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JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

HOW CHRISTIAN TEACHERS PERCEIVE THEIR ENGAGEMENT FACILITATES
SPIRITUAL FORMATION WITHIN AT-RISK MALE STUDENTS:
A CASE STUDY

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Stephanie Eldridge

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to understand the experiences of teacher's perception of their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk students at Southeast Christian Alternative School (pseudonym). This participating school is recognized by the North Carolina Department of Administration as a non-public school. The program uses a Wilderness Therapeutic approach to learning. Four essential elements were explored. Teacher's engagement concerning behavior management was assessed through processes that tactically managed disorderly conduct or acts of misbehavior. Implementation of any behavior plans or behavior models were applicable. Teacher's engagement concerning spirituality was assessed through active practices of spiritual disciplines and soul care. Teacher's engagement concerning Christian pedagogy was assessed through exhibitions of faith integrated in teaching and learning. This facet encompassed a personal cognizance of content, application, and methodology that developed the curriculum and the student (Kieser & Parsons, 2014). Lastly, teacher's engagement concerning Christian discipleship was assessed. Any demonstrations of transition beyond pedagogy toward application succor was applicable. The theory guiding this research was Fowlers' (1981) Stages of Faith. The assessment of the participants development of faith is essential to facilitating spiritual formation within their students. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to qualitative analysis was chosen as a useful framework to analyze the data. The research sample was identified as the group of teachers, administrator, and assistant director working within a Christian alternative school. Two of the primary themes revealed were *discuss the issues* and *straying away from God*.

Keywords: Christian alternative schoolteachers, at-risk students, spiritual formation, Christian alternative schools

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Dedication

Thank you Jesus! First and foremost, this dissertation is dedicated to You. Thank You for this opportunity. Your grace is truly sufficient (KJV, 2 Corinthians 12:9). This would not have been possible without You!

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom Charlotte and dad Lawrence. You were there through weary complaints, every worn-out laptop, and every dinner that I inevitably missed. Thank you both for your continued support! Love you always!

To my precious grandma Beverly Vernell, you spoke THIS over my life. Thank you for staying up all night with me every step of the way. I am forever indebted unto you. I love you so much! To you, I dedicate this work.

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A special thank you to the Christian Alternative School that graciously participated. Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to share your amazing ministry. Every participant represented Jesus well and without hesitancy shared their real life experiences. To the assistant director, you are so genuinely humble. I am appreciative of your willingness to ensure the data collection process was achieved. Thank you!

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List of Abbreviations

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

Children and Residential Experiences (CARE)

Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD)

Emotional Disturbances (ED)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Generation Z (Gen Z)

Individual Crisis Management Plan (ICMP)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

King James Version (KJV)

Local Educational Agency (LEA)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

New International Version (NIV)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Problem Solution Prevention (PSP)

Research Question (RQ)

Safe Crisis Management (SCM)

Screen-based Activities (SBA)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

Developing students in wholeness and faith is vital to Christian education. Students comprehend that God created the world, their involvement within the world, and likeness as the image of God (Hanscamp, 2019). The embodiment of Christian alternative schools includes engaging students that are spiritually broken and facilitating their spiritual formation. As a Christian teacher, to engage with students considers intentionally imparting faith, values, and morals. The adamant attention required of alternative schoolteachers, generally cannot be met within the public school system. Students deemed as unscrupulous, are often on a trajectory that leads to behavioral and academic failure. Unfortunately, these students are characterized as at-risk and must attend alternative schools due to such comportment (Carver & Lewis, 2010).

Some students are left with rancor involving the repudiation from a public school. However, when restoration is imperative, attending a diminutive school is healthier for some students. Spiritual formation implicates the transition from a life as it was previously known to the world to a life embedded through Jesus Christ. There is a radical change that can occur within a person's heart and they are never the same. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Students that attend Christian alternative schools typically have been expelled from public school. Some students have prolonged behavior problems which warrant a change. The sordid sinful nature that exists in children, irrespective to age, cannot be overlooked and must be rehabilitated. This transformation can only occur through knowing God. Within this transformational approach, Christian alternative schools provide a rare but unique experience.

Most students attend alternative schools because of their history of low achievement. Within the alternative school setting, students have the opportunity to experience a positive atmosphere that is conducive for learning in a productive manner. In as much, this setting encompasses an atmosphere where trust is developed and relationships are formed. “The alternative school must consider its physical environment, routines, activities, instruction, and opportunities that contribute to the quality in which students can succeed” (Holden, 2009, p. 47).

Alternative schools are regarded as adept in caring for students. The common concept of the atmosphere is kindled in the feeling of nurture and encouragement. The teachers are able to invest their time into each student. In fact, the “Quality of relationships and interactions between the teachers and their students determine whether the atmosphere is one of caring or one of stress” (Holden, 2009, p. 27). A caring environment is pertinent to children that have been abused, traumatized, or neglected.

The teachers seek to build up students as disciples of Jesus Christ in every aspect of the school. The Christian education provides multifarious elements for change. This can be presented through aspects of love and how to live within the world. Therefore, at-risk students must be introduced to God and as a result be transformed. According to Thurman (1996), if a person is not free in mind and spirit, they will remain confined:

Things on the horizon point logically to the transformation of a society. But one cannot co-operate with them because they are spiritually and intellectually confused. But, if the mind is free and the spirit unchained, one can work courageous and intelligently. (p. xvi)

Within Christian education the trajectory of spiritual formation is highly perceived. According to Pettit (2008), “Spiritual formation is the holistic work of God in a believers’ life whereby systematic change renders the individual continually closer to the image and actions of Jesus Christ” (p. 19). To aid transformation, Christian alternative schoolteachers must

intentionally engage students. This case study filled a gap in literature regarding how at-risk students are negatively impacted by the educational systems' failure to rehabilitate morally destructive liberalisms which hinders the ability to transform students to wholeness. It was imperative to understand how the experiences of Christian alternative schoolteachers' engagement within behavior management, spirituality, Christian pedagogy, and Christian discipleship were structured.

Chapter One was arranged to introduce the primary reasons students are considered at-risk. It delved the problem of the disadvantage when students are excluded from school because of misbehavior or academic incapacities. The primary purpose of this case study was to understand how Christian alternative schoolteachers' engagement facilitates spiritual formation in their students. The overall goal was to better understand how teachers impart or transmit healthy practices to deepen their student's faith and values. Through four research questions, real-life experiences revealed the processes utilized by the teacher participants. For clarity and solidarity between the researcher and reader, the definition of terms was provided. The significance of the study disclosed how the culture of all Christian schools can improve when spiritual wholeness is instilled within students. The data was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to qualitative analysis. Data collection instruments included surveys, interviews, document analysis and physical space observations.

Background to the Problem

While public schools attempt to provide a safe learning environment, the disruptive behavior of students can cause challenges. A student that is determined by the principal to be guilty of willful disobedience, profane language, or fighting can be suspended from school ("Safe Supportive Learning," 2019). Disruptive actions impact not only the student(s) involved,

but their peers that are attempting to learn, and their teachers' ability to effectively instruct the class. When a student has been suspended, they are at a detrimental disadvantage. They are excluded from school and are apt to get into more trouble outside of school.

In most cases, their parents must work and cannot abandon their daily workplace responsibilities. When students are suspended or expelled there are at least four recurrent outcomes. It is projected that students will experience a deferred graduation, repeat a grade, drop out, or enter the juvenile justice system (Duncan, 2014). When students experience any of these negative aspects, it is difficult to exert positive life outcomes. When students drop out of high school, they have reached their limit and do not deem it essential to progress forward. Generally, they have presumably "missed an excessive amount of school, earned poor or failing grades, and experienced an abundance of disciplinary problems" (Baker & Sansone, 1990, p. 181).

When a student has been expelled, they are no longer allowed on the school premises. Disorderly conduct, drug possession and violence typically result in students being expelled ("Safe Supportive Learning," 2019). The student is at a greater disadvantage once expulsion is mandated. When school officials have determined to expel a student from school indefinitely, other schools are not required to accept them for enrollment (Jarboe, 2011). These decisions are also difficult on the school leadership that must be involved. Leadership is not excluded from the challenges that exist. "There are cases of teachers being cursed at and principals being violently attacked. Amid such a backdrop, students are still expected to engage in learning" (Smith, 2011, p. 124).

Teachers have a significant role within the school system. Recurrently, teachers are tasked with planning effective lessons, interacting with parents, and providing daily behavior reports (Barton, 2018). Teachers must also maintain a high level of professionalism and behave

ethically. Great teachers innately desire students to succeed and are committed to helping them achieve their goals. Moreover, resilient teachers are attentive to their students' happiness, well-being, and life beyond the classroom ("Teachers Care," n.d.). Classroom conduct problems are a common issue of concern amongst most teachers. It is often the primary complaint involving their job (Pagliaro, 2011). However, conduct problems are handled differently amongst different types of schools.

There is a vast difference between Christian alternative schools as opposed to public schools or traditional Christian schools. In addition to the typical daily tasks, Christian alternative schoolteachers are tasked with accepting and assisting students with underlying challenges regarding mental health. "Mental health means striking a balance in all aspects of life: social, physical, spiritual, economic and mental" (Bellenir, 2010, p. 3). When individuals are whole, they are unwaveringly living through a healthy mental position. When individuals are broken, they can immeasurably experience disorders. It is amply common for students to experience mental health disorders, in particular anxiety. Many disorders remain poorly or to some extent fully not understood. "There are many theories about the cause of anxiety and other mental disorders, focusing on a variety of factors including genetic, biological, physiological, cognitive, and social factors" ("Living with Anxiety," n.d., para. 1).

The mental health of all students within any school should take precedence with concerns to positive behaviors. This facet of mental health refers to a cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being (Newman, 2020). These three elements are vital to a lifestyle of stability and healthiness before experiencing spiritual wholeness. "Teacher emotional support comprises of teachers' demonstration of genuine concern for and care about their students, respect for their students, desire to understand students' feelings and point of views, and dependability" (Ruzek et

al., 2016, p. 95). When compassion is expressed through a judgement free environment, it represents how God also displays compassion to the students regardless of their sinful nature.

Christian schools and teachers must recognize the overall aim of the inexorableness to obtain spiritual wholeness. Although students have autonomous behavior issues, it is the body, spirit, and soul that needs to be healed. This case study extends existing literature concerning the obstinate need to cultivate spiritual wholeness within students receiving a Christian education. Christian schools typically develop a culture of discipleship and utilize Scriptures to transform students (Evans, 2017). All Christian schools whether traditional or alternative, benefit from understanding how the engagement of teachers must be intentional to instill spiritual wholeness in students. This transformation to wholeness seeks to impede the soul of students. In most cases, especially within the Christian church, the term “soul” is stated concurrently with the term salvation (i.e., “saving souls”) and seldom to its transformation (Lanker, 2019).

Christian alternative schools are extremely rare resulting in the insufficiency of existing prototypes to emulate. Within the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), there were five Christian alternative schools listed with locations in North Carolina. One school no longer existed and was not an alternative school as classified by this case study. In addition, three other existing schools were not alternative schools as classified by this case study. Those four schools were labeled as alternative concerning an alternative option to public schools, but they did not accept at-risk students. Only one school was an actual Christian alternative school, it was also the only school listed that accepted at-risk students in grades 9-12 (“National Center for Education,” n.d.). There were other schools that did not apply to the overall scope of this study. For example, there were 133 traditional Christian schools and 22 secular alternative schools listed with locations throughout North Carolina (“National Center for Education,” n.d.).

The frequent conduct exemplified by at-risk students is contrary to Christian biblical teachings. The Scriptures attest to characteristics that reflect Christlikeness. The development of spiritual formation within at-risk students assist to build self-esteem, increase confidence, and obtain positive behavior (Branden, n.d.). Low self-esteem can cause changes in behavior. Low self-esteem can make children feel less intelligent because of their failing grades or they may become overly self-critical (“American Academy of Pediatrics,” 2009). To build a healthy self-esteem in students, Christian teachers must rely upon the Holy Spirit. Self-esteem is an inner authenticity that reveals how a student feels about themselves. Self-esteem is not only being aware of the possessed good qualities. It is recognizing that there are strengths and weaknesses within and accepting both (Bellenir, 2010).

These specific empowering personality traits are healthy concerning self-worth for any student. These elements are particularly essential to at-risk students because they normally lack in these specific areas. “Children with positive self-esteem feel confident and capable. When children are confident and secure about who they are, they are more apt to have a growth mindset” (Cunningham, 2019, para. 3-4). Students that have positive self-esteem value the sacrifice of availing themselves to proper study for their education. They understand that hard work will produce results and be met with success in the future.

A team of teachers (Soo, Lim, and Goh), leaders of Character and Citizenship Education within their respective schools, collaborated and developed a special in-school program. When conducting research, they discovered that low self-esteem negatively impacts a child’s self-confidence and social relationships (“Office of Education Research,” 2019). From a biblical stance, helping students understand God’s creation can provide them with a sense of self-esteem and confidence in knowing God created them. “God said, Let us make man in our image, after

our likeness” (KJV, Genesis 1:26). In addition, there is an understanding that God created them for good works. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (KJV, Ephesians 2:10).

The fruit of the spirit is a good illustration for students to model, as it exhibits all positive characteristics. “But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (KJV, Galatians 5:22-23). Spiritual growth is a process, similarly, fresh fruit takes time to develop. In the beginning stages, seeds must be planted in good soil, carefully nurtured, and continuously watered. Students must have this same experience of growth. Students must grow in knowledge of God through His Word and grow their love of God through knowing and obeying Him (Esahc, 2018).

The preliminary experiences of at-risk students result from not being planted; firmly grounded. The Christian alternative school serves as a Christian community that holds students accountable for their actions. Spiritual formation can be cultivated when the environment is conducive for alternative learning. It is deemed highly obligatory for Christians to pray and support others that need restoring. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (KJV, Galatians 6:1).

In the public school system, the South Carolina Department of Education office of Exceptional Children (2010) posed the question, “What training should be provided for teachers at alternative schools or programs?” The response stated the following:

These teachers should receive all the training provided in other schools in the Local Educational Agency (LEA), including how to make appropriate referrals to programs for students with disabilities under both the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Section 504. Training in the development and implementation of behavioral assessments and BIP’s [Behavior Intervention Plans] required by the IDEA should also be provided. (p. 5)

This is the suggested secular training within the public school system. In which it exposes the gap in literature and entails why this study is pertinent. The response is vague and does not constitute the depth of engagement necessary for Christian alternative schools. Within literature, the knowledge of training that should be provided for teachers within Christian alternative schools is void and non-existent. It may be determined that the suggested training is the same regarding the standard non-spiritual aspect that must be met, however, there must be a spiritual aspect included for the Christian alternative school. In which their facilitation is dual to include non-spiritual and spiritual elements.

Christian schools typically integrate biblical Christian worldview with standard academic assignments to implement faith and learning. Within Christian discipleship, spiritual formation is vital because it transforms the whole person. This transformation consists of the heart, mind, emotions, and body (Ricciardi, 2018). To transform at-risk students into wholeness they must learn within a different environment. The term disciple literally means learner (Harder, 1963).

All adolescents should be provided the opportunity to learn from a faith perspective. However, the way they learn may vary. For those that are not within the body of Christ or the traditional Christian educational setting, there must be a more realistic approach. Receiving God's Word through teaching and being obedient to the Word is Christian discipleship (Harder, 1963). Becoming obedient to God's Word and living it daily is the desired outcome for the at-risk student. Becoming not only hearers of God's Word but doers is the ultimate end result.

When at-risk students hear the true Word of God and start living that Word, their behavior begins to drastically transform. "While behavior is the outward result of the will, the will itself is the deliberate, intentional power that originates action" (Porter, 2019, p. 83). Behavior management is pertinent within the aspects of Christian community. The aim for all

Christians is to replicate their actions through the image of God that they were created in. The foundations of discipleship, spiritual formation, and sanctification all accentuate being conformed to the image of Jesus (Porter, 2019).

All Christian teachers should be equipped for behavior management to assist with implementing respectful and achievable discipline. Some schools implement BIP's to assist with managing student behavior. BIP's are utilized to help clearly define acceptable classroom behavior. BIP's detail the students' problematic behaviors, propose a plan for reducing the problem behavior while increasing the desired behavior (Christensen, 2005). Behavior plans allow the students to recognize their own behaviors and actions.

When students can fully recognize their own actions, they can begin to self-reflect. Another aspect of BIP's is to describe what behaviors are expected of the student and how they will be taught and supported (Middlebrooks et al., 2016). In all schools, students must be developed to some extent. Behavior management maintains a positive, productive classroom atmosphere conducive to learning (Cox, 2019). All Christian teachers should be adequately equipped in facilitating spirituality within students. When Christian teachers implement soul care, an inner "heart work" brings forth healing for the soul.

All Christian teachers should be adequately equipped in Christian pedagogy to understand adept teaching methods. "Christian teachers should practice Christian pedagogy to assist with teaching for transformation and not information transfer" (Etzel et al., 2017, p. 84). When teachers have limited time within the school year to teach curriculums, they tend to focus solely on providing information. Normally, the information is not retained within the student because it does not generally apply to them specifically. They cannot relate to the material. Christian pedagogy assesses life critically to suggest change when change is needed (Kieser &

Parsons, 2014). This is how Yount Disciplers' Model was executed, he recognized his students were not learning or being impacted. Yount (2010), mentions his experiences of teaching Sunday school through his personal life (p. 2).

Lastly, Christian teachers should be equipped in Christian discipleship. Jesus said, "Go and make disciples" (KJV, Matthew 28:19). The student is to become like the teacher, in hopes that the student will in turn disciple others. Although the term teacher is commonly known, it should be distinguished from the meaning of discipler. The term teacher refers to individuals that have been elected or licensed to teach within an educational organization. In which, teachers have specific teaching credentials and qualifications that must be met (National Education Association, 2022). Teachers are primarily concerned with disseminating required information related to their qualified subject matter.

Teachers focus on providing their students with information primarily necessary to pass their test. A teacher provides information so students know what is required for their lessons. Ultimately, the answers and various methods are the responsibility of the students to merely seek. The term discipler refers to teachers who have progressed beyond lesson transmission (Yount, 2010). Disciplers seek to devote their time and attention to ensure their students are equipped with the needed knowledge to have a lasting impact and to administer change. Overall, a discipler seeks to guide their students.

A discipler guides and supports students while demonstrating how to do it. For example, students can be advised on the need to pray. However, a true discipler walks alongside students and models how to pray. Discipleship is "the process of developing the life of God Himself, sustained by God as a new reality in those who have confidence that Jesus is the anointed One, the Son of God" (Steibel, 2019, pp. 47-48).

The role of the traditional Christian teacher and the Christian alternative teacher are vastly diverse. Christian schools distinctively desire to cultivate students into the image of God (Horton, 2017). Ultimately, Christian alternative schools are faced with a different approach. The traditional Christian teacher is reputed to teach students that are already Christians. In many cases, these students have a rearing that is attached to Christianity.

Students may have parents that have raised them in the Christian faith. They may already attend a Christian church. Therefore, their parents have enrolled them into a Christian school to align their education with their beliefs. The parents desire their children to be within a like-minded environment. These students are expected to be on their best behavior because they have been trained from a young age to understand the character of Jesus and Christlikeness.

In contrast, Christian alternative schoolteachers are engaging daily with students that may not attend church or have any religious affiliation. These students innocently may not intimately know who God is. It is difficult to know God apart from the Scriptures. If they have not been reared from a young age, the role of the Christian alternative schoolteacher is drastically unlike other Christian teachers in the educational setting. Their students brazenly acquire a sinful nature and need to gain a personal knowledge of God to experience the repentance of sin. “In Christian education, students are taught to know God and to imitate Him in His character and in His words” (Horton, 2017, p. 9).

The students that these Christian teachers engage are equated with the post-Christian movement. There is an underlying challenge because they are Generation Z, commonly identified as Gen Z, and known for neglecting church (Landrum, 2019). This aspect poses a conflict because Christian community (the body of Christ) contributes greatly to spiritual formation. Christian community is a significant necessity, being able to fellowship in like-

mindedness with other believers is God's will. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (KJV, Hebrews 10:25). Believers are to take joy in fellowshiping within the body of Christ. "But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other" (New International Version, 1984/1973, 1 Corinthians 12:24-25).

Support is available for the struggles of Gen Z if they attended church on a regular basis. Christian community through a Christian alternative school may be the only resource that at-risk students have that leads them to a relationship with God. The teachers may be the only Christian role models that students have that resembles the characteristics of God. Therefore, the teachers' engagement must be intentional if transformation is to occur. It is through the understanding of who God is, that Gen Z can better understand who they are. When adolescents can understand who they are, they can better understand their own personality and positively connect to others.

When adolescents are not within the Christian community, they can be fragile. During what is deemed a fragile stage in life, it is imperative that teachers adequately respond to the spiritual needs of adolescents (Spurr et al., 2013). If not, adolescents can easily be consumed with secular or unhealthy activities daily. 12% of Gen Z stated, "I used to go to church but it's not important to me anymore" (Barna Group, 2018). Many adolescents may claim the faith, but they are not active in the faith. Three out of five (61%) Christian teens stated, "I find God elsewhere" and 64% stated, "Church is not relevant to me personally" (Barna Group, 2018). When the church has become irrelevant to Gen Z, change is inevitable. "Data shows that 45% of Gen Z Americans rarely or never attend church while one in four attends weekly or more" (Deckman, 2020, para. 7).

For Gen Z, “atheist” is no longer a corrupt word. “The percentage of adolescents who identify as atheist is double that of the general population” (Barna Group, 2018, para. 3). This generation does not follow tradition and believe in anything or anyone on the basis of someone else. They desire to understand and obtain knowledge for themselves. “More than one-third of Gen Z (37%) believes it is not possible to know for sure if God is real” (Barna Group, 2018, para. 6). For this group, they cannot fully comprehend what they cannot tangibly see. “The non-Christians’ most popular answer makes sense (they’re not Christians, after all), but Christians’ reasoning is an indicator that at least some churches are not helping to facilitate teens’ transformative connection with God” (“Gen Z: Your Questions Answered,” 2018, para. 6).

In general, students are inimitable within their teenage years. Gen Z is comprised of more than 25% of the United States and is a post-Christian generation (White, 2017). Often adolescents automatically connect with the religion their parents introduced them to at a young age. If a child’s parents are Muslim, there are good chances they will grow up identifying with Muslim traditions and customs. If a child’s parents are not practicing Christians (i.e. attend church on a regular basis and deem faith important), there are chances the child will follow the same pattern. Christian teachers in general must seek to understand the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents. “Adolescents represent a crucial developmental transition from childhood to adulthood and can disclose a tremendous amount of knowledge about religious socialization and change in the life course” (Smith et al., 2002, p. 597).

There is often confusion between the terms religious and spiritual. The terms are frequently used interchangeably, but both elements are needed for wholeness within an individual. The goal of Christian education is to transform adolescents from being non-religious and non-spiritual to being active in Christian community and becoming believers (Long et al.,

2018). Adolescents are not always entirely opposed to religion; however, it is not their primary priority in life. Individuals will normally defend or advocate for matters that are most vital to them - but religion rarely is at the forefront for most adolescents. “More than half of Gen Z states that church involvement is either “not too” (27%) or “not at all” important (27%). Only one in five says attending church is “very important” to them (20%)” (Barna Group, 2018, para. 6).

Spiritual formation is similar to what is commonly known as sanctification. Sanctification yields the results of a Christian becoming holy, as God is holy. “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (KJV, 1 Peter 1:16). This is a command directly from God. “The goal is to awaken God in individuals’ hearts and in the world around them” (Dean, 2015, p. 18).

Sanctification involves the certainty in knowing that God provides the opportunity for a life sustained in unbiased ethical decisions not tainted by sin. This state or condition should be viewed as a “greater opportunity for demonstrating the power of God’s grace and not as a danger posed to ones’ salvation” (Stromberg, 2015, p. 427). Within the realm of sanctification, there is the process of conversion. “This process is not necessarily from the stage of immorality to salvation. However, it is when one is restored over a period from humanity to Christ-likeness” (Stromberg, 2015, p. 428).

Amongst the public school system and the church, some adolescents are being left behind, left out, and headed towards destruction. “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” (KJV, Luke 15:4). The sinner cannot be left behind but must be restored. When students are enrolled in a Christian school, it is the responsibility of the teacher to “motivate them to accept God’s gift of salvation, and to be a Christian witness and role model to help them grow in their faith” (“Trinity Academy,” n.d.).

Teachers are a vital asset to any school. It is commonly accepted that no school can exceed beyond the quality of its teachers (Jones & Watson, 2017). Within Christian schools, teachers should model a Christian life that sets an example for their students to successfully imitate. The Christian education cannot successfully exist without Christian teachers (Etzel et al., 2017). Emotions are a part of every human being.

Within spiritual formation it is vital to be emotionally healthy. “Students specifically with emotional disturbances (ED) have difficulty building interpersonal relationships, struggle to perform appropriate behaviors under regular circumstances, encounter depression, or develop fears related to personal or school-based problems consistently” (Hoge & Rubinstein-Avila, 2014, p. 297). Throughout the Scriptures, Jesus displayed various emotions. “Although the students have emotional difficulty, a good Christian teacher has the ability to meet everyday stress with emotional stability” (Houghton Academy, n.d., p. 1).

In most instances, at-risk students do not have a relationship with God. Therefore, the spirit-filled Christian teachers may be the only representation of God to the students. What the student knows of God is often what they witness in and through their teachers (Horton, 2017). The Christian school administrator is a leader who exercises authority over both the teachers and the students to serve the teachers in their service of the students. The chief responsibility of the administrator is to provide an environment most favorable for the communication of Christ to the students. “The teachers can function as teachers from God only as the administration serves their needs, and through them, the needs of the student” (Horton, 2017, p. 15).

Statement of the Problem

All students must be offered a quality education. In recent research, it was discovered that while public schools attempt to provide a safe learning environment, the disruptive behaviors and

actions of students can cause challenges (Long et al., 2018). Essentially, there must be alternatives for educational learning and for life transformation. It was recognized that Christian alternative schools provide the desired opportunity. Spiritual formation is vital for at-risk students because their demeanor must be transformed from negative to positive traits.

Current research was deficient concerning effective engagement from Christian teachers to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk students. Existing literature broadly comprised of general teachers' inability to handle technicalities concerning detrimental behavior issues of students. Although the zero tolerance policy was established within the public school system as a method to control discipline, general teachers continued to feel inadequate regarding the discipline of students (Gregory et al., 2009). All schools experience some measure of discipline difficulties. Conflicting behaviors constitute a range of school violence that is often unique to each school environment and typically a symptom of a host of other problems that entail school discipline (Losinski, 2014).

Conflicting behavior causes severe actions under the zero tolerance policy and students do not receive any further engagement from the teacher. At this point the student is considered at-risk and no further areas of literature are developed regarding engaged restoration or remediation. The zero tolerance policy frequently effects students with classroom behaviors of "yelling, excessively talking out of turn, disturbing peers, incessant arguing, lying, stealing, cheating, destroying property, non-compliance of directions, non-responsive to teacher feedback, and the paucity of assignment completion" (Ruddy, 2019, p. 27). Disorderly school behavior is broadly ranged from disrupting class to massive school shootings. "One week after a shooter opened fire at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, killing 22 people, at least five children brought guns to school" (Corbett, 2019, para. 1).

Schools experiencing behavior issues in all respects was inevitable. All schools have an obligation to maintain a safe learning environment for every student (Curran, 2017). Policies must exist; however, the existing policies destroy the future of students impacted by them. There was a dichotomy between the local school policies and the national expectations for schools. The Every Student Succeeds Act, commonly known as the ESSA, was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015. For the first time in history, it required that in America, all students be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in their future endeavors. The ESSA maintained an expectation of accountability and action to effect positive change in the lowest-performing schools for the students that were not making progress, and where graduation rates were consistently low (ESSA, 2000).

There was a time when public schools in America valued prayer at the beginning of the school day. “In 1962 and 1963 the Court declared that schools could not begin their days with a school-sponsored class prayer or devotional Bible reading, thus rejecting a characteristic feature of public education from its inception” (Greenawalt, 2007, p. 20). A public school teacher can be a professing Christian but cannot disciple students. “A teacher can be fired if he/she offends someone by praying aloud or teaching Scripture in a public school” (Givens, 2014, para. 1). There are students of various religions and the public school system does not want to be held liable based on teaching all students one religion, Christianity. “A causative factor for the low discipleship status of Christians relate to the fact that approximately 80 percent of children from U.S. Christian homes attend public schools where biblically based discipleship equipping is forbidden” (Cox & Peck, 2018, p. 245).

There is also existing literature concerning Christian teachers within Christian schools that adapt to discipleship models. In general, within Christian schools the Scriptures were

utilized to aid in the transformation of students. However, the traditional Christian school does not accept at-risk students. At-risk students' behavior drastically differs from students that attend a traditional Christian school. However, both students' must be formed to Christ-likeness. This created a research gap in literature concerning how at-risk students are negatively impacted by the educational systems' failure to rehabilitate morally destructive liberalisms which hinders the ability to transform students to wholeness. Christian teachers must identify and understand the underlying factors that cause brokenness. Christian teachers' knowledge within areas of students' brokenness is vital to understanding their student's haphazard conduct.

From school to the prison pipeline agenda is increasing. Students are being handcuffed before entering the high school grade level. Approximately 100,000 school-age youth are incarcerated in jails or prisons in the United States (Phillips, 2013). The national news often reports the local jurisdictions that arrest students because of their tantrums. Normally it is the school that has called the local police department to handle the student's behavior. Sending school-age youth to jail has the same consequences as the zero tolerance policy (1990). There is no remediation. Many become members of an uneducated workforce that cannot successfully compete for jobs in today's world, reducing their standard of living (Phillips, 2013).

To prevent these statistics, at-risk students must be provided an alternative education and an opportunity for salvation, in lieu of being left with no hope in life. Christian teachers must be intentional with their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation. A teacher can provide an abundance of information, but if the student does not internally change, there will not be any transforming results. "Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (KJV, 2 Corinthians 5:17). The old behavior must be crucified, and new life must arise.

This research regarding at-risk students was executed as a case study. The daily engagement of Christian teachers towards at-risk students was warranted. The case study approach allows in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in their real-life settings (Crowe et al., 2011). Christian alternative schools are unique because they welcome at-risk students and work towards students' remediation. The teachers can engage in-depth with students and disciple them through complex life issues. If the teachers' engagement is invalid or ineffective, spiritual formation may not occur. Christian alternative schoolteachers must understand the significance of their engagement or impartation and how it prepares and develops the positive transformations of their students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to understand Christian teachers' perception of their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk male students that attend a Christian alternative school. Spiritual formation was generally defined as the wholeness of God in a believers' life when total change commits the individual incessantly closer to the characteristics of Jesus (Pettit, 2008). To engage as a teacher was considered as imparting into or guiding students towards wholeness. The primary theoretical framework guiding this study was James Fowlers' (1981) Stages of Faith Development. "Faith results from interactions and experiences that individuals have in the various components that make up their lives and unites these components so that they can feel their lives are whole" (Fowler, 1981, p. 25).

Research Questions

RQ1. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding behavior management facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

The methodological design assisted to gain an understanding of how, or if, the teacher exhibited practices that established or monitored discipline. This aspect was incorporated by display of classroom behavior charts, classroom rules, earned activities and special privileges. It also assisted to gain an understanding of any behavior assessments that were utilized.

“Behavioral assessments are used to understand why students behave a certain way. It uses different methods to understand what is behind behavior challenges” (“Understood Team,” 2020). When misbehavior was identified through assessment, it could be measured and compared/contrasted to Christ-likeness. Upon which, progression into alignment with the appropriate Christian behavior could begin.

RQ2. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding spirituality facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

The methodological design assisted to gain an understanding of how, or if, the teacher exhibited active practices of spirituality through Christian spiritual disciplines. These spiritual disciplines consisted of prayer, devotion, and meditation. “Spiritual disciplines are activities that can assist an individual gain power to live as Jesus taught and modeled. Additionally, they allow us to do what we cannot do by willpower alone” (Ortberg et al., 2015, p. 20).

RQ3. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding Christian pedagogy facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

The methodological design assisted to gain an understanding of how, or if, the teacher exhibited certain teaching methods concerning faith being integrated in teaching and learning. According to Horne’s (1998) six essential features of teaching and learning (a teacher, students, a suitable environment, curriculum, educational aims, and methods) imply three questions (Kieser & Parsons, 2014, p. 6):

1. Content - what am I teaching?
2. Application - why am I teaching this?
3. Methodology - how will I teach this?

According to Etzel et al., (2017), education encompasses the curriculum and the student:

Therefore, the teacher should develop an awareness of theological anthropology's influence on pedagogy. Theological anthropology is the study of humanity, especially in relation to God. The way in which we view humanity will influence and shape the way we educate others. (p. 89)

RQ4. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding Christian discipleship facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

The methodological design assisted to gain an understanding of how, or if, the teacher exhibited strategies to make disciples. Jesus and Paul are examples that exude discipleship. Both poured into others and trained them in the Word of God. Discipleship is not achieved solely by memorizing Scripture verses, a transformation must take place (Gangel & Wilhoit, 1998).

Several teachers were pursuing or have obtained biblical certificates or degrees from a college program that assist in teaching the Scriptures. "Theological education must be directed towards the formation of the whole person towards an increasing conformity with the mind of Christ so that our way of praying and our way of believing will be one" (Horton, 2017). Christian teachers must awaken the Scriptures in the lives of students. At-risk students must be able to comprehend not only what it is to be a Christian, but must be effusively taught how to be a Christian.

According to Yount (2010), unless Bible teaching can move learners from isolated words to biblical concepts, teachers will see little growth in their students (p. 22).

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

1. Christian alternative school leaders facilitate a school culture conducive for spiritual formation.

2. Teachers educating students in a Christian school were practicing Christians. (i.e. practicing implied attends regular religious Christian services and demonstrated spiritual practices).
3. Teachers served as transformational leaders for students. The elements of engagement or impartation were intentional and beneficial for the students to emulate as they become leaders.
4. At-risk students experience mental health implications that were initiated by family situations, abuse, or unstable environments.
5. Students that attend a Christian school have no guarantee of spiritual formation.
6. Teachers witness consistent spiritual disciplines as beneficial to their students.

Delimitations of the Research Design

1. This research was delimited to a Christian alternative school, by this qualitative research's definition of *alternative*. A school that enrolled and accepted at risk students.
2. The location of the school was delimited to North Carolina. Schools in other states were not included in the case.
3. This research was delimited to a Christian alternative school that was accredited with current student enrollment under 500.
4. This research did not consist of all leaders within the participating school. This study was delimited solely to secondary education teachers, an administrator, and assistant director over the age of 18. Teachers, administrators, assistant directors with less than one year of teaching experience were not included within this study.
5. This research was delimited to participants classified as full-time, part-time, retired, volunteer, or student.
6. This research did not consist of any student interaction. Elementary or middle school grade levels were not studied. The students within the age range for elementary or middle school did not meet the criteria of secondary education for the purposes of applicable current Generation Z research information.
7. This research was delimited to Christian teachers that educate high school students, typically within the age range of 14-18 years old.
8. This research was delimited to the Christian teacher role within a Christian education system.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were provided to avoid ambiguity between this researcher and the reader.

1. *Alternative schools*: Schools established to address the needs of students that typically cannot be met in regular schools who are most often at risk of educational failure and negative life outcomes (Free, 2017, p. 501).
2. *At-risk adolescent*: Considered at risk of academic failure, substance abuse, early pregnancy, juvenile justice involvement, truancy, and early school dropout (Free, 2017, p. 503).
3. *Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)*: A BIP is a written plan that teaches and rewards good behavior. The plan lists the problem behavior, describes why it is happening, and put in place strategies or supports to help (Morin, 2020, para. 1 & 2).
4. *Behavior management*: Managing behavior to focus on maintaining order occurs through behavior management. This can occur through classroom rules, schedules, or reprimand (Behavioral Management, n.d.).
5. *Christian alternative school*: A school that provides a Christian education founded on faith, community, and opportunity for students who experience difficulty within the public school system.
6. *Christian discipleship*: Believing the message of Christ, learning to be more like Christ, and teaching others within the same manner (Sowell, 2022).
7. *Christian pedagogy*: Teaching that encourages teachers and their students to seek the Kingdom of God. The term pedagogy was derived from the Greek paidagogo, a compound of paidos (child), and agogoa (one who leads or guides). During Ancient Greek times, pedagogy was known as leading the child in wholeness as they experienced growth. (Cairney, 2018)
8. *Engagement*: Active participation of teacher involvement with students by impartation of healthy practices that cultivate wholeness.
9. *Expulsion*: The student is indefinitely excluded from school and cannot return (“Safe Supportive Learning,” 2019). The student is at a disadvantage because they are placed outside of their learning environment.
10. *Long-term suspension*: Within a public school indicates a student is excluded for more than ten school days (“Safe Supportive Learning,” 2019). When a student is suspended, they can return to school after the allotted timeframe.

11. *Spirituality*: An experience that brings a person into contact with the divine. The aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, self, others, nature, and to the sacred (Delagran, n.d., para. 3 & 4).
12. *Spiritual formation*: The holistic work of God in a believer's life whereby systematic change renders the individual continually closer to the image and actions of Jesus Christ (Pettit, 2008, p. 19).
13. *Transformational leadership* (1978): Leadership that occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Wren, 2013, p. 101).
14. *Zero-tolerance policy* (1990): A school district policy that mandates predetermined consequences or punishment for specific offenses, regardless of the circumstances, disciplinary history or age of the student involved (Findlay, 2008, p. 104).

Significance of the Study

Student misbehavior is one of the most highly cited concerns in public schools recurrently. Conduct issues often lead to negative student-teacher relationships. "Valuable time is often wasted when conduct issues exist because less time is spent on academic instruction and potentially affect student mental health, well-being, and academic skill development" (Griffiths et al., 2019, p. 1494). At-risk students deserve an opportunity to change. The criterion regarding student enrollment for alternative schools: "Meeting some form of at-risk criteria, being suspended or expelled from a regular school, being disruptive in the general education environment, and not achieving success in a traditional school setting" (Lehr et al., 2009, p. 26).

All the requirements to enroll in a Christian alternative school result in the need for inner healing. "It is an inner process that reflects a spiritual transformation of the entire person" (Emmons, 1999, p. 19). What is truly in one's heart will reflect in their behavior and actions. "The man who loves God supremely loves everything that God loves and hates everything that God hates. This love being in the heart and filling all its capacities and engrossing all its powers" (Stromberg, 2015, p. 432).

The negative behavior within at-risk students hinders their spiritual formation. This case study was urgent to the entire school system, the private and public sector. Schools must implement effective strategies and policies that result in wholeness. Suspension or expulsion only result in rejection and termination, not remediation. Exclusion from school discloses social exclusion and leads to destructive activities. Exclusion causes increased mental, physical, and emotional problems within students (Coleman, 2015).

The theoretical framework that guided this case study was Fowlers' (1981) Stages of Faith Development theory. This theory was significant to this case study as it revealed how individuals mature through the stages of faith. When teachers are aware of the problems their students are experiencing, comprehending the elements of this theory can result in the ability to sort out faith stage transitions from other life crises (Andrade, 2014). When teachers understand the stages of faith, they understand that faith is not always found in religion.

The utilization of effective strategies enhances positive teacher-student relationships, improve school culture, and positively transform the lives of students. School administrators must be attentive to the overall needs of their teachers and students. When teachers are not properly trained or qualified for the schools' climate of transformation, the school cannot be effective. Aside from the professionalism and spiritual preparation of Christian teachers, knowing the uniqueness of the students and proficiency of the subject to be taught as well as of the methodology of its presentation are essential for effective teaching (Horton, 2017).

Summary of the Design

This qualitative intrinsic case study examined teachers within a Christian alternative school. "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). The rationale

for this design method was to understand the experience of Christian alternative schoolteachers' perception of how their engagement facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students. This factor was of importance because the teachers' own perspective was examined. There are three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This researchers' specific case study utilized the intrinsic type. This type was utilized because this researcher was ultimately concerned with the teachers and their experiences. The teachers were the individuals that provided the answers to understand how their engagement was perceived to assist students. The Christian alternative schoolteachers were the subject of study and the primary interest.

The key concern of this intrinsic case study was to describe how, or if, Christian alternative schoolteachers' real-life processes are credible. This study was achieved through various data collection methods. According to Yin (2009), "The qualitative researcher conducts data collection methods from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts" (p. 98). Surveys were implemented in the beginning phase to recruit a population of individuals that later became a purposive sample of teacher participants invited to contribute to the study. Merriam (1998) suggests that "Purposive or purposeful sampling usually occurs before the data are gathered" (p. 66). The surveys encompassed basic screening information that provided the researcher ample information to further proceed with the intended target audience.

Screening surveys were implemented to assure the potential teacher participants would meet the criteria of the study. The criteria for the teachers stated they must be over the age of 18 and be employed within a secondary education Christian alternative school. Potential participants must also have been in the teaching profession at least one year and must be classified as either

full-time, part-time, retired, volunteer, or student. The principal data collection methods this study applied were surveys, interviews, document analysis and physical space observations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two explores the theological and theoretical framework for this study. This chapter examines several fundamentals that facilitate spiritual formation. Jesus Christ is the epitome of Christian representation for all of mankind to model. Within spiritual Christian leadership the goal is to bring individuals to Christ-likeness (MacArthur, 2005). The theological framework was guided by principles that explore the doctrines of hamartiology, Christology, and soteriology. These doctrines were exclusively germane to the comprehension of sin, Christ, and salvation regarding the experience of spiritual formation within at-risk students.

Fowlers' (1981) Stages of Faith Development theory was the primary theoretical framework for this case study. Fowler (1981) developed six stages that individuals experience as their faith matures. Other general theories that build and form a context for spiritual formation were examined. Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory was a relevant framework for this case study, as it explored how people learn from observing others. Skinners' (1937) Operant Conditioning was examined to assess how behavior is modified through use of rewards and punishments. Piaget's (1932) Moral Development Theory was explored to assess the stages that children understand morals. Also Burns' (1978) Transformational Leadership Theory was examined in relevancy to the importance of teachers being role models. This chapter revealed the gap in literature concerning how at-risk students are negatively impacted by the educational systems' failure to rehabilitate morally destructive liberalisms which hinders the ability to transform students to wholeness.

Theological Framework for the Study

The theological foundation for this case study was supported by understanding that sin separates individuals from God which hinders spiritual growth. “Spiritual formation is the regeneration work of the Holy Spirit upon the redeemed human heart which produces the fruit of the character of Jesus Christ” (Swindoll, n.d.). Therefore, anything that is contrary to what God sanctions is sin. Sin causes a disorderly spirit which produces adverse outward behaviors that must be combatted. When overtaken by sin, a new birth which is spiritual is inevitable.

It is normally easy to give into the sinful pleasures of life. However, it is often difficult to discipline the body and command it to live Christ-like. Discipline within any regard is never easy, even for the proclaiming Christian. Paul understands how difficult it is even as an apostle to have discipline. He understands how the body can control the flesh if not placed under subjection. Paul’s desire was for his spirit to have control over his flesh. He states, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (KJV, 1 Corinthians 9:27).

At-risk students should be afforded the opportunity to learn discipline. Discipline is primarily learned within the home from parents. Within Christian community, a deeper level of discipline is learned from Christian leaders. At risk-students are taught love through a genuine relationship with God and how to receive their free gift of salvation. “To love them does not mean to condone their way of life” (Thurman, 1976, p. 84). There is a difference between loving the person but not loving the sin that causes the struggle. Alternative teachers can assist with building students’ faith. Becoming a Christian is an act of faith and faith is necessary for salvation (“Salvation,” 2018). The following concepts can apply to all Christian teachers and all students receiving a robust Christian education.

Christian Spiritual Formation

Christian spiritual formation is when believers progress into unity with God and their souls are nurtured and their character is changed to Christlikeness. Spiritual formation is also fostered through the mentorship and impact of people. For example, teachers influence their students, parents influence their children, and similarly pastors influence their congregational members. Formation takes place as the student is being influenced because they are being established and molded. Christian spiritual formation can be described as formation within the Christian faith, in the context of relationship with God through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

To gain a better understanding of the purpose and the position of spiritual formation, the characterization of the term was examined. James Bryan Smith and Jeffrey P. Greenman are well-recognized for their contributions to the study of Christian spiritual formation and have provided comprehensive definitions. These definitions entail how it is specifically the Holy Spirit that draws an individual towards an intimate relationship with God. According to Carlson (2019), James Bryan Smith defines Christian spiritual formation as the following:

The process of being transformed into the image of Christ, through a relationship of intimacy with God, by the power of the Spirit, in order to live a good and beautiful life of faith, hope, love, joy, and peace - a life that will be a blessing to oneself and to others yet will glorify God now and for all eternity. (para. 6)

This definition states there is a point when an individual changes to the likeness of the image of Jesus. This occurs after obtaining a close relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. After which they can live a life that uplifts. This life causes the individual and others to be blessed and God will get all the glory forever more. It is the life that exhibits transformation.

Jeffrey P. Greenman defines spiritual formation as “our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world” (Carlson, 2019, para. 6). This definition

states spiritual formation is the endless recollection to the knowledge that it was by God's grace that individuals are molded into Christlikeness, through the Holy Spirit, within the body of Christ for the good of the world. Each definition encompasses the same key underpinning within its own lucid interpretation. Spiritual formation at its best is individuals being simultaneously amalgamated and molded into Christlikeness through the Holy Spirit. Within Christian education the goal for students being formed and whole entails healthiness in aspects of the body, spirit, and soul.

Self-control is an undisputable foundation for godly behavior. "It is motivated by a good heart and the knowledge of an individuals' tendency to act according to their own evil desires" (Pettit, 2008, p. 145). Being disciplined and able to control their actions is a major factor of conversion for at-risk students. Becoming healthy within the spirit, is having a change of heart. True change begins at the foundation of the heart. To speak of the spirit is to speak of a person in the depths of their being as to who they really are. Regardless of attending a traditional Christian school or an alternative Christian school, students must examine their own heart. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:" (KJV, Psalm 139:23).

To be Christian is to be changed from the inner posture of the heart through the work of the Holy Spirit. To be spiritual is to have an inner working of the heart that draws a person close to God. This inner working withdraws individuals from a sinful life, to which eventually transcends in a positive outward behavior. "The spiritual Christian person is clearly the one who evaluates their life in light of the teaching that comes through the Spirit of God" (Evans, 2017).

Students that malevolently misbehave in an incessant manner, are generally not professing or devout Christians. In which, they are not attending church services regularly and do not have an intimate relationship with God. At-risk students have a sinful nature that must be

contended with. In most cases, it is the outward behavior of at-risk students that incurs quandary. Behavior is only a fraction of the total problem to be rectified. Normally when students are constantly misbehaving there are underlying internal problems or issues of the heart.

Even at a young age, some students in certain areas of their lives have experienced trauma or hardships. These adversities have caused their spirits to become wounded and broken. When their spirits have become broken, they can become purposefully mischievous. Acting out of character is seen through various acute behaviors. For this reason, spiritual wholeness is a primary focal point. “What has been deformed by the ugliness of sin (the whole person) must now be reformed according to the ideal image of perfect humanity found in Jesus Christ” (Pettit, 2008, p. 42).

There are several aspects of spiritual formation that Christian teachers can facilitate. However, only the Holy Spirit can dwell within a person to truly transform them. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (KJV, 2 Corinthians 3:18). Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, spiritual formation cannot occur (Pettit, 2008).

Growing closer to God often causes individuals to move further away from sin. God is so pure and holy that sin taints everything that is offered unto Him. Spiritual disciplines or practices such as prayer, worship, meditation, and acts of service are the tools that help individuals to grow closer to God. Communicating with God and spending time in His presence cultivates a cohesion between the individual and God.

According to Romans 6:12-14 sin should not have total control over the flesh:

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as

instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (KJV)

When Adam and Eve sinned, they became distant from God. They were in the same physical space; however, their hearts were far from God. They instantly attempted to hide from Him because of their guilt and shame. “Humanity has been spiritually separated from God, separated from themselves, separated from their fellow human beings (hostility), and separated from the ruling relationship they were intended to have over nature” (Pettit, 2008, pp. 41-42). Adam and Eve were given total control of all territory before the Fall. However, they no longer had dominion because of their willful disobedience. In the same way that Adam and Eve tried to hide after they sinned, is how mankind today tries to hide. Even today, sin keeps mankind from becoming committed Christians. “When we recognize the depth of our sin and place our trust in the finished work of Christ on our behalf, we become a Christian” (Pettit, 2008, p. 43).

When at-risk students are guided by the Christian teacher and can delve into the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit can begin a transforming work in their hearts. “Spiritual formation is divinely enabled by God through three essential resources: God’s Word, God’s Spirit, and God’s people” (Pettit, 2008, p. 45). Christian education affords ample opportunity for each of these three resources. Those on a spiritual formation journey seek to develop their faith and belongingness within the Christian community (Horan, 2017). At-risk students’ faith can be cultivated and acceptance can be derived within Christian alternative schools. The faith factor is critical to the life of all Christian teachers and their students. The teachers must have the faith to believe their students can be changed regardless of how drastic the change. The students must have the faith to believe God can change their hearts. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (KJV, Hebrews 11:1).

The heart is deceitful by nature. It takes faith to die to sin and it takes faith to have a pure heart (Byers, 2008). There are Scriptures that confirm both instances. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (KJV, Romans 6:6). The Book of Acts speaks of having a pure heart by faith. It states, “And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (KJV, Acts 15:8-9). Therefore, it is certainly possible for at-risk students’ hearts to be purified when they become new creatures.

Christian Education

Schools in general are concerned with the well-being of students after high school. Christian schools desire that students have been well-equipped to handle life situations and the challenges that will be experienced daily in a Christian manner. According to Etzel et al., (2017), “Christian education is in crisis. It is not healthy and vital as it exhibits the fatal flaw of having no clear purpose” (p. 9). Within Christian education there is an involvement that is more than content derived. There is a vigorous shaping of character that further develops and constructs a conviction that is governed by a Christian worldview as it is revealed from God. If Christian education is indeed flawed, at-risk students are not being molded or further developed.

According to Dockery (2012), students receiving an education are privy to more than information solely:

Education involves much more than the passing on of content to students. It also means the shaping of character, and it moves toward the development and construction of a convictional way of seeing the world by which we can see, learn, and interpret life from the vantage point of God’s revelation to us. (p. 23)

Christian teachers carry the burden of maturing their students in the faith and the Christian life of Jesus Christ. Traditional teachers have become accustomed to teaching subjects

that are formula based. In math one plus one will always be two. In English it will always be suitable to meet the subject verb agreement requirement. However, it takes faith to understand how one God equates to the three persons of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christian teachers must rely upon the Holy Spirit to penetrate the hearts of their students to have the faith to understand what they cannot see.

All students, whether they are Christian or not, are encouraged to grow and mature. “Students through the work of the Spirit in their lives, might come to understand something of the love of God through Christian community where the ‘virtue of selfishness’ is replaced by the virtues of grace, compassion, and humility” (Pietsch, 2018, p. 108). Grace, compassion, and humility are the true core of Jesus Christ. He extends grace through His compassion as a humble servant towards mankind. “As Christians foremost, and teachers within Christian education, there is the responsibility to enhance positive values and behaviors that are biblically based, theologically sound, and faithfully lived out” (Hynson & Krau, 2016, p. 7).

As within the home, children must be matured daily. They must be taught how to behave under the authority and leadership of their parents. “If children are to have Christian faith and live the Christian life, they will need to be nurtured in that faith and life. That cannot be done adequately outside a community of faith” (Morgenthaler et al., 2014, p. 245). The public school system does not tolerate harsh disorderly misbehavior and excludes the students that cause disruption. The Christian alternative education system embraces and affirms the student not where they currently are, but who they will become in Jesus Christ.

Students must feel as though they belong. In many cases, the public school systems’ use of the zero tolerance policy instills a sense of rejection within at-risk students. Most have problems within their homes because of their behavior. When students misbehave within the

school environment, they develop more problems. At this point the chances are minimal that they would enter their communities or make a greater contribution to society as a whole.

Overall, Christian education incorporates the Bible and explores the Scriptures just as implemented within the body of Christ, the church. Students who have enrolled in Christian schools have “teachers who are in a position to help them develop their relationships with Christ and grow in their relationship with Him” (Moore, 2014, p. 256). Christian education should afford the opportunity for students to learn standard academics and incorporate a biblical aspect within those subjects. Christian schoolteachers are able to achieve this goal by being intentional in their classroom management and personal spiritual growth (Moore, 2014).

Within the public school system, teachers have consistently expressed concerns regarding general education students and at-risk students being within the same classrooms. From the perspective of the teacher, the behavioral disorder that most at-risk students have is difficult to control in front of the entire classroom and makes situations worse (Mader, 2017). The experience within Christian education is different. Christian teachers understand what the Bible says about unruly and uncontrolled behaviors and have learned how to best deal with them. The experience of faith in God, is an important aspect of Christian education. Unlike the public school system, faith can be developed within a Christian school.

While it is real and authentic in its own unique way, the faith of the young child looks different from the faith of adolescence and adulthood. Nurturing children’s souls requires an alternative approach as Jesus Himself modeled. Children, created by God in His own image, are being drawn to Him with authentic faith that is developmentally appropriate to them. It is understandable that teaching, in the traditional sense, is not always the best option for young children (Morgenthaler et al., 2014). This is the exact understanding that Fowler (1981) states.

Christian alternative schools purposefully affirm students. The students are not welcomed from a false sense as an isolated individual, but as an active correspondent alike in Christian community. When growing in faith, “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (KJV, 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Christian Leadership

There are numerous definitions that attempt to define what leadership truly is. Leadership is a progression of social influence, that increases the attempts of followers, towards the success of a goal (Kruse, 2015). Christian leaders have the responsibility to be accountable of their own actions, as well as others. This aspect describes the nature of the Christian teacher. The Christian teacher is the Godly leader represented within Christian education.

Christian schoolteachers are the epitome of Godly role models. The Christian teacher is to the school, what the pastor is to the church. Christian teachers have the prodigious responsibility to lead others. “A Christian leader is called by God to lead; leads with and through Christ-like character; and demonstrates the functional competencies that permit effective leadership to take place” (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 32).

Christian teachers must lead students to a better understanding of life from a Christian worldview. “Leading first through the example of their lives and then through their teaching” (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 39). Christian teachers should not take modeling the Christian life before students casually. Teachers must be open with their students as they seek to understand how to be faithful during the times of adversity. Experiencing tribulation is when students can understand the real-life of a Christian.

God is the true example of a teacher and the model that should be followed. A Christian teacher can never be steered in the wrong direction modeling after God. The primary function of the teacher is to “relate to the Master Teacher in such a way that he or she becomes God’s agent in the plan of redemption” (Knight, 2006, p. 213). If salvation is an expected outcome for Christian students, teachers are to be intentional in helping students in the process of spiritual formation. Teachers embed spiritual principles within the daily routines and activities in their classroom management, pedagogy, and personal disciplines. Classroom management is pertinent because it is the tool for maintaining the appropriate behavior from students during class. According to Kratochwill et al. (2010), classroom management can be effective regardless of the subject or the grade level in the following ways:

- Establishes and sustains an orderly environment in the classroom.
 - Increases meaningful academic learning and facilitates social and emotional growth.
 - Decreases negative behaviors and increases time spent academically engaged.
- (para. 1)

A child’s faith can be developed through nurturing the child in developmentally appropriate and dynamic ways. Teachers aid in faith development of children by constructing a relationship that is formed, maintained, invested, and committed to nurturing the child. This relationship is in terms of sponsorship, which is defined as: the way a person or community provides affirmation, encouragement, guidance, and models for a person’s ongoing growth and development (Fowler, 1981).

Christian leaders that are disciples can walk alongside unbelievers because they know the journey and can provide direction. Christian leaders can be trusted and are committed to nurturing unbelievers through challenges. Accountability can be provided when difficult situations arise to assure the correct path is obtained. Christian leadership and Christian

communities can provide models and experiences in education that parallels spiritual direction to deepen the spiritual formation needed for further growth (Studzinski, 1985).

Within Christian leadership it is always the hope of the teacher that students will follow their guidance. “The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master” (KJV, Luke 6:40). Christian teachers desire their students to model after them, as they model after Christ. “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (KJV, 1 Corinthians 11:1). In this Scripture verse, Paul directs the church of Corinth to follow his guidance as he follows the direction of Christ.

Teachers have the important commission of guiding students in their spiritual formation, which is the process through which an individual accepts Jesus Christ as Savior and continually becomes more like Him. The classroom environment is either at one end of the spectrum or the other. The teachers are either in control of the classroom and there are minimal behavior issues, or the teacher cannot control the classroom and the behavior of the students is ramped and learning is difficult to obtain (Haydn, 2012).

One of the main functions of a Christian leader is to make disciples. The Great Commission states, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (KJV, Matthew 28:19-20). It takes integrity to make disciples, other leaders. A person is not a leader if they do not have positive influence over others. Any follower must trust their leader to have any influence over them.

Apostle Paul is a great example of a Christian leader. His primary objective was to teach others the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He traveled throughout many cities to reach masses of people.

He also successfully mentored others, as Timothy emulated his teachings. When a Christian teacher follows Christ, they are striving to live a life worthy to be followed. The works of the Christian teacher today should be no different.

All of humanity was created by God. All human beings are creatures of God, made in the image of God (Small, 2018). Over time, there have been studies that attempt to assert science to explain God's and creations existence. "Humanity is to be understood as having originated not through a chance process of evolution, but through a conscious, purposeful act by an intelligent, infinite person" (Erickson, 1998, p. 436). Even though some believe that science and religion are intertwined, the Scriptures give full account of God's handiwork. God reigns in full authority and dominion.

The image of God is essential to humanity. "Whatever sets humans apart from the rest of creation, they alone are capable of having a conscious personal relationship with the Creator. Humanity can know God and understand what He desires of them, love, worship, and to obey their Maker" (Erickson, 1998, p. 436). Jesus was made flesh as the visual representation of God the Father. "The new theology supports "Christological" or "eschatological" interpretation of the divine image in humankind. The God-man assuredly exhibits the divine intention for persons, and the glory of redeemed humanity will consist in full conformity to Christ's image" (Elwell, 2001, p. 592).

Imago is the word meaning image. Regarding imago, "The Protestant Reformers comprehended mankind's original position of raw purity. In this case, "Genesis 1 and 2, are where Adam represents moral and spiritual fellowship with God" (Elwell, 2001, p. 592).

Although humanity was created in the image of God, they were not made in the pure image of

God parallel to Jesus. “Whereas, the *imago* is then no longer conceived as a state, but as a relation - since an original state of Adamic purity is set aside” (Elwell, 2001, p. 592).

Christian leadership should be instinctive transformational leaders. The life of the Christian leader should result in positive transformations that inspire at-risk students. Individuals should strive to put to death the old man, so that the new man can be revived (Small, 2018). As the new man is revived, the true image of God will be represented as originally intended. Bearing a healthy relationship with God leads to healthy relationships with others. Primarily, for individuals to comprehend who they are as human beings, they must first understand who God is. When Christian teachers and students collectively represent the *Imago Dei*, a school culture where spiritual formation can reside is created.

Christian Discipleship

Christian teachers in the role of Christian leadership are placed by God to protect, lead, and guide His people. As Christian leaders and those who have matured in the faith, there is a responsibility to help guide children through life. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (KJV, Proverbs 22:6). Children should be trained from a young age to be respectful, pray, read the Bible, attend church, and have reverence for God. This is the reason transformational leaders are valued and warranted within the Christian school.

Even if children depart, they have a foundation and can be restored like the prodigal son. “Mankind’s separation not only affects their relationship with God, but also their relationships with others and even the knowledge of self” (Hilgeman, 2010, p. 34). There are times when individuals become unbalanced or make the wrong decisions in life. In Christianity this is known as backsliding. “If a person states they have no sin, they have deceived themselves, and the truth is not in them” (KJV, 1 John 1:8).

All have sinned. All beings, throughout childhood to adulthood have once been immature, from either a cognitive or spiritual stance. Christian leaders understand that God can cleanse anyone of their sins. With such understanding there is the realization of the relationships with others, however, most importantly the necessity of a relationship with God. However, this relationship cannot be produced where sin abounds. “As the New Testament clarifies, sin prevents people from developing as God intends - in fact, it damages people so badly that they are much farther from God’s standard after their “fall” into sin than before it” (Kilner, 2015, p. 93).

God is still God, perfect in all His ways. There are times of disobedience towards God. “Sin has badly damaged human *attributes*, and restoration in Christ is needed. But sin has not damaged God’s *image* - which is why the New Testament only says that *humanity*, not God’s image, needs restoration” (Kilner, 2015, p. 113). Christ who was sinless, died for everyone’s sins. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (KJV, 1 Peter 3:18).

Christian discipleship is not solely instructing an individual on what to do but helping and guiding them to do it. Yount Disciplers’ Model presents the different stages to guide disciples. Discipleship is a “personal” call, not an abstract profession, nor a program, but a daily living with Jesus Christ. True discipleship is being committed to reading daily devotions, praying without ceasing, reading, and meditating daily on the Scriptures, and being thankful for God’s daily presence.

Within the scope of discipleship there must be a regard for Matthew 18 and dealing with conflict. In this text the disciples were having a disagreement. Matthew 18:1 (KJV) states, “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of

heaven?” In this instance, the disciples were fighting over position. Matthew 18:15 (KJV) states, “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” This Scripture acknowledges the need to address the person that has caused the offense, by going directly to them. In this way attempting to resolve the conflict. If not reconciled, the Scripture instructs to involve another person to assist with the issue. Matthew 18:17 (KJV) states, “And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

When differences develop between Christians, some individuals attempt to take matters into their “own hands” and bypass the biblical process of solving problems. A Christian school is made up of people: parents, administrators, teachers, and students. Like any other collection of earthly mortals, the people associated with a Christian school have the potential for misunderstanding, disagreement and even wrongdoing. Nevertheless, it is God’s will that we live and work together in harmony. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (KJV, John 13:34-35). Because of our human nature, we may at times irritate others, resulting in misunderstandings or strong disagreements.

Discipleship assists in becoming sanctified. When reading and meditating on the Word, students will begin to have a repented heart. They will gradually stop misbehaving and start acting according to Christlikeness. “Our misunderstanding of Christian salvation stems from our inability to see its manifold aspects. One will look at salvation rather one-dimensionally, as if salvation merely deals with the removal of guilt, or the granting of eternal life” (Kuligin & Yarbrough, 2015, p. 18).

Salvation entails more than removal of ones' sins or ensuring one will make it to heaven. Believers must repent and have faith. Repentance and faith are necessary for salvation ("What is Repentance," 2016). One must turn from their wicked ways and turn to God. This is an act of true repentance. Believers must also persevere in faith to be saved. According to Wells (2000), salvation encompasses faith:

In the Old Testament, salvation is received and in Jesus' teaching the kingdom is entered, simply by trust. In the Old Testament this was stated simply and directly; towards the end of Jesus' ministry it was made explicit in His teaching that the Son of man must suffer vicariously for His people. They were more external and physical. (pp. 27-28)

Human merit has no accountability in the process of salvation; it is by divine grace alone. Faith is the only mode by which one can encounter salvation. It is neither works nor any other human involvement that can receive the praise for anyone's salvation (Chirico, 2015). A person is not deemed to have experienced salvation solely because they were born into a Christian family or because they have ties to a Christian community. Salvation is from the heart and is an inward affirmation to God. Paul states that it is not by works that any man should boast. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (KJV, Ephesians 2:8).

Christ has set Himself as a model. Therefore, Christian teachers must set an example for students to model. This is another difference between a public school versus the Christian school, salvation can be received unto the students. "Sanctification thus refers to moral purity or moral goodness (literally, "saint-like")" (Emmons, 1999, p. 19). The characteristics of moral purity and moral goodness consist mainly of being a Christian that is intentionally ethical. "When "in Christ" an individuals' non-material soul exercises freedom to rightly choose behaviors that transforms them by denying them physical cravings and instead fulfilling the Holy Spirits desires" (Shrier & Shrier, 2009, p. 226).

The spiritual appetite of an individual transforms and begins to crave godliness. “Human holiness is a process of becoming aware. Holiness is not only awareness; it is above all holy practice. God has chosen His creation, His people, and His order of justice” (Waaajman, 2016, p.15). Fesko (2010), confirms that the wages of sin are death and the risk of struggling with it:

The Christian’s conflict with sin, therefore, only ends with death and not a moment sooner. The fact that a believer constantly struggles with sin means that there is no point in existence prior to death and resurrection that is not completely and utterly dependent upon Christ and the Spirit for sanctification. There is no impeccability or perfection in sanctification on this side of glory for any believer. (p. 205)

Being set apart involves sacrifice. The old uncultivated way of living must be changed. “Where individuals progressively sanctify various spheres of their life (i.e. personal relationships), resulting in personal sanctification (ultimate sanctification) in which an overall regeneration of the person (i.e. “born-again”) leads to shifts in specific aspects of a person's life” (Emmons, 1999, p. 20). If individuals are deceived into believing that any way is all right if they are sincere, they are in grave danger of missing the Kingdom of Heaven. “The saintliest men and women in church history were those who sought, often in desperation, until they caught sight of the way which leads home, the way of the cross” (Woodson, 1994, p. 149).

This generation must have the same tenacity and passion. Discipleship is ongoing and is a journey throughout the entirety of life. “The spiritual life is a lifelong process of growth toward holiness and progress toward the ultimate goal of perfection” (Emmons, 1999, p. 20). God is the only One that can determine the heart of mankind. “One of the difficulties related to Christian speech of holiness is how to account properly for the sinfulness of human beings and the holiness of the Spirit who works in and through them” (Castelo, 2014, p. 183).

A teacher can only reproduce who they currently are. Teachers are in place to disciple and build up new leaders. One should not want to raise others that are faulty in character and are

not striving to live a Christian life. As a teacher, one is an instant role model for others to use as an example. It is vital for teachers to walk in love, humble submission, and integrity. It is all a part of being saved and sanctified. A teachers' desire is for their students to be saved and make it to heaven. Heaven is the contriving goal of every believer.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical foundation for this research was advocated by various models. The models specifically pertained to faith development, social learning, behavior modification, moral development, and transformational leadership. These theories built and guided this study to gain a deeper understanding on the connection synonymous with at-risk students' understanding of their faith, behavior, and moral decisions. In addition, a deeper understanding of Christian alternative schoolteachers modeling the character that is needed in their students. These theories were applied based on the identification of faith, belief, disruptive behaviors, significance of morals, and the role of transformational leaders that facilitates change.

Stages of Faith Development

Fowler (1981) explains in Stages of Faith how faith is not always of a religious context. Faith is an individuals' way of moving into the force field of life (Fowler, 1981). Fowler also provided six stages to denote the development of faith. Prior to the first stage there is a pre-stage. This stage represents what Fowler terms Infancy and Undifferentiated Faith. This stage occurs between birth and two years old ("Stages of Faith," n.d.). At this stage, children experience faith as a connection between themselves and their parents. Children within this stage have the potential for faith, however, they are unable to act upon that potential ("Unitarian Universalist Association," 2017). Fowler states, "The quality of mutuality and the strength of trust, autonomy,

hope, and courage (or their opposites) developed in this phase underlie all that comes later in faith development” (“Stages of Faith,” n.d.).

Stage 1 is termed Intuitive-Projective Faith. This stage occurs generally for pre-school age children. Those that are between the ages of three and seven years old (“Stages of Faith,” n.d.). For children within this stage, faith is not a thought-out set of ideas, but is a set of impressions that are gained from their parents or society. These children become involved with the traditions of their religious community by experiencing them and learning from others close to them (“Unitarian Universalist Association,” 2017). If a child’s parents are Christians, the child automatically grows up within a Christian community. They are learning the Christian traditions as with a child from another religion would be learning the traditions of that specific religion. The child’s imagination plays an important role of their faith development. (“Stages of Faith,” n.d.).

Stage 2 is termed Mythic-Literal Faith. This stage occurs generally for children ages six to twelve. At this stage children’s source of religious authority starts to expand past parents and is evolved to teachers and friends. At this stage children can understand that others’ beliefs may be different from theirs. There are some adolescents and adults that experience faith at this stage. (“Stages of Faith,” n.d.). Faith stories are logical and concrete in this stage. Acceptance of the stories that are told are automatically believed with understanding in a literal way.

Stage 3 is termed Synthetic-Conventional Faith. This stage occurs generally for children that are between 13-18. However, Fowler (1981) has detected that some individuals stay at this stage for their entire life (“Unitarian Universalist Association,” 2017). At this stage, faith has moved beyond the alliance of parents and others. God becomes a significant other who knows the depths and the secrets of the self and offers companionship and support. (“Stages of Faith,”

n.d.). At this stage individuals claim faith as their own. However, their faith still coincides with the faith from the upbringing of their family (“Unitarian Universalist Association,” 2017). Self-identity is important and it is still developing as individuals desire to be accepted by others in this stage. Individuals in this stage are unable to perceive that there are other systems. It is through the transition to Stage 4 when individuals are leaving their normal environment, they are encountering other groups and different perspectives. For example, when individuals get married, attend college, or enter the workforce, they meet others with other perspectives and beliefs.

Stage 4 is Individuative-Reflective Faith. This stage generally occurs in the late adolescence phase, for those between 18-22 years of age (“Unitarian Universalist Association,” 2017). Individuals after maturing to a certain degree, start to desire understanding. Instead of seeking comfort, the goal is to acquire understanding (“Stages of Faith,” n.d.). This stage does not solely encompass the late adolescence stage, it can also begin at various times during adulthood. This is often when an individual will leave their religious community if questions of faith are not answered. In Stage 3, authority is gained from an external position, within the group. There is the understanding that there are beliefs, not just their own. However, in Stage 4 authority is shifted to an internal position that encompasses self. There is an emphasis on independence and individuality. Individuals in this stage make their own judgements about morals (“Stages of Faith,” n.d.).

Stage 5 is Conjunctive Faith. Individuals do not generally get to this stage until their early 30’s-40’s. Stage 5 is rare before midlife. Previous rejected religious symbols and practices are reaffirmed as tools to assist individuals encounter God and the truth. In this stage there is the

willingness to let reality speak its word, regardless of the impact of that word on the individual's self-esteem ("Stages of Faith," n.d.).

Stage 6 is known as Universalizing Faith. Fowler (1981) describes this stage as "one in which individuals begin radically to live as though what Christians call the Kingdom of God" ("Stages of Faith," n.d.). Rare individuals experience this stage of faith. Individuals that do reach this stage live without any real worries or doubts. Individuals at this stage can become important religious teachers because they can relate to others at any stage and from any faith ("Unitarian Universalist Association," 2017). Faith without works is dead. Individuals at this stage put faith into action ("Unitarian Universalist Association," 2017). Examples of individuals that have experienced this stage are Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mother Teresa. Individuals in this stage selflessly serve others and love life without being overly attached to it.

All stages of Fowlers' (1981) faith development may not be experienced. It is rare that all the stages are experienced. Progression through the stages is not automatic. Some individuals will move slower than others. Some individuals will stay in the earlier stages longer, or throughout their adult life.

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's (1977) focus regarding the aspects of the social learning theory can assist Christian teachers to better understand how students learn. "Bandura sees behavioral learning as an interaction between learner and environment, in that the environment influences the learner, and the learner influences the environment" (Yount, 2010, p. 217). After executing an experiment with Bobo dolls, Bandura identified that people learn from observing others. From a Christian teacher's viewpoint, one would deem it essential to behave Christ-like as a model for their students. Christian teachers in most cases are automatic role models, so it is common for

others to observe their behavior and actions. It would be damaging for a Christian leader to act or behave ungodly before others and produce ungodly behavior in others. People do not have to be angered or aroused to behave aggressively, aggression is a learned behavior (Allen, 2017, p. 34). Bandura's (1977) social learning theory argues that learning can occur from the following three social processes:

Aggressive behavior is learned through imitation. Imitation is learning by mimicking someone else's behavior. Aggressive behavior is also learned through observation. Observation means learning by seeing another person's behavior. It is also learned through modeling, which is commonly known as observational learning. Modeling or observational learning is using the actions of another person as an example of how to form new behaviors. (p. 12)

There are conditions in which observational learning occurs. Bandura (1977) provides four conditions that are vital for observing and modeling behavior. "It includes paying attention, retaining information, producing behaviors, and being motivated to repeat the behaviors. More simply, these stages are called attention, retention, production, and motivation" (Yount, 2010, p. 218). An example of attention encompasses awareness. "If a person aims to learn anything from a model, they must be paying attention to it and the behavior it exhibits" (Stone, 2016, para. 1). If the observer is not paying attention or becomes distracted, they are not likely to learn the modeled behavior and later imitate it. This can be observed when boys have fascinations with sports players. Children often pay attention to athletes and attempt to model after their behavior.

The next condition consists of retention. This component consists of remembering the behavior that was observed. If the behavior is not remembered, it is not likely to be imitated (Stone, 2016). The ability to copy behavior that concerns physical and mental ability is reproduction. In the scope of children observing athletes, a child may observe a basketball player that makes a shot. However, when the child attempts to mimic the behavior, they are not successful. This is because the child is not physically developed. Height is a contributing factor.

The child is not tall enough and does not have the skill to make the shot. However, after the child has grown and has practiced, they are more likely to mimic the behavior (Stone, 2016).

Lastly, if humans have no reason to mimic behaviors, the three aforementioned components will overcome the lack of motivation. “Motivation encompasses knowing that the model was offered an incentive to perform or observed receiving reinforcement for the behavior” (Stone, 2016, para. 5). In this way, the social learning theory is similar to the subsequent theory from B.F. Skinner (1937). “If a child is rewarded for behaving in a particular way, they are likely to continue behaving in that manner. If, however, they are punished, they are likely to try to avoid behaving that way in the future” (Allan, 2017, p. 35).

According to Allan (2017) Bandura’s Bobo doll experiment involved nursery-school children in the following situations:

- Witnessing no aggression toward the Bobo doll
 - Watching an adult behaving aggressively toward the doll
 - Watching a video of an adult behaving aggressively toward the doll
 - Watching a cartoon depicting violence toward the Bobo doll
- (p. 36)

For this observance, Bandura placed children in the same room as a Bobo doll, and then watched their reaction and recorded their behavior. The recording displayed how the children watched the adult attack the Bobo doll and mimic what they observed. Therefore, imitation was produced the most often. As a result, “Children who witnessed a person behaving aggressively to the Bobo doll were the most likely to do the same” (Allan, 2017, p. 36).

This theory confirms why the Christian school environment and the transformational leadership through Christian teachers are both vital. Children observe and imitate what they witness. “The social learning theory approaches the explanation of human behavior in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral and environmental

determinants” (Jarvis et al., 2003, p. 49). Teachers are not excluded from this theory. Christian teachers often learn from others that are poor teachers.

There is a cycle that is repeated especially if the teacher was well-respected. In most cases, “There needs to be an evaluation to make the class better” (Yount, 2010, p. 220). However, the methods are not changed because the poor teaching was observed by the then student. When the student became the teacher, they utilized and repeated the same methods. Christian teachers must be cautious of their behavior because others are paying attention and retaining their actions.

Theory of Operant Conditioning

There are several theories that assist with understanding how to engage behavior. In 1937, B. F. Skinner coined the term operant conditioning (Staddon & Cerutti, 2003). If teachers can employ tactics based upon Skinners’ (1937) observations, they will experience modified behavior in their students. Operant conditioning is a method of learning that employs rewards and punishments for behavior (Cherry, 2016). This theory explains how an association is made between specific behaviors and the results for those behaviors. “This association is built upon the use of reinforcement and/or punishment to encourage or discourage behavior” (Vinney, 2018, para. 1).

In many cases, theories are expounded upon as an extension of previous work. “This theory is an extension of work created by Edward Thorndike (1905). Thorndike studied learning in animals using a puzzle box to propose the theory known as the ‘Law of Effect’ (McLeod, 2018). Skinner later utilized a box and a rat for observation. This is known as “The Skinner Box” (McLeod, 2018). Skinner introduced a new term into the Law of Effect, which is Reinforcement. “Behavior which is reinforced tends to be repeated (strengthened); behavior which is not

reinforced tends to be extinguished (weakened). Skinner (1937) believed the key to understand behavior is to view the causes of an action and its consequences” (Staddon & Cerutti, 2003).

Teachers can find assistance with behavior management by using the operant conditioning theory with students. Skinner (1937) distinguished between two types of responses or operant that can follow behavior. Respondent behaviors are not necessarily learned. They just happen. However, operant behaviors are intentional. The outcome of these behaviors is the determining factor of influence regarding if they occur again (Cherry, 2016).

Positive reinforcement occurs when situations are favorable outcomes that are presented after the behavior. For example, if a student does a good job, the teacher gives a reward, the reward is a positive reinforcer (Cherry, 2016). If a teacher gives their students a candy bar when they complete their homework, they will be adamant to complete their homework. In turn, this strengthens the behavior of the students’ homework being completed.

Negative reinforcement involves the removal of an unfavorable outcome after the display of a behavior. A response is strengthened by the removal of something considered unpleasant (Cherry, 2016). For example, if a student had to give their teacher a candy bar if they did not complete their homework, they would complete their homework to avoid having to give their teacher a candy bar. In turn, this would strengthen the behavior of the student completing their homework. Both reinforcements have a positive outcome to help teachers modify their students’ behavior. “Positive punishment presents an unfavorable outcome in order to weaken the response it follows” (Cherry, 2016, para. 20).

A student becomes consistently tardy. Therefore, the student gets special privileges revoked for being tardy to class. As a result, the students’ action is weakened because they stopped being tardy. Negative punishment occurs when an outcome is removed after a behavior

occurs (Cherry, 2020, para. 21). For example, a student does not get to participate in recess because they forgot to turn in their project. As a result, the student does not forget to turn in their project again. This poses a problem with the zero tolerance policy (1990), as there is no action that can be weakened to in turn have positive results. The policy structure does not result in a new positive behavior.

The operant conditioning theory assists teachers with at-risk students. Implementing these processes displays how to modify students' behavior. This concept is important to understand how learning new forms of behavior occurs. This theory correlates spiritually with the Christian doctrine of eternal rewards and punishments. From a spiritual aspect, Christian teachers can teach the importance of behavior as it impacts students' eternal rewards or punishments.

If a student would not cheat on a test because they are afraid of being caught by the teacher and being punished, this correlates to an individual refraining from sin. Whereas, if an individual does not believe in God and behaves in a sinful manner because they have no conscious or risk of eternal punishment, the individual would likely continue to sin. Students must learn how their daily behavior and actions on earth will affect their eternal life. Next, how adolescents make moral decisions will be expounded upon.

Moral Development Theory

Piaget's theory focused on how children develop their moral reasoning. Morals are the predominant standards of behavior that allows people to live cooperatively and assembled together. Moral refers to what societies deem as right and acceptable (Morals, 2018). Morals should be learned within the home at a young age. However, that is not always the case. Jean Piaget (1932) a psychologist, executed the moral development theory (McLeod, 2015). This

theory assists to understand how children attain knowledge through different stages. “Moral development refers to the age-related developmental processes that individuals undergo as they become more knowledgeable, consistent, and responsive in their ethical functioning” (“Moral Development,” 2016, para. 1). This reasoning exceeds the action of breaking the established rules. The primary focus is the reason behind the behavior.

Making moral judgements, even as a child is foundational regarding behavior. Early work done by Piaget (1932) studying the cognitive abilities of children to make moral judgements as they grow and mature is the primary basis for this theory (Elm, 2019). Behavior is the cause as to why most at-risk students are morally condemned. Behavior is the outer consequence that displays the will of a students’ action. As children, actions that are immoral are acts that are punishable by adults. Being morally responsible is being obedient to authority and leadership.

Piaget proposed two stages of moral development. Within these stages, Piaget (1932) observed that children’s ideas concerning morals and rules changed as they grew older. Morality of constraint, commonly known as heteronomous morality (heteronomous means subject to another’s law) and moral realism. Also, morality of cooperation, commonly known as autonomous reality and moral relativism. Within heteronomous morality there is the realization of an external set of requirements handed down by authority figures, like parents (“Moral Development,” 2016).

Morality of constraint occurs between the ages of four to seven where adults such as parents are in control and therefore construct the rules. Within this stage, rules are viewed as unchangeable and parents define the terms of behavior that is morally wrong. In this stage, children think that rules are unchangeable and that breaking them leads to automatic punishment (Puka, 1994). During this stage children consent to the rules established by authority. They

believe that breaking the rules will lead to severe punishment. As children grow older their heteronomous morality leads to a more autonomous morality. This stage starts at the age of eight years old. Within the stage of autonomous reality, children realize that rules are open to revision (“Moral Development,” 2016).

As children grow and have relationships with their peers, who are not dominant in structure as an adult, autonomous reality comes into play. With the awareness of their peers being on their same level, having equal leverage (“Preoperational Morality,” n.d.). As youth mature into adolescence, they are concerned more with social approval. Piaget (1932) denied the notion that children learn and ascribe to the rules and morals of society by bearing the rules and being forced to adhere to them (Kandola, 2019). At this stage, rules appear as an option or guidelines that may or may not be followed. He understood that as children grow older, they “recognize that rules are arbitrary and can be changed with group consensus” (Patanella, 2011). During this stage children believe morals are based on their own rules. They also believe there is no definite right or wrong and that morals are contingent upon intentions and not consequences (McLeod, 2015). Piaget’s (1932) moral development theory can assist all teachers in understanding why students behave in certain manners.

Moral development encompasses certain aspects of behavior disorders. If the teacher regardless of special education classification, is already trained by the school to also engage students with underlying issues or disorders, he/she will be able to reach the entire classroom intentionally. Teachers unprepared to meet the needs of struggling students is an issue. “Resistance and negativity toward low-performing and at-risk students, are due to general education teachers feeling unprepared to teach and manage students with underlying issues” (Mihalas et al., 2009, p. 114).

The Council for Exceptional Children (2003) established a list of the minimum knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by special education teachers for effectively working with students with EBD. “This list includes the knowledge of theories of reinforcement techniques and the ability to use strategies from multiple theoretical approaches. The ability to use functional classroom designs and knowledge of the social characteristics of individuals with EBD” (Shillingford & Karlin, 2014, p. 179). If all teachers were trained, they could identify and prevent early symptoms at the earlier stages of children’s lives. If not recognized, by the time students are in high school the symptoms have evolved and are worse.

At-risk students experience behaviors such as poor school attendance, non-compliance to the directions from teachers, low work completion, physical attacks, and property destruction (Lewis, 2016). With tremendous calamity within their environment, at-risk students eventually give up. Unfortunately, at-risk students are dropping out of school at significantly higher rates than their peers (Ernest, 2019). The lack of training for teachers results in many students’ issues not being identified early enough. The need for early identification and intervention for at-risk students is essential to prevent early symptoms from increasing in severity over time. “As children age, the severity of their symptoms intensifies and related behavior problems are likely to emerge, such as substance abuse, criminal behavior, and diagnoses of psychiatric disorders” (Mihalas et al., 2009, p. 109).

Transformational Leadership

James McGregor Burns (1978) developed the transformational leadership theory. Burns (1978) was the original developer of this specific theory. “This approach constitutes life-purpose. This purpose is not self-oriented, but a by-product of a life given in service to others and guided by a renewed mind and values. The true meaning of life is discovered by the learners” (Wilhoit,

1991, p. 108). The primary concept of this theory indicates that the leader greatly impacts the followers. Bernard M. Bass (1985) expanded upon Burns' (1978) original ideas to develop what is now referred to as Bass' transformational leadership theory. According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership can be defined based on the impact that it has on followers.

Transformational leaders garner trust, respect, and admiration from their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2005). Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe (2000), amply explain the elements of the 4 I's:

The transformational leader that incorporates *Intellectual Stimulation* will encourage followers to explore new ways of doing things and new opportunities to learn. Secondly, this type of leader will acknowledge *Individualized Consideration* by exhibiting supportive and encouraging strategies on an individual basis. Thirdly, the transformational leader will apply *Inspirational Motivation* by employing a clear vision that the followers passionately desire to fulfill. Lastly, a transformational leader will serve as an *Idealized Influence* by exhibiting characteristics of a well-respected role model that can be emulated. (p. 15-17)

Thus, transformational leadership is a type of leadership style that can inspire positive changes in those who follow. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders. "Transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration for both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both" (Burns, 1978, p. 20). Transformational leaders assist to stimulate the minds of their followers. In which, Christian teachers that serve as transformational leaders assist to broaden the minds and change the behavior of their students. "James MacGregor Burns (1978) first introduced this concept in his descriptive research on political leaders. Bernard Bass (1985) has extended Burns' (1978) work by developing measures and metrics to determine transformational leadership's effect on motivation and performance" (Kendrick, 2011, p. 14). This specific theory builds most directly on the human search for a life centered by God.

Christian leaders must transform their lives to have moral responsibility. This portion of the paper will explore how the transformational theory considers character. “The teacher must experience a growing relationship with God and have discovered, by doing what Jesus did, what it means to live as Jesus lived; otherwise the teacher will fail to expose the students to the working of God’s grace” (Wilhoit, 1991, p. 114). This theory places a strong emphasis on moral and ethical standards. Leaders that follow this transformational theory are well respected and trusted by those that follow them. This aspect is vital to the teacher-student relationship.

Transformational leadership may be defined as a leadership approach that causes a change in individuals and social systems. This style is said to create valuable and positive change in “followers” with a potential result that these followers become the leaders. Transformational leadership involves four factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Kendrick, 2011). These four factors will be further expounded upon.

Idealized influence is founded on trust. “Trust has eroded because leaders have acted in their self-interest in ways that have let others down” (Mishra & Mishra, 2013; 2012, p. 5). A Christian teacher must exhibit high moral and ethical standards. These are the foundations that begin the bond between leaders and followers. Christian teachers are to be trustworthy. Christian teachers can exhibit trust by displaying loyalty. “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter” (KJV, Proverbs 11:13). This includes being able to keep confidential information or situations that are shared private. “Teachers who are trusted by their students, particularly in terms of competence, effect change more easily and more quickly” (Mishra & Mishra, 2013; 2012, p. 8).

Christian teachers serve as an inspirational motivation towards their students.

“Inspirational motivation is the ability to help followers see clearly as to the right thing to do. It creates the drive for shared goals and visions” (Kendrick, 2011, p. 14). This is a good concept if the shared goals and visions focus on good behavior and morals. “Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (KJV, James 4:17). A biblical example of inspirational motivation is in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, where the Thessalonians encouraged each other. Paul confirmed this as he commended the Thessalonians for building each other up. “The Christian teachers’ influence will build others up and encourage others” (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 212). Inspirational motivation is vital to at-risk students that may have experienced punitive communication throughout their life. “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (KJV, Ephesians 4:29).

Theological competence is significant concerning intellectual stimulation. At-risk students may not have been introduced to Christianity. Therefore, there may be various questions as they seek to understand who God is. “Intellectual stimulation challenges the follower to question basic assumptions and to generate a more creative solution to problems. “This is the way we’ve always done it” is definitely not in the vocabulary” (Kendrick, 2011, p. 14). In many cases, it is difficult for leadership to change.

Leadership often settles to continue doing things the way they have always been done traditionally. “Christian teachers can influence others by being focused, staying current, and communicating all information effectively” (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 212). What worked twenty years ago, may need to be changed to be accurate for the given time period. A good Christian teacher will aim to teach with integrity; in this way intellectually stimulating their

followers. Those being led seek to be fed from an intellectual teacher. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (KJV, 2 Timothy 2:15).

Each student is different and will need a different engagement based upon their needs. “Individual consideration treats each follower as a unique contributor and provides coaching, mentoring, feedback and growth opportunities. Once given individual attention and allowed to grow, many followers far exceed what was generally recognized as outstanding performance” (Kendrick, 2011, p. 14). If it is difficult for students to listen to Christian teachers who are not of good character, their spiritual growth becomes stagnant. Christian teachers can use their influence to maximize mentoring moments (Temple, 2019). Jesus always took advantage of special moments to mentor. Mentoring is more than passing along knowledge. “A mentor has been defined as an experienced and “trusted” advisor” (Wakeman, 2012, p. 1). Jesus was able to impart His experiences into others. “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (KJV, 2 Timothy 2:2). Christian teachers must do the same.

Related Literature

This section further expounded on foundational literature regarding insight on promoting spiritual growth. The transformational role of the Christian teacher as it applied to modeling how students should conduct themselves was explored. Within Christian leadership, facilitation through teachers in the areas of spiritual growth, Christian community, and conforming to Jesus Christ were encompassed (Lowe, S., & Lowe, M., 2017; Pettit, 2008). If Christian teachers expound on these three areas specifically, students can create their own emerging model of spiritual formation. Christian teachers are distinct as they are freely able to disciple students. The

current spiritual state of Gen Z will be explored to gain a better understanding of how to reach this unique generation.

Facilitating Spiritual Formation

Some Christian parents deem it more favorable to send their children to a Christian school. The typical environment of the school is in alignment with the principles of the Christian church. Generally, parents desire to shield their children from any unnecessary negative situations that may arise at school. Christian education provides the opportunity for Christian teachers to aid in the spiritual development of students. When students have been trained to understand spiritually, they are more prone to live healthy Christian lives. There is a broad range of evidence that suggests spirituality is connected to the outcome regarding adolescents. Therefore, a students' behavior, mental and physical health can be contingent upon their spirituality (James & Fine, 2015). This is vital to understand because the internal which is not visible is manifested through outer characteristics that can be adequately observed.

Spirituality and Spiritual Formation

Spirituality is an important dynamic within spiritual formation. Naturally, adolescents grow physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and morally. Within that growth that is experienced, the same development should occur within the spiritual perspective (Brandes, 2108). There should be the same equivalency of growth that parallels between the natural realm and the spirit realm. Between the 1960s and 1970s, the Roman Catholic institutions and Protestant circles became curious with spiritual formation (Howard, 2017).

Over the years, spiritual formation has become highly recognized and has been established as a requirement by Christian institutions. "The association of Theological Schools and the Association of Biblical Higher Education now mandate development in "personal and

spiritual formation” as part of a legitimate curriculum” (Howard, 2017). It is difficult to become close to God when sin abounds. The doctrine of sin is commonly known as hamartiology.

Hamartia in Greek is understood as missing the mark. To better understand sin and how it is the premise of detachment between individuals and God, sin will be defined. Enns (2014), defines sin and Scriptures are provided to confirm the validity:

Sin is a transgression of the law of God. Transgressions are explained as offenses to the established laws or rules. “Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression” (KJV, Romans 4:15). Sin is a failure to conform to the standard of God. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” (KJV, Romans 3:23). Sin is a principle within man. “But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe” (KJV, Galatians 3:22). Sin is rebellion against God. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (KJV, 1 John 3:4). Sin is wrongful acts toward God and man. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;” (KJV, Romans 1:18). p. 324

Individuals often quote the phrase, ‘I’m not religious, I’m spiritual.’ Within this phrase individuals are professing to have a close relationship with God that extends beyond traditional rituals and norms. For this individual, attending church for a service may not be a weekly obligation. Spirituality is generally considered to be beliefs, experiences, or practices, such as prayer or meditation, that foster a connection to a higher power that transcends daily physical existence, and which may be unrelated to the practices of any religion (Lippman & Keith, 2006).

The deep inner connection that bonds an individual and God normally stems from an undeniable experience. Within Christianity, spirituality is an inner and personal communion specifically with God. In many cases, personal experiences that encounter God are life-changing. This often amplifies an individuals' level of belief in God. When an adolescent has experienced God at an early age, there is a greater chance they will grow up with a sense of wholeness.

When adolescents are groomed into spirituality at a young age, they are generally nurtured in a way that is pre-structured; trained all the same way. Spirituality may foster an integrated moral and civic identity within adolescents and lead the individual along a path to becoming an adult contributing integrative to self, family, community, and civil society (Lerner et al., 2006). Spirituality is developed by practicing disciplines that penetrate the soul. The image of the "soul" and its role in spiritual development encompass a safe place. A place that is not mandated to adapt to a standard pattern. However, conforming to the life that best molds one's own soul (Brandes, 2018).

Christians generally have accepted the apostle Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (KJV, 1 Thessalonians 5:23). There are numerous disciplines that individuals normally apply to their daily lives to cultivate their spirituality. These disciplines help to bring the individual and God closer in relationship. According to Pettit (2008), "Worship of the triune God is the most spiritually formative practice available to Christians" (p. 52). True and genuine worship often comes from the innermost depths of a person. Worship is an intimate fellowship with God. This time spent with God displays a genuine vulnerability that exposes a true reverence unto Him. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to

glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (KJV, 2 Corinthians 3:18). God has provided the spiritual disciplines as a means of receiving His grace. Disciplines allow individuals to be placed before God for transformation. “The disciplines have no virtue, possess no righteousness, contain no rectitude. The disciplines do not provide “brownie points” with God” (Foster & Yanni, 1994, p. 266). As a Christian there are several disciplines that facilitate and promote genuine spiritual growth.

Occasionally, one will attempt to measure the spiritual growth of a Christian. Some spiritual disciplines are learned and are repetitious acts of service or works. Therefore, a person can appear to have reached exponential spiritual growth from an outward stance yet have a hollow heart. God is the only discerner of one’s heart. “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight” (Pettit, 2008, p. 127). Christians are commonly depicted as devout if they recite Scriptures, pray, or serve. These examples are visible outward disciplines, but they do not always measure how spiritually inclined a Christian is. According to Wesley (2017), there are 13 spiritual disciplines of Christianity that encourage growth spiritually:

- Prayer
- Meditation
- Study of Scripture
- Simplicity of life
- Surrendered life
- Solitude/quietness
- Service to others
- Confession of sins
- Seeking wise counsel
- Thanksgiving
- Worship
- Sacrificial giving
- Fasting

Of all the disciplines, this researcher could identify how most of the teachers provided evidence of acquiring at least twelve of these disciplines. However, a few teachers explained the

difficulty in fasting because of their job requirements and environment. According to Wesley (2017), there are several considerations of sacrifice when fasting. For example, an individual may desire to eliminate food, television, or the internet from their daily routine. At the participating school, it was revealed that in severely hot temperatures, the teachers need nourishment to maintain enough energy throughout the entire day.

When the teachers or the students practice these disciplines, there is an internal intimate relationship with God produced. The brick and mortar of churches and schools are only buildings that can provide safe spaces to commune with like-minded believers. At-risk students can understand that their relationship with God is not contingent upon physical attendance of a church or a Christian school. God must reside in their hearts and these spiritual disciplines are elements that draw individuals closer to Him. Spiritual disciplines offer a calming effect, which is vital for the behavior of at-risk students.

Engagement or relational involvement with Christianity is pertinent as a child. “Experiences during childhood help to shape faith during the adult years, including involvement with a Christian community and environment” (Davis, 2021, para. 10). Spiritual disciplines assist a child with becoming involved and committed. In 2018, a study was conducted to understand “the experiences in childhood that influence Christian commitment in young adulthood” (Davis, 2021, para. 2). The study discovered three different connections within experiences. Participants in the study made a personal decision to participate in Christianity during their childhood and considered choosing to be baptized, talking about the claims of Christ with an adult, or engaging in a spiritual discipline on their own.

The Soul and Spiritual Formation

Behavior is deeply impacted by the soul. This is partly because various emotions reside in the soul of all individuals. “The soul is that aspect of your whole being that correlates, integrates, and enlivens everything going on in the various dimensions of self. It is the life center of the human being” (Moon, 2014, p. 286). As with most at-risk students the soul can be troubled. Jesus taught us to apply our love for God with our soul.

When He states, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour” (KJV, John 12:27). Because the soul is troubled, it must be purified. “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (KJV, 1 Peter 1:22). When the soul is purified it is in a pure state and can accept salvation. “Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation” (KJV, Psalm 35:3).

Soteriology is commonly known as the doctrine of salvation. “The work of the Holy Spirit in salvation involves the convicting ministry to the unbeliever, regenerating the person to give them spiritual life, indwelling the believer, baptizing the believer into union with Christ and other Christians, and sealing the believer” (Enns, 2014, pp. 343-344). The Holy Spirit is how regeneration takes place. Regeneration is a spiritual birth. It can be defined as the “communication of divine life to the soul as the impartation of a new nature or heart and the production of a new creation” (Enns, 2014, p. 353). The result of regeneration for the at-risk student is a new transformed life and a new nature. A new life that now lives with a new mind, heart, and will towards God. The ability to succumb to a new nature is possible and can be

confirmed within the Scriptures. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (KJV, 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Since mankind is God’s creation, every individual is constructed of a body, spirit, and soul. There are only two choices the soul can ever submit to. At-risk students as well as anyone else can either choose to serve God and behave according to His commands, or continue to give into the sin of their flesh. “Spiritual formation involves attention to both inside (“heart work”) and outside (“mouth work”)” (Pettit, 2008, p. 126).

What is on the inside of a person will be outwardly demonstrated. The psychological reality of sin is seen in the incapacitation of the soul to coordinate the whole person, internally and externally (Willard, 1998). King David is a great example, when he states, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (KJV, Psalm 51:10). David understood that he was enamored in sin. His actions did not align with God’s commandments. However, he asked God to give him a new heart and a spirit that was yielded. He did not try to blame anyone else for his faults, but he took full ownership of his own sin. “When we befriend our brokenness - that which keeps us from full fellowship with God - we come to grips with our own propensity toward shaming and blaming, pointing fingers and accusing others of issues we need to own for ourselves” (Macchia, 2015, p. 120). Self-reflection allows individuals to meditate concerning their own character and actions.

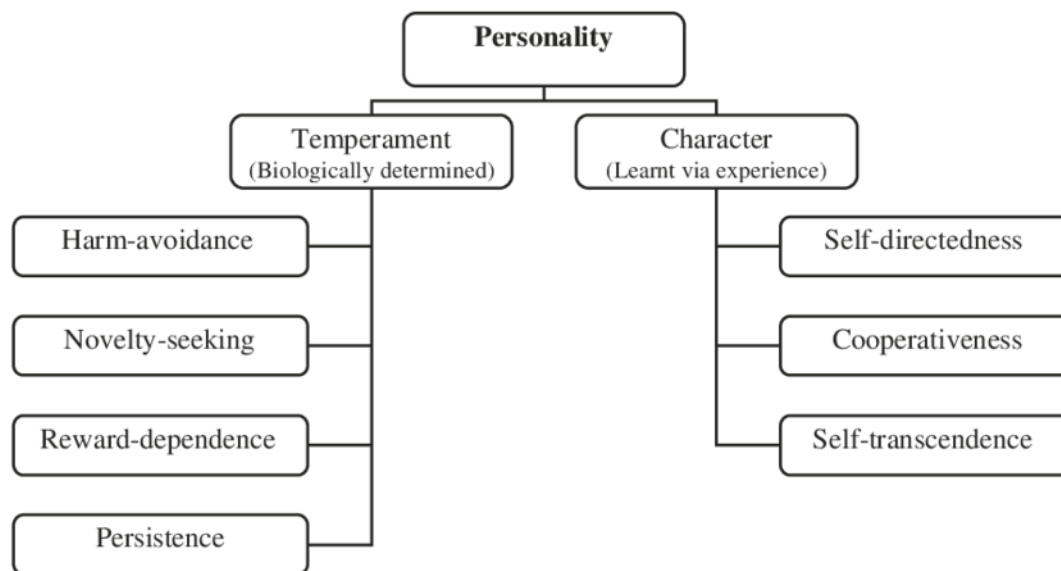
Character and Spiritual Formation

Lack of character is one of the primary reasons at-risk students are recommended to attend alternative schools. A student that has behavior issues, irrefutably has character flaws. Character is the inner world of motives and values that shape our actions (Pettit, 2008). Cloninger created the “Psychobiological Model of Temperament and Character” as a general

model that identifies aggressive personality traits and somatic anxiety. Both of which at-risk students frequently experience. Three primary character traits in the model are self-directedness, cooperativeness, and self-transcendence (Pettit, 2008, p. 150).

Figure 1

Cloninger's (1993) Psychobiological Model of Temperament and Character



Note: Adapted from Cavanagh, Michael. (2020). *Mental Health Issues and Challenging Clients in Executive Coaching*. p. 9

At-risk students often have no regard for these character traits. In their daily lives they adamantly live the opposite of the model which includes feeling unmotivated, lacking purpose, and insignificant (Hodges, 1993). The opposite of what is deemed Christian character. Faith is indispensably compulsory to imitate God's character. For all the prominence on discipleship, spiritual formation, and sanctification, considerable misperception still exists regarding the nature of being conformed to the image of Jesus (Porter, 2019).

To teach from a faith perspective, Christian teachers must understand the Christian faith. The Christian faith refers to faith in Jesus Christ. Christians believe that their faith in Jesus Christ forms the basis for their relationship with God. It matters what individuals think and believe

about Jesus to have faith in Jesus to provide access to God. Access to God is dependent on faith in Jesus (Dockery, 2012, p. 124).

The summation of faith in Jesus Christ is referred to as the gospel. Paul declared, “And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (KJV, Acts 16:31). The gospel, known as the apostles’ teaching, is the summation of what Christians believe regarding Jesus. The gospel explicates who Jesus is and why knowing who He is matters. Jesus boldly asked His disciples, “But whom say ye that I am?” (KJV, Matthew 16:15). At-risk students must understand who Jesus is to truly emulate His image.

When growing in faith, “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (KJV, 2 Corinthians 3:18). Being shaped into the image that God originally intended is possible for at-risk students, by faith. “Hebrew-Christian theology frames the doctrine of the *imago* in the setting of divine creation and redemption” (Elwell, 2001, p. 591). Human beings were created *in* the image of God, and Jesus who is the son of God *is* the image of God. “Genesis 1:26 and 5:3 do not distinguish different aspects of the imago but state intensively the fact that all mankind uniquely reflects God” (Elwell, 2001, p. 592). Since all of mankind reflects God, it should be the aim of everyone to model His character.

One must first have the faith to believe in God to desire to model after Him. Christian teachers have a great responsibility to understand human beings, who people really are. All teachers must take the time to truly know their students. “Theological anthropology understands being in God’s image in terms of attributes that people have now, most commonly people’s ability to reason, rule over (manage) creation, be righteous, or be in relationship” (Kilner, 2015, p. 3). When teachers know a student and appreciate the student’s life experiences, their thinking

about the student and who the student is can take on more meaning and significance. Such understanding may result in teachers who are more compassionate in how they respond to the student. “When students have reason to believe that their teacher really knows them, students can consequently be more accepting of establishing a collaborative relationship with their teacher” (Mihalas et al., 2009, p. 116).

When a person has faith, they accept God. When a person grows in their faith, they can be transformed by Him and carry out His plan and purpose for their lives. “For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (KJV, Jeremiah 29:11). Faith can conquer anxiety or other disorders because it gives a bigger perspective that God is in control. It encourages individuals to simplify their lives. “Praying in faith can help calm nerves, focus the mind and limit waves of anxiety” (“Lifting the Lid,” n.d., p. 14).

To live an integral life is the overall aim this study desires to assure the at-risk student attains. Their overall behavior is the outward ramification that there are issues. However, their life becoming complete and whole is the end result. “The word “integrity” stems from the Latin adjective integer (whole, complete). In this context, integrity is inner “wholeness” deriving from qualities such as honesty and consistency of character” (Lindeman & Ward, n.d., p. 6).

The ethical life is a life that is lived when others are not observing. “An ethical person is someone of moral integrity” (Gini & Green, 2013, p. 22). The characteristic of integrity is a legitimate source of influence. “Many devote more energy to generating the appearance of a Christian rather than developing the character required” (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 148). The goal of Christian schools, teachers, and students are not to simply bear the name Christian, but to be Christian in mission and values.

According to Bauman (2013), integrity involves wholeness, honesty, and purity:

Integrity is defined as 1) the state or quality of being complete; wholeness; entireness; unbroken state; 2) Moral soundness; honesty; freedom from corrupting influence or motive; - used especially with reference to the fulfillment of contracts. 3) Unimpaired, unadulterated, or genuine state; entire correspondence with an original condition; purity. (p. 415)

When an individual is integral, they have chosen to make the right choice at all costs and the outcome is always worth it. “Integrity should be its own reward” (Nystrom, 2000, p. 5). The Bible specifically teaches concerning honesty. “Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small” (KJV, Deuteronomy 25:13-14). The biblical importance of moral integrity is presented in several ways. Individuals’ daily lives should resemble the life of Jesus, as He is always integral in His actions. He is the only perfect example of a role model. “Any discussion of moral character and behavior must eventually discuss the concept of integrity” (Bauman, 2013, p. 414).

Jesus knew no sin; therefore He was always integral in character. “Integrity is part of a personal or corporate process that begins with what’s in an individuals’ hearts. Where choices are made and where character is developed” (Engstrom et al., 2011, p. 71). Paul in his modeling of Jesus, always desired to make moral choices before people, but especially before God. Paul realized that he always had to give an account before God. “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void to offense toward God, and toward men” (KJV, Acts 24:16). In the passages surrounding this Scripture, Paul was before elders and a lawyer named Tertullus. They were bringing his charges before the governor.

Paul was being accused of being a troublemaker. He refuted peacefully and spoke of his life in Christ. He stated the facts and it was all in accordance with the standards of a Godly life. Paul unapologetically lived a life in God; therefore, he was able to honestly present himself to

others as integral. Christians should be adamant about upholding Godly integrity, understanding they are set before others as an example representing Jesus Christ. Christians clearly understand that “To walk according to man is to not walk in a manner pleasing to God” (Samra, 2008, p. 66).

All Christians are holy from an initial stance because they are of God. However, there is a vast difference when ones’ actions and conduct are holy beyond the status of holy. One can be holy in status because they belong to God. However, not be of holiness in behavior and character. “To think and behave in a manner inconsistent with the Spirit is to lack holiness” (Samra, 2008).

Character is substantial to spiritual growth. “It is through our foundational character, whether good or bad, that we develop a value system that helps us make ethical or unethical, moral or immoral, decisions about what actions to take in any given situation” (Pettit, 2008, p. 144). A Christian’s character can often be distinguished by their reverence for God. There are certain inappropriate actions and behaviors that a Christian will abstain from because they do not desire to hurt God. Leaders are expected to read the Bible and share wisdom with others; however, one must live what they are reading and sharing. Integral character is vital because Christian leaders often become automatic role models. 1 Corinthians 9:27 (KJV) states, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

It is pertinent for Christian leaders to lead with Godly character. Godly character must be developed, it is not inherited at birth. Job 14:1, 4 (KJV) states, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble...Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” Therefore, all come into the world full of sin and with a sinful nature. “Most psychologist would

agree that “people develop character over time, primarily through socialization” (Pettit, 2008, p. 165).

God’s character is the true example for leaders to follow. As the leader adheres to the character of God, the followers adhere to that which is displayed in the leader. The more a person deliberately exercises Godly character, the more their spiritual growth is developed. The elements of character are self-control, self-directedness, cooperativeness, and self-transcendence. Adam and Eve were perfect examples of humans with character flaws. If only one of them would have possessed self-control the Fall possibly would have never occurred. This is a good example of how disciplines are contagious, whether good or bad. Therefore, in leadership one must be mindful of others. “Self-control is a foundation for godly behavior, including the love that we share among our brothers and sisters in Christ” (Pettit, 2008, p. 145).

Alternative Education

The opportunity for long-term suspended or expelled students would be scarce if not for Christian alternative schools. “Assignments to alternative schools have increased due to the proliferation of zero tolerance policies at the state, district, and school levels that require administrators to suspend or expel all students who commit certain infractions” (Kennedy et al., 2019, p. 130). Alternative education is not a new concept, however, some of the approaches have changed. Freedom Schools and the Free School Movement were the two categories of schools outside of public education formed from the launch of alternative schools (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Alternative schools became prevalent during the Civil Rights Movement. During a time when factors regarding race, ethnicity, social class, poverty, and underserved communities were at an educational disadvantage.

Christian Alternative Schools

These schools were specifically created for the underprivileged. Freedom Schools were developed as a community-school model outside of the public school system, often stationed in a church basement (Lange & Sletten, 2002). The same way the Trinity functions and works together, is the same way God desires mankind's relationships to commune with each other. This was the purpose of the Freedom Schools, to function in togetherness. Seclusion is not the aim for the Christian life. However, communing with God and one another is the goal. Christian community seeks to support each other. The term commune is a derivative of the word community.

Christians being connected through the company of others is considered being in community, in Christ. Freedom Schools provided freedom from restriction so that Christian alternative schools of today can serve its purpose. The purpose of community is to allow followers the opportunity to identify with something greater than themselves that they cherish. Community provides a safe haven where others can connect, but also feel comfortable being themselves (Northouse, 2016). Community also holds Christians accountable to each other. Alternative schools were for minorities that were not receiving equal opportunities for a quality education as their peers (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

The Free School Movement was established to provide students with a self-accomplishing achievement. The emphasis was on the student exploring their natural freedom to learn with no restrictions. Education should provide an equal opportunity for all individuals. "These alternatives outside of the public education system were seen as among the first alternative options, their emergence inspired a movement of reform within the public schools beginning in the latter half of the 1960s" (Lange & Sletten, 2002, p. 4). Although alternative

schools were established for equality of injustice, the current focus encompasses remediating aggressive behavior.

Alternative schools of today are vastly different from the initial alternative schools that emerged in the 1960s. Depending on the structure of the school, students can self-enroll, a parent can request to enroll their child or the court system can establish mandatory placement (Lehr et al., 2009). The emphasis for attendance is vastly based on behavioral disorders and adolescent life situations that need quick attention. “Students attending alternative schools reported higher rates of substance abuse, suicide attempts, sexual activity, and pregnancy. In addition, they were more likely to have been physically or sexually abused or to have witnessed abuse within their families” (Lehr et al., 2009, p. 20).

Christian alternative schoolteachers, if properly trained in theological competence can successfully combat the sinful nature. “Teaching that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present world;” (KJV, Titus 2:12). Teachers must be able to relate to the background of the students when teaching. “This knowledge can be used to connect instruction to students’ background knowledge. As well as to enhance the learning experience by making instruction more relevant to the student” (Mihalas et al., 2009, p. 116).

According to Jolliffe (2014), Christian schools should focus on teaching Godly principles and not place more emphasis on other activities that do not change students’ hearts:

I recently spoke to a chaplain working in a church school. She was suggesting to me that we needed to be subversive in what we are doing in schools. I didn’t understand what she meant. When asked to clarify, she explained that schools have a particular agenda; success in the eyes of the world, and this becomes what they strive for. Academic results, competition success, musical performances, and athletic prowess have replaced the desire to educate children to be godly. (p. 2)

Alternative schools provide an opportunity for students to overcome their problems. They serve as the beginning of change for the student, providing them a chance at life. “Alternative schools serve as a “first step” to students graduating from high school - instead of a “last chance” before dropping out of school and increasing their chances of unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, homelessness, and incarceration” (Free, 2017, pp. 502-503). Within Christian community real lifestyles will be exposed. There will be different layers of the identity of a student that may be revealed. Therefore, the culture of the school must be cultivated to have compassion, kindness, and understanding towards others. “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins” (NIV, 1 Peter 4:8). All these aspects concerning love normally greatly lack in the life of at-risk students. “The more time we spend with a person, the greater our responsibility becomes to love them well” (Pettit, 2008, p. 169).

Learning can be captured in a different way for students to make sure they can still succeed. “Some alternative schools allow students to earn academic credits without the distractions and obligations of comprehensive academic programs” (Bascia et al., 2016, pp. 132-133). This enhances learning so that obtaining knowledge is not dreadful for the students that may have a disorder or experiencing temporary hardships. Therefore, Christian alternative schoolteachers must facilitate specific processes or methods when employing Christian pedagogy. This takes into consideration any situations that would affect spiritual formation.

Alternative schools emerged as a solution to some of the problems facing urban students. “Alternative schools have been categorized into three categories: those that change the student, those that change the school experience, and those that change the school system” (Tyner-Mullings, 2014, p. 3). By this classification, the common emphasis is change. Students that attend an alternative school benefit from an individual-level of focus from the teacher. The

teacher can dedicate more time to each student for a more structured plan that is catered to each students' needs. "Most alternative schools provide one-on-one interaction between teachers and students, a supportive environment, student-centered curriculum and flexibility in structure" (Lehr et al., 2009, p. 20).

If teachers recognize alternative students as troublemakers, they will never have the approach that truly desires to help them change. "Educators often refer to alternative schools as places where unruly students can be reformed through the provision of additional supports and services so that they can ultimately return to comprehensive schools" (Kennedy et al., 2019, p. 131). For educators to identify students as unruly, displays the lack of compassion most have towards those that need special attention. Alternative schools are designed to provide specialized instruction to students who require more intensive support than can be offered in a traditional school. The evidence from a social cognitive perspective suggests that children's interactions with adults are vital sources of healthy development and learning. "Students' cognitive abilities for academic tasks are enhanced when they enjoy a good relationship with their teacher" (Ahnert et al., 2013, p. 23). When teachers view students as unruly and are not committed to helping them, is different from a Christian alternative schoolteacher that is willing to assist.

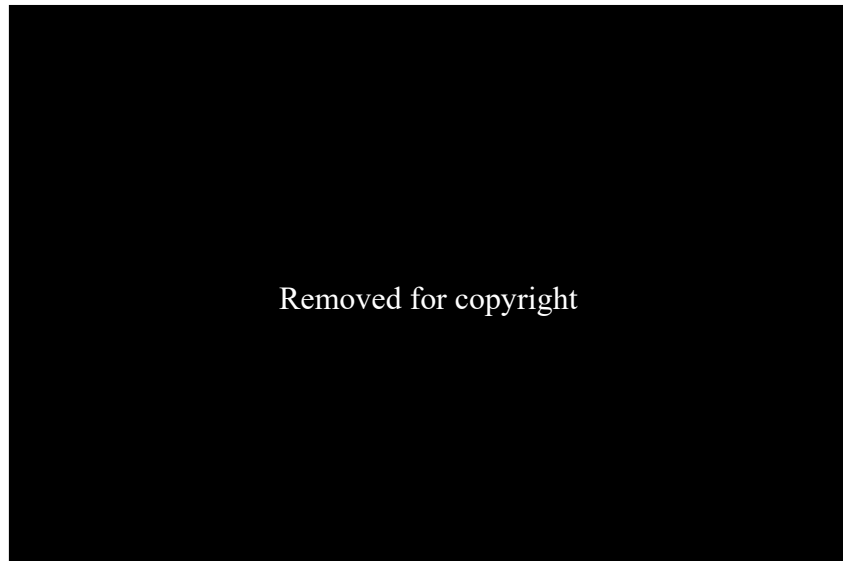
Instead, the idea should be that communing with others that are like-minded keeps one accountable. "A balanced spiritual formation is cultivated in the company of like-minded comrades and sensitive confidants" (Pettit, 2008, p. 78). Christians can build each other up, exhorting one another daily. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (KJV, Psalm 1). There is wisdom, accountability, and encouragement in community.

When Christian teachers exhibit the facets of intentional engagement that facilitates spiritual formation, relationships through community are vastly formed. If a Christian teacher is equipped with theological competence, they will understand how community is a central feature of spiritual formation. Communing with others that are like-minded keeps students accountable. It is important for students to spend time alone with God. This time may include prayer, worship, and meditation on the Word of God. A student's public display should be a true indicator of their private encounters with God.

As an attempt to prevent children from entering the juvenile justice system, alternative schools collaborated with other entities. "The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention supported alternative education nearly 30 years ago. It was beneficial to remove students from public schools and place them in more supportive environments to provide them with a greater chance for success" (Griffiths et al., 2019, p. 1495). Teacher education generates questions about qualifications and methods. Qualified teachers are defined by degrees or exams connected to state accreditation. "This can create a teacher who is educated in the subject of teaching rather than trained in its practice" (Tyner-Mullings, 2014, p. 8).

Christian Community

One issue with students being suspended and expelled is that there is no restoration. According to Chandler (2014), the restoration process of being conformed to the image of Jesus in order to glorify God begins in seven formational dimensions: (1) spirit, (2) emotions, (3) relationships, (4) intellect, (5) vocation, (6) physical health and wellness, and (7) resource stewardship (p. 18).

Figure 2*Christian Spiritual Formation Model*

Note: Adapted from Chandler, D. J. (2014). Christian spiritual formation: An integrated approach for personal and relational wholeness. p. 18

The doctrine of Christ is commonly known as Christology. Christ’s intercession assures the security of salvation. “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (KJV, Luke 22:32). Christ’s intercession restores fellowship that has been broken through sin. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:” (KJV, 1 John 2:1) (Enns, 2014, p. 253).

Gen Z and Spirituality

Adolescents that are currently of high school age encompass Gen Z. In the United States, Gen Z is the first generation that will have been raised in a post-Christian context (White, 2017). Spiritual formation is significant because this age group of youth rarely attends church. “Therefore, Christian schools must continually strive in their mission to impart and integrate a

Christian worldview while educating and preparing adolescents for a Biblically-based adulthood” (Horan, 2017, p. 32). Children have gifts that they must understand God has freely given to them. “Children involved in religious groups reported lower participation in risky behaviors, higher prosocial behaviors, but poorer levels of the more holistic measures of health” (Michaelson et al., 2014, p. 1353).

There is a conviction within children that belong to a Christian community and they are more likely to hesitate to behave recklessly. “Gen Z is less willing to claim a firm moral or religious guideline. When asked who they consider to be a trusted source regarding moral issues, over 20% stated a teacher” (Barna Group, 2017, p. 175). Gen Z was raised within a generation that has not lived without technology, computers, and iPhones. This group is comprised of adolescents that were born after 1996 (Deckman, 2020). Technology has vastly changed the world and the way individuals connect. “This particular group cannot recall life without social media” (Fromm & Read, 2018, p. 11). Screen based activities often supersede other leisure activities. The amount of time spent on screen-based activities (SBA) has emerged as an important risk factor for the mental health of adolescents. Children seek violent computer games and violent television programs for entertainment; however, both were linked to aggressive thoughts and hostility (Bushman, 2012). This concept does not assist to facilitate in positive behaviors.

Figure 3*Components of Integrated Spiritual Development*

Note: Adopted from Brandes, M.A. (2018). *Integrated Spiritual Development: A New Approach to Nurturing Adolescent Spirituality and Faith*. Religious Education.

To be wise, is to be mature. Most of the adolescents in this age group are smart regarding technology, but they must become wise regarding the knowledge of God. This Scripture exemplifies how it is important to be mature in the Spirit. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (KJV, James 1:5). Children must mature and become wise on their age level. It is difficult to teach children too far beyond what they can mentally retain. “Those who recognize the wisdom of God and are able to receive it as wisdom are called mature” (Samra, 2008, p. 69). Paul was wise and very knowledgeable. He was taught by one of the best teachers, Rabbi Gamaliel who was a leading Jewish teacher.

Paul knew that he was well-educated; however, he did not account his wisdom to his education but to the Spirit of God. Just as Christian teachers of today, Paul's desire for those that he watched over was to acquire Godly wisdom. He knew that wisdom correlated with being mature, and that maturity was needed for their spiritual growth. "Although all believers live according to the Spirit in status, not all believers' attitudes and actions conform to this status" (Samra, 2008, p. 66). The church of Corinth was commonly known for their immaturity. To become spiritually mature is the true sign of the growth of any Christian.

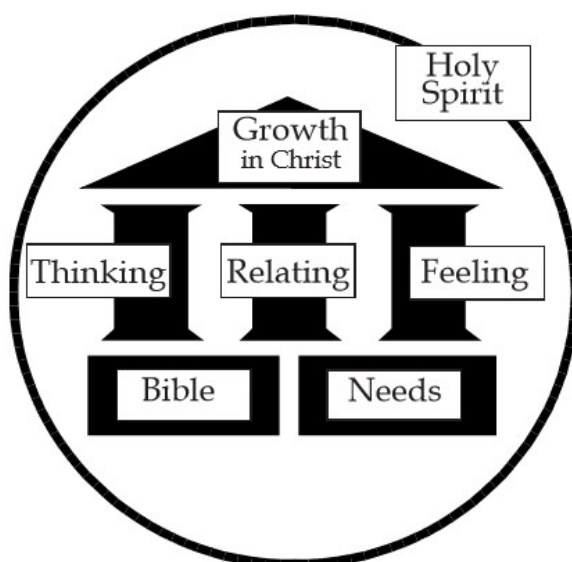
Adolescents must be able to have a sense of who they are, their self-value, and understand how to interact positively with others. "The adolescence stage is a time of building identity, relationships, and moral philosophies, and this period is formative in a person's spiritual life path" (Spurr et al., n.d., p. 221). In High School, identity plays a major role regarding how adolescents feel about themselves. When adolescents can understand who they are, they can better understand their own personality and establish positive relationships with others. "It is important to understand this fragile adolescent stage because teachers could overlook or fail to respond to the spiritual needs of adolescents" (Spurr et al., n.d., p. 221). If spiritual needs are overlooked; confidence, the sense of belonging, or values are some of the needs that may be at jeopardy.

The Yount Discipler's Model was created to enable Christian teachers (Sunday school, seminary, Bible study teachers, etc.) to lead the discipleship process. The Yount's Discipler's Model is concerned with the outcome of the learner (Yount, 2010). However, the teacher shapes the process using seven strategic elements. Christian teachers that desire to understand how to grow their students in the Lord, can use these elements as a biblical framework. The framework consists of progressing past the what, when, where and encompasses the how of discipleship.

Figure 4

The Discipler's Model

The Left Foundation Stone: The Bible
 The Right Foundation Stone: The Needs of People
 The Left Pillar: Helping People Think
 The Right Pillar: Helping People Value
 The Center Pillar: Helping People Relate
 The Capstone: Helping People Grow
 The Circle: Holy Spirit as Discipler



Note: Adapted from Yount, W. (2010). *Created to Learn* (p. 7). B&H Publishing Group. <https://app.wordsearchbible.com>.

The left foundation stone of the model is the Bible, God's eternal Word. The model would not be stable or sturdy without the foundation. This is the same as Christians needing the Word to be strong in the Lord. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (KJV, Psalm 119:105). There must be a clear understanding of the Word of God because it serves as a guide and direction. “Biblical wisdom is born small and grows through many trials and missteps, by the sustaining grace of God, toward the fullness of the mind of Christ” (Powlison, 2010, p. 272).

The focus is on letting the Bible speak to learners' needs, concepts, attitudes, and lifestyles. Scripture is more than words and symbols. God's Word is an extension of God's power. The teacher must present the Bible with clarity. When teaching, it is better to simply seek to understand what the Scriptures are saying. "When the focus is on letting the Bible speak to learners' needs, concepts, attitudes, and lifestyles it helps students to grow" (Yount, 2010).

Spiritual communication is just as important as the communication between the teacher and the student. Younts' model proves there is a strategic process. Although the Lord is everywhere, He does not demonstrate His presence, or make Himself tangibly present, unless we intentionally invite Him to participate (Yount, 2010). Prayer is an important aspect to welcome the presence of the Lord in. "Teachers should pray for students by name, asking the Lord to focus their hearts and minds. Teachers should also ask the Lord to use personal life experiences in learners to reinforce truths that will be addressed" (Yount, 2010, p. 43).

Yount Disciplers' Model helps teachers teach for the best learning outcome of their students. The right foundation stone in the model represents the needs of the learners. Jesus taught individuals and focused on their personal needs by teaching the meaning of Scripture. What the Bible says is infallible and does not change (Left Stone), however, the learning elements of each student changes (Right Stone) (Yount, 2010). Learners have different needs that are both general and specific. Both foundation stones are required for the model to be stable. If either crumbles the model falls, reflecting teaching that does not result in spiritual growth.

The left pillar is dedicated to helping people think. Students grow in the Lord when they can clearly understand the meaning of God's Word. The process of spiritual growth is constant. Individuals grow in personal knowledge of God. They can live out what is known and

understood in everyday life situations. Knowledge leads to understanding, understanding leads to wisdom (Yount, 2010). Students must be taught how to live according to God's Word.

The right pillar consists of helping people value. Students grow in God when they accept biblical truths on a personal level (Yount, 2010). Teachers help students develop a well-balanced emotional life, one which reflects positive attitudes toward life and others, as well as priorities that God Himself controls. Emotional freedom consistent with growth in emotional characteristics requires an environment conducive to emotional processes. When removing emotional barriers, it reveals students who have certain emotions that keep them from trusting and growing. Emotional growth resolves conflicts and disputes that occur in class that are derived from symptoms of emotional immaturity: fear, anxiety, short temper, and self-interest (Yount, 2010). Students grow out of negative traits as they replace them with traits that are more positive.

The center pillar helps people relate. A relationship with God the Father, begins with faith in the Son Jesus Christ. Spiritual power for repentance and renewal come through this vital link with the Lord (Yount, 2010). A relationship with others encompasses fellowship, ministering, equipping, and witnessing. Jesus established the church to establish and strengthen relationships with God and with fellow believers (Yount, 2010). Christian alternative schools serve as Christian community for students. In which for most students, this form of community may be the only evidence of God they receive. The three pillars of the model reflect three elements of human growth. "The rational helps learners process the facts and concepts of a course objectively. The emotional helps learners process the values and priorities of the course personally. The relational helps learners process course content in community with others" (Yount, 2010).

The capstone of the model is concerned with helping people grow. It represents the process of growing individual believers in God and helping them become like Christ through a relevant and practical study of God's Word (Yount, 2010). When students become mature in Jesus Christ, they grow into relationship with Him. The capstone represents growth in Christ. Lastly, the circle represents the Holy Spirit as discipler. It is the Holy Spirit who breathes life into lifeless lessons (Yount, 2010).

It is pertinent for students to understand the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit. He is a helper. He is the One that causes growth to happen. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (KJV, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Christian community is very beneficial regarding accountability in the aspect of striving to sustain holiness.

In many instances, communing with likeminded believers will assist those that fail to remember they are set apart from the world. As the Scripture states, Christians are indeed the temple of God. This confirms further how one is to be conformed to His image. A Christian should work daily to preserve the temple as pure and holy. "A mature believer is one who is defined as perfect, blameless, and pure" (Samra, 2008, p. 670).

It is imperative that Christian leaders strategically assess how to reach Gen Z. This generation is the future, and they are a very different and unique group. Spiritual formation being developed within Gen Z is a complex task because this group focuses more on technology and other activities. Christian teachers must examine what exactly it is about this group that makes them so different and difficult to reach. "Adolescents with mature spiritual formation are more likely to participate in community service and extra-curricular activities, exhibit pro-social

behaviors, improved self-esteem, self-control, and academic achievement with fewer risk behaviors (e.g., smoking, alcohol, truancy, sexual activity, marijuana)” (Horan, 2017, p. 57).

Encouraging adolescents regarding committing to God in their hearts is difficult. Adolescents consistently demonstrate an openness to religion, but few of them are deeply committed to one (Dean, 2015). In many cases, adolescents automatically connect with the religion their parents introduced them to at a young age. Christian teachers must seek to understand the religious and spiritual lives of American adolescents. There is often confusion between religious and spiritual adolescents. The terms are often used interchangeably, however, both elements are needed for wholeness.

Christians are to worship God and God alone. “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (KJV, John 4:24). It is a privilege to worship God, as this is one of the only things that God cannot do in and of Himself. If Christians neglect to praise the Lord, “And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (KJV, Luke 19:40). According to Pettit (2008), “Worship of the triune God is the most spiritually formative practice available to Christians” (p. 52).

True and genuine worship often comes from the innermost depths of a person. Worship is an intimate fellowship with God. This time spent with God displays a genuine vulnerability that exposes a true reverence unto Him. Adolescents are not antagonistic toward religion: they just do not care about it very much. Religion is not a big deal to them. People fight over things that matter to them - but religion barely causes a ripple in the lives of most adolescents.

The importance of the Spirit of God is over worldliness:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of

the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (KJV, 1 Corinthians 2:12-16)

This Scripture wholly describes a concept regarding being spiritual. It is vastly important to be led of the Spirit while growing spiritually. There are times when one unquestionably cannot lean unto their own understanding. The guidance from the spirit of the world cannot be compared to the guidance from the Spirit of God. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (KJV, John 14:26). The Spirit of God discerns beyond our limited comprehension and will always guide individuals in the right direction.

It is through spending time with God that the Spirit can manifest in a Christian’s life. When a Christian meditates on the Word of God they are transforming into like-mindedness with Jesus Christ. The Word of God through the Holy Bible is the most powerful tool for Christians to live by. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (KJV, John 1:1). The Word became flesh. “Because believers live by the Spirit they should also walk by the Spirit” (Samra, 2008, p. 64). Living by the Spirit produces character that mirrors that of God. It appears that attending church may not provide stimulation for adolescents. They seek more intense experiences that satisfy their desire for excitement. Christian organizations must understand how adolescents need intense stimulation.

Apostle Paul has remarkably set forth numerous examples for Christians to model regarding conforming to the image of Christ. There are extensive examples from his teachings; however, his own life is also a great testament. He understood the overall importance of truly becoming and living Christ-like. He personally experienced a genuine transformation on the road

to Damascus. He was on his way to arrest those that were of the gospel, yet instead he was the one arrested by God.

After his encounter with God, Paul journeyed throughout the world to and from various cities to preach the gospel. His desire was not solely to teach others, but to see Christ formed in them. “Spirituality is typically characterized as more private thoughts or behaviors that are not necessarily associated with formal religion (i.e., prayer, meditation, spiritual beliefs). Whereas religiosity is defined as behavior associated with organized religion, such as church attendance” (Good & Willoughby, 2006, p. 32). Spirituality represents an adolescent’s personal values, attitudes, and beliefs. Spirituality can, but does not necessarily, manifest itself through religion, a connection to an institutional set of beliefs and values. “Markstrom (1999) found that secondary school students who were highly involved in church activities, Bible studies, and/or youth groups, reported the greatest feelings of hope, love, and purpose in their lives” (Good & Willoughby, 2006, p. 42).

Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature

The rationale for this case study entails how spiritual formation is facilitated through the engagement of Christian teachers. This researcher anticipated understanding in-depth the real-life experiences of the Christian teachers’ perception of their engagement as it relates to at-risk students that attend Christian alternative schools. Four specific areas were explored, behavior management, spirituality, Christian pedagogy, and Christian discipleship.

This study seeks to fill the gap in literature concerning how at-risk students are negatively impacted by the educational systems’ failure to rehabilitate morally destructive liberalisms which hinders the ability to transform students to wholeness. “Public school teachers often request assistance related to behavior management due to feeling unprepared to manage misbehavior

effectively” (Allday et al., 2012, p. 87). General education teachers within the public school system have no tolerance for students that misbehave. The continuous misbehavior often stems from mental health disorders. “Many students with or at-risk for EBD are being served by general education teachers, many without BIP’s guiding their practices” (Ennis et al., 2020, p. 1).

There are implications for students when they are not taught by teachers that are not equipped to specifically engage with or impart into them. General education teachers are challenged and as an end result become frustrated when attempting to manage students’ misbehavior. When not properly equipped, “Teachers may not be capable of choosing the right methods of responding to students’ behavior, which may escalate the problem” (Markkanen et al., 2019, pp. 2-3).

In contrast, most Christian schools focus mostly on discipleship models. “To be true to its name-sake, the academic focus of Christian education should be in service to discipleship” (Cox & Peck, 2018, p. 243). Discipleship has been the traditional model for Christians to follow within Christian organizations when transformations are needed. “Discipleship is the process of learning Scriptures, internalizing them to shape ones’ belief system, and then applying them to change ones’ life” (Burggraff, 2015, p. 397). Within the public school system, the role of behavior management is vital. Within the Christian school system, the role of spiritual wholeness is vital. In as much that teachers must effectively engage students with underlying behavior problems to facilitate wholeness.

These findings offer all Christian schools a useful perspectives on how Christian teacher’s engagement facilitates spiritual formation. Moreover, it provides information that can assist in creating effective strategies that exemplify how wholeness is vital to spiritual formation. This case study provides innumerable in-depth strategies of engagement concerning behavior

management, spirituality, Christian pedagogy, and Christian discipleship, so teachers as well as students can experience growth.

Profile of the Current Study

Chapter Two reveals the significant role of teachers in the lives of students. Teachers are often the only Christian role models that students engage or connect with. Adolescents that attend Christian alternative schools must be disciplined. Through discipleship they are conformed to Christ. In the setting of Christian alternative schools, there is Christian community. Within this Christian environment, Christian teachers can cultivate the spiritual formation of students. The soul must be transformed as well as saved. Christian alternative schoolteachers engage students with known challenges.

This chapter encompasses how mental health impacts the behavior and actions of students. It was revealed that general education teachers are not trained to address the needs of students experiencing EBD. “When teachers are unprepared or not trained, students are repeatedly exposed to ineffective instructional practices, a process that over time can have profound negative consequences for students” (Mihalas et al., 2009, p. 109). Since mental health affects students’ thinking it is important to understand how to engage them for spiritual formation.

This chapter emphasized the need for teachers to intentionally reach Gen Z. This age group is currently in high school. “At this stage of life, they are attempting to build identity and relationships” (Spurr et al., n.d., p. 221). These two elements are attained through knowing God. There will be different layers of identity revealed within at-risk students. It is through the transformational Christian teacher that students learn how to grow in God. The significance of student growth entails how teachers must be intentional when engaging students. Through the

elements of behavior management, spirituality, Christian pedagogy and Christian discipleship, spiritual formation is conceivable. “Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (KJV, 2 Corinthians 5:17).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to understand the experiences of Christian teachers' perception of their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk adolescents that attend Christian alternative schools. This case study was pertinent as it intended to fill a gap in literature concerning how at-risk students are negatively impacted by the educational systems' failure to rehabilitate morally destructive liberalisms which hinders the ability to transform students to wholeness. "Students who demonstrate aggressive behaviors are at risk of school failure and are often placed in alternative schools, in which a primary goal is remediating behavioral and academic concerns" (Long et al., 2018, p. 106).

Christian alternative schools are vastly different from the traditional Christian school. This research methodology exhibited how Christian alternative schoolteachers intentionally engage students concerning behavior management, spirituality, Christian pedagogy, and Christian discipleship. The data collection instruments utilized consisted of surveys, interviews, document analysis and physical space observations. Themes were created to assist in transcribing the data. Non-probability sampling and purposive sampling were used and selected based on the population and individuals that are knowledgeable concerning the interest of this study (Creswell & Plano, 2011). Data analysis was implemented to interpret the information received from the teacher and administrator participants. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to qualitative analysis was chosen as a useful framework. Data analysis is a complex portion of this case study and there must be a clear understanding of the occurrences that have developed and why (Nowell et al., 2017).

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

In recent research, it is found that many students have been affected by the zero tolerance policy (1990). In many cases, this has resulted in students being suspended or expelled from school. When students have been suspended or expelled from public school, their learning has been hindered or terminated. EBD is a facet of mental health that is often the culprit for the behaviors that cause adolescents to misbehave. Mental health is frequently the primary factor that causes at-risk students to struggle.

Since alternative schools mostly enroll at-risk students, it was beneficial to gain an in-depth understanding of how teachers engage students successfully. There is a gap in literature concerning how at-risk students are negatively impacted by the educational systems' failure to rehabilitate morally destructive liberalisms which hinders the ability to transform students to wholeness. With adequate strategies, Christian alternative schoolteachers have a deeper understanding of how to engage students with an assertive sinful nature. "What has been deformed by the ugliness of sin (the whole person) must now be reformed according to the ideal image of perfect humanity found in Jesus Christ" (Pettit, 2008). Striving to become more like God is a daily intentional effort.

A true understanding of biblical principles guides at-risk students' behavior and ultimately their life away from the world's corrupt standards. Transformation encompasses students living and following that which is honorable unto God, His will. The case study approach allows in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues within real-life settings (Crowe et al., 2011). When the processes or engagement of the teachers are invalid or ineffective, spiritual formation may not occur effectively.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to understand Christian teachers' perception of their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk students that attend a Christian alternative school. At this stage in the research, spiritual formation is generally defined as the process of being "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). The primary theoretical framework guiding this study was James Fowler's (1981) Stages of Faith Development theory. "Faith results from interactions and experiences that individuals have in the various components that make up their lives and unites these components so that they can feel their lives are whole" (Fowler, 1981, p. 25).

Research Questions

RQ1. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding behavior management facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

RQ2. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding spirituality facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

RQ3. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding Christian pedagogy facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

RQ4. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding Christian discipleship facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

Research Design and Methodology

This case study methodology assisted to obtain the real-life experiences of the teacher participants. The rationale for using a case study was to conduct research on the daily lives of Christian alternative schoolteachers. Studying the daily lives of teachers assisted to better understand and help them overcome any dilemmas entailing engaging students. Utilizing the case study method answered how teachers are engaging daily. To engage encompassed the

teachers being able to positively impart into students, to instill healthy practices. All the research questions asked how teachers engage through various elements that impact students in the long-term.

The qualitative research method was chosen over quantitative because this study did not seek to quantify large data. “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). Instead, this researcher desired to gain an understanding of the engagement executed by the teacher participants concerning behavior management, spirituality, Christian pedagogy, and Christian discipleship. This case study method helped to understand how teachers perceive how certain factors facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk students to change their lives.

The teacher participants’ own perspective within their own setting was examined, as they were the subjects of interest for this case study. “Case studies are a design of inquiry, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, process or individuals” (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). An example dissertation that utilized the case study method was discovered and reviewed regarding the preparedness of teachers for spiritually transformational teaching. Preparedness was based on spirituality, training, and transformational teaching (Lewis, 2015). These elements addressed the purpose of examining teachers for indications of preparedness for spiritually transformational teaching. Within this case study, “The school and the teachers were nested cases within the primary case. This qualified it as a single case study” (Lewis, 2015, p. 88). This dissertation review assisted to understand how to employ specific elements of spirituality within the research questions to understand the experience of the teachers.

There are three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This researchers' specific case study utilized the intrinsic type. This type was utilized because this researcher was ultimately concerned with the teachers and their experiences. The teacher participants were the individuals to provide the answers and solutions this researcher was seeking to discover. An example dissertation was discovered and reviewed that studied students as a result of how a Christian alternative school affected them.

The dissertation inquired on the experiences and post school outcome of students. The dissertation utilized the intrinsic case study method "because not only were the results based on the students, but how they were affected by the school and the time they spent at the school" (Carniol, 2018, p. 52). The dissertation further explored the role that attending an alternative school played in the student's social/behavioral development and post school outcomes. The dissertation review assisted in understanding how to utilize the intrinsic type for deeper analysis of the experience of Christian alternative schoolteachers.

Setting

Southeast Christian Alternative School was founded in 1980. It is nestled on over nine hundred acres of land and is based in the Southeast Region. During the campsite observations, this researcher captured all the unique qualities that this program offers. According to Elijah, the land was previously a farm tract. This characteristic was vastly accommodating for the purpose of a Wilderness Therapeutic Camp program. This type of camp approach is holistic, in which it encourages and inspires students naturally and spiritually. The school day transpires outdoors and amongst nature daily. There are a total of 12 staff members. Also, the school has a 3:1 student to teacher ratio (Southeast Christian Alternative School, 2020). The teachers live with the students on-site.

The teachers are known amongst the camp as chiefs. A chief is a counselor who teaches and participates in life with the students. Within this study the various titles of teacher, chief, counselor and groupwork supervisor were synonymous. Also, it was common for the group of boys to be acknowledged amongst the camp as “the boys”. There are instances when the phrase “the boys” is synonymous with students. Southeast Christian Alternative School was chosen based on its Christ centered values and accreditation. Therefore, the term school, program, and camp were synonymous. Typically, it is not a requirement for private Christian schools to obtain accreditation. However, for this study, accreditation credentials were sought after to yield quality end results.

Southeast Christian Alternative Schools’ program focuses on the development and growth of students. The teachers assist with the academic and spiritual development of their students to ensure educational and personal success in life. The mission of this school is to provide Christian service to children and their families in a caring culture (Southeast Christian Alternative School, 2020). Ultimately, transforming who society deems as unfortunate students into productive citizens.

Southeast Christian Alternative School is committed to the alleviation of oppressive cycles of students. The school is an example of a school that focuses on student restoration. This school is a residential program and the students have left their families to work on their issues. It understands that at-risk students cannot be obliterated. It seeks to meet the needs of students who struggle in traditional schools due to academic or behavioral obstacles, many of whom were expelled or dropped out (Southeast Christian Alternative School, 2020).

According to the Assistant Director Elijah, each student voluntarily lives at the camp. Students enter the program to focus on their personal issues and to overcome any trauma they

have experienced. Elijah explained the history regarding the various reasons students enter the program. For example, some students have been abused or have been addicted to drugs.

Southeast Christian Alternative School is led by the love of God (Southeast Christian Alternative School, 2020). This was apparent through observation during the on-site visit. The evidence of caring for others permeated the surroundings of the school. “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (KJV, Philippians 2:4). There was a family relational atmosphere that was filled with compassion for others.

The camp approach is community oriented. It promotes working in groups to establish a healthy learning environment. According to Elijah, every six weeks the students return home to their families the duration of four days. During the time at home with their parents and siblings, the students practice the skills they have learned. Elijah also mentioned that the average length of stay for students within the program is normally a year and a half. However, it can vary between shorter or longer time lengths. Overall, the timeframe depends on the student. Some students accomplish their goals and can leave the program early. Other students depending on their personal goals and healing progress, may stay up-to two and a half years.

The Wilderness Therapeutic Camping experience provides opportunity for the students to explore trees, deer, lizards, and woodpeckers up close and personal. The schools’ unique program made it possible to delve the research questions in-depth and from a different perspective. The school’s religious services include chapel and Bible study. Outside of the student’s living environment there are canoe and camping trips (Southeast Christian Alternative School, 2020). The teachers educate students in various subjects through a distinctly biblical worldview.

Although the setting of this school is outside within the environment of nature, there are amenities. “Minimum permanent facilities are provided: kitchen-dining room and bath house. The boys construct and maintain their own shelters, latrines, camp cooking-eating facilities, tool racks, wash area and garbage disposal facilities” (Loughmiller, 1980, p. 23). This researcher was astonished at the handy work of the students. The shelters were spacious and immaculate. “The shelters are constructed of canvas stretched over a frame made of saplings, they require repair and replacement from time to time, and must be winterized for comfort in cold weather” (Loughmiller, 1980, p. 23). It was explained how the students live outside in the various weather conditions. This includes rain, storms, or snow. However, the Assistant Director Elijah explained how there are facilities on-site in case of adverse weather conditions.

There are unique experiences, however, there is a standard requirement for academics. Students mostly attend this school because they experienced difficulty in an area(s) while enrolled within a traditional school. Southeast Christian Alternative School believes students have an essential and natural desire to learn. Therefore, if students are not learning, there is an underlying reason and that reason needs to be discovered (Southeast Christian Alternative School, 2020). This process often requires extra time from teachers that cannot be provided within traditional school settings.

Southeast Christian Alternative School does not solely apply additional pressure on students to only pass test. Rather, teachers seek to equip students with daily life skills. There is more of a focus on instilling the skills needed for their student’s future within their natural environments. For example, becoming successful concerning their daily family and work life. There is a genuine care and awareness that students must survive beyond the school

environment. This aspect is important during the off weeks when students can return home for a week and after students graduate from the program.

Southeast Christian Alternative School expects students to experience a transformational change. To be able to transform from within their hearts is pertinent. The school also expects students to become disciplined within their daily lives from a physical, mental, and emotional aspect. The school desires students to become confident with who they are, to better understand their self-worth (Southeast Christian Alternative School, 2020). Lastly, the school desires their students to understand how to relate positively within society.

Participants

The sample was identified as the group of teachers currently working within Southeast Christian Alternative School. After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted approval (Appendix A), the process began. “Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they were selected” (Roberts, 2004). A permission letter (Appendix B) was emailed to the regional director. Approval from the school of interest was granted to conduct this research. Non-probability sampling is a method of sampling utilized when it is unknown which individual from the population was selected as a sample (Panchal, 2017).

The teacher recruitment letters (Appendix C) and the administrator recruitment letters (Appendix D) were emailed after permission was granted. This specific letter was executed to formally invite respondents to participate in the actual study. After the recruitment letters were executed, screening surveys were emailed (Appendix E) to the potential participants. This survey was necessary to recruit possible participants that would later become a purposive sample of teachers invited to contribute to the study.

Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling. Purposive sampling is selected based on characteristics of the population and the objective of the study (Crossman, 2020). Purposive sampling helps to identify individuals that are knowledgeable or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano, 2011). Due to the criteria of this study, the participants were over the age of 18 and had at least one year of teaching experience. The teachers taught within a secondary education Christian alternative school. The teachers were to be classified as full-time, part-time, retired, volunteer or student.

After the screening surveys were returned, the maximum variation sampling was also utilized for a range of diversity within the participants. During this time consent letters were also provided to teachers, administrator and the assistant director that met the criteria of the study and could further participate in the study. “The purpose was to provide as much insight as possible into various teacher participants” (Crossman, 2020, para. 3). However, unexpectedly all the same ethnicity and gender were interviewed. This was an interesting factor that was not perceived prior to screening.

To assure the willingness of each educators’ acceptance to become involved with the study, teacher consent letters (Appendix F) and the administrator consent letters (Appendix G) were provided to each participant and returned to the researcher. Afterwards, a short demographic survey was emailed (Appendix H) to the teachers and the administrators that were chosen to participate. For this case study a minimum of five individual research participants were anticipated. A demographic survey (Appendix H) was utilized to assist this researcher identify the aspects of each individual’s age, gender, education, specialized programs, Christian degrees or certificates acquired. After the demographic surveys were returned and reviewed for completion, the interviews were scheduled.

The teachers interview questions (Appendix I) and the administrator interview questions (Appendix J) were prepared using open-ended questions. After the face-to-face interviews, this researcher utilized the observation sheet (Appendix K) to observe and analyze any objects associated to spiritual formation. Lastly, regarding data analysis, excel spreadsheets were utilized to manage the data.

Role of the Researcher

This researcher was the key instrument for this case study. “Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants” (Creswell, 2014, p. 185). Aside from its credentials, Southeast Christian Alternative School was chosen because of its rarity as an established Christian alternative school. This researcher had no previous affiliation with any of the participants or the institution. This researcher did not know of the existence of this alternative school. This researcher desired to avoid any biases that would potentially hinder the case study findings. Obtaining extensive experience working with children has been a tremendous blessing and learning experience. Learning how the importance of instilling an individuals’ morals and integrity at a young age is vital. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (KJV, Proverbs 22:6).

This study derived from a heavy burden for adolescents that have disorders or experience hardship, resulting from everyday life experiences. It was devastating to learn through research, that adolescents were not receiving the assistance they need to succeed in life. There were several bias stereotypes of alternative schools. The most common was the school is for “bad” children that cannot live at home for various reasons. There was further comparison of interest amongst the researcher and Southeast Christian alternative school with desiring to implement

change in adolescents. This institution proclaims a strong foundation on development and growth.

Having the ability to work with adolescents and witness first-hand the aspects of the way they think, act, and express themselves provoked this study. Adolescents mostly desire an individual that accepts them where they are and in whom they can trust. This researcher is dedicated to impacting the alternative school setting to a great degree. This researcher and the Southeast Christian Alternative School had the same Christian beliefs. To better assist with any biases, this researcher relied upon strong research literature.

Ethical Considerations

All the participants involved with this case study were adult teachers over the age of 18. There were no student participants in this case study. All names and other personal data were changed to pseudonyms. In all cases, confidentiality of information was secure. Confidentiality was applied to this case study, as all participants' identity was established ("Confidentiality," 2013). All participants identity was secure from anyone other than this researcher.

This case study conducted face-to-face interviews; therefore, anonymity could not be established. No information was sought until the IRB approval (Appendix A) process was established. "The IRB is in place to protect the student researcher and the population surveyed or interviewed" (Vyhmeister, 2014, pp. 43-44). Only the IRB could decide whether the proposed research meets the expedited review criteria requirements.

According to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (2019), the following criteria must be met for IRB approval:

- Risks to participants was minimized
- Risks to participants were reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits

- Selection of participants was equitable
- Informed consent was sought from each prospective subject
- Informed consent was appropriately documented
- The research plan made adequate provision for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of participants
- There were adequate provisions to protect the privacy of participants and to maintain the confidentiality of data (pp. 2-3)

No one had access to the participants information but the researcher on a secure computer. All paper forms were locked in a key file drawer. The researcher was prepared in case there were situations that could potentially affect the participation of teachers. There were no teacher participants that began the process and were unable to proceed to finish. This study protected all participants and maintained their privacy throughout the entire case study.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Collection Methods

Applying more than one data collection method assisted in the validity of the study. Screening surveys were used to initially recruit the target audience of teachers. The survey information allowed this researcher to define the type of participants that met the criteria. This selection of participants attained a broad range of experience and knowledge. The experience and knowledge resulted from past or current teaching experiences with at-risk students and the Christian alternative school setting.

There was information provided that elaborates on any education that assisted within the Christian alternative school. "Interviews are commonly executed as a data collection instrument to gather information about participants' experiences, opinions, and values concerning a specific research question or phenomenon of interest" (Frances et al., 2009). Interviews assist to sense the

participants' body movement and comprehension of the questions. "The interviews captured first-hand information from the teacher participants' personal experience. Interviewing is essential when behaviors and feelings cannot be observed or how people interpret their surroundings" (Merriam, 2009, p. 88).

Surveys

Screening surveys were conducted to ensure the study criteria was met. The demographic survey instrument questions were developed by the researcher but conducted by using email and an online tool Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey is a convenient and easy-to-use website that is commonly known for creating and collecting surveys. The questions were factual to merely inquire on the potential participants' background. The surveys were developed by creating content that identified areas of basic demographics such as age, gender, education, and teaching experience.

Each survey question intentionally provided the researcher with an indication of the overall population. This researcher was granted IRB approval to ensure the confidentiality and protection of the survey participants. After the surveys were completed by the respondents, the researcher invited a diverse group of teacher participants to the study. This information formed a foundational basis to understand the range of participants regarding their background and qualifications. The demographic surveys confirmed that the potential participants were best fit for this study.

The demographic survey questions were structured and developed to specifically determine information concerning the participants. The surveys were a significant beginning for the researcher to collect a distinctive sample group. After the IRB process was attained for the confidentiality and protection of the participants, the surveys were administered. These survey

questions were further created to assist in electing a purposive sampling of teacher participants with maximum variation. Survey questions one through seven provided the researcher with basic information pertaining to the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, education, longevity of profession, academic subject being taught, and life of a Christian. Survey questions eight through eleven provided the researcher with information pertaining to the participants' spiritual practices. Survey question 12 provided the researcher with information pertaining to any special training the participant may have obtained. These surveys were transcribed by using assigned codes.

Interviews

This case study utilized the qualitative method to examine the real life experiences of the teacher participants. This factor was of importance because the teachers were able to explain their experiences from their point of view. The teachers were the subjects of interest for this case study. "Case studies are a design of inquiry, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, process or individuals" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). This researcher understood that a case study was more appropriate for the data that would be retrieved. There are three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This researchers' specific case study desired to use the intrinsic type. This type was utilized because this researcher was ultimately concerned with the teachers and their experiences.

There were five teacher participant interviews conducted in-person and one by telephone that devised the purposive sample. This type of sampling involved identifying and selecting individuals that were especially knowledgeable about and experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano, 2011). Interview questions (APPENDIX I and J) were developed by this researcher based on the need to answer each research question. Themes were assigned to the

data that was retrieved from the interview questions (APPENDIX I and J). For example, discuss the issue and practical skills in the woods, were two themes assigned.

The teacher participants and the administrator interview questions (APPENDIX I and J) were grounded in the literature. The interview questions were constructed through guidance of Fowlers' (1981) Stages of Faith Development Theory, Piaget's (1932) Moral Development Theory, Burns' (1978) Transformational Leadership Theory and Horne's (1998) six essential features of teaching and learning. The interviews assisted in understanding the experiences regarding behaviors and what is accomplished in their daily teaching practices. The interview questions consisted of unstructured, semi-structured and open-ended questions to better understand the experiences of the teacher participants.

The questions were written in advance and developed to strategically answer the specific areas of the research questions. However, the interview time allotment provided for unstructured questions. In which a teacher participant could freely delve into another topic that flowed from a previous question and generated more in-depth conversation, as necessary. This approach allowed this researcher to be more flexible when seeking depth of any questions. This approach was utilized in the dissertation regarding teacher preparedness for transformational teaching and it was successful (Lewis, 2015).

The interviews were conducted within the participants normal setting. After requesting consent (APPENDIX F and G), this researcher made use of an interview journal and audio recorder to account for sufficient data within the interviews. After each interview, this researcher transcribed the data that was conveyed. Transcribing assisted to interpret and analyze the data. The data was organized by the nature of the subject matter, based on specific themes and patterns (Creswell, 2014). Member checking was used to determine the accuracy of the qualitative

findings by taking the final report back to each teacher participant to assure the information was inferred accurately (Creswell, 2014). Each interview question was created to retrieve the essential data needed to address specific research questions.

Document Analysis

Document analysis was also conducted by the researcher. This researcher requested to review the schools' standard curriculum map from the assistant director Elijah. Curriculum maps may be utilized by teachers corporately or individual teachers may attain diary curriculum maps that can be reviewed. Curriculum maps can provide sufficient information regarding what is being taught to students (Burns, 2001). Prior to the onsite visit, this researcher requested the school administrator or teachers to furnish lesson plans.

Lesson plans provide day to day information on information the teacher intends to teach (Burns, 2001). After comprehending how this school executes lessons daily, lessons were understood as experiential. Behavior plans organized by the teacher, were initially requested for review. However, the method this school utilizes is commonly known as Individual Crisis Management Plans (commonly known as the ICMP) (Appendix L). Each of the documents provided supplied sufficient information to contribute to the areas of behavior management, spirituality, Christian pedagogy, and Christian discipleship.

Document analysis uses a systematic method to analyze written evidence and answer research questions. Document analysis requires persistent review, examination, and interpretation of the data to gain meaning and pragmatic knowledge of the phenomenon being studied (Frey, 2018). This researcher reviewed ICMP's and curriculum maps that were utilized. An example dissertation that studied students within a Christian High School successfully used

similar documents to understand if Christian teachers were prepared to utilize spiritual transformational teaching (Lewis, 2015).

Behavior management consist of understanding potential triggers and providing intervention strategies. The applicable documents were applied to RQ1, regarding behavior management. A lesson plan is a teacher's daily guide for what students need to learn, how it will be taught, and how learning will be measured. As mentioned, lesson plans are established different within this school. "A curriculum map can manage three stages: Goals and Standards (purpose of the unit), Assessments (evidence of student learning), and the Learning Activities (how will the student learn)" ("Immanuel Christian School," 2019). Students can learn a body of knowledge in the academic disciplines in a biblical context.

This researcher assessed the curriculum map belonging to the teacher participants as a whole; corporately. Curriculum mapping prepares students intellectually, spiritually, and personally ("Immanuel Christian School," 2019). The criterion for selecting the curriculum maps and lesson plans were based on data pertaining to RQ3, regarding Christian pedagogy. This researcher requested access to these documents from the assistant director.

Observations

As the researcher, this writer executed field notes on the behavior and activities of the teacher participants. This researcher observed as complete observer, a researcher that observes without participating (Kawulich, 2005). This researcher observed the teacher participants. No students were observed. This researcher followed any IRB rules for ethical considerations. This process occurred at the same time during the interviews. Any visual observations were notated, for example, personality, body language and tone of the teacher participants. Other observations

consisted of the ability to answer the interview questions. Classroom observations (i.e. woods) consisted of, but were not limited to religious banners, access to Bibles or rules/policies.

Observations accounted for anytime the researcher was on-site. All data was written in the interview journal and was transcribed to address any details and reflections. The theme assigned, the time of the occurrence were accounted for, and a description of the events that took place. Member checking also occurred within this phase to ensure the researchers interpretation of any observation was accurate.

Procedures

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to understand the experiences of Christian teachers' perception of their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk adolescents that attend Christian alternative schools. This study was achieved through various data collection methods. According to Yin (2009), "The qualitative researcher conducts data collection methods from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts" (p. 98). Screening surveys (APPENDIX E) were implemented in the beginning phase to recruit a population of individuals that later became a purposive sample of teacher participants invited to contribute to the study. Merriam (1998) suggests that "Purposive or purposeful sampling usually occurs before the data are gathered" (p. 66). Demographic surveys also encompassed basic demographic information that provided the researcher ample information to further understand the intended target audience.

Once the demographic surveys (APPENDIX H) were received, the interviews could begin. The interview sessions were allotted within a timeframe based upon teacher availability. The assistant director was notified of the request for documents to be analyzed. The retrieval of any lesson plans or other documents were determined by the process of the school. In some

instances, the teacher can provide lesson plans, in other instances there is an assigned individual that will provide access to the documents requested. In this case, it was the assistant director.

This study was completed through several data collection methods that allowed triangulation of the different data sources to shape a comprehensible explanation for themes (Creswell, 2014). The participant responses retrieved from these various data collection methods answered each of the research questions. Most importantly, the participant responses explained and further elucidated on Christian teachers' perception of their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk adolescents. The principal data collection methods this study engaged were surveys, interviews, document analysis and physical space observations.

Data Analysis

Once the participants were selected for the study, the data analysis could begin. Several instruments were utilized throughout the study; therefore, the gathered data had to be organized and managed. According to Creswell (2014), "Data analysis is making sense of the data and interpreting them appropriately so as to not mislead readers" (p. 38).

Analysis Methods

To begin the data analysis phase, the researcher retrieved the initial data using email and the online tool, Survey Monkey. This data started with the selection of population of potential teacher participants. The non-probability sampling, commonly known as purposive sampling will guide this study. The purposive sampling is based on the criteria of teacher participants currently employed at a Christian alternative school(s).

Each instrument was analyzed independently, and this occurred soon after the researcher collected the data. Data analysis was made manageable when this researcher was able to analyze along with data collection. To wait until all data are collected is to lose the opportunity to gather

more reliable and valid data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 236). This researcher utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to qualitative analysis as a useful framework to analyze the data. A system was created to implement a systematic routine that was apparent across all data collection. Data was initially filed by the date that it was documented. The data was then organized by labeling. Next, the data was categorized by using inductive coding. "Then the data was analyzed by a strategy known as content analysis" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 298). The findings from this data collection were systematically called themes. These themes were assigned specific names and they are projected to answer each research question. The data was assigned to its applicable theme. "The research questions are the key foundation that governs the analysis and coding of the organic data" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 236). The themes were assigned based on the current interview questions consisting of behavior, spirituality, Christian pedagogy, and discipleship. This was vital concerning spiritual formation. Whereas the engagement of the teachers further develops the Godly behavior for the students to model. The intentional engagement of the teachers shaped the spiritual formation of the students.

Trustworthiness

The research data must be trustworthy. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative researchers often use the term trustworthiness to refer to the concept of validity (p. 161). Trustworthiness consists of establishing four key areas: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. This process includes the element of credibility. Credibility contributes to the readers' confidence in the data analysis. The research findings warranted a level of confidence that could be placed in the truth of the participants' organic data. Dependability involves ensuring the findings are consistent and can be repeated (Cohen, 2006). Dependability is pertinent because it focuses on data stability.

The data had to be confirmed. Confirmability was concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the finding are not forged or researcher biased, but precisely derived from the data of the participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This element assists in confirming that the researcher has not motivated the results. Transferability is the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents and continue be viewed as applicable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Credibility

As a Christian, it is imperative to live a life that represents God. This representation may be established through trustworthiness and reliability. In the same way, credibility establishes confidence that the results (from the perspective of the participants) are true, credible, and believable (Forero et al., 2018). Credibility asks the researcher to clearly link the research study's findings with reality to prove the truth of the actual findings. The aim of credibility focuses on the use of two specific techniques, triangulation, and member checking (Birt et al., 2016).

Triangulation is a technique that makes use of more than one data collection method to ensure the study is well-developed. "Triangulation will help this researcher increase confidence in the findings through the confirmation of a proposition using two or more independent measures" (Heale & Forbes, 2013). This case study utilized data triangulation/informant's triangulation through different sources of data or research instruments of interviews, document analysis, and observations that utilizes different teacher participants to enhance the quality of data. Each teacher, administrator, and assistant director were needed to understand the similarities or differences, and the uniqueness amongst the diverse group of participants' perspectives.

This study implemented member checks to validate the findings. This was accomplished by returning the interviews, observations, analysis of documents, to the participants. This enabled the information that was interpreted by the researcher to be reviewed for accuracy. Participants read and reviewed the transcriptions and made remarks and necessary modifications. The changes were needed for clarity and the researcher made the necessary final changes. Throughout the study and audit trail was implemented. An audit trail provides the reader with evidence of the decisions and choices made by the researcher regarding theoretical and methodological issues throughout the study, which requires a clear rationale for such decisions (Nowell et al., 2007). This researcher logged and kept records of the research occurrences to validate findings in the research journal. This procedure encompassed keeping an account of the research process from the beginning to the end. This researcher personally made certain to be ethical, accountable, and unbiased throughout the entire study.

Dependability

One goal of this research study's findings was to maintain its consistency. This specific matter aims to prove that the findings and the organic data that was collected is dependable. The researcher can be confident if other researchers reviewed that data, that they would conclude the same assumptions regarding the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure that other researchers would have success with repeating this process if needed, an audit trail was formed. A log was well-maintained of all research activities. To maintain confidentiality, all information was secured on a computer with sole access to this researcher only. All data was secured by password protection for information stored on the computer and any paperwork was filed with file drawers that will be locked when not in use.

Confirmability

Confirmability was pertinent to qualitative research to assure the findings were verified based on the respondent's influence, not the researcher's personal interest. This researcher employed confirmability to extend the confidence that the findings would be confirmed by other researchers (Forero et al., 2018). Confirmability is concerned with establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), confirmability was established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all attained. This researcher included labels and markers to emphasize the reasons for theoretical and methodological selections throughout the entire study. This step was vital to understand how and why decisions were decided upon (Nowell et al., 2017). A detailed audit trail was established as a record to log all actions to further exhibit openness. Method triangulation was also used to establish validity through the various instruments utilized. The method triangulation process checks the data on multiple occurrences to verify if the same concurrent results are yielded to answer the research questions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Transferability

Transferability extends the degree to which the results can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Forero et al., 2018). The responsibility as a researcher is to provide a rich description of the teacher participants. In which the reader will be able to assess if the findings are transferable to their own setting (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferable means the

readers can apply their own findings within another context. In qualitative research, this concerns only case-to-case transfer (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

The researcher would not know the sites to transfer the findings. However, the researcher is responsible for providing thick descriptions, so that those who seek to transfer the findings to their own site can judge transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). The transfer must be made by the participants, not by the researcher. This description is describing not just the behavior and experiences, but their context as well, so that the behavior becomes meaningful to an outsider. According to Creswell (2014) this researcher needed to provide rich detailed descriptions of the setting to add validity to the findings (p. 202).

This case study may have the potential to assist all teachers regardless of whether their school setting is classified as public or private. However, this case primarily assisted Christian alternative schoolteachers to understand how vital their engagement was for spiritual formation in at-risk students. There was a dire need for at-risk students to drastically transform and benefit the Kingdom. The Great Commission will be established.

This case study anticipated to alleviate the stress of feeling inadequate to fulfill ones' daily job tasks. Being in the role of the Christian alternative schoolteacher is the epitome of a transformational leader. Teachers were able to self-reflect upon their own lives. The teacher must live a life that is worthy to be followed. This case study revealed any areas that are declining. If a teacher cannot control the teaching environment, this case study revealed processes that can be added to strengthen the teachers' process.

As the students grow, they are internally changing, which will be displayed through their renewed behavior. Students are gradually transforming to the image of Jesus Christ, to live a life pleasing unto God, which is one's reasonable service. As students are transformed, they have

experienced training from their teaching to be able to disciple someone else that is in need. This study has the potential to assist clinicians that work in the mental health field. In which they can better understand how to assist the school systems by providing information to better assess the needs of the students. All teachers, within the public or private sector would benefit from new models. Behavior management models integrated with discipleship models are needed to assist teachers engaging certain behaviors. Remediation is needed instead of students being removed from school indefinitely.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Three defined and further explored research methodology according to this qualitative intrinsic case study. This chapter amply reviewed the research problem and why this study was warranted. It considered the zero tolerance policy (1990) and how it negatively affects students. An explanation was provided on how students impacted by the policy may experience school expulsion within a public school. For this reason the Christian Alternative school serves as an opportunity to continue learning for students. It also reiterated the overall purpose, research questions, setting, participants, data collection, and data analysis.

The research questions in this chapter provided real-life experiences of the teachers and essentially how they engage or impart healthy practices into students' lives. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) was pertinent and essential for ethical considerations. The process primarily served as a measure to protect all participants involved (Creswell, 2010). The data collection methods and data analysis were also provided to understand the precise procedures that were undertaken. All surveys, interviews, document analysis and observations were acknowledged and permission was obtained before participants utilized any instruments. The explanation of the

data collection methods governed the processes and captured the answers needed to understand the engagement in detail.

The data analysis process utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to organize the data. This researcher was able to code and theme the data within an efficient process utilizing this step-by-step approach. Overall, this chapter exhibited how the case study filled the gap in literature concerning how at-risk students are negatively impacted by the educational systems' failure to rehabilitate morally destructive liberalisms which hinders the ability to transform students to wholeness.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to understand the experiences of teachers' perception of their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk students at a Christian alternative school. Chapter Four focused precisely on the qualitative data deriving from surveys, interviews, document analysis and physical space observations from teachers and the general environment within Southeast Christian Alternative School. Screening surveys were implemented to ensure the potential participants would meet the criteria of the study. The surveys were sent via email and Survey Monkey. After eligibility was considered, eight individuals met the criteria for the study.

Demographic surveys were emailed to participants who accepted the invitation to share their experiences. After the surveys were returned to this researcher, face-to-face interviews were implemented on-site. All data was assessed and analyzed. The data was coded and concluding themes were created according to each research question. Several of the themes created were: Distinct teaching methods, outside opportunities and God on the inside.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

Southeast Christian Alternative Schools' geographic location was based in North Carolina. Initially, this researcher contacted the regional director via telephone and followed up via email. The assistant director contacted this researcher by email and readily approved participation for the study. After all approval directives were granted, this researcher utilized email and Survey Monkey to send screening surveys to each potential participant. Once completed, the surveys were returned to this researcher and evaluated for eligibility.

After eligibility was considered, eight individuals met the criteria for the study. In which, all potential teachers were then accepted as participants. Fortunately, this researcher did not have to exclude any of the potential participants. The initial goal for this study was a minimum of five participants. There were six participants classified by this study as teachers. These participants were identified by the school as chiefs and groupwork supervisors. Other satisfactory eligibility included one administrator and one assistant director. All consent forms were emailed to participants to vigilantly review the research dynamics and as invitation to participate. All consent forms were signed, dated, and returned to this researcher by email.

Next, the demographic surveys were emailed to the participants that would acquiescently share their experiences. All demographic surveys were emailed back to this researcher. These surveys were assessed for clarity and completion, then filed in a key-locked desk drawer for confidentiality. Next, the face-to-face interviews were implemented on-site and one via telephone. Physical space observations were advantageous for clarity and comprehension during this researchers' on-site visit. Observation sheets (Appendix K) were completed based upon this researchers' assessment of the site. This data collection process assisted to ensure the validity of this study. Utilizing the various methods impacted this researchers' understanding of how the teachers effectively engage with their students regarding behavior, spirituality, teaching and discipleship. This process further assisted to eliminate any misinformation or prejudice of the compiled data.

This researcher followed the necessary protocol to analyze the provided data. According to Braun & Clarke (2013), there are seven steps that should transpire within a thematic analysis (pp. 3-4). This process assisted to identify repeated patterns and eventually led to themes. Transcription occurred through extracted data from participant responses, playback of audio tape

recordings, researcher transcripts and on-site observations. Information from the various data sources formed the basis of the compiled triangulated data. Credibility was established through triangulation and member checking. This researcher also implemented an audit trail by logging and retaining records of the research occurrences.

The second step involved reading and familiarization with the information acquired. This researcher became familiar with the data by repetitively reading, assessing, and comprehending participant responses. After re-examining the data, this researcher utilized excel for assessment and sorting. Excel provided an organizational arrangement that provided structure to execute coding. Organizing the information was time consuming, however, beneficial regarding clarity and the overall broad view.

The next step was the coding process. To initiate coding, this researcher identified all relevant pieces of data within the entire dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This process would further assist answering the research questions. All codes utilized were derived directly from the data retrieved. To code effectively this researcher utilized a codebook, Microsoft Word, and Excel. The participants' response to each question was coded by color and according to the frequency of occurrence. Notes were made throughout the dissected data for clarity and reasoning.

After completion of coding, this researcher began searching for probable themes. The origin of themes was consequent of the codes that were established. After review, the next procedure of defining and naming the actual themes could begin. This sixth step assisted to fully understand the dataset responses. A piece of discernable information was transformed to the use of the selected pseudonyms that would be utilized. This step ensured confidentiality for all participants. The seventh step of the process implemented finalizing the analysis.

All participants displayed an in-depth knowledge regarding the standard processes of operation to intentionally engage students concerning their behavior. Participants explained their use of various models that guide their engagement for behavioral correction. The Children and Residential Experiences model, (known as CARE), and the Problem, Solution, Prevention model (commonly known as PSP), were consistent collectively throughout the participants. All participants have a minimum of two spiritual disciplines that they practice (i.e. prayer and reading Scriptures). The participants expressed how their own personal spiritual growth assists to better understand their students. The beliefs expressed from the participants seemingly assist to extend grace towards their students. Aside from academic lessons, Christian pedagogy consists primarily of implementing the lessons of God, nature, and life. Through their personal faith walk, participants walk alongside and spend one on one time with students to disciple effectively.

Demographic and Sample Data

Eight potential participants completed the screening survey and returned them by email to this researcher. Six teachers, one administrator and one assistant director met the criteria for participation. The demographic surveys (Appendix H) were a combination of twelve multiple choice and open-ended questions. A demographic survey was utilized to assist this researcher identify the aspects of each participant's age, gender, education, specialized programs, Christian degrees, or certificates acquired. Initially, this researcher anticipated a diverse selection of teacher participants. However, the results were homogenous. All participants were the same gender and ethnicity.

The homogeneity in gender was plausible because this was an all-male school. After the surveys were completed and returned by email, the next phase was the face-to-face interviews. The interviews with the six teacher participants assisted to understand how they facilitate

spiritual formation within at-risk students. The teacher interviews consisted of 18 open-ended questions (Appendix I). Whereas the administrator and the assistant director interviews consisted of ten open-ended questions (Appendix J).

Before each interview, this researcher confirmed all consent forms were signed and dated. This researcher also further explained the purpose of audio-recording and confirmed approval to proceed. Before each interview, participants were advised to stop this researcher at any time and for any reason, if needed. Pseudonyms were used to protect all participants identity. The interviews were set-up via face-to-face and on-site within the participants normal environment. This researcher arrived at the location and first met with the assistant director each day. The beginning timeframe for each interview was selected by the assistant director and based on the availability of each teacher during that moment. On the first day there were four interviews. This researcher arrived onsite at 9:15 am and departed at 5:30 pm. The participants were Oliver, Jack, Logan, and Noah. Regarding the second day of interviews, this researcher arrived at 9:30 am and departed at 4:00 pm. The participants were John, Chris, and Elijah.

On the third day, there was an additional day added for an interview that was unforeseen with Thomas. During the days of the scheduled interviews, the brutally hot temperature caused Thomas to become ill. Therefore, this interview was completed after he became well. This interview was via telephone at 12:00 pm and was not consecutive. There was an occurrence when Thomas had to be excused from the phone to care for a work situation. The interviews were all completed within their duration. All transcripts were written and approved by the participants. This process is known as member checking.

Five teachers were within the age category of 25-34. One teacher was between the age of 35-44. All the Christian teachers interviewed were males of white ethnicity. All the teachers have

decided to further their education. Of the six teacher participants, two have completed their studies and have obtained bachelor's degrees. Five of the participant teachers have 1-5 years within this profession and one teacher 6-10 years. Four teachers responded that they teach every subject. In addition to all subjects, Thomas has experience with additional vocational instruction. Oliver and Logan teach reading, mathematics, and religion.

All teacher participants were able to describe the life of an active Christian. Their timeframe regarding being an active Christian extends between nine to twenty plus years. The common factor describing the life of an active Christian regarded discipleship. All participants actively attend church. Most attend weekly, however, one participant states that he attends when he is able. It was explained that because of their work schedules, it can be difficult to attend a church outside of the school. However, on-site they attend chapel and Bible study on a weekly basis. Chapel occurs on Sunday and Bible study occurs on Wednesday. Chapel and Bible study were explained as share time for everyone to gather what they have discovered from the experiences of the week.

Each teacher participant prays to God daily. All but one teacher reads the Bible daily, the sole teacher reads in his personal time on a weekly basis. Two teacher participants have completed their bachelor's degrees. One participants' degree is a bachelor's in Biblical and Theological Studies. The second teacher completed a Bachelor of Science degree. Another teacher completed the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement Course. This program is a fifteen week course designed around four vantage points or "perspectives"- Biblical, Historical, Cultural and Strategic ("Perspectives," 2013).

Table 1***Demographic Survey of Participating Administrator and Assistant Director***

Role	Administrator	Assistant Director
Name	Noah	Elijah
Age	35-44	25-34
Gender	Male	Male
Ethnicity	White	White
Highest Degree	Masters	Masters
Profession Longevity	16-20 Years	11-15 Years
Subject(s) Taught	n/a	Reading Mathematics Science Social Studies Religion
Describe the Life of an Active Christian	Loving and following Jesus regardless of the cost.	A proactive follower of Christ and to pursue His character.
Active Christian (years)	Yes 25 years	Yes 25+ years
Church Attendance	Monthly	Weekly
Read the Bible	Weekly	Weekly
Pray to God	Daily	Daily
Certificates or Degrees	M. Div	M. Ed BA

Table 2
Demographic Survey of Participating Teachers

Name	Oliver	John	Jack	Logan	Chris	Thomas
Age	25-34	25-34	25-34	25-34	35-44	25-34
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Ethnicity	White	White	White	White	White	White
Degree	Bachelors	Bachelors	Bachelors	Bachelors	Bachelors	Bachelors
Profession Longevity	1-5 Years	1-5 Years	1-5 Years	1-5 Years	1-5 Years	6-10 Years
Subject(s) Taught	Reading Mathematics Science	Reading Mathematics Science Social Studies Religion	Reading Mathematics Science Social Studies Religion	Reading Mathematics Religion	Reading Mathematics Science Social Studies Religion	Reading Mathematics Science Social Studies Religion Vocational
Describe the Life of an Active Christian	Life pursuing a deeper relationship with Christ and sharing that life and good news with others. Training others as disciples.	To serve and teach others about the redemptive truth of Jesus Christ.	Accepting the free gift from Christ and then lighting the world with His Word and truth.	A daily reliance on God and feeding on His Word by reading, prayer, and worship.	Someone who lives out the Gospel, builds life of truth of the Scripture and submits every aspect of life to Christ.	Loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Loving your neighbor as yourself.
An Active Christian? (years)	Yes 10 years	Yes 9 years	Yes 21 ½ years	Yes 9 Years	Yes 29 years	Yes 20 years
Attend Church	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	When Able	Weekly	Weekly
Read the Bible	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily
Pray to God	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily
Certificates/ Degrees	n/a	n/a	Biblical and Theological Studies	Perspectives on the World Christian Movement Course	Bachelor of Science	n/a

Data Analysis and Findings

There were 18 open-ended interview questions dedicated to each teacher regarding the topics of behavior management, spirituality, Christian pedagogy, and discipleship (Appendix I). This researcher asked ten open-ended questions to the administrator and the assistant director during the face-to-face interviews (Appendix J). This researcher was able to utilize these sources to implement the triangulation process. This shaped an understandable knowledge for the themes. Confidence in the data was increased through the findings of these various sources.

This researcher desired to utilize inductive coding on the raw data that was provided. “Inductive coding condenses extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format” (Thomas, 2003). There were 88 pages of transcribed data. The inductive approach reflects the patterns within the data set. All codes were data driven. There were 107 codes initially established. After the coding process was completed, themes were assigned. Several subthemes were also assigned. Patterns were consistent between the various sources.

Research Question 1

How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding behavior management facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending Christian alternative schools?

The behavior management question was critical because most students attend alternative schools primarily seeking improvement regarding their behavior. This was validated through a response from Elijah, “The students attend the camp to work on personal issues that prevent them from being successful.” He expressed how the boys willingly leave their families because they desperately desire and need help. The themes that derived from the data were as follows: Discuss the issue, practical skills in the woods, and understand triggers and set goals. All participants identified the vital necessity to fully understand the underlying issue of their

students, i.e. the root of the problem. The synonymous desire amongst the participants was to solve the present problem and provide a positive prevention plan.

Discuss the Issue

This researcher desired to understand if there was a process that was synonymous amongst the teachers to manage behavior. Often students attend an alternative school because their behavior is disruptive. It was imperative to understand if the teachers engage the students effectively to further develop a Christ-like behavior.

Oliver. Oliver indicated that caring for the boys is at the core of the camp. He states that every day, the goal for everyone is to go to bed at peace with the day. “My goal is to promote an encouraging attitude within the boys. At any given time, if there are issues, we stop and address them.” He further explained that afterwards they re-think the situation to gain awareness of how the situation should have occurred differently for a better outcome.

John. John indicated how he implements the same basis that is found in Matthew 18. “I address the person having the issue. If the student takes the correction, the problem is solved. If he doesn’t, I choose to get support from another person.” The additional support helps to correct the students’ actions. However, it is also for John as a teacher, to make sure the situation is handled and addressed correctly.

Jack. Jack specified how the boys follow the example of the chiefs as they are modeling Christ-like behavior. The leaders are conscious of their actions and how they handle any problems. As leaders, they do their best to model in a Christ-like manner. They talk about the Bible and what was read. The boys are responsible for planning chapel and Bible study. Jack expressed overall how “The primary goal is the development of the whole person within the

camp environment and at home.” Jack was passionate and confident in his belief that the boys can become whole. There was a sense of hope felt from within his response.

Logan. According to Logan, the camp uses the correction support model. If the boys need improvement in a specific area or are misbehaving, he provides correction. If the correction is not taken, “I ask for assistance from someone else to support or make the situation better.” If the boy does not listen to the correction, the entire group of boys will become involved. It was inferred how the entire group becoming involved in the correction process provides a supportive Christ-like environment during a time of difficulty. This researcher recognized how this action reverts to the Matthew 18 principle. It was inferred that it may take the viewpoint of the entire group for the boy to fully identify his own misconduct or to contend with accountability. “All members of the group are familiar with the circumstances, all are affected, and all have an interest in the solution” (Loughmiller, 1980, p. 26).

Chris. Chris explained how the camp utilizes the Problem, Solution, Prevention model. This model is commonly known throughout the camp as PSP. He utilizes Matthew 18, with the understanding that if my brother sins, “I go to him in a loving manner.” However, if that does not work, “I ask for support from someone else.” Chris may ask for support from a student or peer. This researcher recognized the level of cautiousness that he desires to handle situations and to be accountable for his own actions. He inferred that he attempts to get a second opinion to ensure his observations are aligned correctly with the actual situation. Chris had a patient and calm demeanor during the days this researcher was on-site.

He indicated how he tries to advocate for the good and growth of the boy. “I push for friendly correction; I seek to correct in humility.” He also provided an example regarding how a boy may have food anxiety. This may be a specific trauma regarding the previous home life of a

boy. A boy may sneak food out of the dining hall. “Children who have not had enough to eat may hoard food” (Holden, 2009, p. 163). To address the problem, there may need to be a conversation. However, the boy ultimately needs to admit the wrong and then apologize. “To avoid these struggles and be helpful, staff must explore beyond the behavior and get to the feelings and needs of the children” (Holden, 2009, p. 163). In this way, spiritual formation occurs and the boys experience progress.

Thomas. Thomas indicated how he tries to meet the kids where they are. “If a boy is cursing, I don’t always address the matter of the cursing, but instead how the boy feels.” If there is a basic issue, perhaps the boy is rude to the group, “I try to get the boy to identify the problem.” Thomas advised that he is to disciple. He indicated how there are plenty of opportunities to lead the boys to God. “It is important to teach for the heart, not just for outward behavior. Are teachers more concerned with what’s in a student’s heart or just with their outward behavior?” (“Ten Traits of Impactful Christian Teachers,” 2019, para. 7).

During Chris’ interview, he stated his belief in heart work. He believes that “God can change our hearts.” It was his motivation to change. The goal is to try to take advantage of those opportunities to develop the boy’s best. If a boy approaches a situation that seems against the Bible, it must be addressed. The teachable moments are pertinent. “It is possible for an untrained teacher to miss these deeply satisfying experiences. Conscientious and well-motivated counselors may miss opportunities simply because they are not aware of their importance or lack the skill to exploit them” (Loughmiller, 1980, p. 50).

The boys live in tents that they design themselves and Chris and his peers serve as guides and supervision. They try to figure out the deeper cause to the problems. For some, it may be that their parents were arguing and that is the root to the problem that the boy is having. When

interviewing Thomas, he explained how they try to do life with the kids. He indicated how camp can be compared to a mission's trip in many ways.

Practical Skills in the Woods

It is vital to understand how the teachers' lessons promote positive behavioral growth that impacts faith. This researcher aimed to discover how the lessons impacted students' faith based on the rare nature of the school.

Oliver. Oliver indicated how the entire program itself is the lesson. Most of the lessons learned are through the experience of walking through a day. The boys view God by the routine of their day and how to take care of themselves.

John. John indicated how learning is always occurring in the woods. "The goal is to teach social skills and interacting with others and what it means to build healthy relationships." When some boys enter the program, they don't know what it means to have healthy relationships and how to treat people well. John indicated that, "Everyone has worth, but it must be represented through actions."

Jack. Jack indicated how they all live in the woods daily. "No day is the same." They plan the day; however, they must remain flexible. They follow plans as much as possible. Math, English, and Writing are standard, but outside of that they must be flexible.

Logan. According to Logan, when being in the woods daily, trust is a big lesson. "The boys are away from their families and it can be stressful. They must trust the process. That is the lesson, which is faith." They have faith in their leaders and their families. This is the model for trusting God. He indicated how the boys do what is needed, even when they can't see it. This is validated through the CARE model as it states, "Children need to trust that the care worker is available and ready to assist them" (Holden, 2009, p. 41).

Chris. Chris indicated how he helps to support when the group struggles to meet needs. “My aim is to teach practical life skills from firm Scriptures.” He indicated how they read daily and try to incorporate it into practical skills. “I attempt to pass on truths, God’s truth.” He addressed how Scripture directly supports truth. He advised how scripture grooms the boys in a way that is better than saying “because I said so.” The Scriptures are a firm authority.

Thomas. Thomas indicated that he tries to grasp the good out of situations. He advised that “Whatever I do, I do it to the glory of God.” This ranges from sweeping the floor to the flow of the trips. “When the kids do well, I tell them that they have done better.”

During pow-wow, he does not sugar coat anything. “I seek to be real.” He indicated how they analyze what was learned and they ask themselves, what can be improved? “My dad left my family when I was young. I would act out and I had a lot of bitterness.” He indicated how the kids are angry, but they are not bad kids. They are so far away from the Lord and must be helped.

Understand Triggers and Set Goals

To understand the factors that cause disorderly behavior, most schools utilize BIP’s or IEP’s. The goal was to comprehend the method utilized or the strategies implemented to change students’ behavior. Additionally, this researcher inquired to understand how the method impacts the students’ progression towards faith.

Oliver. Oliver acknowledged that after admittance into the program, each student creates goals. The goals are reviewed frequently and aid to create positive changes. Even after a regular review at the dedicated timeframe, the boys can define their goals during times of struggle. Gradually after the child enters the program, the teachers get to know the child better and can update and/or change the ICMP regarding changes in behavior. Oliver indicated how the use of

the ICMP's provide a much more indirect approach and helps learn how the boy's tick. It helps to better understand how to reach them. It is more of a tool to learn how to build trust and build a path toward faith. This tool also helps to better understand what they need to work through. They cite their goals every day and know what to push towards for correction.

John. John indicated how the ICMP is a good tool for background information, their history and what they have been through. In a situation, if a boy responds negatively, the chiefs know what situations bother him, because of what has happened in the past. He advised how they implement the ICMP for background knowledge and areas that the boys can grow in.

John indicated how the trauma and struggles that need to be processed and dealt with are revealed. The ICMP's help move to a healthier approach. It is a good tool that helps to make change. Each boy is different and has their own struggles. The boys view the teachers as the example.

Jack. Jack indicated that the boys get frustrated and tend to think they must be perfect. This way of thinking can make them angry. The group is asked to have grace when this occurs. The boys may become upset when letters are delivered. The teachers must use discernment. Letter delivery can be a trigger and cause a boy to become upset if his parents did not send a letter. At that point the teachers will sit with the boy and build him up. The boys can become overwhelmed, homesick, and/or angry.

According to Jack, many of the boys do not attend church and do not have a Christ centered family. Some of the boys become Christian and grow in their faith. Some only do the basic requirements. There are positives and negatives just like the world. Some gravitate and some reject. However, all the boys help to plan chapel. A boy may have experienced sexual

abuse previously. In this case, Jack aims to put more effort into the boys. He tries to help the boys spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.

Logan. Logan indicated how the weeks are busy. He advised how they are out nightly looking for areas of success and trauma. They look for areas that help to explain behavior and it is reviewed nightly as teachers/chiefs. Logan helps the chiefs to help the boys to be on alert for progression. As chiefs, it helps every day to give more grace and a better understanding towards boys.

Chris. Chris indicated how they all have goals, everyone. The boys' parents are involved in their process. The ICMP's address negative behaviors at home and school. The ICMP is the strategy to better behavior. Every three months there are conferences. The boys make weekly goals, but the teachers refine or replace them if the boy has grown. The boys can see others as a mirror. He can see behaviors in others that he cannot see in himself. The other boy may have the ability to speak to what another boy has done. One boy may be further along and can be of assistance. This is discipleship. Not all boys come to faith in Christ, but the goal is that they have that opportunity.

Chris addresses goals and issues using the Gospel of Matthew. He brings in spiritual truths of what needs change. He aims to teach new coping strategies. The boys can see the connection and the consequences. Chris indicated how our sins can be forgiven, and we can be made new. God can change our hearts. After this realization, the motivations of the boy changes. They realize that Christ is the answer they were looking for. Christ is the ultimate significance.

Thomas. Thomas indicated how the ICMP is critical. It is not a resource to judge but to give insight. Within the camp environment, they need to use all resources. Thomas indicated how camp is like a pound cake and all the ingredients must be used. Things that are unseen are

revealed. Below the surface issues are presented through the ICMP. The boys do not come in camp confident and the goal is to build their confidence. Thomas indicated how it is hard to help the boys if their situation is unknown. The ICMP provides familiarity and helps the teacher to not be blind. The Holy Spirit is in control, no one can control or manipulate the camp. The results may not be immediate, but five years from now they may realize how camp tried to help them.

Summary of Research Question 1

This school does not utilize BIP's. However, they employ a plan that is similar. They utilize the ICMP (Appendix L). The ICMP form helps to understand the history of each boy that enters the program. It assists the leaders to recognize and understand how to approach different situations. The ICMP is specifically concerned with a few of the following matters: history of abuse, triggers, self-injury, and intervention strategies. When the boys experience certain triggers, it leads to misbehavior. The ICMP's are a proactive measure and awareness to indicate any previous or existing problems the boys have possessed. Without the ICMP's the teachers would be blinded to the personality or characteristic of the boys. Thomas described the use of an ICMP as "A door to understanding the students' situation. It is difficult to help if the teacher does not know the student and their history." The ICMP provides familiarity and helps to not be blind to the students' triggers.

The strategies that are implemented to change students' behavior consist of actively listening. It is best to let the boy talk. Providing a safe space to talk, assists in building relationships. The teachers are constantly guiding the boys in their behavior. Therefore, correction is always taking place, repetitively. The primary strategy is to set aside time to fully understand the foundation of the issue. When the root of the issue has been recognized, the plan

sets correction and aids positive behavior. The boys are apt to react to situations, accordingly, the plans are in place and needed.

According to administrator Noah, the camp itself is a living Bible. This inferred how the camp and its practices align with the teachings of the Scriptures. The Scriptures provide basic instructions for living a Christian life. In as much, God's Word was a commonality mentioned concerning building up the boys with a Christ-like behavior. "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (KJV, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

God's Word provides correction for Christians, just as the teachers provide correction to the boys. During an interview, one teacher explained how they are constantly providing correction daily. Thomas expressed how he seeks to use Scripture to keep the boys from being repulsive. He does not try to force it on them but applies it when the time is right. He expressed that there are instances when a student may use profanity. As a method of correction, Thomas expressed how he does not always place a big emphasis on the profanity. When a behavior goes against the Word of God, he uses it as an opportunity to disciple. He expressed how this assist to develop the boys. This researcher identified that Thomas was well versed in Scripture. He utilized several during the interview. This is highly sought in order to employ them and identify what actions are contrary to the Word. "In a Christian school environment, a Christian teacher can use Scripture as well as pray for students" (Schlauch, 2016).

The levels of correction ranged from applying Scripture to employing restraints. "If a boy in the group turns to violence, we restrain him; if he pretends inability, his excuse is not accepted; if he throws a tantrum, it is handled by the group to a satisfactory conclusion"

(Loughmiller, 1980, p. 38). In general conversation, Noah explained his certification that is required for restraining students if needed. “A culture of nonviolence is essential and is the responsibility of everyone in the residential organization, including adults and children” (Holden, 2009, p. 71).

Through physical space observation, this researcher recognized a Scripture board that was visible within the dining facility. Also, the teachers were well versed in Scripture throughout their interviews. Most quoted Scripture from Matthew and in addition Oliver quoted from Hebrews. Chris expressed how practical life skills derive from the Scriptures and that all truth is God’s truth. He stated how “Scripture directly supports truth.” Therefore, the Scriptures assist with the de-escalation process. The teachers were adamant regarding intertwining the boys and peace, internally (inner self) and externally (amongst everyone). Several teachers expressed the importance of obtaining peace throughout the day amongst the boys. This is aligned biblically with “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (KJV, Matthew 5:9). When the boys are demonstrating a rude behavior, the teachers will provide correction that is centered on politeness and respect.

The behaviors demonstrated may not always implicate rage or rudeness, it may be more subtle. For example, the boys are away from home and their families, they may be skeptical and doubtful. In which, the teachers provide encouragement to build the confidence of the boys up pertaining to trust. The boys must have the assurance that they will be taken care of by God and their teachers.

The data revealed that the teachers aim to promote correction by following the instructions of Matthew 18. They go to the person and will address the issue. This is done in hopes that the correction is received. If not, the entire group will become involved until the issue

is resolved. “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother” (KJV, Matthew 18:15).

The data also revealed that this camp utilizes Problem, Solution, Prevention as a model to hold the boys accountable for any misbehavior. During the interviews the process was commonly referred to as PSP. The PSP process is to guarantee any undesirable occurrences are resolved. Those involved will firstly address the problem that occurred. Next, find a suitable solution. Lastly, there is a plan created for prevention, with the intention that the problem does not re-occur.

There are pow-wow sessions that occur before the boys go to bed. These sessions are in place to assess the events that occurred throughout the day. The major goal is for everyone to relieve any animosity, resolve the issue and go to bed in peace. This method holds each boy accountable to their teachers as well as their peers. Pow-wow sessions were articulated as time set aside to discuss as a group.

Elijah explained the purpose of pow-wows well. On one of the river trips they had a pow-wow at approximately 8:30 p.m. He validated how a pow-wow session takes place before bed. There is a session every night. The day does not end without a pow-wow. These sessions are implemented to combat the chaos and negativity that surrounds almost every boy’s home life. Being able to highlight any positive occurrences that happened during the day is the goal. The pow-wow sessions occur regardless of the time. They stay up and talk to evaluate, but ensure any matters are resolved. Pow-wow can occur with everyone sitting around a small fire.

Most of the time, a specific matter is the root cause of misbehavior and it must be clearly understood. The ICMP is a standard process utilized by every leader. For example, a boy may have taken extra food from the diner. The root cause of the problem possibly stemmed from the

lack of meals provided at home. The teaches' desire is to find a solution to help with the correction process. The solution may be an apology or confession of wrongdoing. The prevention is an active step for the student to learn how to handle things differently.

Throughout the scheduled days onsite, this researcher gained a valuable understanding. The boys are not bad kids. They are simply teenagers with everyday life problems. The same problems that some adults have. Sometimes, because they are adolescents, they do not have the capacity to handle certain situations in life. This school aims to walk them through their process in a Godly way.

Table 3
Emerging Themes, Subthemes and Codes for Research Question 1

Theme 1	Code Category					
Discuss the Issue	Implement PSP - Problem, Solution, Prevention Fundamental root issues Soothing solutions					
Subtheme	Participants					
	Oliver	John	Jack	Logan	Chris	Thomas
Teachers Who Utilize Matt 18		✓		✓	✓	
		Noah			Elijah	
		✓			✓	
Theme 2	Code Category					
Practical Skills in the Woods	Live out the Word Responsible and obedient Pow-wow sessions					

Theme 3	Code Category					
Understand Triggers and Set Goals	Utilize ICMP's - Individual Crisis Management Plans Walk the journey collaboratively Influence of personal goals					
Subtheme	Participants					
Teachers Who Utilize ICMP's or Goals	Oliver	John	Jack	Logan	Chris	Thomas
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Noah			Elijah	
		✓			✓	

Research Question 2

How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding spirituality facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending Christian alternative schools?

This researcher anticipated gaining an understanding of how or if there was progression regarding spirituality within the teachers. Also, if there were any disciplines obtained by the teachers that were collective with their students. All teacher participants acknowledged assistance from family members or friends who helped them to grow spiritually. The themes that derived from the data are as follows: Support through times of unbelief, daily prayer and Scripture reading, devotion time, and prepare for leadership.

Support Through Times of Unbelief

There is often a distinction between knowing God in childhood as opposed to the adult phases of life. The maturity of faith and understanding perhaps considerably differs. This question was developed to better understand if there is a valid difference. In addition, there was an aim to understand if the teachers had the support of others during their own spiritual growth. Considering there was growth in the teacher, this researcher desired to understand how growth was facilitated within the students.

Oliver. Oliver was born a Mennonite. Within the interview he stated, “I acted out of religious tradition and just did what I was told to as a child.” He expressed how he did not have a deep relationship with God. “I went through the motions.” He did not choose a relationship with God; he was taught to just do it. “However, I became desperate. It was a close friend of mine that got me back into the church.” During this time, he started to study for himself. He started to seek a spiritual life in Christ beyond being told to do it. His spiritual life as a child was out of habit. However, as an adult he is seeking to know and further his relationship.

Oliver explained how he did not have faith at a young age. Within his own personal spiritual growth process, he remembers those who helped him. As mentioned, he indicated how his close friends helped him to start attending church again. “The Holy Spirit will send people into our lives or use those we already have relationship with to hold us spiritually accountable. The Christian life was never intended to be lived apart from the encouragement and help of others” (“Accountability,” n.d.). This type of accountability has a lasting impression on those that need help spiritually. Accountability exhibits Godly love. “Pouring love into others knowing that it isn’t about who you’re loving but why you are loving on them, provides opportunity to change a person’s life” (Johnston, 2017). It has a tremendous impact because spiritual accountability considerably facilitates spiritual formation.

Elijah provided an example from a river trip regarding how they “teach the boys to tie a hook or how to chop down a tree for their cabins. Chiefs model appropriate ways to handle frustration or solve a problem. There is even greater opportunity to teach after a mistake.” This example demonstrates how chiefs are role models and pour into the boys. All the teachers conveyed their sincere gratefulness to those that helped when they were troubled.

John. John indicated that the older he has become, the more he has seen the value in faith. “I believed in God but I did not have faith.” Between the ages of 11-16 he was angry with God. “I thought I hated God because I was angry with Him.” Several men that he knew helped to guide him. He realized that something had to change. He had to seek to be redeemed through Christ, he was then baptized and started to pursue God. However, he did not know how to live it out. Through the years more people helped him to grow in his faith to help the process. He feels like he is a very different person from when he was younger.

Jack. Jack was raised in a good Christian home. “I had a teacher and pastors to adopt me from Europe at the age of four. This is how I grew to love adoption.” He has been adopted twice. He learned the basics of Christianity and grew to enjoy the Scriptures. “I have wrestled with theology.” Initially, he learned what his parents believed, however, once he learned, it was time for him to pursue God. During the interview, he quoted the “train up a child” Scripture. He states how others have poured into him and now he takes the opportunity to pour into others.

Logan. Logan indicated how he had good habits growing up and learned how to apply them. He is learning to be honest with himself. “There are some things that I had to re-learn.” His dad helped him a lot. He also indicated how the boys open up more to someone that is genuine and honest. “They can sense the genuineness of a person.”

Chris. Chris grew up in church, however, he took a lot for granted. He accepted Christianity because of his parents until college. Faith meant something but until college and encounter. “I felt like God said if you call yourself one of mine you better start acting like it.” His understanding has matured. He figured out that he needs to live like what Jesus said even if he does not feel like it is true. “I spent a lot of time trying to look like I was doing the right thing. Almost as if I was trying to earn grace.” Now he just wants to be obedient because of what God

has done for him.

He has received support from his youth pastor, paternal grandfather, his mom and dad, his brother, Noah, and a mentor/professor at Liberty Theology Seminary. He admits that he was trying to be good enough over the years, but God showed him that He was enough. As God has transformed him, it has impacted what he knows He can do in other people.

However, Oliver and Thomas explained that they did not have faith at a young age. John also explained how there was a time when he was angry with God. Within their own personal spiritual growth process, they remember those who helped them. The spiritual assistance from others varied from close family, friends, and neighbors.

Thomas. Thomas' lack of faith is foundational as to how he leads his family. When growing up, Thomas had a neighbor that he thought was boring. However, as Thomas became older, the neighbor became a strong influence. He would call Thomas and they would go fishing and just talk while hanging out. Thomas realized that he was having fun. He expressed how those moments changed his life.

According to Schlesman (2020), a mentoring relationship between men and boys from a spiritual aspect is important because: Men are commanded to spiritually influence boys (Ephesians 5:1). As with Thomas' situation, this is one way God helps the fatherless. However, now he wholeheartedly aims to help the boys in the same way. "Male mentorship doesn't have to always be spiritual to be valuable. A boy needs to play ball, watch a sporting event, build things, go hiking, or do any number of other activities that will feel different to him if he's doing it with a man" (Schlesman, 2020, para. 22). This was confirmed through Oliver, who indicated how the camp incorporates fishing, group games, and group trips.

Daily Prayer and Scripture Reading

Spiritual disciplines and practices are essential to any Christians life. The teachers were asked if they could describe any disciplines that are practiced in their own lives. Any personal insights of the teachers' commitment to grow in their own spiritual walk with God, to facilitate the spiritual growth of their students.

Oliver. Oliver actively seeks time to read Scripture, pray and attend church. "For a long time, I was taking the time in the mornings, now it is in the evenings." He needed discipline, but he does not have a lot of time. "Sometimes I may have 15-20 minutes before bed to study and pray." He had to find a church. His home church is two hours away. "During my time off I contact close friends to have Bible study and an accountability group." He also sings songs. This researcher witnessed Oliver singing songs that were spiritual in nature.

John. John prays throughout the day. "I try to find times throughout the day to read." Sometimes he does well, but sometimes he admits that he struggles.

Jack. Jack reads Scripture and prays daily. These disciplines help him to find comfort during tough times. He indicated that he goes to regular church on Sundays when off. He explained how it is important to attend church. However, "It is difficult to attend church outside of the camp because of my work schedule." He is in a new area now that he is at the camp. He desires to get out of his comfort zone. He indicated how he must search for ways to go out and try to progress and grow.

Logan. Logan indicated how reading and prayer is his foundation. "I would rather read and pray in the mornings; however, it tends to occur at night." It is a struggle when working because he works full days. Regular fellowship is difficult because of work. "I attempt to fast."

However, while at camp he becomes very tired and it is difficult to pray. He explained how he would skip dinner a day before and then skip breakfast.

He had concerns with fasting because he needs his energy throughout the day. He also intended to remember more Scripture; however, he fell short. This researcher recognized how Scripture was pertinent on-site. There was a large scriptural vision board in the diner with each boys' vision displayed. Also, inside the tents in a large wooden footlocker at the end of each boys' bed amongst their belongings there were Bibles. Logan was very refined in demeanor but precisely informative.

Chris. Chris reads one chapter of the Bible a day. "I also try to read an additional book, usually within the philosophy or theology category." He attends church every Sunday outside of camp when he is not working. "I also listen to Christian podcast and sermons on occasions." He prays daily. He is continuing to grow in prayer. At the time of the interview he indicated that he has a list for intercessory prayer. He explained how he walks down the trail talking to Jesus. "During this time I ask God to show me how to handle issues and how to handle the boys that day." Chris indicated that he fasts occasionally, it is usually one day at a time. He indicated how he has other Godly men in his life that he can confess to when needed. These are good Godly sources to be honest with about his faults.

Thomas. Thomas reads the Bible every day and spends time in prayer. He indicated how it is just as important to exercise and stay active. "It is important to stay alert." Thomas realizes the importance of staying away from drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes. He expressed how he aims to have the right friends in his life. Growing up in an environment where his father dishonored his mother, he is adamant regarding honoring God and his wife. He practices not being selfish, but

selfless. He desires to be aware of the needs of others. In this way, taking advantage of opportunities to share the gospel to further help create change.

Devotion Time

Within a Christian school environment, there is the ability to liberally engage spiritually. This idea differs drastically within the traditional public school setting. This researcher desired to understand any spiritual disciplines that are practiced by the teachers amongst their students. It was vital to understand if any disciplines were readily applied within the teaching space when needed.

Oliver. Oliver indicated that he tries to make sure throughout the day that he has a separate time set aside with God. During the day some of the boys may become curious and have questions about different topics. They pray throughout the day. “We have a routine built in that is surrounded around prayer; the chuckwagon program, during lunch and after lunch.”

John. John indicated how they all pray together. If anyone has a situation, at times they strategically read. “I read before the boys wake up or after they lay down for the night.” They have Scripture reading in chapel and Bible study. While at work throughout the day it can be difficult to read the Bible individually.

Jack. Jack indicated that he reads Scripture. When interacting with the boys he likes the Action Bible. “It makes reading fun and interesting. It gets discussions started and going. Even the boys that did not grow up in church are interested.” Jack prefers using the Action Bible because it makes reading the Bible fun and exciting for the students. The Action Bible intrigues the boy’s interest because it is in comic book form. After reviewing the illustrations, they discuss the Scriptures. Jack advised how they also pray in chapel and Bible study. “I like to pick hesitant

boys. It is fun to see their reaction.” They also pray based on history and even the calendar of events. For example, Passover or Columbus Day.

Logan. Logan indicated that he prays. He is also active in participation within chapel and Bible study.

Chris. Chris indicated how he shares what God is teaching him in the moment. “My accountability is Noah, Thomas and Elijah.” He indicated that he tries to in turn be that for the chiefs. Chris reads Scripture and prays a few times a day. “The boys have hurts to bring to God, so prayer is beneficial.”

Thomas. Thomas expressed how some of the boys struggled with addiction issues such as drug use. He desires to share his own struggles with the boys. Throughout the interview Thomas would express his commitment to his wife. He shared how they met and how he truly believes the relationship was led by God. In which he aims to be obedient unto God and strives to always honor his wife. Therefore, he explains ways to approach marriage to the boys, through love, loyalty, and honor. He expressed that he shares on a level that they can comprehend. This researcher understood the importance of his response and its relevance. Most of the students have not witnessed healthy relationships between their parents and enter the camp from broken families. They must learn so the cycle is not repeated when they become men and lead their own families.

He expressed his belief in celebration as a discipline. He explained with the example on how Easter is not about a bunny, but about Jesus Christ. In addition, how Christmas is not about Santa, but about Jesus Christ. “Celebrating is being obedient to God.” He further explained how they teach solitude. As in spending quiet time with God, in a way that is healthy and not

isolation. He shared his belief in proper worship and how to worship the correct way within daily living and not just within the church.

Prepare for Leadership

It was vital to understand how or if teachers guide the transformation of their students. According to the model of Bernard M. Bass (1985), Transformational Leaders follow the four I's. In addition, this question was implemented to reveal if there was a focus on the spiritual maturity of the students. "As a counselor gains experience while working with the group he develops confidence and self-assurance" (Loughmiller, 1980, p. 63). In which, the group mimics their teacher. For example, if the teacher remains calm, the boys will seek to become calm. Therefore, peace would be established and spiritual formation could occur.

Oliver. Oliver indicated that camp at its core is designed for the boys to eventually lead. Leadership is day to day. "Not all of the boys will get where they need to be in certain areas because of the camp timeframe." However, the chiefs plant the seed to help as boys become adults. It was explained how one boy never fully committed, but he had the answers. "He was very smart. He knew the Bible and the seed was planted. He had the knowledge and he realized that he could attend church." Oliver indicated how the overall hope was that he has gained a better understanding and can make spiritual decisions. The boys lead chapel and Bible study service. They are very active in leading. During service they read Scripture and sing songs.

John. John indicated how finding things the boys already have good skills in and pushing them to lead is key. I desire to push them to become better. I encourage and support them." He builds them all up to lead. He builds their confidence. "The boys can be nervous and therefore, they feel as though they cannot do certain things." It helps to let them know when it is obvious that they are working hard.

Jack. Jack desires that all the boys become leaders. He likes to rely on the boys that have been at camp the longest. This is because they already know the routines and have learned how to accomplish goals. “The boys who have been at the camp for more than eight months, they are examples to anyone new that is coming in.” They speak up and lead the group.

Logan. Logan expressed that he prays for the boys often and they know that material is readily accessible if needed. The camp program is modeled after biblical principles. “My desire is that down the road the boys realize how valuable their time was at the camp.” Sometimes the realization happens afterwards. However, as long as it happens is the end goal.

Logan also indicated how it is hard to be involved in church because of his work schedule. As it is, the chiefs do not have a specific church. He explained how he would like to see more of a church structure. Logan suggested that it would be a good idea for a church to adopt or sponsor the program. In this way, there could be a greater focus on discipleship. He still feels new to the program and explained how sometimes he can feel alone. This researcher understood how this may be the exact sentiments of the students upon entering the camp.

Chris. Chris likes to encourage the boys in the areas where needed, then he points to scriptural truth. “The boys are baby Christians and I must help them learn the faith and the truths of God.” He tries to meet them where they are.

Thomas. Thomas expressed how it is vital to understand where the students are, the level of their maturity. He mentioned how it is a mistake to only attempt to help students grow when they are causing problems. “It is important to try and pull on things even if things look good.” Getting the group involved if a boy is struggling with disrespect is pertinent. In which, collectively everyone can glean from it. He stated, “It is called groupwork.” It is vital to understand “how we all can gain from the situation.” It was indicated how as teachers they are

evaluating constantly. “Encouragement is big. We can never do it enough. Their families are also important and we need their support.”

Summary of Research Question 2

Some of the teachers distinctly remember being a young boy and not fully understanding their faith. However, they still experienced God personally in their own way. Faith derived within different areas throughout the study. Oliver explained how he did not have faith at a young age. Within his own personal spiritual growth process, he remembers those who helped him. The personal experiences of the teachers assist them to understand the boys’ process and how they are underdeveloped spiritually. The way in which someone assisted them, they strive to help the boys. All the teachers can identify individuals who supported them on their journey. “If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself” (KJV, 2 Timothy 2:13). Within the interviews it was apparent how the teachers felt that God remained faithful to them, even when they were not faithful.

Although it can be tough due to work schedules, there was evidence of a strong prayer life within all teachers. Since the teachers are determined to pray, it helps to facilitate a prayer life within the boys. It was expressed how the boys witness the life of their teachers daily. If the teachers are counterfeiting their spiritual life, the students recognize it. Logan expressed in his interview, “They know when someone is being genuine.” The teachers and the boys are praying several times throughout the day. It was expressed that if anyone is having difficulty at any moment, they stop what they are doing to pray. The teachers use these intimate teachable opportunities to build prayer lives in their students.

The data displayed that all teacher participants are grounded in prayer, read Scripture, and attend chapel and Bible study weekly. The boys are children and they must be taught at their

level of understanding. The teachers are planting seeds to assist the boys to become leaders and have faith. The boys must be trained in the right direction, which eventually leads to God. “All learning, all growth, is sequential and in programming for emotionally disturbed, insecure boys, we do not leap over broad areas of experience to pursue adventure in types of experience for which they are not ready and which, therefore, may compound the difficulty” (Loughmiller, 1980, p. 47). When the teachers are planting seeds, they are mindful to meet the students on their level. “They need to climb a hill before they climb a mountain; they need the calm waters of a lazy stream before they canoe the white waters; they learn to cut a sapling before they fell a tree” (Loughmiller, 1980, p. 47).

Table 4
Emergent Themes, Subthemes, and Category for Research Question 2

Theme 1	Code Category					
Support Through Times of Unbelief	Progression of spiritual growth Received support from close family/friends Learning to train up a child					
Subtheme	Participants					
Committed to God	Oliver	John	Jack	Logan	Chris	Thomas
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Noah			Elijah		
	✓			✓		
Theme 2	Code Category					
Daily Prayer and Scripture Reading	Commitment to Scripture Being prayerful daily					

Subtheme	Participants					
Vulnerable and Eager to be Disciplined	Oliver ✓	John ✓	Jack ✓	Logan ✓	Chris	Thomas
	Noah				Elijah ✓	
Theme 3 Devotion Time	Code Category Active during chapel and Bible study Prayer anytime throughout the day					
Theme 4 Prepare for Leadership	Code Category Sowing seeds Awareness Obedience					

Research Question 3

How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding Christian pedagogy facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending Christian alternative schools?

This researcher inquired on any teaching methods that assist the teachers daily. There is a six month and daily planning calendar. The week to week lesson blocks were categorized by what is required for each morning, noon, and evening. The themes that derived from this data set are as follows: Distinct teaching methods, diversity of students and knowledge, teamwork and sharing responsibility, outside opportunities and mentorship.

A teachers' responsibility may vary based upon the type of school or the type of students. The participating school was an alternative school and the students did not previously succeed in the traditional setting. Therefore, this researcher desired to discover if the teachers' responsibilities varied from the traditional obligations. The goal was to better understand the teachers' responsibilities regarding any unique teaching structures.

Distinct Teaching Methods

Oliver. Oliver explained how the entire teaching structure is based on not constantly sitting down and learn this or that specifically. “A large part of teaching is how to behave in a functional productive way.”

John. John explained how he is with the boys most of the time, day in and day out. “Part of my responsibility is to teach Christ. I teach in the woods daily. I need to lead my group and share about Christ the same way as I would if teaching math.” He explained that when he plans chapel or Bible study, he is helping to make sure “Scripture is not misquoted, misused, or wrongly interpreted.” He states how it is vital that they must know exactly what the Scriptures are saying.

Jack. Jack believes that “living life is the best teacher.” He provides examples of the core curriculums such as math, practicing handwriting, and science. However, daily there are teachable moments when students enthusiastically explore why trees fall. There are numerous opportunities that are teaching moments. “Sometimes you can run with them, sometimes if not careful, you will miss them. As a teacher you must look for the moments.”

Logan. Logan states that teaching opportunities arise regularly throughout the day. However, he explains, “I don’t feel as though I always recognize them or take them. I feel that some of the others are better at it.”

Chris. Chris shared how he leads chapel occasionally. On the day of the interview, he would be teaching Bible study. He explained how he incorporated training exercises for chiefs. “During share time it is big to discuss ways to learn, recognize the new approaches and analyze problem solving.” It is during share time when teachable rememberable moments occur for the group to see how lessons pertain to them specifically.

Chris expressed how the boys often have questions. He will sit with them one on one if needed and they share, ultimately to explore what the Bible says. He indicated that he likes to create partnerships with the boys, in which they know that they are not alone. This researcher observed Chris during lunch standing in the middle of three to four students who were having what appeared to be an in depth conversation. As he was mitigating the situation, he was talking in a calm voice. He was positively approaching the situation as a teaching moment.

Thomas. Thomas explained how he teaches the Scriptures. He also teaches during chapel and Bible study. He states how he has teaching responsibilities that occur through meetings on Sunday, when they sing songs and during prayer and devotion.

Diversity of Students and Knowledge

It was believed that teachers are required to plan their lessons. This researcher desired to understand if there were any spiritual factors that are taken into consideration when preparing course material.

Oliver. Oliver explained how “It depends on the staff approach to plan out days.” There is a level of spiritual factor. “Spiritual growth comes from the staff recognizing opportunities and taking them.” Specifically with chapel, every plan has a purpose. “It is not necessarily direct, but the boys are involved directly. For example, they may learn patience from folding their clothes daily.” The boys help plan everything from field trips, fishing trips and group games. The boys have their input regarding the daily preparation.

John. According to John, the consideration for preparation of courses depends on what the students are ready for. He indicated how “You don’t want to throw a guy headfirst in something that he doesn’t have the background and knowledge for.” He explained how they start with what the group knows and then they progress with the Scriptures. “It must start where they

are for them to get anything out of it and for them to grow. Too far ahead or below, they won't get it." John's response was confirmed in comparison to various literature. "All learning, all growth, is sequential and in programming for emotionally disturbed, insecure boys, the camp does not leap over broad areas of experience to pursue adventure in types of experience for which the boys are not ready" (Loughmiller, 1980, p. 47).

Jack. Jack indicated that at the end of the day there are pow-wow sessions. During this time, they all make sure their hearts are clean. They do not go to bed angry. They ask questions for reflection and each boy answers. Encouragement may be the topic of the day. Therefore, the question would be "How did you encourage someone today?" He explained how the goal is to end the night in a positive manner. If there is a problem, they will intentionally leave their location to gather around and figure out the problem. He stated how he wanted students to realize the importance of forgiveness. It will help when the boys are at home or away at college.

Logan. Logan explained how one student was pagan, one messianic, and one atheist. Although this was a Christian school, the religious background of the students was diverse. When talking spiritually it results in inquisitive questions from the students. This will start conversations and make the students think. Logan explained how this makes subjects relatable for the group.

Chris. Chris explained how the boys have different backgrounds. Some grew up in church, some are from different denominations. He expressed how as teachers they "tailor Scripture to the group's current need." He said, "I like to sharpen my personal study too. I get excited about what God is teaching me."

Thomas. According to Thomas a lot of course material is open. The boys plan with guidance of the chiefs, but in a balanced way. "The six month plans dictate the weekly plans."

The students have their academic books (i.e. math and reading) based upon how they tested. According to Elijah during his interview, each student is tested using the Woodcock Johnson standard testing at intake and discharge. Each students' books are not the same, they are different and are based on how they were tested.

Teamwork and Sharing Responsibility

This researcher desired to understand how or if the teachers organize, plan, and prioritize their work. The goal was to recognize if the teachers established a specific structure to successfully execute their daily tasks.

Oliver. According to Oliver, "When planning out the week, the needs are always planned before any wants." Dates are planned throughout for an entire month. Oliver explained how planning at times can involve packing the trailer so everyone can just get up and go. Then there is also planning for the clean-up and put away. Planning involves writing down the needs, priorities and wants for the rambles. The ramble process was described as their journey walking through the woods. The rambles are a vital part of their day. "The wants are needed and are fun activities. This occurs to break up the flow and is needed to be successful. Planning occurs in three blocks: morning, afternoon, and evening." Oliver indicated that before bed, if there are things that still need to be done, they do them together if needed.

John. John indicated how large work may involve the tents and trips. They take time to plan, as large work takes more prep work. During the time of the interviews the group was grafting a tent. He explained how they may run low on wood supply. As a chief he wants an idea of what is taking place before discussing it as a group. Therefore, if boys overlook something, he has an idea of what needs to be completed and by which date. In this way he can better guide the process.

Jack. Jack indicated how he normally writes plans in a notebook. As a group they also write plans down in a notebook and then put it in a folder that the chiefs carry with them. He explained how this assists him to stay organized. He accumulates different papers and he would not be able to find them if floating around. He also keeps all medical information for each of the boys handy. “The boys share in responsibility, as much as they can handle in order to grow.” The teachers’ job is to put the boy in a successful position so that their responsibility is attainable.

Logan. Logan explained how he plans one week ahead and six months ahead. However, daily, the teachers get together and plan before the boys get up.

Chris. Chris states that this is his weak point. He is not as organized as he desires. He indicated how he needs a to do list, because if there are more than three things to remember he will forget. He explained how he keeps a to do list on his phone. When explaining the details of the day, he stated that it is “fairly routine”. They normally have the same routine at the same time daily.

Thomas. Thomas stated that during staff meetings, at the beginning of the session they document important events and write them down on behalf of the groups. There is also a calendar created for everyone. At the beginning of each week all important details are written down regarding everything that needs to be accomplished weekly.

Outside Opportunities

This researcher planned to discover if the teachers within this school create any lessons. Therefore, the goal was to better understand how or if the teachers construct lesson plans that integrate faith into learning.

Oliver. Oliver indicated how spiritual growth occurs during their transitional periods. The transitional periods occur during the times between when they move from one location to

another. When moving from one location to another, there may be ten minutes when Oliver ask a student that appears stressed, how they are doing. This transitional period is a time when he seeks to provide encouragement. This time also helps to build trust, which opens the door to speak on their faith level.

John. Since everyone lives in the woods, nature is always a subject of Godly discussion. God is the creator of nature, therefore, “Nature is easy to tie to God and creation.” He likes to focus on treating others well, and “that is all biblical.” It takes faith to envision how God created the world, in which they explore within the outside environment daily. There are tons of lessons learned from this focus, which are mostly hands on.

Jack. Jack explained how he must look for opportunities. The opportunities that present themselves may be subtle or unexpected. He provided an example, “After lunch a snake may be crossing the path. We will pick it up and analyze it.” They are in a setting where they observe nature all the time. He stated how they see “dogwoods in the Spring,” and the “forest change with the seasons.” He compared this to “how we change physically and spiritually.” The ability to adventure within the surroundings of nature assists in learning lessons from the woods to apply them to their own lives. As a teacher he must constantly think.

Logan. Logan indicated how he does not make exact lesson plans as thought of customarily. He explained how the idea is to take the opportunities when they come. Opportunities can be taken during a meal. The workbooks utilized are written from a Christian perspective, they execute the Scriptures regardless of subject matter. Overall, “It’s a matter of the boys asking and being inquisitive and as a leader finding opportunities to teach at any point and time.”

Chris. Chris indicated that he “has no lesson plan unless teaching in a formal setting. It is rare. I use the truth in me by reading the Bible daily and I communicate that in the context being discussed.”

Thomas. According to Thomas “We may need to talk about specific Scripture verses.” “Learning to engage is a focus. There is a struggle when students are closed up and don’t talk.” He expressed that every time he engages with the students, they don’t have to talk about God directly to have an impactful conversation. Engagement can occur during tree climbing. In the mornings, time is set aside for academics. In the afternoons, time is set aside for an activity such as tree climbing.

He explained how he does not necessarily create lesson plans because the students create the lesson plans. The boys develop weekly planner sheets, that must be approved. There is a six month plan sheet. There is the freedom to incorporate Christ in any of it. While walking, fishing, cutting cedarwood or pine wood, the teachers and students talk naturally.

Mentorship

It was imperative to understand how or if the teachers were involved with improving the positive nature of their students. This researcher inquired to understand if there were any strategies utilized to build positive Christ-like behavior within the students.

Oliver. Oliver indicated that “The boys get to a point when they have a desire to grow.” They want to learn how to treat their peers better and respect authority. During this time I can point out opportunities in the area they want to learn in. This is a time when I can point out the good that I see in others. For example, one of the boys may want to speak up more or be more supportive. It provides them with a nudge when there is a good opportunity and boys respond, until they can recognize it and do it for themselves.

John. John explained how the boys see how the teachers treat other people. Therefore, they are learning by example. “They learn by seeing us treat people with respect. They observe when we are treated wrong and they witness if we try to get revenge or if we still treat the person well.” This researcher understood this explanation being described as lifestyle evangelism. He personally likes to follow the axiom, “Don’t just tell me, teach me.”

Jack. Jack admitted that he likes to set a good example. He plans and evaluates everything. He explained how they all also plan as a group. “This helps the boys to know what they are expected to learn at camp, what to do regarding family and when at church; to live it out in life.”

Logan. According to Logan, “As teachers, we are Christ-like and live it out for the boys.”

Chris. Chris indicated how the boys do not like having a lot of rules. “No one likes to be controlled, especially children in care who have very little control over the essential elements of their lives” (Holden, 2009, p. 55). Chris further explained how the boys are in a position where they do not like leadership lording over them. “The boys don’t like authority.” Therefore, they have agreements or commitments instead. Since the boys have authority issues, he aims to avoid legalism. “It’s guided by chiefs and founded on Scripture; boys have a say in expectations.”

The teachers help the boys to hold themselves to a standard and to value accountability. Chris aims to build positive peer pressure. This is confirmed through the CARE model when it states “The more rules a program has, the more the care worker becomes an enforcer of rules rather than a caring professional trained to support, encourage, and teach the young people. Rules are an authoritarian approach to guide or control behaviors and work best when limited to safety and security concerns” (Holden, 2009, p. 55).

Thomas. Thomas indicated how he aims to live out the Word of God. He stated how he “Uses the Bible to help guide the boys and to help solve their problems when they are frustrated with their families.” He explained how he does not like to stifle the boys for perhaps cursing. He tries to recognize that the boy is doing the best that he can. He aims to be their friend regardless. He loves them even when it is hard. The times when chapel is occurring, this is not an event that is in place to be “a boring activity.” He indicated how some of the boys do not come from wealthy families. Therefore, some have missed meals. These factors must be taken into consideration.

Summary of Research Question 3

This researcher requested to review the schools’ standard curriculum map to satisfy the data collection through document analysis. They were provided during the onsite visit by the assistant director Elijah. Curriculum maps may be used by teachers corporately or individual teachers may attain diary curriculum maps that can be reviewed. Within this school the corporate format was utilized. Curriculum maps can provide sufficient information regarding what is being taught to students (Burns, 2001).

Within the curriculum the following areas are studied: Creation, Ecosystems, Health/Culinary and Plant Life/Trees/ Forestry. This school abides by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. There are state standards that should be met by the teachers. There is information that helps teachers to understand what the students learn and will be able to do. For example, students must know how to analyze cells as a living system. In return, students will be able to analyze how cells grow. Within the schools’ health education course, students are learning about human sexuality, substance abuse and addictions. The students specifically learn in-depth about alcoholism and its causes, symptoms, and treatment.

Since the students live in the woods, it was explained how the lessons of nature correlate to academic lessons. The boys do have individual academic lessons that implement math and history, etc. but they intentionally take the time to learn about nature. The boys have rambles. The rambles were explained as walking through the camp site. “A ramble is a short trip of half a day or less which a group frequently takes by foot, within the camp property” (Loughmiller, 2000, p. 59). While walking each day they encompass different situations.

There are lessons through these experiences of nature that promote their growth and impacts their faith. Creation is the true work of God. The overall goal for the boys is to become healthy and whole. The data revealed how the teachers genuinely care and are concerned for the well-being of the boys. The teachers understand how they must aim to meet each boy where he is in life. “The spiritual implications go beyond the immediate sensory experience” (Loughmiller, 2000, p. 61).

Numerous unintended opportunities to teach the boys daily was revealed within the data. However, the teacher must have the mind frame that is ready to take the opportunity and turn it into a teaching moment. Everyone grows, some perhaps more than others. The teachers have a deep desire to grow. The boys’ growth is often contingent upon the growth of the teachers. The teachers can only teach what they know. At times, the students learn by how they witness their teachers’ treatment of others. If the teacher is respectful, the students learn the lesson of respect. This helps to teach the boys the correct behavior when they are within their family environment.

Planning is vital and is transcribed on a calendar in six month, six week, weekly, and daily task segments. One of the teachers mentioned how planning is important, however, they must remain flexible. Planning involves but is not limited to meals, laundry, church visits, field

Subtheme	Participants					
Boys Can't Outgrow Their Chiefs	Oliver ✓	John ✓	Jack	Logan	Chris	Thomas ✓
	Noah ✓			Elijah		

Research Question 4

How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding Christian discipleship facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending Christian alternative schools?

This researcher desired to understand how the teachers regard their own understanding of God to further assist their students. Also, if there were any occurrences of discipleship towards their students. It was pertinent to gain a better understanding of how faith impacts their lives. The data revealed varying degrees of progress towards having faith. Several teachers can recall when they did not have faith. This program offers several areas of training for their teachers. The training structure for the teachers were synonymous throughout the data. The themes that derived from the data are: Compassionate towards others, straying away from God, trust in God and others, God on the inside, share in intentional discussion, also Wilderness and Residential training.

Compassionate Towards Others

Christians are to be the “salt” and the spokesperson of truth “light”. “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing... Ye are the light of the world...” (KJV, Matthew 5:13-14). Salt is a preservative or an additive that keeps food from spoiling. A Christian who is the representative of light would be

described as a person shining in darkness. “The salt is to retain its saltiness for its preservative function, and the light is to shine in darkness so that others may see the good deeds of the followers of Jesus. If both the salt and light lose their effectiveness, they become worthless” (Scripture Union, 2019). This researcher desired to understand how or if the teachers serve as an additive and light of the world.

Oliver. Oliver indicated how he attempts to approach situations from a Godly perspective. “The students learn and try by following examples of chiefs.” The group plans and leads chapel and Bible study service. These services take place every week. “I can’t live life for them but as a chief, I understand how to help guide the boys.”

John. John indicated how these are “boys that need to make changes in life to be successful. They have made choices that negatively impact them and their families.” John believes that without Christ people do not start making changes. “Christ is the core of change for it to stick.” For John, it is not about just teaching someone not to do something, but “why this is truth and not the muddiness of the way the world wants to run things.”

John also indicated how his background helps him to understand feelings. “It helps to understand where some of the anger from the boys derives from.” He explained how he tries to share his experiences when it is similar, to guide the boys. It helps when dealing with anger and hurt, to have Godly people around that can help to deal with it. “I understand when guys come to camp with their approach to God. I have walked in the path and I can help them deal and process. At same time helping the guys has pushed me as a tool and method in being able to connect with guys and their struggle.”

Jack. Jack indicated, “I show the boys how I live and handle problems personally.” He explained how there are typical attitude issues within the group. Therefore, the chiefs pray

throughout the day for the boys. The students are encouraged by what the chiefs say. Those that do not have an understanding learn. Chapel is important, chapel is church service. It is held on Sunday. Bible study is held on Wednesday night. “We sing spiritual songs.” The boys are responsible for picking the topics for chapel. “The topic examples may pertain to being slothful or perhaps the fruit of the spirit. We went through the book of Jonah. We try to make it fun; we have skits.” Jack explained how when the occurrences are fun, it is creative and will stick on the boys’ minds.

Logan. Logan finds comfort in knowing that God is in control. “At times, I tend to get anxious and worried and caught up into self. We are all here together. I am here until God leads me elsewhere and that is my biggest driver.”

Chris. Chris declared, “I wouldn’t do this job if it weren’t for what Christ has done on my behalf. Christ has transformed me and I have hope for the boys. Others have written them off. Christ offers hope where otherwise there is not any.” He explained how the Gospel is core of why and how he does his job. “What Christ has done in me is motivation.” His aim is obedience to the great commission. “His love is put in me for other people. In my words I let the boys know.” He indicated how the overall goal is how the boys work on their goals and treat others.

Thomas. Thomas shared enlightening moments of his life. He stated, “The way I was coping, I hit rock bottom. I found the wrong way and wrong people, even in a great environment.” In discussion, it was revealed that he attended Liberty University. “I was becoming my dad. I saw what it was doing to me. I figured out how much my mom cared for me. I was rotten in the way I handled all things. But God forgave me and it humbled me.” For this reason, he can relate and chooses to share hope. “Being salt must be engrained in everything I do. There is a sacrifice but there is life in it.”

Straying Away from God

It was vital to understand how or if the teachers remembered their spiritual life between the stages of childhood to adulthood. If so, this researcher desired to understand how their spiritual growth impacted the shaping and molding of their students.

Oliver. Oliver was raised in the church. However, during his adult years, when he was approximately 18, he started falling away. Then years later, he came back. This is how he learned to be empathic to the boys. “Some have a different understanding of God. Some don’t believe. I empathize and can talk to them and walk them through the situation because I have lived it.” Through those stages from childhood to adulthood, he grew closer to God. This helps the boys understand there is nothing too big for God.

John. John grew up in and around church. He believed but he did not have faith. “I was small and didn’t understand. My older brother battled cancer for years and passed away. For a long time I was angry.” It took people helping him and years of process to come to faith and try to follow God instead of being angry. That situation helps him to have grace towards the boys.

Jack. Jack indicates how it is vital to be flexible. “I had to learn it’s good to follow a plan.” It is good to know what will be done, but also, he emphasized the need to be flexible. “I learned from mission trips, that we must hear God and follow with our whole heart. We must stay patient.” The home that he grew up in was good. He had Christian parents. He admits that he followed his parents’ ways and that has helped him over the years. “It helped me to gain patience, love, joy, etc. The boys pray for patience every day. I am not perfect but do the best I can.”

Logan. Logan stated, “I continue to be shaped and molded. I grew up Christian. I spend a lot of time with the boys.” Logan has realized that even as a leader, he is still growing daily in

God. His continually growth inevitably assists the influence of the boys.

Chris. Chris indicated that he could see how God has transformed him. His grandfather was a pastor. However, he explained how there was still brokenness within his family. “I can see what sin did in me. God has been patient with me, so I wanted to help others.” He mentioned how this led him to a degree in youth ministry. He has seen in the lives of some of the boys, how “you don’t always get the results hoped for.” Chris is confident that the Holy spirit works on His terms and not ours. He would like to see all the boys in Christ. But some may still have struggles. However, no one comes and leaves unchanged. “May not be where I would like them to be but leaves changed most of the time.”

Thomas. Thomas indicated how he has a better understanding of what the boys are going through. “My spiritual walk as a kid was by tradition.” His mom was a Christian, but he didn’t understand until college or maybe even when he came to camp. He mentioned how he would have rather watched an NBA game. “It felt like a requirement and it was not a desire when I was young.”

He explained how he went through rebellion as a teenager. It started when he was a teenager until his college years. He would fall for things and then feel guilty about it. He stated that he was bound. “I had to cry out to God. I can see some of my own struggles in the kids and it gives insight to speak into their lives. I don’t want the boys to have regrets or make the same mistakes.” For this reason, he attempts to speak truth in love. “It requires discernment. I can’t save them and I need to not be in the way and let the Holy Spirit work.”

Trust in God and Others

Fowlers’ (1981) Stages of Faith was extremely applicable to this study. This researcher intended to understand how the teachers’ defined faith. It was appropriate to understand how

faith was ascribed in their lives. In addition, how their personal faith facilitated faith within their students.

Oliver. For Oliver, within the scope, it is difficult to describe faith. He states, “Many times Christ could have let me down and He didn’t. I never felt like Christ didn’t take care of me and this transfers to the boys when in situations.” He explained how the boys had to plan for a river trip and it took faith. “It takes a lot of planning and thorough thinking.” They all must be able to think regarding trips because they must be ready to find the next camp site. They must ensure they have enough water and anything else that is vitally needed. He said, “Faith without works is dead. Especially during river trips, we must push forward. We must push forward until we find what is needed and the boys witness everything firsthand.”

John. John stated that “Faith is centered in you. It is the core in you. You can’t believe something all the way and it is not a big part of your life.” He felt that having faith reflected upon how he deals with people and the value they have. “Faith is a true heartfelt deep belief. It is an active pursuit.” He also quoted, “Faith without works is dead.”

John indicated that he desires to serve. “In my heart, soul and mind, I have to go serve others and live by what the Bible is saying.” He explained that since the teachers live with the boys, no one can hide who they really are. It just does not work. “It helps to build trust. If I am trying to live by faith on a day to day basis, they see that. Striving to live with integrity and by the Bible, they see that.” He indicated how the boys open up and try to live by faith because of how their teachers live. When a mistake is made, fixing it and still treating people the way they should be treated, it has a big impact.

Jack. Jack had a small Bible in his pants pocket and pulled it out when this question was asked. He states, “Faith is hard to describe.” He then, quoted Hebrews 11:1. He mentioned how

the Bible gives the answer to deal with faith every day. Then he explained how they deal with faith every day at the camp. “If we believe, the boys start to believe.”

Logan. Logan believes faith is “confidence in something not immediate. It is trust.” He spoke of the positioning of the boys and how they must trust that the teachers have their best interest in mind and know what they are doing. “God is not absent from the circumstances. This came up a few weeks ago in one of the boys.”

Chris. Chris believes that God transforms lives and that Christ’s redemption gives hope to everyone. “No one is beyond Christ’s redemption. I have faith in the boys to be transformed so that they can succeed.” He also mentioned how faith is the promise of things hoped for, just as some of the other teachers from Hebrews 11:1.

Chris indicated that faith is that God is who He said He is and will do what He said. “He chased me down and initiated a relationship. We love because He first loved us. It is His redemptive work and sacrifice. I endeavor to be obedient. If boys can be convinced, I can share hope to a boy that didn’t have it to begin with.”

Thomas. According to Thomas, “Faith is loving God and fulfilling the great commission. When approaching situations that are from God and its scary, as if you don’t have the tools. Like things don’t all line up. Relying on something bigger than God.” He acknowledged how faith and works, work together. When speaking of faith Thomas referenced Noah and Abraham. “If Noah had faith and did not build the ark, what good is it. If Abraham did not take Isaac up the mountain, what good is that?” Thomas explained how he applied this concept to camp and was blown away.

After a couple of weeks being at camp, one day it was 90 degrees and the kids were upset. He asked, “Lord what have You done to me.” Many times he wanted to quit. It became too

much. At camp he wakes up at 5:30 am. That was drastically different from waking up at 11:00 am when in college. He explained how it had to not be what he wanted, but what God wanted. He shared how as a result he met his wife through being obedient and having the faith to stay at the camp. He learned if you follow God, He will bless you.

God on the Inside

This researcher pursued to better understand how the teachers' commitment to Scripture assist the development from the perspective of a Christian or biblical worldview within their students.

Oliver. Oliver indicated how this varies from week to week and month to month. "Currently I'm working on issues within childhood and didn't even know it. The boys may not know the details, but they can see how I'm working through it." He strives to be a role model and uses more of a practical level. He explained how there are lots of group discussions in moments when boys don't believe in God. In this case, "There is no level of convincing, I must show them."

John. John indicated that if not careful, you can become distracted. He believes that you can't share with the boys about the Bible if you don't know it. "If not committing to Scripture and reading, we shortchange ourselves because we won't have the impact."

Jack. Jack indicated that reading daily helps. He explained how they have good conversations about the Bible. For example, they have group conversations on topics regarding being confident in the Scriptures. Being able to read the Scriptures daily can be difficult, but it is not impossible. There are times when they may have to sacrifice sleep. However, he explained how it is vital to find time to have conversations. He believes that discipline is key, but sometimes the boys don't see it. "Seeing the evidence of it is the key."

Logan. Logan stated how he was not sure of the measure of impact. “There was a season when I was made aware of impact within self. Through worship and prayer, I realized there is a spiritual battle.” He mentioned how life is a spiritual battle. He realized the need to be in the Word regularly, or if not, there is a risk of being lost. “I’ve seen it powerful in my own life.”

Chris. Chris discussed that during the Reformation, the reformers came up with five solas. Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone, etc. He believes Scripture is the foundation, without Scripture there is only so much that anyone can know about God. “Without Gods revelation one can only go so far.” He further explained that to impart into boys, he reflects and has normal conversations. He believes that “not every conversation needs to be a deep spiritual conversation.”

Thomas. Thomas indicated that “The Word of God must be engrained in everything we do. Kids know a BS’r. The kids can detect it. They can tell if you mean what you say or if you don’t.” He believes that one must live it or it will be evident when it is not. “When I wake up, I try to apply the Word. I know evil will try to attack me. The Word of God is my weapon.” He likes to use Ephesians 6, stand for Christ. “The kids are not the enemy and their family is not the enemy. The devil is the enemy. I believe what the Bible says is true.” He remembers how Silas in his worst moment sings and from that he is encouraged.

Share in Intentional Discussion

Yount Disciplers’ Model was relevant to this study, as discipleship is a major concept within this school. It was pertinent to reveal how the teachers have disciplined their students within the last year.

Oliver. Oliver indicated when boys are at the age of 13-15, they start to move beyond thinking as children. “They develop adult like thinking.” He explained how they have questions

about mostly anything and this offers the opportunity to discuss relationships. “Some of the boys have terrible relationships with their parents or siblings.” Therefore, discussion is good because they have deeper conversations to help disciple with a good way to handle situations.

John. John indicated that for the guys that don’t believe, they still talk about the Bible and declare that what the Bible says is right. He believes that it is about having conversations. The boys are looking for the answers to the real questions of how Christians are supposed to be living. “It is often in making the most of the small things. If not paying attention, the moment will be missed.” Within, those moments that is where the change starts.

Jack. Jack indicated how the boys can become uncontrollably angry. “I must sit with them so they can continue to see someone the opposite of them. During this time, I’m trying to stay patient and deescalate the situation.” He further explained that when the boys push limits, they see how chiefs are passionate. Sometimes the boys do it on purpose to try to get a bad reaction. “Discipling is a day to day basis.” Before the boys go to bed they can unload and share their burdens. Jack recognizes that the chiefs do not have all the answers.

Logan. Logan states that he is always with the boys; he lives with them. He hopes that he has rubbed off on the boys because of being Christ-like. He indicated how most answers come from being Christ-like and doing one on ones.

Chris. Chris believes that there are many forms. He desires to help them do something successfully because that is how partnership works. If the boys have questions, they can sit down one on one and see what the Bible says. “Relationship is what it comes down to.” The teachers and the boys are doing life together day to day.

Thomas. Thomas indicated that it is through Christian living. Also it can be on road trips. He shared that one time the tire busted on the side of the road and they had to change it. All four

of the tires went flat. “You are not spiritual if you can’t apply a spiritual perspective to difficult situations. I am open with the boys. We may go to the dining hall in the pouring rain and forget to bring a jacket.” Thomas has discovered that as a leader, he must find the golden nugget and help students to stay positive.

Wilderness and Residential Training

According to administrator Noah, the camp provides training throughout the year. This researcher inquired to discover any specific training that supports the teachers’ role in Christian education. In addition, if they did have training the researcher desired to understand how it equipped each participant to build into the transforming lives of the students.

Oliver. Oliver stated that he has had a lot of internal training. They train throughout camp. He mentioned CARE training. “I must know how to read a person by recognizing their needs and then I can take care of them.” They make sure the boys are clean and have a safe living place. As leaders, they take care of the boys’ emotional issues. He advised that CARE training leads to faith. They also learn the fundamentals of Safe Crisis Management, known as SCM. Oliver explained that SCM is in place for boys that become violent. This training helps them to learn how to approach the situation and keeps others safe. The overall goal is to keep everyone safe and this extends outside of the camp environment. They are also First Aid certified. He stated, they are “Trained to deal with any situation that occurs.”

John. John indicated that as he is pushing the boys towards their growth, he has supervisors and friends that push him. John stated that the boys can’t outgrow their chiefs. “If I’m not growing, neither are the boys. I can’t foster their success if I’m not doing it. I want and strive to learn more.” John strives to make learning a part of his life so that it helps the boys.

Jack. Jack explained how he had a heart for learning and teaching at an early age. He has helped to teach kids through church in the Awana program. He also worked with the Sparks k-2 program for 10 years and he loved it. He has taught Sunday School and has helped with church plants. He didn't even know the camp existed.

He stated how he understands now that it was almost if the training was preparation for his next step, camp. Just as similarly, camp is preparing him for his next step. He has studied Scripture and learned the theological side. He can see the progress and how it led to camp. Overall, we follow the CARE model and Safe Crisis.

Logan. Logan stated how they have a lot of training, although it is not always formal. He believes that church has helped and that doctrinal soundness is big. He indicated that knowing the Scriptures and being well informed and instructed is vital. Logan admits that he is learning a lot regarding dealing with non-believers. "The boys don't always like doing what they are being led to do."

Chris. According to Chris, there is a lot of camp specific training and camp education. He has a religion degree in youth ministry. He has experience leading small groups. Camp is learned through experience. Education for the boys is experiential. Skills are passed from the supervisors to the chiefs and then to the boys. Chris realizes that it is important to engage with the boys where they are. "Building relationship and care with boys is the most useful tool."

Thomas. Thomas acknowledges the use of CARE training. He explained that it is a weeklong process. He also explained employee to employee contact. He mentioned that he had van and driver training. In most cases, they all walk wherever they need to go when on-site, however, there are times when a van must be utilized.

Subtheme	Participants					
	Oliver	John	Jack	Logan	Chris	Thomas
Leaders following 2 Timothy 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Noah ✓			Elijah ✓	
Theme 5 Share in Intentional Discussion	Code Category Inquisitive nature Being at peace One on one					
Theme 6 Wilderness and Residential Training	Code Category Implementing CARE Training Safe Crisis Management					

Summary of Research Question 4

The data revealed how the faith of the teachers eventually increased within their lives. Faith was a synonymously revealed factor regarding spirituality and the ability to engage students to aid in their spiritual formation. The theory guiding this research was Fowlers' (1981) Stages of Faith. The data revealed the insight of the theory as to confirm Fowlers' sentiments. "Faith results from interactions and experiences that individuals have in the various components that make up their lives and unites these components so that they can feel their lives are whole" (Fowler, 1981, p. 25). The data displayed how this theory was significant to this case study as it revealed how individuals moved beyond depending on the faith of others. It displayed how students begin to incorporate faith in their own lives.

There were several examples provided that confirmed the teacher participants maturing through toward Fowlers' Stage 4, Individuative-Reflective Faith. The teachers shared several instances of using their own judgements about morals and value. They each shared moments

when as an individual they had to believe for themselves. It also shows how they faithfully follow the Great Commission. It was revealed how lifestyle evangelism takes place. The Godly life of the teachers serve as a model for the boys. The teachers are empathic towards the boys because as the data presents, they have experienced the same struggles in life. Mentorship is adequately provided at each level. The data displayed how the boys are mentored by their teachers. However, several teachers also acknowledged how their leaders mentor them as well.

Throughout the interviews there were several methods of training explained. CARE training and caring emotionally was applied consistently throughout the teachers for various questions. The CARE program understands that building relationships and paying attention to the emotional needs of children must be established (Holden, 2009, p. 11). The camp follows the CARE model because of its basic principles. The principles are as follows: Developmentally focused, family involved, relationship based, competence centered, trauma informed and ecologically oriented (Holden, 2009, pp. 18-22).

The data revealed that the teachers have a clear understanding of the crisis most boys encounter prior to arriving at the camp. For this reason they are empathetic and ensure one on one time with the boys when needed. One reason adolescents are referred to residential care is their inability to handle intense reciprocal relationships (Holden, 2009, p. 27). It was explained in one of the interviews how the teachers are the example of caring parents that the boys have never experienced. Their peers are a model of the siblings they have and cannot get along with when at home in real life. Peace in the form of reconciliation was a major consistent goal of each teacher. This researcher recognized this is aligned with Ephesians 4:26. This concept acknowledges that if any issues are unsettled no one will stay angry all day and night. Everyone aims to live in peace.

It was revealed how vital training is at this school. “Training on the job is the best way, in fact, the only way – that a counselor develops the skills required” (Loughmiller, 2000, p. 137). Although the teachers complete 90 hours a year of training, several teachers were to some extent equipped before arriving to the camp. For example Jack taught Awana through a program at church. Noah and Elijah indicated how the teachers are mentored by a supervisor daily. “In training a counselor for the job, included is a basic knowledge of camping, of child development, the meaning of behavior, groupwork techniques and mental health concepts of teaching” (Loughmiller, 2000, p. 137).

Evaluation of the Research Design

This researcher utilized the qualitative intrinsic case study to better understand how teachers perceive their engagement towards students. This study employed data collection instruments of surveys, interviews, document analysis and physical space observations to discover and reveal data. The teacher participants willingly and eagerly shared their experiences during the interviews and throughout the duration of this researchers visit. They were passionate and knowledgeable regarding their day to day structure. Each participant willingly shared their real-life cases as it pertained specifically to their experiences.

There were several instances when this researcher sensed the emotions of the teachers regarding sensitive matters. The testimonies of the teachers regarding life growing up experiencing difficulties at a young age. Also the various unfortunate circumstances of their students and their life issues were sensitive topics. All the teachers shared personal experiences that were life changing. When the teachers shared stories regarding their family this researcher could feel the compassion. Each participant displayed Christlikeness, which created an interview

atmosphere that was relaxed and free flowing. The participants appeared comfortable. The calm temperament needed to work effectively with teenage boys was apparent.

Before each interview this researcher advised participants that the setting was meant to be of general conversation as to bring ease of thought. The questions regarding behavior would often revert to the participants considering their own actions when they were younger. In each instance, the participant would give glory to God for never forsaking them. In this way, the teacher participants truly understand the problems of the boys and are elated to be a part of their journey.

Arriving to class late or having an extreme number of absences are likely occurrences that happen within a traditional school. However, they are unlikely within this program because the students live on-site. Noah advised that students who are prone to run away would likely be problematic within the Wilderness Camp setting because of the outside capacity within an open environment. There are several intolerable actions within the public school that can cause termination. Upon a student being expelled, alternative schools provide an opportunity for learning.

Further exploration to identify when students are beyond the assistance provided within Southeast Christian Alternative School would have been warranted. This knowledge would assist to better understand any instances that warrant students being terminated from the program. An assessment to understand the policies that would warrant student termination from the program would have been beneficial information for this researcher. What occurs when the source for remediation cannot be of support? Are there any steps taken to withdraw a possible termination occurrence if at all possible? To identify and evaluate any processes that occur before a final termination could have been further analyzed.

There were a few research developments that could have transpired differently within this study. Utilizing a Likert scale for survey questions would have similarly captured participants behaviors. Answering strongly disagree, agree, etc. would have resulted in the responses being limited to exact categories. This would have resulted in making use of a better, conceivably quicker method to code the data. Coding the data was very time consuming with several open-ended interview questions with detailed responses.

It was difficult to attain options for Christian Alternative Schools because they are rare. It was difficult to establish a school that would commit to the study. Several schools that met the criteria did not desire to participate. Therefore, the process to obtain a committed school was time consuming. However, the participating school was uniquely designed impeccably for this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The primary goal of this research was to better understand how or if teachers effectively engage with at-risk students to facilitate their spiritual formation. As mentioned, many of the public school systems' implement the zero tolerance policy which instills a sense of rejection within at-risk students. This specific policy does not provide any concluding remediation for the students involved. The study of alternative schools was pertinent to provide families with an alternative to learning, after students have been expelled. This chapter will provide a summary of research question conclusions. These conclusions will compare and contrast the data revealed. Finally, this chapter will provide areas for future research. Within the public school system, minimal effort has been sufficed to modify or eliminate the zero tolerance policy.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to understand Christian teachers' perception of their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk students that attend a Christian alternative school.

Research Questions

The following questions were utilized for data collection for this case study:

RQ1. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding behavior management facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

RQ2. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding spirituality facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

RQ3. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding Christian pedagogy facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

RQ4. How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding Christian discipleship facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

The research conclusions derived from data that was deduced from the four research questions. The following data was collected and evaluated from the participants.

Research Conclusions

Through this research, it was revealed that the teachers obtain substantial engagement towards their students to facilitate their spiritual formation. Each participant readily contributed well-informed detailed responses that displayed their level of commitment to God as well as the well-being of their students' growth. Each participant shared their perception of how they impart into or engage with their students daily. This section will entail the concluding overall details pertaining to each question.

Conclusion to RQ1

How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding behavior management facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

This question was asked to determine how or if teachers engage their students effectively to facilitate positive behavior. The data revealed that all teachers effectively provide correction utilizing the Problem, Solution, Prevention model and/or the instructions of Matthew 18. Behavior management and Matthew 18 appeared synonymous among many of the teachers. As it was referenced numerous times within several interviews. Christians, if not cautious, will try to handle conflict vicariously and may employ an approach that is not Godly. In any given situation, disagreements, misunderstandings, and misconduct can occur.

Matthew 18:15-18 provides a Godly method as an approach:

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglects to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. (KJV)

Matthew 18 teaches Christians to keep the transpired matter confidential. A Christian should not spread the details of the circumstances to others not involved. Next, go directly to the person and advise them of the offense in a loving way (Kienel, 2016). If they accept the correction, the matter is resolved. To address the problem, there may need to be a conversation.

Spiritual formation is substantiated when the boy(s) admits the wrong and then apologizes. It was perceived that the teachers intentionally promote the students admitting their wrong and apologizing. Being able to admit wrongdoing and apologizing displays growth. However, if the matter is not resolved, it is then ok to involve another individual. "A Christian school is a ministry in Christ's name. Everything that is done in the context of the school must be done Christ's way. The world's methods of solving school problems are inappropriate" (Kienel, 2016).

In comparison, during the interview with administrator Noah, both models were referenced as a definite plan of action (PSP and Matthew 18 models). During the teacher interviews it was discovered that both models assist in a situation when a boy is being rude or acting out. Once the rudeness is acknowledged, the boy has an opportunity to respond. If he does not respond well, others help to bring the situation to a resolve. As an administrator, Noah believes implementing the PSP model is an effective and structured method because the teachers are prepped and prepared when situations arise. Overall, the PSP model ensures any problems are resolved.

It was revealed that the key to understanding what triggers a student is pertinent in overcoming misbehavior issues. When a student is experiencing a struggle, in that moment the teacher knows firsthand what makes the boy angry and can make accommodations for a solution or resolve. Noah indicated that a soothing solution may be chopping wood with an ax for ten minutes. Other examples mentioned were taking walks and breathing exercises. This helps to release the frustration without damaging someone or something. This researcher observed the area in the woods where the boys walk daily and the axes and other tools utilized by the boys.

It was also revealed how accountability is promoted throughout the varying levels of leadership. Striving to live out the Word should be a primary focus for all Christians. Within this camp, this researcher recognized that transformational leadership exist. Three levels of hierarchy were noted during the on-site visit. The data presents how every level is serving as a role model for others, aiming to live out the Word.

When accountability is evident, it makes responsibility and obedience inescapable. Several teachers mentioned how pow-wow sessions assist to keep everyone responsible and obedient. If chaos occurred throughout the day, the pow-wow sessions are implemented to embrace peace within and peace amongst each other. Pow-wow is an evaluative session held by each group at the end of each day. "The purpose of the pow-wow is to take a reflective look at the group's experience during the day in terms of its successes and failures, and to examine the reasons for each" (Loughmiller, 2000, p. 131).

Through all the interviews, it was revealed how the teachers realize that they must understand their students' back history regarding behavior. Also, emphasis was placed on the goals that the students create after entering the camp. The goals are repeated daily and have a great influence on the student's behavior. There are also group goals that are implemented during

river trips. Elijah shared a phenomenal example of group goals from a river trip. “We will explore and learn about history while utilizing surrounding resources. We will build a better group by encouraging and giving corrections as brothers. We will keep a positive group spirit by depending on each other at all times.” Through the implementation of goals, the boys are continuously growing into leaders. They are also learning to alter their behavior in a positive manner.

According to Noah, the boys’ individual goals are updated every 90 days. It was explained that if the behavior changes, the goals are updated promptly. To preestablish a boys’ history regarding his behavior, it was discovered that ICMP’s are utilized. This was a standard method utilized by all leadership roles. Thomas explained how this method is not utilized to judge the students. The ICMP is a tool that assist to understand the back history of the students. When students start attending this camp, the ICMP is evaluated by the teacher. They are informed of any concerns regarding safety, potential triggers. The teachers become aware of intervention strategies and emergency contacts.

The ICMP’s are written before a student enters the camp. They are updated on an as needed basis. For example, there may be cases when a teacher recognizes a new trigger. The ICMP method along with other routines randomly mentioned by the teachers can be compared to BIP’s. This researcher evaluated several example BIP’s from within the public school system. The following are some of the similarities, specifically the Teaching Alternative Behaviors section from an example BIP:

- Student will develop and utilize a schedule, checklist, or visual schedule
- Teacher and student will develop a secret cue that the student will use to indicate to the teacher they would like to participate, volunteer, answer a question, add a comment, etc.

- When student cannot control anxiety and feelings, they may ask to go to an alternative room or setting to take a break and re-group or calm down
- Student will take deep breaths, count to 10, stretch, or utilize other relaxation techniques when feeling anxious or overwhelmed (“Behavior Intervention Plan,” n.d.)

Noah reiterated how they must view the boys as human beings. To be effective, they seek to walk alongside the boys and have patience and kindness. Overall, the leaders must understand the crisis behavior and be able to handle the trauma.

Conclusion to RQ2

How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding spirituality facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

This question was executed to better understand how or if the spirituality of the teachers impacts their students. During the interview sessions with the administrator and the assistant director, this researcher asked if there were any specific considerations when hiring individuals? The Christian education cannot successfully exist without Christian teachers (Etzel et al., 2017). In the deciding factors for this camp, it was important to understand what type of individuals are vital to the spiritual formation process. Without hesitancy Elijah replied, “We hire followers of Christ.” Noah replied, “Jesus followers.” Noah expressed that he did not think unbelievers would desire to work at the camp because its foundation is based on Christian beliefs. According to Loughmiller (1980), “Camps try to employ mature persons of good character who are interested in working with youth. If we are successful, the job itself will bring the counselor’s moral and religious values into sharper focus” (p. 71).

Through the interview process and observation, it was revealed that all teachers attained two primary spiritual disciplines. Spirituality was exhibited through the teachers, as they were proven to be grounded in prayer and well versed in memorizing and reading Scripture. All the

teachers encompassed a spiritual background from childhood. The data revealed there were various spiritual backgrounds, however they were taught from a young age. Now as teachers they share their disciplines amongst their students daily. “Christian educators help cultivate a worldview in which God has His rightful place, and they look to the Bible for guidance in answering life's big questions. These teachers enhance children's spiritual development in an intentional, nurturing manner” (“Why Christian Schooling,” 2021, para. 2).

It was discovered that the teachers are well-trained. “When a person is employed, he is assigned to the director of counselor training for ten days to two weeks during which he is instructed in detail about every aspect of the job” (Loughmiller, 2000, p. 138). Training starts from the beginning of employment and continues throughout the year. Administrator Noah indicated there are 90 hours of training a year. Within this training spiritually is factored because this role “is a work of the Lord” according to Noah. The teachers are avidly active regarding their own spirituality and can offer insight according to Biblical standards for their students. “A Christian teacher can train students in righteousness and godliness, with the desired outcome being for the child to experience God’s forgiveness and to become a self-disciplined student, striving to do God’s will” (Schlauch, 2016).

All teachers remember when they were young and experienced God personally. All believe in God. However, Oliver and Thomas explained that they did not have faith at a young age. John even explained how he had been angry with God. Within their own personal spiritual growth process, they remember those who helped them. The assistance ranged from family/friends to neighbors. The students need people that truly care for their well-being and understand how to connect with them spiritually. “It may be almost too much to expect young people who have suffered so severely from broken and insecure attachments to ever trust fully in

one person again” (Holden, 2009, p. 28). If individual relationships are difficult to maintain for at-risk children, a spiritual relationship that requires faith and trust with an invisible God is even more difficult.

It was discovered through the interviews that some of the boys do not have good relationships with their families. “In residential care, the young person will need to trust and rely on care workers to achieve developmental goals and build competencies. Through forming these alliances with care workers, young people learn to develop coping skills, social skills, and healthy relationships” (Holden, 2009, p. 29). To guide the spirituality of the boys, the teachers must obtain their own relationship with God. They cannot pour what they do not obtain themselves. “Studies show that without a dad or male figure to guide them, boys especially are more likely to drift into crime and prison, drug and alcohol addictions, poverty, suicide - and abandon their own children” (Stirk, 2014, para. 8).

The data revealed that the teachers are successful as spiritual mentors. They are active spiritual role models that the boys can follow. “The role of the mentor is to bring change, to excel, and achieve new heights of ability, skill, and virtue. From childhood to adulthood, mentors can help to stay on a path that is conducive to the well-being of others, many are craving a male mentor who they can look up to and trust as a source of guidance” (Woolfe, 2020, para. 1).

There are several issues that can arise for children without a mentor/role model in their lives:

- Low self-esteem
- Lack of emotional security
- Behavioral problems, such as issues with social adjustment and forming friendships
- Truancy and poor academic performance
- Delinquency and youth crime
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Homelessness
- Mental health disorders, with higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide (Woolfe, 2020, para. 12)

This researcher asked the administrator and assistant director if they had encountered teachers incorporating their disciplines amongst students. The discipline displayed was prayer. It was revealed how prayer can occur anytime throughout the day at the camp. The data displayed how teachers were eager to be disciplined. Teachers desire to implement other spiritual practices; however, their work schedules restrict them from being consistent. For example, it is often difficult to fast within this type of environment.

There are times when it is severely hot outside. Oliver stated that he desires to fast more. However, it exhausts all his energy when it is severely hot outside. This researcher witnessed the impact that the hot temperature can have on the teachers. Thomas was exhausted from the heat and became ill during this researchers' first day on-site. This researcher recognized the sentiments of a personal sacrifice that Oliver desires to acquire unto God. According to Wesley (2017), "Fasting should always have a directed goal. It should be something you are attempting to achieve for God in your life." Overall, Oliver wishes to become closer to God and guided with wisdom as he serves the boys.

Along with prayer and reading Scripture, fasting helps a person to grow closer to God. Teachers implementing fasting could intervene on the behalf the students spiritually. The burden to fast can impact students as it regards sacrificing unto God on their behalf (Rohrbaugh, 2021). Most children may not fully comprehend fasting and it is not recommended for their age. "Intermittent fasting is not recommended for those in periods of rapid growth, such as children and adolescents" (Blalock, 2021).

Spiritual growth at the camp is pertinent. Through the interviews it was evident that everyone has a part in the participation of weekly chapel and Bible study services. In general, it is important for the teachers to be well-versed in Scripture. At any given time, a teacher must be

able to speak the Word. Chapel and Bible study must be planned weekly. The boys are active in the participation of choosing themes and songs. Decisions must be made about which participant will lead each portion of the program.

The teachers and students work together to plan, practice and present; everyone has a functioning role. This assists the students in the growth of their souls and builds the spirit of the camp. "Our souls need songs. So God ordained a ministry of singers to drive theological teaching deep into the hearts of His people" (Nesbit, 2017). Within observation, this researcher witnessed all the participants singing spiritual songs. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (KJV, Colossians 3:16). When the group sings songs, they are making a joyful noise unto the Lord. The spiritual songs are intentionally incorporated to facilitate character and values.

It was insinuated that the teachers and the students learn from chapel and Bible study, it is meaningful. Outside of chapel and Bible study, the students also have the opportunity to read their Bibles daily. However, it is not forced on them to do so. If any of these disciplines were forced, they would be resented by the students. Chapel and Bible study consist of songs, prayer, skits, reading Scripture, and then discussion on the Scripture. The spiritual growth of the students and the teachers occur through application. Through attending chapel and Bible study, the faith of the teachers and the students are maturing.

According to Thomas, there are church visits that occur. There are churches that donate, so they all sing and share details about the camp during the visits. The boys share their goals and tell their testimonies. Throughout the timeframe of the program, teachers have ample opportunity to plant seeds. Most of the boys enter the camp program with low self-esteem and disruptive

behavior. According to Loughmiller (2000), “The boys that enter the camp have a long history of failures which have undermined their self-confidence and made them feel worthless” (p. 5).

Since the teachers live with their students and are around them consistently, there are numerous opportunities to plant seeds. Thomas indicated that his mother is a Christian. When he was young, they never missed church. She always had the radio on with Christian music playing. However, during that time, Christianity felt like a requirement to him. He recalls not understanding that his mother was planting seeds.

Thomas’ mom was training up her child, as according to Proverbs 22:6. He explained how he went through rebellion as a teenager. However, now he serves God. In this same way, he and his peers are planting seeds into the boys. It was inferred throughout the interviews that prayerfully the boys would ultimately become strong leaders and attain healthy relationships with others. “One reason children and young people are often referred to residential care is their inability to handle intense reciprocal relationships” (Holden, 2009, p. 27).

Conclusion to RQ3

How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding Christian pedagogy facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

All interviews revealed how camp education differs from a traditional educational setting within a public school. While on-site this researcher observed how the nature aspect of the entire camp environment provides the ability to explore and have freedom. The classroom is the woods; therefore a lot of the daily teachings are non-traditional and regard nature. Nature knowledge occurs during the rambles regarding the trees and the living creatures that roam in the woods. Every day the lessons are radically different. However, because it is God’s creation, the teachers can teach faith with firsthand rational experiences.

Loughmiller (2000) provides an example of nature knowledge captured within rambles in a considerable way:

One of the boys called attention to a partially decomposed skeleton of a small animal and wondered what it was. The group gathered around and began to speculate. No one knew. One boy noticed that the toothless lower jaw was still intact. Another boy called attention to the fact that the back leg was longer than the front ones. No one could make a positive identification until they started to leave and found a small segment of an armadillo shell a few feet away. A ramble is a time to develop interests and appreciations---an awareness of beauty, of relationships. Such experiences are apt to engender a sense of wonder, sometimes of awe, with spiritual implications that go beyond the immediate sensory experience. (p. 60-61)

These unique experiences are beneficial to understanding who God is and His role within creation. The students' faith can be increased when they have daily revelations of "And God called the dry land Earth;" (KJV, Genesis 1:10). The sun that shines, is a reminder that God created light. The calm outdoor atmosphere assist to maintain the calmness of the boys. "Tertullian wrote, we conclude that God is known first through nature, and then again, by doctrine, by nature in His works and by doctrine in His revealed word" (Halsall, 1997, para. 9).

According to the teachers, the learning opportunities are endless, especially when in the woods daily. "The camp environment is advantageous because it accords more fully with the child's nature and provides ample opportunity for adventure and exploration outdoors" (Loughmiller, 2000, p. 1). During their interviews, Noah and Elijah indicated that the overall aim for each boy is to become healthy and whole in mind, body, and spirit. Noah indicated that every subject whether it pertains to health, biology, or the veins of a leaf; the boys can notice the fingerprint of God. To successfully bridge the gap that is often left open and unexplored the teachers strive to meet the boys where they are.

To meet the students where they are means to build them up and to edify them with encouragement, seeing past the imperfections of life. "There have been boys with speech

impediments, some so severe that the boy could not be understood. After being in camp there was no evidence of a speech impediment at all” (Loughmiller, 2000, p. 37). He did not need a speech therapist, just the camp environment. He needed a support system to assist him.

The goal is to build healthy leaders. When building leaders the teachers must consider how to connect the missing pieces between religion and faith. During the interviews it was assessed how previously the teachers believed in God wholeheartedly but lacked faith. Through the teacher interviews, it was revealed that there are students who did not have a Christian upbringing or had varying beliefs. When religious diversity is present amongst the students, teachers must remain unwavering and teach the Gospel of Jesus with clarity. There is a motto that several of the teachers and the administrator referenced, “The boys can’t outgrow their chiefs.”

The interviews revealed the progression of the teachers’ growth through the areas of managing student behavior, Christian teaching, spirituality, and discipleship. Helping the boys to improve the roles they have within their families is pertinent. Each boy may be a son or brother to someone in his family. Their actions significantly impact their home lives. Often, the boys do not have a good relationship with their family members. The camp environment and its leaders are the model of a healthy home environment. The teacher interviews presented data that defined a model of how the boys can grow into leaders of their own homes and be functional.

Conclusion to RQ4

How do Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding Christian discipleship facilitates spiritual formation within at-risk students attending a Christian alternative school?

This question was established to better understand if or how teachers’ effectively disciple their students. Discipleship within this study mimicked the concept of being a role model and/or mentor. The data revealed how the teachers are living examples for the boys daily. This

researcher recognized that lifestyle evangelism existed amongst the participant teachers. The term “live among” could be translated “to pitch a tent” (Aldrich, 1993, p. 31).

Ironically, this is the epitome of the camp. The teachers live among the students, showing them examples of a Christian life. However, the students literally pitch their own tents to live in, in which they call a shelter. They build tents/shelters out of wood. This researcher witnessed the tents during the on-site visit. In biblical terms, to “live among” and “pitch among” displays how the teachers also do what is expected of the students. The teachers become the students in order to reach them. Administrator Noah explained how the chiefs do exactly what is asked of the boys.

This researcher recognized that Bernard M. Bass’ Four I’s of Transformational Leadership existed deeply within the camp. In which the overall aim is a positive change that is beneficial to the camp and its leadership. “Intellectual Stimulation encourages followers to explore new ways of doing things and new opportunities to learn” (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2000, pp. 15-17). This researcher observed this specific quality in Chris. He indicated how he does not lead the boys with “because I said so.” In his response he indicated how this does not help the boys to learn. Rather, he leads the boys in the new way of truth. This provides new opportunities to learn practical life skills within a firm authority.

Assistant director Elijah also applied a leadership model. It was evident particularly on big adventurous river trips. Secondly, this type of leader “acknowledges *Individualized Consideration* by exhibiting supportive and encouraging strategies on an individual basis” (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2000, pp. 15-17). The trips are full of new opportunities in which leaders can establish new lessons. For example, in conversation during a river trip Elijah

asked one of the boys if he would care if his adoptive mom passed away. The young boy answered “somewhat”. Elijah was astonished.

Elijah could not believe what he heard. After engaging in depth Elijah figured out why the young boy felt the way that he did. He did not know a lot about his adoptive mother and there was a void. After engaging one on one, the young boy cried. Elijah knew that his student needed to become vulnerable so that he could heal. He advised his student to write his mom a letter but did not force the matter. Later that night, the student took the initiative to write his mom a letter (p. 112).

Administrator Noah and several teachers confirmed another concept of the leadership model regarding motivation. Thirdly, the transformational leader “applies *Inspirational Motivation* by employing a clear vision that the followers passionately desire to fulfill” (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2000, pp. 15-17). It was indicated that everyone has created personal goals. Noah, Elijah, the teachers, and students all have goals that they have set forth to accomplish. All teachers validated their ability to serve as effective role models. Lastly, a transformational leader “serves as an *Idealized Influence* by exhibiting characteristics of a well-respected role model that can be emulated” (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2000, pp. 15-17).

This researcher observed how the responses of the teachers all revealed their influence concerning their students. According to Thomas, the teachers’ model for the boys in a basic manner. They clean the campsite, tents, and focus on being a clean camper. Their shirts must be tucked in, shoes tied, and they must have good hygiene. This was confirmed through observation. All the teachers were well groomed, presentable, and well-spoken. In this way, they were positive models that the boys could follow.

Administrator Noah shared experiences of his own hurts and baggage when he began to work at the camp. He shared how he had to visit a counselor for nine months. He had to work on processing through the issues that were occurring within his life. As administrator, he experienced hurt and can inspire teachers and students through his real life experiences. Each teacher has experienced their own personal faith walk.

There were several examples provided throughout the interviews of personal testimonies. The teachers help the boys to understand how to live Christ-like. After which, demonstrating how to progress towards having an intimate relationship with Jesus. Through the experiences of a lack of understanding their own faith when younger, John and Thomas realized that faith matters. They both believed in God but initially lacked faith. As mentioned, the teachers are bridging the gap between religion and faith.

The data revealed that daily the teachers aim to serve their students by being *trustworthy*. Noah advised that as the chiefs take on roles, the boys also grow. The goal as a teacher is to help so that others can benefit, this builds trust. This job is beyond pay, it is the work of the Lord. Noah indicated that before any teachers decide to work at the camp, they should be prayerful. Teachers should pray as to whether God is calling them to this type of ministry. Elijah indicated that one of the teachers struggled with the death of his parents. He shared it with the group. They all prayed together but had to witness him go through such a dark time. Through this experience, they all learned to be trustworthy towards God, chapel, and the body of believers.

Scriptures are foundational. Elijah indicated how Paul and Timothy relied on the Scriptures. This displays his insight on mentorship from a biblical perspective. In which, the chiefs are mentored by the supervisors. In turn, the boys are mentored by the teachers. The interviews revealed how the teachers have an understanding that God cannot be known without

seeking the Scriptures. This camp allows the Scriptures to hold everyone in a stance of accountability.

The teachers recited Scriptures during the interviews. Elijah believes if the teachers are well-versed in the Scriptures, they are more apt to bring change within the group. Within this change that is needed, the chiefs understand that they must be aware of the level of understanding of each boy. To effectively disciple, this researcher recognizes how this camp is following the instructions in the Book of Titus. The teachers are following the declaration, "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience" (Titus 2:2). The teachers must be able to mentor in this way to be effective.

Peace and quality time were big impacts on discipleship. Peace must be established from within each student and within the camp environment. When needed, one on one time is readily available from the teachers to the students. The teachers are amply flexible and can stop and counsel the boys when needed. "Children need to talk about what is upsetting them. They need to talk and process the very same feelings and events many times" (Holden, 2009, p. 70). This is vastly different from the traditional school setting. This also makes a clear distinction between the remediation process of why alternative schools are needed.

Public school teachers cannot consistently take time away from the entire class to focus on one student. In most cases, students are sent to in-school detention with no results of resolve. Through the interviews it was acknowledged how the boys are inquisitive in nature. They ask questions that most adults are too leery to ask. It was revealed how their inquisitive nature makes it easier to communicate God in a clear way and keeps the relationship dynamics open for discussion.

There are different levels of peace incorporated within this camp. The primary focus of the camp is peace with God. Noah desires that the teachers have peace regarding serving/working at the camp, not just someone to be in the woods. In the same way, the chiefs desire is that the students have inner peace. This is known as individual peace, however, there is also a social peace (Barbey, 2018). As mentioned previously, this is demonstrated every evening during pow-wow sessions.

The data revealed that the teachers receive a vast amount of formal and informal training. Administrator Noah and assistant director Elijah indicated there are six weeks of orientation. During this time the teachers work through manuals of philosophy. The teachers are provided with devotionals to boost their understanding of Jesus. The teachers also complete 90 hours a year of training. “We train a counselor exactly as we do a boy” (Loughmiller, 1980, p. 72).

CARE training, First Aid training and Safe Crisis Management were some of the simultaneously mentioned trainings available mentioned by the teachers. When the students have lived lives that result in conflict, they must be able to confide in someone who cares. To care for adolescents in crises situations can be challenging. Elijah indicated that CARE training is pertinent for the teachers. He explained how CARE training keeps the students where they can do things with help to expand the sphere of their capability.

Research Applications

There are three probable research applications that can derive from this study. First, the parents/guardians of the students could benefit from informational guidance. The teacher participants are with the students all day, most days. Some of the students did not grow up in a Christian environment. Behavior management, spirituality, Christian pedagogy, and discipleship should also be learned within the home. Some parents may not attend a church seminar or

service but will spend time within the camp environment to learn fundamentals to assist their child.

Second, the public school system could benefit from the practices of this camp. Yes, academics are pertinent. However, the students are human beings. The CARE model could possibly be utilized within public schools. Although the CARE model is strategically created for residential care, there are specific principles that public schools could adapt. For example, the basic principles of CARE; “developmentally focused, family involved, relationship based, competence centered, trauma informed and ecologically oriented” (Holden, 2009, pp. 18-22).

This camp trains its teachers to effectively communicate and impart a sense of wholeness in students. The participant teachers are building relationships and trust. Each teacher acknowledged the need to understand the root of the students’ issues. Also, correction occurs consistently throughout the day. Correction is a part of teaching. If public schools would engage in understanding the root of the issue in order to correct the issue, students would conceivably improve.

Through the expressions of the teachers, behavior correction entails a guided care when engaging students. “Mindfulness (care) has the capacity to build a strong body, mind and spirit in children. It can help to protect against stress, anxiety, depression, improve academic performance and social relationships, as well as expand the capacity to experience positive emotions” (Young, 2020). Elijah expressed the importance of the students becoming whole. To care for the body, mind, and soul of the students can create a kind and compassionate environment where healing and hope flourish (Warren, 2018).

After analyzing the statistics on Generation Z, the third application regards the local church and youth pastors that mentor adolescent boys. Adolescent students are expelled from

public schools if they violate the zero tolerance policy (Lehr et al., 2009). Gen Z adolescents are also vastly opting out of attending church. According to the statistics 45% rarely or never attends church (Deckman, 2020, para. 7). This research could assist leaders within the church and teachers to effectively engage and attain Generation Z. This researcher learned how becoming more involved in the discipleship process and becoming the student is crucial. This process would not negate being a role model but builds relationship and trust. This study has proved how being a living example is a great influence on adolescents. A Christian mentor must be a role model and must build relationships with Generation Z to retain them and to help them grow spiritually.

Research Limitations

This researcher presumed upon retrieving the screening surveys, that there would be a maximum variation sampling utilized for a range of diversity within the participants. It was prematurely assumed there would be a diversity of ethnicities and genders. However, this study was limited to a homogenous sample. All participants were Caucasian males that were currently employed full-time. The age groups were also synonymous throughout the range of participants. Of the six teachers interviewed, five were ages 25-34. The assistant director was also between the age of 25-34. One of the teachers and the administrator were both ages 35-44.

When reviewing this work, this researcher identified that there is a gap within the literature. The gap concerns how at-risk students are negatively impacted by the educational systems' failure to rehabilitate morally destructive liberalisms which hinders the ability to transform students to wholeness. Children that are merely experiencing life issues are frequently mislabeled. "Students enter school and face tasks for which they are not ready and they become labeled. They are labeled as slow learners and exceptional. Then we test them, analyze them,

evaluate them, and label them” (Loughmiller, 1980, p. 22). The primary limitation regarding this research is that alternative schools are rare and non-traditional. Aside from those limitations, the study criteria for the participating school had a requirement to be Christian. For this reason, this researcher experienced difficulty confirming a school that would participate and within in a reasonable timeframe.

Another limitation regards the willingness of Christian alternative schools to engage in research and outside evaluation. These schools are rare, therefore this researcher started with a dilemma. The number of contacts were limited. Within the range of schools that exist, most did not wish to participate during the timeframe provided. If schools are against participating, there cannot not be an accurate evaluation of their effectiveness. If schools decline to participate in these types of studies, the proper understanding of how they are effectively transforming students will not exist.

This study did not interact or interview any of the students. However, this researcher believes dialogue would have been beneficial, if on their level of understanding. A shorter version of similar questions rephrased to better fit their comprehension possibly could have presented thought-provoking outcomes. Their spiritual understanding may have been more difficult to fully express. It would have possibly made it more difficult to transcribe. The teachers have worked through their own spiritual formation and have healed with aims to share personal testimonies. The boys are currently experiencing fresh hurts and have not fully worked through their issues. This could have impacted the sincerity of the responses.

There could have been uncomfortable matters that the boys would have declined to share. There would not have been the depth that this researcher desired to obtain. It would have been hard for them to articulate their spiritual journey because of the stage they are in. This researcher

does not think the questions would have been effective as open ended questions. Perhaps using the Likert scale would have been a successful option.

Implications for Further Research

This research further examined how or if Christian teachers were able to effectively engage with their students to facilitate spiritual formation. This research could be furthered developed by studying camps or Christian alternative schools that only accept girls. The data sample may possibly generate leaders and teachers who are all females. It would be valuable to review the differing responses with the identical question sets asked. This researcher also believes this research could be furthered developed by studying camps or alternative schools that are not entirely Christian focused in nature. There were several schools contacted that did not have any obvious traces of spirituality. This study could be expanded to focus on moral philosophy, which can be applied to any school and its teachers.

The learning process within experiential education was discovered as extremely different in comparison to traditional education. It was revealed that the students construct their own shelters, cut wood, and cook. There are absolutely no blackboards, erasers, or tardy bells (Loughmiller, 2000, p. 35). This concept has the potential to benefit public schools. There are experiential learning elements that could effectively be implemented. As a result, establishing practical and positive outcomes for students. Which contrasts with the zero tolerance policy outcomes. As mentioned, every day the lessons are radically different.

The experiential learning involves teaching students how to live life daily. This aspect has vastly changed in public schools. Home economic courses have been discarded. Teenagers graduate from public school without learning how to survive in life daily. They do not learn how to cook, clean, pay bills, plan, or have healthy relationships. Elijah expressed how the boys cook

their own meals two days of the week. Within the camp environment, “The boys are free to make out menus according to their preferences as long as they maintain a dietary balance and stay within the food budget” (Loughmiller, 2000, p. 37). Planning meals are implemented as lessons regarding nutrition and cost.

The experiential approach is a benefit to at-risk students because they learn daily practical life skills. The data revealed an area of struggle for many students entering the program is derived from the lack of normal life skills. While on-site, this researcher was able to visit the outside cooking area. There were several cast irons on posts and a large wooden table where the boys eat. In contrast to traditional schools, the Christian alternative school focuses on cleanliness. As Elijah and Thomas mentioned, the cooking area, tent area, and the boys must be clean. These factors are practiced daily. Planning was also significant within the camp. Every aspect of the day must be planned. It was revealed through several interviews that the students are responsible for planning their day.

This study could be further expanded to the students that have finished the program. Teacher participants indicated how some students may not receive Jesus in their hearts while in the camp. However, the seeds have been planted and the students continue to grow even after finishing camp. The students that have finished the camp and have matured could possibly analyze their life and speak on their growth. As revealed, there are issues that may start because of a students’ home life, which carries over into school and learning. After there is growth and the root of the problems are resolved, students are likely to have a different perspective.

Lastly, the data revealed how experience within the profession could be an implication. Five of the participant teachers have 1-5 years within this profession and one teacher 6-10 years. An employer may view 1-5 years within a profession as inexperience. This could occur primarily

based on a lack of knowledge or unfamiliarity pertaining to new tasks or vocation. In contrast, an experienced employee likely understands the job well and should have the ability to maneuver difficult situations tactfully.

Summary

A Christian's main goal and focus should be on growing and maturing in Jesus Christ. Therefore, striving to become more like God is a daily intentional effort. The mind, body, and soul were referenced several times by participants. Becoming whole in Christ consists of these exact elements. In most cases, at-risk students are broken and need to become whole. Wholeness is a state of well-being. According to Pettit (2008), "Spiritual formation is the holistic work of God in a believer's life whereby systematic change renders the individual continually closer to the image and actions of Jesus Christ" (p. 19).

The mind must be transformed, and this often happens through prayer and mediating on the Word of God daily. Spiritual growth and maturing consists of change. This change that occurs is referenced as spiritual formation. The behavior of students that are affected by the zero tolerance policy (1990) contradicts Godly character. Zero tolerance equates to no acceptance of certain misbehaviors. The same behaviors are not acceptable within Christianity. However, Christian teachers must realize transformation does not occur overnight. Similarly, a caterpillar does not transform into a butterfly instantly. The metamorphosis is a gradual change. Transforming may take more or less time based on each student. Christian alternative schools provide a chance for a renewed image.

All schools could benefit from understanding the underlying dynamics of behaviors. However, Christian alternative teachers engage with students that need the most attention. An advantage to attending a Christian alternative school is that employing spiritual beliefs and

practices to cope with root issues would be encouraged. Spirituality provides hope for distressed students. The positive impact that spirituality has helps individuals to recover. Christian teachers understand how certain aspects of behavior can be engaged with prayer, meditation, or worship. Students can experience peace and comfort when engaging spiritual practices.

If a student has issues, if their teacher can understand the root of the issue, solutions could be executed. Regardless of being a public or private school, both institutions should collectively desire to instruct students regarding their academics and character, so they can live as responsible individuals. It is important to understand the underlying implications that may cause students to behave in certain manners. If a student is misbehaving in class because of family issues at home, it may be a result of not handling stress well and further results in not being able to focus.

When a Christian teacher exhibits engagement in Christian pedagogy, they can teach to change the heart. “Spiritual formation involves attention to both inside (“heart work”) and outside (“mouth work”)” (Pettit, 2008, p. 126). What is on the inside of a person will be outwardly demonstrated. It was revealed that Christian teachers serve as an inspirational motivation towards their students. This study proved that at-risk students have not necessarily been introduced to Christianity. Therefore, there are various questions they seek to understand regarding who God is. A teacher proved that the concept of, “This is the way we’ve always done it” is definitely not in the vocabulary” (Kendrick, 2011, p. 14).

Jesus took advantage of special moments to mentor. Christian teachers can use their influence to maximize mentoring moments (Temple, 2019). Mentoring is more than passing along knowledge. “A mentor has been defined as an experienced and “trusted” advisor” (Wakeman, 2012, p. 1). Jesus was able to impart His experiences into others. “And the things

that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (KJV, 2 Timothy 2:2). Christian teachers must do the same. Christ has set Himself as a model. Therefore, Christian teachers must set an example for students to model. A teacher can only reproduce who they currently are. This study revealed that teachers are in place to disciple and build leaders.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 15, 2021

Stephanie Eldridge
Joseph Butler

Re: Modification - IRB-FY20-21-6 HOW CHRISTIAN TEACHERS PERCEIVE THEIR ENGAGEMENT FACILITATES SPIRITUAL FORMATION WITHIN AT-RISK STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

Dear Stephanie Eldridge, Joseph Butler:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has rendered the decision below for IRB-FY20-21-6 HOW CHRISTIAN TEACHERS PERCEIVE THEIR ENGAGEMENT FACILITATES SPIRITUAL FORMATION WITHIN AT-RISK STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY.

Decision: Exempt - Limited IRB

Your request to add an additional study site, [REDACTED] has been approved. Thank you for submitting documentation of permission from [REDACTED] for our review and documentation.

Thank you for complying with the IRB's requirements for making changes to your approved study. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

We wish you well as you continue with your research.

Sincerely,

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

APPENDIX B
PERMISSION LETTER

March 2021

[Information Redacted]
[Information Redacted]
[Information Redacted]

Dear Christian School Leadership:

As a Doctoral Candidate at John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The title of my research project is **HOW CHRISTIAN TEACHERS PERCEIVE THEIR ENGAGEMENT FACILITATES SPIRITUAL FORMATION WITHIN AT-RISK STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY** and the purpose of my research is to understand the experiences of Christian alternative schoolteachers' perception of their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk students.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at your school and recruiting your administrators and teachers to participate.

Participants will be asked to utilize Survey Monkey. A link will be provided to complete a demographic survey. This survey will not exceed 15 minutes. You will also be asked to participate in a 45 minute audio-taped face-to-face interview. Observations will also be implemented. Photographs of any applicable articles within your classroom will be essential (i.e. Scripture boards). Documents associated to lesson plans, curriculum maps and team meetings will be requested for review. These observations will not exceed 15 minutes. Participants will be able to review retrieved information for clarity of researchers' field note interpretation.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to [REDACTED]@liberty.edu. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Eldridge
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C**TEACHER RECRUITMENT LETTER**

March 2021

[Information Redacted]

[Information Redacted]

[Information Redacted]

Dear Christian School Leader:

As a Doctoral Candidate at John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to understand how Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding behavior management, discipleship, Christian pedagogy, and spirituality facilitates spiritual formation. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Teacher participants must be 18 years of age or older. Teacher participants must have an employment classification of full-time, part-time, retired, volunteer, or student and currently teach within a secondary education Christian alternative school. Teacher participants must also have at least one year of teaching experience. If willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a demographic survey which will not exceed 15 minutes. You will also be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Interviews will be audiotaped for later review. Additionally, you will be asked to provide documents for analysis. Documents associated to lesson plans, curriculum maps, and/or behavior plans will be reviewed and a copy collected during this time. Photographs of any applicable articles within your classroom will be essential (i.e. Scripture boards, Bibles, Christian study charts). The document review will not exceed 15 minutes. For clarity of researchers' field note interpretation, participants will be able to review retrieved information. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please complete the attached screening survey and return it to me by email at [REDACTED]@liberty.

If you are eligible to participate, a consent document will be provided to you one week before the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me by email prior to the scheduled interview or in-person at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Eldridge

Doctoral Candidate

[REDACTED]@liberty.edu

APPENDIX D**ADMINISTRATOR RECRUITMENT LETTER**

March 2021

[Information Redacted]

[Information Redacted]

[Information Redacted]

Dear Christian School Leader:

As a Doctoral Candidate at John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to understand how Christian teachers perceive their engagement regarding behavior management, discipleship, Christian pedagogy, and spirituality facilitates spiritual formation. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Administrator participants must be 18 years of age or older. Administrator participants must currently lead within a secondary education Christian alternative school. Administrator participants must have at least one year of experience in a Christian school leadership position. Within this role the administrator must be employed at this school full-time. A demographic survey will be implemented. Administrators, if willing, will be asked to complete the demographic survey which will not exceed 15 minutes. Administrators will be asked to participate in a 45 minute face-to-face interview. Interviews will be audiotaped for later review. Any applicable team meeting documents will be requested for review. This document analysis process will not exceed 15 minutes. For clarity of researchers' field note interpretations each participant will be able to review retrieved information. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please complete the attached screening survey and return it to me by email at [REDACTED]@liberty.

If you are eligible to participate, a consent document will be provided to you one week before the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me by email prior to the scheduled interview or in-person at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Eldridge

Doctoral Candidate

[REDACTED]@liberty.edu

APPENDIX E
SCREENING SURVEY

Name: _____

Primary Contact: _____

Please answer the following questions as each applies to you.

1. What is your current age?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- Over 55

2. What is your current employment status at this school?

- Employed full-time (40+ hours a week)
- Employed part-time (less than 40 hours a week)
- Retired/Volunteer/Student

3. How long have you been working in your profession?

- This is my first year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years

- More than 20 years

4. Are you currently employed within a Christian alternative school?

- Yes
- No

5. Do you lead/teach within secondary education (high school)?

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX F

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: How Christian Teachers Perceive Their Engagement Facilitates Spiritual Formation Within At-Risk Students: A Case Study

Principal Investigator: Stephanie Eldridge, Doctoral Candidate, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older. Teacher participants must be employed as full-time, part-time, retired, volunteer, or student, teach within secondary education at a Christian alternative school and have at least one year of teaching experience. 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 understand the experiences of Christian alternative schoolteachers' perceptions of their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk students.

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:

1. Participate in a demographic survey. This survey may take up to 15 minutes.
2. Participate in a 45 minute face-to-face interview. This interview will be audio-recorded.
3. Provide documents pertaining to any lesson plans or curriculum maps. This document review may take up to an additional 15 minutes and copies will be collected.
4. Participate in reviewing the researchers' interpretation of interview transcripts for accuracy. This transcript review will not exceed 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include a greater understanding of intentional engagement with students. As a Christian alternative school, it is vital to understand the facilitation of spiritual formation within at-risk students. The teachers' perspective provides a greater understanding of their real-life experiences for the school and the education system.

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. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely on a personal computer and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Electronic data will be stored on a password-locked computer and hard copies will be stored in a key-locked file drawer. This data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and hard copy records will be shredded.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased or shredded. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

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. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting these 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 email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Stephanie Eldridge. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [REDACTED]@liberty.edu. You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Joseph Butler, at [REDACTED]@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 Ste. 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 me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX G

ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: How Christian Teachers Perceive Their Engagement Facilitates Spiritual Formation Within At-Risk Students: A Case Study

Principal Investigator: Stephanie Eldridge, Doctoral Candidate, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older. Administrator participants must be employed full-time and have at least one year of experience in secondary education in a Christian alternative school leadership position. 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 understand the experiences of Christian alternative schoolteachers' perceptions of their engagement to facilitate spiritual formation within at-risk students.

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:

1. Participate in a demographic survey. This survey will not exceed 15 minutes
2. Participate in a 45 minute face-to-face interview. This interview will be audio-recorded
3. Provide documents pertaining to applicable team meetings. This document review may take up to an additional 15 minutes.
4. Participate in reviewing the researchers' interpretation of interview transcripts for accuracy. This transcript review may take up to an additional 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include a greater understanding of intentional engagement with students. As a Christian alternative school, it is vital to understand the facilitation of spiritual formation within at-risk students. The teachers' perspective provides a greater understanding of their real-life experiences for the school and the education system.

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. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely on a personal computer and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Electronic data will be stored on a password-locked computer and hard copies will be stored in a key-locked file drawer. This data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and hard copy records will be shredded.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased or shredded. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

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. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting these 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 email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Stephanie Eldridge. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [REDACTED]@liberty.edu. You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Joseph Butler, at [REDACTED]@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 Ste. 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 me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX H
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Please answer the following questions as each applies to you.

1. What is your current age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55 and over

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

3. What is your ethnicity (Race)?

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian/Pacific Insider
- Other (please specify) _____

4. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- High school degree or equivalent
- Associates degree
- Bachelor's degree

- Master's degree
- Doctorate
- Other (please specify) _____

5. How long have you been working in your profession?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

6. What subject(s) do you currently teach?

- Reading
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social studies
- Religion
- Other (please specify) _____

7. How would you describe the life of an active Christian?

8. Based on your description for answer 7, are you an active Christian?

- Yes - If yes, when did you give your life to Jesus Christ? _____ years ago
- No
- I do not know

9. How often do you attend church?

- Weekly basis
- Monthly basis
- Holidays/Special occasions
- Never

10. How often do you read the Bible?

- Daily basis
- Weekly basis
- Monthly basis
- Yearly basis
- For school/teaching assignments
- Never

11. How often do you pray to God?

- Daily basis
- Weekly basis
- Monthly basis
- Yearly basis
- For school/teaching assignments
- Never

12. Have you obtained any biblical certificates or degrees from a college program that assist in your profession or personal spiritual life? If yes, please elaborate.

APPENDIX I
TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Behavior Management

1. Is there a process utilized that assists you to intentionally engage students concerning their behavior, in a manner that develops a Christ-like character? Please describe the process.

2. On a daily basis, how do your lessons promote positive behavioral growth that impacts faith?

3. a. BIP's are plans employed to understand factors that cause misbehavior and to incorporate a desired positive behavior within students. Do you utilize BIP's? If yes, what strategies are implemented to change students' behavior as it relates to facilitating positive social change?

b. How, if at all, does the utilization of BIP's impact students' progression towards faith?

Discipleship

4. Christians are to be the "salt" and the spokesperson of truth "light" (Matthew 5:15-16). How has your understanding of Jesus Christ assisted in facilitating spiritual formation within your students?

5. Reflecting on your spiritual life from childhood to adulthood, how has your spiritual growth impacted the shaping and molding of your students?

6. How do you define faith? What role has faith ascribed within your life, which in return has facilitated faith within your students? _____

7. How has your commitment to Scripture facilitated the development of a Christian or Biblical worldview in your students?

8. Please describe how you have disciplined your students within the last year.

9. Have you had any specific training that supports your role in Christian education? If yes, beyond teaching, how has this training equipped you to build into the transforming life of your students? Please elaborate. _____

Christian Pedagogy

10. Please describe your current teaching responsibilities as they relate to facilitating spiritual formation within your students. _____

11. Are there any spiritual factors within your students that you consider when preparing course materials?

12. Please share how you organize, plan, and prioritize your work.

13. How do you construct lesson plans that integrate faith into learning?

14. What strategies are utilized to build positive Christ-like behavior within your students?

Spiritual Formation

15. How has your spiritual life as an adult differed from your childhood? Did you have anyone to assist in your spiritual growth process? As you have spiritually grown over the years, how has your growth facilitated in shaping and molding your students? _____

16. Please share and describe your spiritual disciplines and practices. _____

17. Are any of your spiritual disciplines or practices incorporated within the classroom amongst students? If yes, how? _____

18. As you are guiding the transformation of your students, who expectantly in return will become leaders, how do you foster spiritual maturity in your students?

APPENDIX J**ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS****Behavior Management**

1. Is there a process utilized that assist teachers to intentionally engage students concerning their behavior, in a manner that develops a Christ-like character? Please describe the process.

2. How do your teachers' daily lessons promote positive behavioral growth to impact faith within students?

3. Through teachers utilizing BIP's can you describe how these plans have impacted students' progression towards faith?

Discipleship

4. Can you share any experiences when you have witnessed how faith within teachers facilitated faith within students?

5. How have your teachers' commitment to Scripture facilitated the development of a Christian or Biblical worldview within their students? _____

6. Have you encountered teachers incorporating their spiritual disciplines or practices amongst students to facilitate their spiritual formation? If yes, please elaborate.

Christian Pedagogy

7. Within the range of subjects that are taught at this school, how have you observed teachers integrating faith into learning?

Spiritual Formation

8. When hiring teachers, are there any specific considerations vital to facilitating spiritual formation at this school that you base your concluding decisions from?

9. What is your primary aim for the overall spiritual culture or environment of this school?

10. Does the school provide any specific programs, conferences, or training for teachers that supports their role in Christian education? If yes, how has this training equipped them to build into the spiritual formation within their students? Please elaborate.

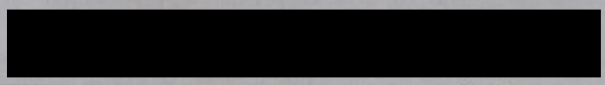
APPENDIX K
OBSERVATION SHEET

Teacher Name:	Date:
Observed By:	Time:
Behavior Management	
Discipleship	
Christian Pedagogy	

Spiritual Formation

APPENDIX L

INDIVIDUAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN



Resident Name: _____ Resident DOB: _____ Case #: _____

INDIVIDUAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN Date: _____

CAN USE PHYSICAL RESTRAINT CANNOT USE PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

Safety Concerns/Warnings: (e.g., medical, psychological, and physical concerns, medications, history of sexual abuse, human trafficking, bullying, trauma history):

Current Issues/Potential Triggers: (e.g., personal, family, social, legal):

Behaviors of Concerns: (e.g., runaway, threats to others, stealing, self injury):

Intervention Strategies (redirection, hurdle help, non-isolation time away from group, identification of CARE principles):

Emergency Contacts, include name and phone numbers (e.g., custodian, juvenile justice, counselor):

_____ Legal Custodian Signature	_____ Resident Signature	_____ Date
_____ Case Manager Signature	_____ Supervisor/Director Signature	_____ Date
_____ Child Care Worker Signature	_____ Child Care Worker Signature	_____ Date
_____ Child Care Worker Signature	_____ Child Care Worker Signature	_____ Date