue that there was a substantial difference between the pre-test, independent variable and the post-test signifying that the discipleship group, seminar, and/or the parenting mentorship had a positive correlation with the dependent variable, in this case the scores on the surveys. Having said this, let us look at the data obtained from each question in the surveys.

<div align="center">Quantitative Results</div>

The pre-test and post-test surveys utilized a paired sample T-test, meaning the same youths that took the pre-test surveys also completed the post-test surveys. There were twelve youths who completed the two pre-test surveys on January 31, 2021; and these same youths completed both the post-test surveys on February 28, 2021. The youths at Crosspointe Church's youth ministry were given two surveys: a five-question survey focused on measuring the youths opinions on parental mentoring and another five-question survey designed to measure participant opinions on the importance of discipleship and church membership. The data from the pre-test surveys and the post-test surveys was calculated utilizing a T-test to measure variance between the two tests. The results are shown below. Paying close attention to the p-values in this study helped identify if there was a significant amount of variance between the pre-test answers and

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[148] C. H. Goulden, *Methods of Statistical Analysis*, 2nd ed (New York: Wiley, 1956), 50.

the post-test answers for each question in the surveys and if the researcher can deduce significant changes between the pre-test and post-test data.

<center>Parental Mentoring Survey</center>

Question 1: My parent or parents are good role-models for Christ.

Pre-Test: Seven youths answered "Strongly Agree" equaling seven points, three youths answered "Agree" equaling six points, one youth answered "Neutral" equaling three points and one youth answered "Disagree" equaling four points for a total of twenty points.

Post-Test: Eight youths answered "Strongly Agree" equaling eight points, one youth answered "Agree" equaling two points, two youths answered "Neutral equaling six points and one youth answered "Disagree" equaling four points for a total of twenty points.

Question 1 had a probability of 1.0 far short of the p-value of less than .05. This showed no difference between the pre-test score and post-test score. In fact, a p-value of 1.0 shows that the two scores are identical. In this case you cannot make the argument that the discipleship group, the seminar, or the parental mentoring had any impact on the youths answering this question.

The youths scored twenty points out of a possibility of seventy points. If all youths answered question 1 with "Agree" they would have received a score of twenty-four. If all the youths would have answered question 1 with "Strongly Disagree" they would have received a score of seventy. In this case their score was on the end of the spectrum more toward "Agree" then "Strongly Disagree" for this question.

Question 2: My parent or parents play a role in my faith.

Pre-Test: Eight youths answered "Strongly Agree" equaling eight points, and four youths answered the question "Agree" equaling eight points with a total of sixteen points.

<center>75</center>

Post-Test: Seven youths answered "Strongly Agree" equaling seven points and five youths answered the question "Agree" equaling ten points with a total of seventeen points.

Question 2 had a probability of .5862 far short of the p-value of less than .05. This showed no significant difference between the pre-test score and post-test score. When it comes to question two on the parental mentoring survey there was no significant difference between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores. In this case you cannot make the argument that the discipleship group, the seminar, or the parental mentoring had any impact on the youths answering this question.

The youths scored sixteen points on the pre-test and seventeen points on the post-test. If all youths answered question 2 with "Agree" they would have received a score of twenty-four. If all the youths would have answered question 2 with "Strongly Disagree" they would have received a score of seventy. In this case their score was on the end of the spectrum more toward "Agree" then "Strongly Disagree" for this question.

Question 3: Having my parent or parents' mentor me is important.

Pre-test: Six youths answered "Strongly Agree" equaling a score of six points, three youths answered the question "Agree" equaling a score of six points and three answered the question "Neutral" equaling nine points with a total of twenty-one points.

Post-test: Six youths answered "Strongly Agree" equaling a score of six points, four youths answered the question with "Agree" equaling a score of eight points and two students answered the question with "Neutral" equaling a score of six points with a total of twenty points.

Question 3 had a probability of .808781 far short of the p-value of less than .05, and thus showed no significant difference between the pre-test score and post-test score. When it comes question three on the parental mentoring survey there was no significant difference between the

pre-test scores and the post-test scores. In this case you cannot make the argument that the discipleship group, the seminar, or the parental mentoring had any impact on the youths answering this question.

The youths scored twenty-one points on the pre-test and twenty points on the post-test. If all youths answered question 3 with "Agree" they would have received a score of twenty-four. If all the youths would have answered question 3 with "Strongly Disagree" they would have received a score of seventy. In this case their score was on the end of the spectrum more toward "Agree" then "Strongly Disagree" for this question.

Question 4: I model my faith after my parents.

Pre-test: Three youths answered the question "Strongly Agree" with a score of three points, five youths answered "Agree" with a score of ten points, three youths "Neutral" with a score of nine points and one youth answered "Disagree" with a score of four points with a total of twenty-six points (the highest score for this survey).

Post-test: Four youths answered "Strongly Agree" with a score of four points, three youths answered "Agree" with a score of six points, four youths answered "Neutral" with a score of twelve points and one youth answered "Disagree" equaling four points with a total of twenty-six points (again the highest score for this survey).

Question 4 had a probability of 1.0 far short of the p-value of less than .05, meaning that there was no difference between the pre-test score and post-test score. In fact, a p-value of 1.0 shows that the two scores are identical. In this case you cannot make the argument that the discipleship group, the seminar, or the parental mentoring had any impact on the youths answering this question.

The youths scored twenty-six points on the pre-test and twenty-six points on the post-test. If all youths answered question 4 with "Agree" they would have received a score of twenty-four. If all the youths would have answered question 4 with "Strongly Disagree" they would have received a score of seventy. In this case their score was on the end of the spectrum more toward "Agree" then "Strongly Disagree" for this question.

Question 5: Discipleship with my parent or parents helps me commit to staying in church after high school.

Pre-test: Five youths answered the question with "Strongly Agree" equaling five points, five youths answered the question with "Agree" equaling ten points, two answered the question "Neutral" equaling six points for a total of twenty-one points.

Post-test: Five youths answered the question with "Strongly Agree" equaling five points, five youths answered the question with "Agree" equaling ten points, two answered the question "Neutral" equaling six points for a total of twenty-one points.

Question 5 had a probability of 1.0 far short of the p-value of less than .05, and showed no difference between the pre-test score and post-test score. In fact, a p-value of 1.0 shows that the two scores are identical. In this case you cannot make the argument that the discipleship group, the seminar, or the parental mentoring had any impact on the youths answering this question.

The youths scored twenty-one points on the pre-test and twenty-one points on the post-test. If all youths answered question 5 with "Agree" they would have received a score of twenty-four. If all the youths would have answered question 5 with "Strongly Disagree" they would have received a score of seventy. In this case their score was on the end of the spectrum more toward "Agree" then "Strongly Disagree" for this question.

The charts below show the breakdown of the five questions in the parental mentoring survey and the difference between the pre-test scores in blue and the post-test scores in orange. The total scores for each of the five questions in the parental mentoring survey is also shown below and their respected probability values.

Prental Mentoring Survey
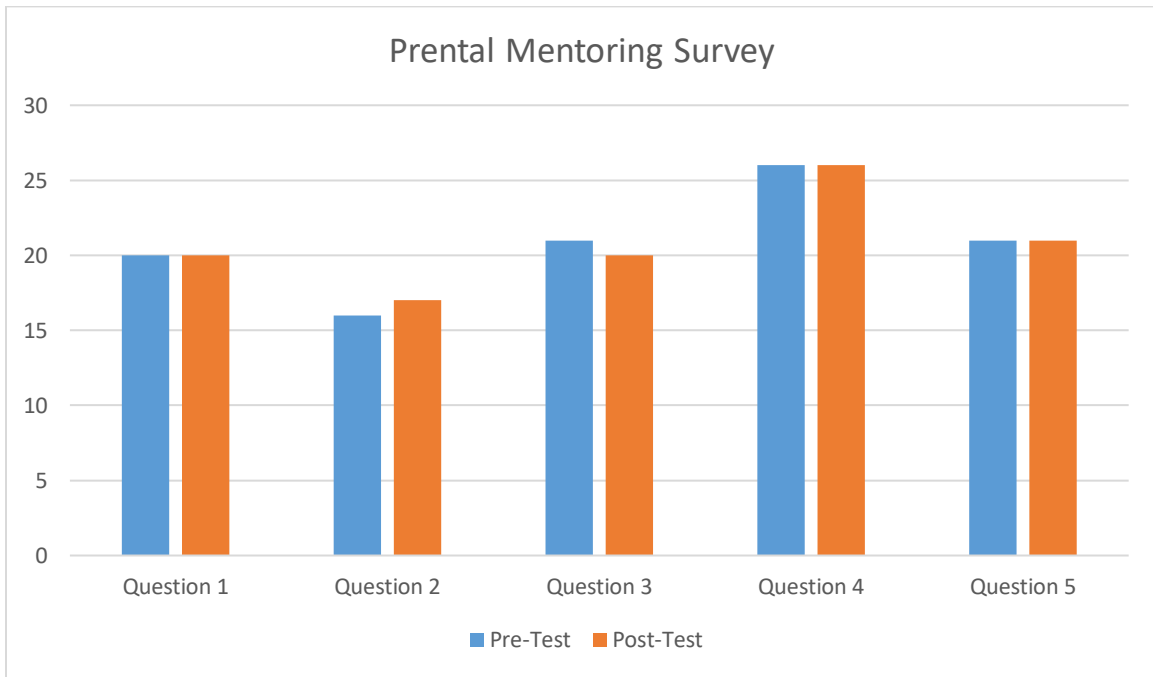
Question	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	P > .05
1	20	20	1.0 (No Effect)
2	16	17	.586299 (No Effect)
3	21	20	.808781 (No Effect)
4	26	26	1.0 (No Effect)
5	21	21	1.0 (No Effect)

P-Value of more than .05 means that no effect was observed.

The survey yielded no effect between questions one through five on the pre-test versus the post-test parenting surveys. Thus, no effect can be deduced from the discipleship class, the hour and a half seminar, the parent/mentoring relationship, and the scores on the parenting surveys.

The lower the number the more strongly the youths agree with a question. The lowest number on this survey (pre-test: sixteen/post-test: seventeen) was exhibited on question 2 (My parents play a role in my faith) meaning that the youths agreed with this statement more than any of the other statements. The highest number on this survey was twenty-six and depicts that more of the youths answered with "Disagree." This was found on question 4: I model my faith after my parents. It is interesting that the youths answered lower scores on average on question 2 than on question 4. This could mean that the youths understand that their parents play a role in their faith while at the same time not wanting to emulate a faith that they see as weak or hypocritical. Is it possible that these youths see their parents as hypocrites and have no reason to model their own faith after their parents' faith? This is a question that should be researched further.

One thing to note is that only five out of the twelve youths reported that their parent or parents worked with them for 30 minutes per week. This means that less than half of the parents engaged with their youth reading the Bible, which was outlined as part of this study. Several reminders were sent out for parents to work with their youths 30 minutes a week reading scripture.

With the potential score of each question being seventy points (five points for a strongly disagree answer and twelve youths) it would appear as if this group of youths scored rather low, with scores ranging from sixteen to twenty-six. This may indicate that before the discipleship class, the seminar and parental mentoring many of the students appeared to have answers of "Agree" and "Strongly Agree." With these students answers of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree," it may be difficult to expect these numbers to go in the downward direction even after implementing the dependent variables of discipleship, teaching on importance of church and

parental mentoring. It may help further research to look at the same dependent and independent variables with youths who are not involved in a student ministry at church and those that are.

Discipleship Survey

Question 1: I will continue to attend Crosspointe Church after high school.

Pre-test: Four youths answered the question "Strongly Agree" equaling four points, five youths answered "Agree" equaling ten points, two youths answered the question "Neutral" equaling six points and one youth answered "Disagree" equaling four points for a total of twenty-four points.

Post-test: Five students answered the question "Strongly Agree" equaling five points, four youths answered the question "Agree" equaling eight points, three youths answered "Neutral" equaling nine points with a total of twenty-two points.

Question 1 had a probability of .50354 far short of the p-value of less than .05 and showed no significant difference between the pre-test score and post-test score. When it comes to question 1 on the parental mentoring survey there was no significant difference between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores. In this case you cannot make the argument that the discipleship group, the seminar, or the parental mentoring had any impact on the youths answering this question.

The youths scored twenty-four points on the pre-test and twenty-two points on the post-test. If all youths answered question 1 with "Agree" they would have received a score of twenty-four. If all the youths would have answered question 1 with "Strongly Disagree" they would have received a score of seventy. In this case their score was on the end of the spectrum more toward "Agree" then "Strongly Disagree" for this question.

Question 2: I will continue to attend church after high school.

Pre-test: Eight youths answered "Strongly Agree" to this question equaling eight points, three youths answered "Agree" equaling six points and one "Neutral" equaling three points with a total of seventeen points.

Post-test: Eight youths answered "Strongly Agree" equaling eight points, two youths answered "Agree" equaling four points and two answered "Neutral" equaling six points for a total of eighteen points.

Question 2 had a probability of .33801 far short of the p-value of less than .05, and showed no significant difference between the pre-test score and post-test score. When it comes to question 2 on the parental mentoring survey, there was no significant difference between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores. In this case you cannot make the argument that the discipleship group, the seminar, or the parental mentoring had any impact on the youths answering this question.

The youths scored seventeen points on the pre-test and eighteen points on the post-test. If all youths answered question 2 with "Agree" they would have received a score of twenty-four. If all the youths would have answered question 2 with "Strongly Disagree" they would have received a score of seventy. In this case their score was on the end of the spectrum more toward "Agree" then "Strongly Disagree" for this question.

Question 3: I will continue to practice my faith in Jesus after high school.

Pre-test: Nine youths answered "Strongly Agree" equaling nine points and three youths answered "Agree" equaling six points for a total of fifteen points (the lowest score on either survey).

Post-test: Nine youths answered "Strongly Agree" equaling nine points and three youths answered "Agree" equaling six points for a total of fifteen points (the lowest score on either survey).

Question 3 had a probability of 1.0 far short of the p-value of less than .05, which showed no difference between the pre-test score and post-test score. In fact, a p-value of 1.0 shows that the two scores are identical. In this case you cannot make the argument that the discipleship group, the seminar, or the parental mentoring had any impact on the youths answering this question.

The youths scored fifteen point on the pre-test and fifteen points on the post-test. If all youths answered question 3 with "Strongly Agree" they would have received a score of twelve. If all the youths would have answered question 3 with "Strongly Disagree" they would have received a score of seventy. In this case their score was on the end of the spectrum more toward "Strongly Agree" then "Strongly Disagree" for this question.

Question 4: You can be a Christian and not attend church.

Pre-test: One youth answered "Strongly Agree" equaling one point, one youth answered "Agree" equaling two points, sex youths answered the question "Neutral" equaling eighteen points, two youths answered "Disagree" equaling eight points and two youth answered "Strongly Disagree" equaling ten points for a total of thirty-nine points (Highest point total on both surveys).

Post-test: One youth answered "Strongly Agree" equaling one point, one youth answered "Agree" equaling two points, six youths answered the question "Neutral" equaling eighteen points, two youths answered "Disagree" equaling eight points and two youth answered "Strongly

Disagree" equaling ten points for a total of thirty-nine points (Highest point total on both surveys).

Question 4 had a probability of 1.0 far short of the p-value of less than .05, and showed no difference between the pre-test score and post-test score. In fact, a p-value of 1.0 shows that the two scores are identical. In this case you cannot make the argument that the discipleship group, the seminar, or the parental mentoring had any impact on the youths answering this question.

The youths scored thirty-nine points on the pre-test and thirty-nine points on the post-test. If all youths answered question 4 with "Neutral" they would have received a score of thirty-six. If all the youths would have answered question 4 with "Strongly Disagree" they would have received a score of seventy. In this case their score was on the end of the spectrum more toward "Neutral" then "Strongly Disagree" for this question.

Question 5: Discipleship is important for growth in Christ.

Pre-test: Two youths answered this question with "Strongly Agree" equaling two points, eight youths answered this question "Agree" equaling sixteen points and two youths answered "Neutral" equaling six points with a total of twenty-four points.

Post-test: Six youths answered this question with "Strongly Agree" equaling six points, five youths answered this question "Agree" equaling ten points and one youth answered "Neutral" equaling three points with a total of nineteen points.

Question 5 of the discipleship survey had a probability of .01718 significantly lower than that of the p-value of less than .05, which showed significant difference between the pre-test score and post-test score. When it comes to question 5 on the discipleship survey there was significant difference between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores. In this case you can

make the argument that the discipleship group, the seminar, or the parental mentoring had an impact on the youths answering this question.

The youths scored twenty-four points on the pre-test and nineteen points on the post-test. If all youths answered question 5 with "Agree" they would have received a score of twenty-four. If all the youths would have answered question 5 with "Strongly Disagree" they would have received a score of seventy. In this case their score was on the end of the spectrum more toward "Agree" then "Strongly Disagree" for this question.

The charts below show the breakdown of the five questions in the parental mentoring survey and the difference between the pre-test scores in blue and the post-test scores in orange. The total scores for each of the five questions in the parental mentoring survey is also show below and their respected probability values.

Discipleship Survey
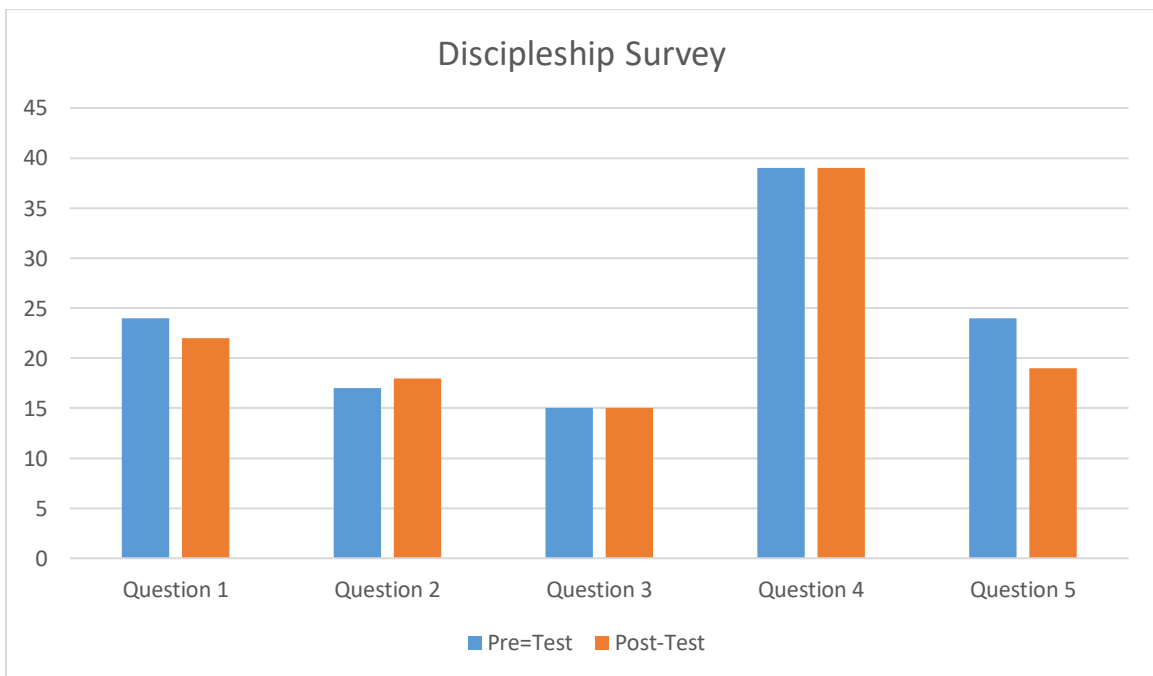
Discipleship Survey Sample Size Twelve Youths

Question	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	P > .05
1	24	22	.5035459 (No Effect)
2	17	18	.3388006 (No Effect)
3	15	15	1.0 (No Effect)
4	39	39	1.0 (No Effect)
5	**24**	**19**	**.017180487 EFFECT)**

P-Value of more than .05 means no effect was observed.

The lower the number, the more strongly the youths agree with a question. The lowest number on this survey (pre-test: fifteen/post-test: fifteen) was exhibited on question 3 (I will continue to practice my faith after high school) meaning that the youths mostly agreed with this statement at least more than any of the other statements. The highest number on this survey, which is thirty-nine, means that more of the youths answered with "Disagree." This was found on question 4: You can be a Christian and not attend church. This question is the only question designed to elicit an answer of "Disagree." The rest of the questions are designed to elicit answers of "Agree." It is no surprise that the score of thirty-nine in this question is the highest of the questions.

With the potential score of each question being seventy points (five points for a "Strongly Disagree" answer and twelve youths) it would appear as if this group of youths scored rather low with scores ranging from fifteen to twenty-four, except for question 4 which was designed to elicit higher numbers. This may indicate that before the discipleship class, the seminar and parental mentoring, many of the students had the answers of "Agree" and "Strongly Agree." With these students answers of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree," it may be difficult to expect these numbers to go in the downward direction even after implementing the independent variables of discipleship, teaching on importance of church and parental mentoring. It may help further

research to look at the same dependent and independent variables with youths who are not involved in a student ministry at church and those that are.

Question 4 (You can be a Christian and not attend church) was elicited to obtain higher scores. The dependent variable of discipleship and the one and a half hour seminar focused on instilling upon the youths the importance of remaining in church after high school was designed to increase the total score with focus on eliciting more "Disagree" answers than "Agree" answers. This would explain the score of thirty-nine for this question. However, there was no change in this score on pre-test vs. post-test surveys. This shows no change in the dependent variable before and after the implementation of the independent variable of discipleship and seminar. This is possibly due to the fact that only one and a half hour (one session) was focused on the importance of church membership. Also, four weeks is a limited time to implement any strategy or independent variable for change. Further research may conduct a longitudinal study on implementing these strategies for a long period of time and following the youths beyond their youth group experience and on through the college years.

Only question 5 of the discipleship survey recorded a p-value of less than .05 showing an effect between the pre-test and post-test based on the discipleship program, discipleship class, the seminar and parental mentoring intervention. This means that there is a strong probability that the implementation of the discipleship class, the seminar and parental mentoring or independent variable appeared to have a positive effect on the youths answering of question 5 on the discipleship survey. Discipleship was a key concept in the New City Catechism and the youths would have been well versed with this concept and the need for discipleship as they worked through the information. This concept of Christlikeness and the importance of discipleship found in the New City Catechism appeared to stick with the youths as they went

through the four weeks of the discipleship class. The concepts of parental mentoring and the importance of church membership did not appear as impactful to the youths in this study, but again most of their scores on these questions where low to begin with.

It would be interesting to find out how the scores of the parenting/mentoring survey would have gone if more parents had participated in the parenting/mentoring phase of the study. Again, only five out of the twelve youths' parents mentored them. Also, only one of the sessions was dedicated to the importance of church membership. It would be interesting to find out how the scores for the importance of church membership would have gone if more time were spent educating the youths on the importance of church membership.

The implementation of this research study was done to find more effective ways to help keep emerging adults from leaving the church after high school. There appears to be some evidence here that discipleship can be a positive influence on youths in a youth group setting. Influencing parents to be more involved in their youth's walk with Christ may help increase the likelihood for emerging adults to stay in church after high school and further research may help to verify and understand this better.

<div align="center">Concept Mapping</div>

The next phase of this research was to conduct interviews with the youth pastor and lead pastor at Crosspointe Church and the two leaders of the college and career ministry in order to help identify any concepts that may determine why emerging adults are leaving the church as well as more effective ways to keep them in church after high school. The youth pastor and lead pastor of Crosspointe Church were interviewed together, and the two leaders of the college and career ministry were interviewed later.
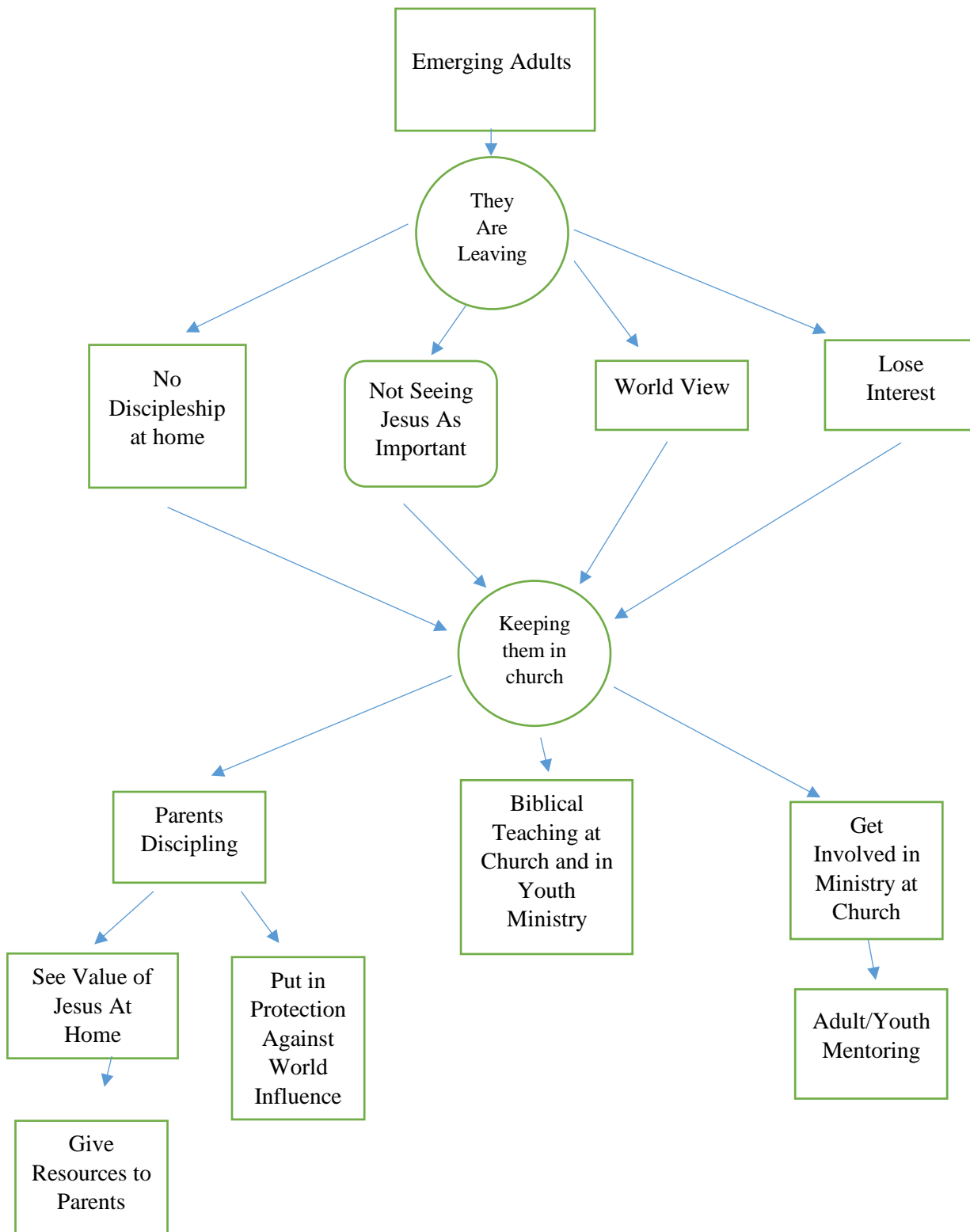
The interview with Crosspointe's youth pastor and lead pastor was conducted on February 4, 2021 and lasted about 42 minutes. The focus of this interview was to understand key concepts in two major areas: why are emerging adults leaving the church and what can the church do to keep emerging adults in church after high school. These key concepts can help the church and its leaders to develop a more effective discipleship ministry for the youths and emerging adults to keep emerging adults from leaving the church after high school. Crosspointe Church is attempting to develop more effective co-ops between ministries to solve the problem of emerging adults leaving the church. Getting the men's ministry, the women's ministry, the retired individuals' ministry, the college and career ministry, the children's ministry and finally the youth ministry all on the same page is the plan. The first step in developing a strategy for implementing more intentional ministry is to identify the problem and then to brainstorm solutions.

During the interview, both the youth pastor and lead pastor reported believing that emerging adults leaving the church after high school was a problem not only for Crosspointe Church but for the whole body of Christ as a whole. The youth pastor at Crosspointe Church is 27 years old and he wasted no time in stating that very few of the people he grew up with in the church were still attending church today. In fact, he stated that out of the twenty youths that he grew up with in church only two of them remained in church today. The lead pastor also acknowledged the sad reality that many of the youths he has seen come through Crosspointe Church are no longer involved in the church today.

Having acknowledged a problem, the interview then focused on the reasons for emerging adults leaving the church followed by brainstorming ways to keep emerging adults in church after high school. The first half of the interview was focused on the problem of emerging adults

leaving the church and the second half of the interview was focused on brainstorming ways to keep emerging adults in church after high school. Concepts were identified during the interview and written down in a notebook. These concepts were later plotted using a concept map.

The concept map below will help to identify some of the main themes of this interview:

Emerging Adults

They Are Leaving

No Discipleship at home

Not Seeing Jesus As Important

World View

Lose Interest

Keeping them in church

Parents Discipling

Biblical Teaching at Church and in Youth Ministry

Get Involved in Ministry at Church

See Value of Jesus At Home

Put in Protection Against World Influence

Adult/Youth Mentoring

Give Resources to Parents

When it comes to emerging adults leaving the church, the youth pastor and lead pastor of Crosspointe Church identified some themes. They recognized that many of the emerging adults that leave church are leaving because their parents are not discipling them at home. In this study we noticed that only five of the youths' parents discipled them, even when asked them to do so for only one month. Less than half of the parents found 30 minutes during the week to read the Bible with their youth even when reminded.

Another theme the youth pastor and lead pastor identified was that many of the youths who graduate high school do not see Jesus as important enough to stay in church. In this study the students scored the lowest score on question 3: I will continue to practice my faith in Jesus after high school. This would indicate that these youths can see the importance of Jesus. The question that could be asked is: Will these same youths find Jesus important enough when they leave high school? A future longitudinal study could show a relationship between those youths who said they would practice their faith in high school to find out if they continued to practice their faith after high school.

Another theme the youth pastor and lead pastor identified when it comes to youths leaving church was the pressure the world puts on them after high school. The world appears to oppose the truths of the Bible. Many youths, according to the lead pastor and youth pastor, will be drawn into the ungodliness of the world and will see no need to continue in a church that they perceive as out of tune and touch with the worldliness they now embrace. This would connect to the last theme that Crosspointe Church's youth pastor and lead pastor identified and that is that emerging adults lose interest in the church. They do not find a need for it anymore and it probably was not that important to them in the first place. The youths in the survey appeared to indicate a desire to stay in church after high school. A longitudinal study can be conducted in the

future to research the correlation between those youths who say they are going to stay in church after high school and those who do not stay in high school after reporting that they plan on staying.

The interview then turned its attention to ways in which the church can help keep emerging adults into church after high school.

The first theme Crosspointe's youth pastor and lead pastor identified when it comes to keeping youths in church focused on the importance of parents discipling their youths during their childhood years. This discipleship should, according to the pastors, include parents being good role-models for Christ. The pastors reported that good parental discipleship may lead to the youth finding value in Jesus, a value that lasts well after they leave high school. They also report it is the church's responsibility to provide resources for the parents in their congregation; resources that will help parents disciple their youths. The pastors reported that most of a child and youth's time is spent with parents who must take responsibility for the discipling of their youths. This also includes putting up protections to shield their children from the influences of the world.

Another theme the pastors discussed had to do with the church's responsibility. The pastors stated that sound doctrine was a key to discipleship at church. Sound biblical teaching is a must in any youth ministry program to help youths maintain dedication to Jesus after high school.

The final theme they identified had to do with getting the youths involved in church ministry and aiding them in mentoring through an adult/youth mentorship program. The pastors agreed that youths should see the church as their church and not just the church of their parents. The pastors reported that being involved in church ministry helps youths feel a sense of

belonging. They stated that another way to help youths feel a sense of belonging is to couple them up with another adult member of the church. This is where the emerging adult ministry or the college and career ministry steps in.

A separate interview was conducted utilizing the college and career ministry leaders at Crosspointe Church. The college and career ministry is focused on providing support for emerging adults as they make the transition out of high school. The two men that lead the college and career ministry were also interviewed for this project. The two leaders of the college and career ministry sat down for an hour and a half interview on February 13, 2021.

During the beginning of the interview, both leaders of the Crosspointe Church's college and career ministry reported believing that there is a problem with emerging adults leaving the church and they both stated that is why their ministry is so vital for Crosspointe Church: to attempt to help keep these youth that are turning into adults engaged in church.

During the interview some of the major themes where identified and organized using concept mapping. Some of the concepts identified in the interview process with the two leaders of Crosspointe Church's college and career ministry are the same as the youth and lead pastor's ideas, but some of them are different. Some key concepts the two leaders of the college and career ministry identified as to why emerging adults are leaving the church include college and career demands, losing interest, discovering self, new responsibilities, the world's influence, and parents not influencing them. Some of the key concepts they identified for keeping emerging adults into church after high school include mentoring relationships, teaching biblical truths in the college and career ministry and at the youth group level, parents showing Christ at home, and parents discipling their own children. Below you will see a concept map outlining these major themes.

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                    ┌──────────┐
                    │ Emerging │
                    │  Adults  │
                    └──────────┘
                          │
                     ╭─────────╮
                     │ They are│
                     │ Leaving.│
                     ╰─────────╯

┌─────────┐  ┌─────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐
│College  │  │  Lost   │  │Discovering│ │   New    │  │  World   │  │Parents Not│
│and Career│ │Interest │  │   Self   │  │Responsibil│ │Influences│  │Influencing│
│ Demands │  │         │  │          │  │  ities   │  │          │  │   Them   │
└─────────┘  └─────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘
                          ┌──────────┐
                          │ Romantic │
                          │Relationship│
                          └──────────┘

                     ╭─────────╮
                     │  Keep   │
                     │  Them   │
                     │   in    │
                     │ Church  │
                     ╰─────────╯

┌─────────┐  ┌─────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐
│ Mentor  │  │  Their  │  │  Teach   │  │Show Christ│ │ Parents  │
│  Them   │  │Concerns │  │ Biblical │  │to Them at│  │ Need to  │
│         │  │         │  │  Truths  │  │   Home   │  │ Disciple │
└─────────┘  └─────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘
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You will see some of the same concepts in both maps, such as the importance of the youth parent relationship, especially in respect to discipleship and being good role-models for Christ at home. You will also notice similarities between these two groups believing that worldliness is problematic and appears at odds with keeping emerging adults in church after high school. The importance of sound doctrine being taught is also represented in both sets of concept maps.

However, you will also see some differing themes between Crosspointe Church's lead pastor and youth pastor and the two leaders of the emerging adult ministry of college and career ministry. You will notice that the leaders of the college and career group put major emphasis on the struggles with emerging adults new found-freedom and the struggle with trying to balance college and career demands with a desire to continue to make time for church. Both of these men were adamant that if there were time management struggles for emerging adults who were working, going to school and entertaining the idea of trying to engage in romantic relationship coupled with church commitment, the church would be the first out.

The college and career ministry leaders focused a lot of attention on the importance of having a good mentor who can help the emerging adult as they make that transition. In their view having someone there who can assist the emerging adult as they try to sift through the responsibility of youth adulthood is vital.

It has been shown here that there are many facets to facing the problem of emerging adults leaving the church after high school. Parents, church leaders, and church members play a role in helping to fight this problem. These youths appear to be motivated to stay in church after high school, but sadly many of them will not. This is a problem facing the body of Christ as a whole and further research is necessary to find new ways to keep emerging adults in church.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

At Crosspointe Church, in Monroe, Michigan, leadership has witnessed the exodus of many of its youths from church life as emerging adults after they high school. Church leaders desire to find ways to help emerging adults embrace a lasting faith and an active membership in the church. The purpose of this research is to help Crosspointe Church develop more effective ways to keep its emerging adults in church after high school.

Research indicates that religiosity tends to decrease after the teenage years and emerging adults are most often reported as being the least religious age group.[149] Research has shown a pattern of youths leaving the church. The research has also identified some of the reasons they are leaving the church.

The research shows that today's emerging adult is caught between the desires of the world and the desire to remain active in church. Some of the other reasons emerging adults leave the church according to the research includes someone offended them, work commitments, lack of testimony, feel unloved, view others' behaviors at church as negative, too difficult to live out, question whether others care, only baptized to please parents, Spirit not felt there, no good examples at church, no respect for meeting place, hypocrites, only were there for opposite sex, only went because it was expected of them, other obligations more important than church.[150]

This study was designed to find more effective ways to keep emerging adults in church after high school at Crosspointe Church in Monroe County. It was hypothesized that increasing

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[149] Kirst-Ashman and Zastrow, *Understanding Human Behavior*, 258.

[150] Henderson, *How to Reverse This Trend*, 1-4.

discipleship and implementing parental mentoring will positively increase emerging adult choice to remain in church after graduating high school.

The importance of discipleship can be found in Jesus' own words. Matthew 28:18-20 reads, "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"[151]

This study utilized "Action Research" allowing for a collaborative effort between participants and evaluators. The focus was on building a network of change through relationships. The empirical data, or quantitative data, may lend to general assumptions and relating the findings to the general population. It is the hope of this research that the results found here can be utilized not only at Crosspointe Church but can help the Church in general. Further research may lend further credence to the findings of this study and/or can expand the ideas set forth.

The intervention was designed as a mixed method approach, focusing on obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data. The study obtained qualitative data using interviews and quantitative data by utilizing pre-test (before discipleship and parental/mentoring intervention) and a post-test (after the discipleship and parental/mentoring intervention) surveys.

The Interventions included a youth discipleship program using the "New City Catechism" and a parental/mentoring program that involved parents discipling their children for 30 minutes a week at home. It was hypothesized that the interventions (youth discipleship using the "New City Catechism" and parental/mentoring) would have a positive correlation with

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[151] MacArthur, *Study Bible*, 1415.

youths' choice to remain in church as emerging adults after high school. The study also included an interview with Crosspointe Church's youth pastor and lead pastor and an interview with the two leaders of Crosspointe's college and career ministry.

One aspect of this study was focused on a 4-week discipleship group utilizing the New City Catechism workbook along with an hour and a half seminar on the importance of the church in the lives of followers of Christ. Another aspect of the study included parents working with their youths for 30 minutes a week reading the Bible. A pre-test survey was given to the youths before the implementation of the discipleship program and parental mentoring followed by a post-test after the implementation of the programs. The data from these surveys was calculated using a T-test. The final aspect of the study included an interview with Crosspointe's youth and lead pastor and another interview with the ministry leaders of the emerging adult ministry. These interviews were designed to identify concepts that play a role in emerging adults leaving the church and concept designed to help keep emerging adults in church after high school.

Discipleship and Parental Mentoring Conclusion

The results of the pre-test verses post-test surveys showed no significant variance in nine out of the ten questions answered by the youths taking the surveys. This means that there was no significant difference in the youths scores between the pre-test and the post-test on nine out of the ten questions asked on parental/mentoring survey and the discipleship survey. This could indicate that the independent variable of the discipleship class, the hour and a half seminar and parenting mentoring relationship, did not have any impact on the youths' answers pre-test vs. post-test. It could also indicate that the impact of independent variable (discipleship class, seminar and parental mentoring) to the dependent (the youths answers on pre-test verse post-test) variable was so low that it could not be measured as significant, especially with the youths'

appearing to agree with most of the statements on the surveys before the independent variable was installed.

The youths appeared to agree with most of the statements on the surveys. Statements like "I will continue to attend church after high school" and "I will practice my faith in Jesus after high school" were met with a majority of "Strongly Agrees" and "Agrees" which could indicate that these youths already held a position of commitment or at least reported that they held a position of commitment and dedication toward church after high school before the independent variable (discipleship, seminar and parental mentoring relationship) was implemented.

The only question that they did not appear to agree on was question 4 of the discipleship surveys, which states, "You can be a Christian and not attend church." This question was different than the other questions in its design. All of the other nine questions were designed with the ideal response being "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" where this question was designed with the ideal answer being "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" so it is not surprising that the youths answered this question in a more "Neutral" to "Disagree" manner.

In this study the youths answered on average of "Agree" to the statement "I will continue to practice my faith in Jesus after high school." In fact, the youths answered the lowest number rating of both surveys (fifteen points) on this question. Out of all ten questions, the teens most strongly agreed with this statement "I will continue to practice my faith in Jesus after high school" and yet they scored lower on the statement "I will attend Church after high school" with a score of seventeen to eighteen points. Even though these number differences may not be significant, it can be telling when added with the current trends on emerging adults leaving church after high school. Is it possible that these youths believe that a relationship with Jesus is important while not holding the same weight with their views on the importance of attending

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church? Is it also possible that well intended teens change their minds about their faith and church attendance as emerging adults, keeping in mind the pressures of the world and other commitments? A longitudinal study could help answer the question "Do teens who state that they are committed to church and their faith in Jesus during high school stay active in church and/or their faith after high school?"

A potential problem in this study was that the youths at Crosspointe Church answers on the pre-test and post-test were already on the low range, with most youths answering "Strongly Agree" to "Agree" on many of the questions. Even though the researcher asked the youths to be honest on the surveys they potentially answered the questions in a positive way, expecting any Christian to answer these type questions in a church setting. Even though the research discussed confidentiality, it is possible that these youths wanted to look good to the researcher by answering these questions in a favorable light. Further research may find it more effective to send anonymous surveys to youths in the mail and then have them return the surveys in a manner that promotes increased confidentiality.

Another potential extraneous variable to this study was the sample size of twelve. It may help to conduct this study with a wider range of youths to ensure reliability. A sample of twelve conservative youths at a conservative protestant church could be measured against youths from other denominations or a wider population base in general.

The length of the discipleship group (3 weeks) and the length of the seminar (1 hour and 30 minutes) could have also affected the results of this study. Most of the time of the discipleship group was spent on the concept of discipleship with less time being spent on educating the youths into the importance of maintaining church membership after high school (1 hour and 30 minutes). Further research may find more variance within the context of a longer discipleship

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program and more time allotted for education when it comes to the importance of church membership for youths after high school.

Only question 5 of the discipleship survey recorded a p-value of less than .05 showing a positive effect between the pre-test and post-test based on the discipleship class, seminar, and parental mentoring intervention. This could mean that there is a strong probability that the implementation of the discipleship class and/or the seminar and parental mentoring (independent variable) had a positive effect on the youths answering of question 5 on the discipleship survey (dependent variable). Discipleship was a key concept in the New City Catechism and the youths had been well versed with this concept and the need for discipleship as they worked through the information. This concept of Christlikeness and the importance of discipleship found in the New City Catechism appeared to stick with the youths as they went through the four weeks of the discipleship class.

Another aspect of this study researched at how parents' involvement in youths' discipleship would affect their choice to stay in church after high school. It was hypothesized that increasing parental discipleship would increase youth decision to stay in church after high school. The importance of parental involvement in youth ministry cannot be ignored. The ministry context for this study looked at the effectiveness of parental involvement in youth ministry. Parents were asked to spend 30 minutes a week discipling and mentoring their youth. The parenting/mentoring survey was the tool designed to measure the effectiveness of the parenting/mentoring relationship.

Each youth was asked to write down on their post-test parenting survey a "yes" if their parent spent 30 minutes a week with them reading the Bible and a "no" if the parent did not spend 30 minutes a week reading the Bible and mentoring them. According to the youths, only

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five of the twelve parents participated in discipling/mentoring relationship. According to the youths, only five out of the twelve parents spent 30 minutes reading the Bible with their youth for a week.

The parenting/mentoring pre-test vs. post-test surveys offered no significant changes. None of the pre-test vs. post-test scores showed any probability that the parenting discipleship relationship (independent variable) had an impact on the answers on the survey questions (dependent variable). The fact that less than half of the parents in this study actually mentored their youths for the four week period was certainly a factor, but other factors probably contributed to the lack of variance between the youths pre-test vs. post-test scores. Another extraneous variable was the length of time of the discipleship program. The four weeks the parents were asked to mentor and read the Bible with their youths may not have been enough time to influence the youths in a positive direction. Either way there needs to be more intentional discipling done by parents with their youths at Crosspointe Church. This intentional discipleship, when there is more commitment from parents, may lend to better outcomes. Also, if the survey tells us anything it tells us that some of the teens do not view their parents' walk with Christ as a thing to be modeled.

The youths scored the highest scores (most "Disagrees" or "Neutral" answers) on question 4: "I model my faith after my parents."

Question 4: I model my faith after my parents.

Pre-test: Three youths answered the question "Strongly Agree" with a score of three points, five youths answered "Agree" with a score of ten points, three youths "Neutral" with a score of nine points and one youth answered "Disagree" with a score of four points with a total of twenty-six points (the highest score for this survey).

Post-test: Four youths answered "Strongly Agree" with a score of four points, three youths answered "Agree" with a score of six points, four youths answered "Neutral" with a score of twelve points and one youth answered "Disagree" equaling four points with a total of twenty-six points (again the highest score for this survey).

It would be interesting to find out how the scores of the parenting/mentoring survey would have gone if more parents participated in the parenting/mentoring phase of the study. Again only five out of the twelve youths' parents mentored their youths.

Further researchers could conduct a research project focused on a discipleship class that involved both parents and youths being involved at the same time and in the same classroom, giving the parents no other option than to work with their youths in a controlled setting. Also it may help if further research allots for more time for youths to be involved in the parenting/mentoring relationship.

Conclusion of Interviews

The next phase of the research focused on gaining qualitative data by conducting interviews with Crosspointe's youth pastor and lead pastor along with both leaders of Crosspointe's emerging adult ministry, which is also called the college and career ministry.

These interviews were designed to help identify some concepts as it relates to emerging adults leaving the church and concepts to help keep emerging adults in church after high school.

During the interviews the youth pastor, the lead pastor, and the leaders of the emerging adult ministry of Crosspointe Church identified these themes as it associates with emerging adults leaving the church:

1. Do not find Jesus important.

2. Worldliness.

3. Losing interest.

4. No discipleship at home.

5. Demands of world.

6. Romantic relationships.

7. Discovering self.

8. The world.

9. Parents not involved.

Identifying key concepts can help Crosspointe Church's staff develop a more effective ministry program designed to aid in keeping emerging adults in church after high school. During the interview, the youth pastor, lead pastor and emerging adult ministry leaders have identified these concepts when it comes to keeping emerging adults in church:

1. Mentor them.

2. Answer their tough questions.

3. Teach biblical truths.

4. Show Christ at home.

5. Parents need to disciple them.

6. Parental discipleship important.

7. Biblical teaching important at church.

8. Getting involved in church ministry.

9. Mentoring.

10. Parents putting up protections to worldliness.

Final Thoughts

This research done in this project has given the leaders at Crosspointe some parameters to use when developing more effective discipleship programs to help keep emerging adults in church after high school. The discipleship program, however short it was, provided some insight into the importance of utilizing discipleship in a youth group ministry, and the effect that it may have when it comes to motivating youths to stay in church after high school. In this study the youths appeared to embrace and understand the importance of discipleship when they were indoctrinated to the subject for just three weeks.

The seminar conducted on the importance of church membership appeared to have less of an impact on the youths' answers. The hour and a half spent on the importance of church membership may not have been enough time. Further research should look at the concept of teaching youths about the importance of church membership for a more pronounced and extended period of time to find out if the concept will hold more weight when indoctrinated to the concept for more than just an hour and a half. The failure of most of the parents in this study to meet with their youths for 30 minutes a week could have impacted the survey on parental mentorship. The church may need to work to find ways to increase parental motivation when it comes to discipling their children.

Some of the key concepts in the interviews have included a need for increased biblically based discipleship tools for the church's youth ministry program, the need for the church to be more transparent when it comes to answering youths' tough questions and the need for adult to youth mentoring. Further research can look at the dynamic of mentorship, especially mentorship that is focused on building trust relationships forged in transparency between older members of

the church and the church's youths. The most important finding in this research appears to be the need to get more parents involved in the discipleship of their youths.

In of March 2021, Crosspointe Church's leaders met to discuss more effective ways to disciple church youths. Church leaders have been discussing ways to increase mentorship relationships between adults and teens, and also between teens and the church's grade school children. Leaders also discussed the importance of getting increased parental involvement in the discipleship of their youths.

If the emerging adult is caught between the world and the church, it appears as if the church is losing. These emerging adults are not only the future of the church, they are the future of the kingdom of God. As a church we are to preach the gospel to the lost world. The sad reality is that the lost world might just include the young people who sit in the pews and attend church youth groups every week. Developing more effective discipleship and ministry tools is not only vital for the church but it is vital for lost souls.

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 24, 2020

Gregory Bedner
Mark Plaza

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-343 Discipleship and Mentoring in Youth Retention at Crosspointe Church

Dear Gregory Bedner and Mark Plaza,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. **If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents**.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Off

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Church Leader Consent Form

Title of the Project: Discipleship and Mentoring in Youth Retention at Crosspointe Church

Principal Investigator: Gregory Bedner, Doctoral of Ministry Student, Liberty University School of Divinity

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a leader at Crosspointe Church involved in youth programs who understands Crosspointe Church's youth ministry program. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to find out if there is a positive connection between discipleship and mentoring and youth staying in church after high school. The hope is that this study will help develop more effective ways to help keep young people in church after high school.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Meet with the facilitator of study for 45 minutes to discuss emerging adults leaving church. This meeting will be focused on both the definition of the problem (emerging adults leaving the church) and the solution (whether discipleship and mentoring will work). This interview will be focused on gaining insight into why the church leaders feel emerging adults are leaving the church after high school. The interview will also include a collaborative effort to identify solutions to the problem of emerging adults leaving the church. The interview will utilize open-ended questions and active listening tools to gain subjective data from those involved. Concept and antecedent mapping will be used to measure qualitative data obtained in the interviews.
2. An eight question questionnaire will be used for the interview that is designed to utilize open-ended questions in unison with active listening. The questionnaire will be key to dialogue and active participation considered vital in "action research."
3. The interview will be video recorded using a video camera.
4. The verbal data will be written and measured using concept mapping to document themes and concepts.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits that participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are that you will be a part of a study designed to help Crosspointe Church and/or the Church as a whole develop more effective ways to help keep young people stay in church.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous. Participant responses will be kept confidential using codes. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews/focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

What are the costs to you to be part of the study?

To participate in the research there will be no cost to you.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Crosspointe Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the greg.bedner@yahoo.com or 734-731-7588. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Gregory Bedner. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 734-731-7588 or greg.bedner@yahoo.com You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Mark A. Plaza, at maplaza@liberty.edu

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Suite 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record the person named below as part of their participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

By signing this document, you are agreeing to the person named below participating in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I agree for the person named below to take part in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Printed LAR Name and Relationship to Subject

_____
LAR Signature   Date

Consent for Crosspointe Study

Title of the Project: Discipleship and Mentoring in Youth Retention at Crosspointe Church

Principal Investigator: Gregory Bedner, Doctoral of Ministry Student, Liberty University School of Divinity

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must have a child who attends Crosspointe Church's youth ministry program. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to find out if there is a positive connection between discipleship and mentoring and youth staying in church after high school. The hope is that this study will help develop more effective ways to help keep young people in church after high school.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. Parents will be asked to not only allow their youth to participate in the discipleship program as part of the youth group at Crosspointe Church, but will be asked to participate in a parental/mentoring program for one month.
2. I will ask them to attend Crosspointe Church youth group weekly for 5 weeks. This 5-week period of youth group will be focused on discipleship using the New City Catechism workbook.
3. I will ask them to fill out a confidential survey of 5 questions.
4. I will ask them to read and discuss the Bible with their parent(s) for 30 minutes a week.
5. The youth will participate in a youth seminar focused on the importance of church membership.
6. At the end of the study, I will ask them to fill out a second confidential survey consisting of 5 questions.
7. Parents will be asked to participate with their youths in a parenting/mentoring program that will involve parents picking one scripture per week and reading and discussing the scripture for 30 minutes.
8. Parents will be asked to talk with their youth about the importance of their own faith.
9. The youths will receive a logbook that documents both the time of discussion and discussion topics shared with parents. The youths will be responsible to document 30

minutes of scripture reading and faith discussions with their parents per week and the parent will be responsible to sign youth logbook.

10. A pre-test survey will be given to the students to take before the parenting/mentoring/discipleship training begins. Then a post-test survey will be given to the students after the five-week mentoring/discipleship period to measure any changes to commitment to church as a result of the parental/mentoring relationship.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits that participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are that you will be a part of a study designed to help Crosspointe Church and/or the Church as a whole develop more effective ways to help keep young people stay in church.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

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The researcher conducting this study is Gregory Bedner. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 734-731-7588 or greg.bedner@yahoo.com. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Mark A. Plaza, at maplaza@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I agree for the person named below to take part in this study.

_____

Printed Subject Name

_____

Printed LAR Name and Relationship to Subject

_____

LAR Signature   Date