

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY IN PERCEIVED
EXPERIENCES THAT ENHANCED GOSPEL ZEAL IN
CHRISTIAN EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

A Prospectus Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Arlynn Gail Perley-Huebscher

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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APPROVED BY:

Jeffrey Davis, Ph.D., Dissertation Supervisor

Gary J. Bredfeldt, Ph.D., Second Reader

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate and reveal the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders in ministry. Scholarly studies reflect that contemporary ministry trends affect Christian educational leaders' longevities (Barna, 2020a) but do not address effects on Gospel zeal. The researcher cites Ryle (1880, Chapter One, Para. 2) regarding the Gospel zeal phenomenon, "Zeal in Christianity is a burning desire to please God, to do His will, and to advance His glory in the world in every possible way. It is a desire, which is not natural to men or women. It is a desire which the Spirit puts in the heart of every believer when they are converted to Christ, however, a desire which some believers feel so much more strongly than others that they alone deserve to be called 'zealous' men and women." The theory which guided this study is The ERG theory by Clayton Alderfer (1969) that refers to, "existence, relatedness, and growth" as the Christian educational leader considers the phenomenon of Gospel zeal to fulfill the Great Commission. The results of interviews with nine participants who were currently pastoring for 20 years have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are exemplars in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older, could help Christian educational leaders consider how their perceived experiences enhance Gospel zeal. The researcher sought to reveal how the Christian educational leader transforming to be more Christ-like could better sustain joyful and zealous relationships with God and humankind as life-long disciplers of the Gospel.

Keywords: Christian educational leaders, Gospel zeal phenomenon, perceived experiences, contemporary ministry trends

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Christ Jesus, our only Redemptive Savior, the Alpha and Omega, Eternal True God, the Creator and Foundation of all who we are; and Howard and Dorothy Perley, who set a concrete Christian biblical foundation for their daughter.

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List of Abbreviations

Alderfer's Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG) Theory

Image of God (*Imago Dei*)

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Liberty University Online (LUO)

Research Questions (RQ)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

Few studies mention Christian educational leaders' fluctuating Gospel zeal during their lifelong ministries. Previous studies concentrate more on Christian educators' longevities than experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal (Vaters, 2013). The importance of maintaining Gospel zeal is recorded biblically in Romans 12:11-13, as God speaks to His Christian educational leaders, "Never lag in zeal and earnest endeavor; be aglow and burning with the Spirit, serving the Lord. Rejoice and exult in hope; be steadfast and patient in suffering and tribulation; be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of God's people [sharing in the necessities of the saints]; pursue the practice of hospitality." (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

This study's significance was to investigate the experiences of Christian educational leaders to identify what enhances Gospel zeal for the purposive participants. In this phenomenological study, the researcher listened to nine Christian leaders in pre-arranged and pre-determined, and safe settings about their experiences with the Gospel zeal phenomenon. The researcher investigated and identified the experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal and the purposive population's call to ministry.

Researchers in the Christian educational leadership field have not frequently studied literature related to the Gospel zeal phenomenon. Some scholars like Tietjen (2020) describe religious zeal as "angry and violent." The author concludes, "These considerations indicate that we only can understand emotional and passionate religious zeal under mutual reference to each other. They are not necessarily two distinct phenomena; they can also be understood as two dimensions of one and the same phenomenon" (p. 88). The researcher defines Gospel zeal as a passion for preaching the Gospel, not a violent or angry gesture.

The researcher defines a Christian educational leader as a person in any Christian educational, leadership, or ministry calling who has preached the Gospel in any capacity. For example, the appointment to share the Gospel could come from a servant Methodist Pastor with 60 years of experience or a Gospel street music ministry leader with 20 years of experience. Administrator, educator, leader, and minister in these contexts are not merely titles but callings to witness the Christian Gospel, as Christian educational leaders exhibit gifts of the Spirit and share the message of Jesus as Messiah in a grocery store or from an international online pulpit. These leaders believe in the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible.

Thomas (2018) cites Howell (2003) to emphasize how all Christians are responsible as leaders to continue preaching the Gospel with zeal:

Biblical leadership is taking the initiative to influence people to grow in holiness and to passionately promote the extension of God's kingdom in the world. Blending Edwards and Howell Jr., we may conclude that a leader's actions combined with an agenda to promote God's kingdom by influencing others marks successful and successive Christian leadership. The indispensable mark of Christian leadership is the combined effort of action and agenda purposing to intentionally influence others. This is the model that Jesus initiated in Mark 3:13-19.

DeLange (2020) considers "the permanence of the call of God on the pastor's life" (p. 14). This researcher is passionate about exploring the perceived experiences that most enhanced Gospel zeal and inquired how these experiences directly affected the Gospel zeal phenomenon. Since a growing number of scholars are debating the effects of Gospel zeal in online community education (Howe, 2010; Lowe, S.E. & Lowe, M.E., 2018; Farmer, 2020), the researcher aimed to identify what experiences the purposive participants shared. This research could assist Christian leaders coming from varied backgrounds to determine if they want to enhance their zeal and continue sharing the Gospel for a lifetime.

Background to the Problem

Theological Literature

Lack of literature related to the Gospel zeal phenomenon in Christian educational leadership could affect future generations. In Christian theology, Christian educational leaders are God-given role models in every aspect of Christian education, leadership, and ministry. Each Christian leader is created in the *Imago Dei*. However, few scholars are exploring Gospel zeal as the time of the anti-Christ is sooner than later. Psalm 37:5 suggests, “Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him also, and He will do it.” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) Biblically, Gospel zeal is the phenomenon that drives the Christian leader not to give up preaching the message of Jesus as Messiah. The theological background of Gospel zeal is the basis for this study because the Gospel message changes eternity for followers, leaders, and those they influence. This study helps determine what experiences Christian leaders have that parallel the biblical zeal of the first disciples of Christ Jesus, who preached the Gospel unto physical death. Because the researcher’s focus is on the power of the Gospel, the theological support that deems her thesis necessary is Scripturally based. Jude 21:21 instructs, “Guard and keep yourselves in the love of God; expect and patiently wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah)—[which will bring you] unto life eternal.” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Scholars like Peeler (2015) support, “In soteriological economy, the Gospel indeed is the power of God for salvation.” Peeler quotes Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation [from His wrath and punishment] to everyone who believes [in Christ as Savior], to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). He continues, “It works for all who hear. At times it saves, at times it reconciles, at times it plants a seed” (p. 204). This study’s problem background was not a question about a commitment to serve but to identify experiences that affect Christian educational leaders from holding fast to their initial

confidence to remain Gospel-focused in ministry. The researcher listened attentively to nine participants in private interviews to examine their perceived experiences with the Gospel zeal phenomenon and contemporary ministry trends, if any, that enhance their passion for preaching the Gospel for a lifetime. In Romans 12:10-13, the Scriptures implore the Christian educational leader in every circle not to be distracted but to instead remain confident and enthusiastic and enduring in fulfilling the Great Commission:

Be devoted to one another with [authentic] brotherly affection [as members of one family], give preference to one another in honor; never lagging in diligence; aglow in the Spirit, enthusiastically serving the Lord; constantly rejoicing in hope [because of our confidence in Christ], steadfast and patient in distress, devoted to prayer [continually seeking wisdom, guidance, and strength], contributing to the needs of God's people, pursuing [the practice of] hospitality. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

The Geneva Bible Commentary (2019) clarifies the Apostle Paul's heart desire of every zealous Christian leader, no matter his or her earthly title:

He [Paul] reckons up different virtues together with their effects, that is, hope, patience in tribulation, evenness of mind, continuance in prayer, liberality towards the saints, hospitality, moderation of mind even in helping our enemies, feeling the same as others in their adversity as well as their prosperity, modesty, endeavoring to maintain honest agreement as much as we are able with all men, which cannot be extinguished by any man injuring us (Biblehub, 2019).

Emotional, practical, mental, moral, and spiritual aspects of participant experiences regarding Gospel zeal were Bible-based. Nevertheless, how does one maintain Gospel zeal in the 21st century? Jesus reminds His disciples in John 2:16-17, "To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!' His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'" (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) Did the stress of church finance enhance Gospel zeal in the clergy? Was non-biblical zeal affecting Gospel zeal? What was the Christian leader focusing on when branching into cell groups and multi-congregational pastoring? DeLange (2020) reports that "The expression 'calling' has many

definitions from ‘falling on the side of being divinely inspired’ or ‘not involving God at all’ (Rawat, 2011, p. 2).” In this study, “calling” is defined as “falling on the side of being divinely inspired.” The researcher examined how ministry changes enhanced the phenomenon of Gospel zeal as churches were bound forward into technological-biblical ages and churches moved to online virtual platforms (Barna, 2021). The researcher considered each Christian educational leader's transformational experiences and the impact he or she had on others who intended to share the Gospel, regardless of tribulations and circumstances.

Scholars like Richards and Bredfeldt (1998) write that:

The implementation stage of [Bible] study becomes highly individual and concrete. It is important that as readers of the Bible, we do not merely approach the Word of God as information only to learn, but as life-changing truth meant to transform us. (p. 72).

Did an issue exist around the Christian leader's perception about his or her biblical purpose, personal growth, and perception? Or how should a place of worship and learning look in the 21st Century? Did self-image with church peers become an experience that enhanced a Christian leader's Gospel zeal in ministry? In John 12:43, Jesus relays, “For they loved the approval of men more than the approval of God.” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) Which non-biblical ministry trends led the Christian leader away from or closer to enhancing Gospel zeal? The researcher executed the research in the participants' best interests as defined and accepted by the IRB. The researcher provided a study to enhance awareness of the importance of Gospel zeal during tribulation and joy. Maxson (2018) imparts that one of the significant challenges of the contemporary media environment is discovering valuable quality internet-Gospel resources void of propaganda. The researcher questioned what experiences a Christian leader recognized that enhanced his or her zeal to fulfill the Great Commission amid societal and cultural changes. Peter 2:5 states, “You [believers], like living stones, are being built up into a spiritual house for a

holy and dedicated priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices [that are] acceptable and pleasing to God through Jesus Christ.” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Kleyn (2018) reflects:

But God never intended the word of the Scriptures just to stay on paper. God never intended that they would just be read personally. God intended that His Word would be preached, that there would be men who would dig into the Scriptures. Because of their depth, the Scriptures must be opened up and explained. God intends His Word to be preached and explained. And it is the preaching of the Word that is powerful. That is what Paul recognizes when he says of preaching in Romans 1: ‘I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome, for It is the power of God unto salvation.’ He wanted to preach the Word in Rome. He could have sent them Bibles. But he wanted to preach because that is the power of God unto salvation.

As the Word of God is a crucial living document, so were the real-life experiences of the transforming Christian educational leader that enhanced their Gospel zeal to help fulfill the Great Commission. The perceived experiences of the Christian leader could determine his or her Gospel zeal. 1 Kings 19:14, “He said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts (armies) because the sons of Israel have abandoned (broken) Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I, only I, am left, and they seek to take away my life.” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) Elijah did not realize God had others in line to fulfill the Great Commission.

Historical Literature

Addressing Gospel zeal is of historical value for future generations to consider how their predecessors maintained Gospel zeal for over 2000-years. The church has been under attack since the 1st Century but sustained throughout. Barna (2021) reports, “Six in ten church Christians (62%) hope that even post-COVID-19, churches will keep using digital means of gathering people together. Nearly two-thirds of church Christians (64%) say they’re open to inviting someone to attend an in-person service. In contrast, four in 10 (40%) say they’re open to

inviting someone to join them for an online church service.” Some Christians sustained Gospel zeal during a pandemic, while others fell away. The phenomenon of Gospel zeal by which the Power of Grace fills each born-again Christian and strengthens him or her to help fulfill the Great Commission was not measured by degrees. Instead, in this study, the researcher committed to investigating and identifying the perceived experiences Christian leaders maintained and revealed about their Gospel zeal throughout a lifetime ministry of joy and adversity.

Ryle (1887) professes Christian zeal and the daily duties, experiences, dangers, and privileges of professing Christians (VIII). McBirnie (2004) writes of the original twelve apostles whose Gospel zeal sent them to martyrdom. He includes “other notable apostles” whose Gospel zeal led them to murderous deaths. What motivated Christian leaders to push forward when they stumble over a stone that could affect their zeal was an experience the researcher covered in this study. The history of King Saul 1 Samuel 15:22 documents the backlash of a weak motive, “Samuel said [to Saul] ‘Has the Lord as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obedience to the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed [is better] than the fat of rams.’” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) Saul’s focus was on his offering rather than giving credit to the Creator of all life.

Historically, many Christian educational leaders leave their ministries, as they lack a solution about “what is wrong with ‘my’ ministry?” (Barna, 2017).” The passion for sharing the Gospel is historically the only answer to saving the church's life. Nevertheless, in the 21st Century, the word “burnout” is a household word for the overwhelming of the individual, and there is much literature about burnout and the toll it takes on believers (Hughes K. & Hughes B., 1987; Foyle, 2001; Brain, 2004; Eswine, 2012; Tripp, 2012; & Ash, 2017). Encouragingly, Maxson (2018) writes about some Christian leaders who possess Gospel zeal and use

contemporary ministry methods. He writes, “The enthusiasm with which these (Christian) organizations embrace spreading the Gospel throughout generations using new skill sets among Christian evangelicals reflects a desire to run toward instead of away from change.” The researcher investigated and identified the experiences by which Gospel zeal was enhanced among the valuable participants. They devoted their lives to sharing the Gospel as ministry seasons changed. Historically, Gospel zeal phenomena occurred at home alone, in the community, via the internet, and through international communication. The researcher did not present a pro or con contemporary ministry trend opinion. Instead, the data reflected what perceived experiences enhanced the research participants' Gospel zeal phenomenon and which biblical, historical, and sociological backgrounds pertained to the effect on Gospel zeal during their years of varying growth. Armstrong's (2009) collection of ten church figures helps the researcher to understand the Christian educational leader's call from God to preach and teach the Gospel under all circumstances.

Armstrong's (2009) ten Christian leaders' stories afford the reader experiences in which God can transform all humankind, no matter in what sin they fall, which some Christians may fail to remember. Interpreting human flaws as catalysts to Salvation allows the Christian leader to consider judging less and trusting God more, to open the hearts and minds of Christian students and possible converts to Christianity. This researcher considered if learning about the Gospel zeal of other Christian educational leaders establishes experiences about enhancing Gospel zeal in the purposive population. Like Armstrong, the researcher focused more on a passion for preaching the Gospel and less on human frailties. This study focused on experiences leading to attitudes that enhanced Gospel zeal. Armstrong's chapter on Charles Simeon, entitled “Overcoming Wounds and Shaping Leaders” (pp. 130-147), mainly indicates the authentic

struggles and satanic attacks the Christian educational leader can expect in his or her lifetime ministry.

Is there a societal pull on the Christian leader to stray? Kleyn (2018) broadcasts to Christians:

Perhaps you say, ‘Well, I know I’m a Christian. I know the Bible. I know that God loves me, and I think that that is enough.’ But it is not enough. That is the lie of the devil. God has appointed the preaching as the way that Christ will speak to your soul to save you. You need the preaching of the Gospel. We all do. This is not just a word for those who do not go to church where there is good preaching. This is a word for everyone.

McManners (1990) writes of a traditional community of disciples who did not see Jesus’ crucifixion as the end, “As an act of God, Easter is not accessible to the method of historical investigation. Nevertheless, the historian knows that something important occurred to transform the disciples from a huddle of frightened men into bold missionaries risking their lives for their faith” (p. 22). These Christian leaders set an example as role models with zeal for the Gospel despite tribulation and unmeasurable joy in the resurrection of Christ Jesus.

Abspoel (2017) poses that within Christian culture:

Various questions present themselves. Are traditional forms of life only worthwhile because they provide raw materials or building blocks for Christian ways of life? How is the accommodation of Christianity to the ‘spirit’ of a culture to be prevented from leading to a relativization [sameness] to the radical newness that is presented to humanity in the Good News according to faith? Can we indicate how far a responsible adjustment can go, and at what point we end up with a syncretism [merging of religion] that violates Christian principles? (p. 473)

Abspoel questions if society and contemporary ministry trends will skew the Gospel message and sway the Christian call of helping fulfill the Great Commission.

Sociological Literature

Sociology is the study of human society, and Jesus came to earth to free human society from sin. The researcher's focus included Christian educational leaders' motives and

contemporary ministry methods that enhanced the Gospel zeal phenomenon, which intends to introduce Jesus' intention to save. She referenced two dissertations regarding motivation and longevity in educators. These two aspects of ministry have massive effects on the society of Christian educational leaders and those who follow their lead. Hurst's (2006) dissertation suggests a literature gap that proposes a further examination of Christian educational leadership to confirm or reveal specific insights and implications already in his study regarding longevity. The researcher extended that gap in the literature to examine the Gospel zeal phenomenon.

Similarly, in her transcendental phenomenological dissertation, Achuff (2018) describes experiences influencing Christian teachers' motivation to maintain Christian schools' longevity in the United States' Southeast region. Nevertheless, again, she shares a gap in her study into perceived experiences and a timeframe that closely parallels the participants of 20 plus years of experience in Christian educational ministry. However, this researcher recognized that each Christian educational leader as unique and perceived experiences disclosed sensitive issues other than longevity, such as societal pressures and trauma "within a sustained calling" (Thompson & Miller-Perrin, 2003). Therefore, the confidentiality of the participants was a significant component of this study. The researcher fulfilled her intention to fill the suggested gaps in Hurst and Acuff's studies relating to longevity versus the Gospel zeal phenomenon. She maintained the participants' confidentiality and empowered them to decide about their participation, consent, setting, and withdrawal from or extension of the interview. The researcher examined data collection coding for a detailed societal description of the spiritual impact, calling, love of teaching and preaching, and interaction and school support. She reviewed the experiences of the Gospel zeal phenomenon comparatively to consider themes and patterns. As a Christian leader is on a lifetime mission, he or she affects society each day, and each participant's safety was

paramount during this study. Some scholars express that the Gospel zeal phenomenon is dying in Christian ministry.

Nouwen (1989) challenges the Christian leader's position in the realm of daily Christian living:

Theological thinking, which is thinking with the mind of Christ, is hard to find in the practice of the ministry. Without solid theological reflection, future leaders will be little more than pseudo-psychologists, pseudo sociologists, and pseudo-social workers. However, this has little to do with Christian leadership because the Christian leader thinks, speaks, and acts in the Name of Jesus, who came to free humanity from the power of death and open the way to eternal life (p. 86).

The researcher includes this passage to provide the reader with an example of how one pastor perceives a sociological influence into the pure Gospel message and experiences influences that enhanced the Christian leader's Gospel zeal phenomenon. Abspoel (2017) concludes concerning the maintenance of traditional zeal to preach the Gospel, "But this promise is, like anything having to do with tradition, threatened in today's world" (p. 489). This study aimed to investigate and identify the Christian educational leaders' experiences that enhanced their Gospel zeal.

Theoretical Literature

Having reviewed the theological, historical, and sociological basis for Gospel zeal in ministry, it was necessary to look specifically at what was meant by Gospel zeal related to Christian educational leaders' experiences. A biblical theory explains that all humankind is created in God's Image (*Imago Dei*) and grows to become more Christlike. Diaz (2013) writes that "Leadership is not the end-all purpose of his ministry." He reflects on five leadership roles in the Bible and finds the standard variable as self-awareness in the *Imago Dei*. Ochoa's (2017) study leans on Alderfer's ERG theory, "Supporting claims that the respondents are social beings who are happy people, the study showed that ERG needs fulfillment is associated with both

subjective and objective life satisfaction: existence, relatedness, and growth” (p. 49). Thus, each Christian leader is in a state of Christian growth related to his or her transformation in the *Imago Dei* and could maintain Gospel zeal based on that focus. Alderfer’s theory suggests that knowing oneself enhances his or her behavior to persevere.

For a Christian leader, patient endurance is recognized as a biblical approach to growth. On their website, Your Coach website (2021) describes Alderfer’s theory, “The essential components of his survival theory are: Existence Needs: All material and physiological desires (e.g., food, water, air, clothing, safety, physical love, and affection), Relatedness Needs: Encompass social and external esteem; relationships with significant others like family, friends, co-workers, and employers; and growth needs: Internal esteem and self-actualization” (p. 1). The Christian leader is a leader and provider of the Gospel and a disciplined- discipler in lifetime ministry. In John 14:15, Jesus imparts to his disciples that He knows their basic needs of existence, relatedness, and growth and that He “will send the Holy Spirit as comforter, advocate, and best friend until His return.” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) Other scholars like Hallez and Ball (2021) suggest that:

Even though the priority of these needs differ from person to person, Alderfer's ERG theory prioritizes in terms of the categories' concreteness. Existence needs are the most concrete and most straightforward to verify, and growth needs are minor concrete in that their specific objectives depend on each person's uniqueness (p. 1).

Maslow (1961) and Alderfer (1969) suggest that the above components drive a leader to make behavioral decisions toward an ideal self. In the purposive population, maintaining Gospel zeal was a consideration to reach a Christ-like and thereby perfect self. Ryle (1887) supports, “Furthermore if zeal is true, it will be a zeal about things according to God’s mind and sanctioned by plain examples in God’s Word” (VIII, p. 6). Enhancing Gospel zeal, therefore, is a biblical principle. Biblical leadership experiences include self-doubt, service to God and others,

personal sacrifices, suffering in leadership, and complete submission to God's will. The researcher considered each Christian leader's primary experiences and perceptions of experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal. Diaz's (2013) theory explains that each Christian leader is a work in progress and must not succumb to discouragement. Hurst theorizes that "A crisis of leadership and zeal is prevalent among contemporary American pastors" (p. 78). Peterson (1987) states that "The pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers" (p. 78), inferring that Gospel zeal ebbs when the business of the church becomes the focus instead of the Gospel.

Witham (2005) expresses that "clergy faces mounting challenges of compromise in non-negotiable Christian facts, where declining prestige deflates the brightest young Americans to the ministry." However, the researcher considered a Christ Jesus-esteem rather than self-esteem as an experience that enhanced Gospel zeal. This study filled a literature gap about early detection of experiences in an atmosphere of contemporary ministry trends that almost pressure pastors from their faith-based stance (Rainer, 2015) or enhanced Gospel zeal. The researcher identified experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in leaders who underwent joy and tribulation while withstanding their calling to fulfill the Great Commission.

Witham (2005) also urges that Christian churches dramatically adapt to new changes and address the clergy crisis. Therefore, to pinpoint experiences that constituted a possible clergy crisis, the researcher focused on Christian leaders' perceived experiences with Gospel zeal and possible attitudes that changed after 20 years of ministry. Dinibutun (2012) reports, "Like Maslow, Alderfer suggests that people progress through the hierarchy from existence needs to relatedness needs, to growth needs, as the lower-level needs become satisfied. However, Alderfer suggests these needs are more a continuum than hierarchical levels" (p. 26). Because the Christian journey is one of transformation, Ash (2017) theorizes about his experience of

overwhelming responsibilities and defeats when deciding about a lifetime of Christian Gospel ministry. The researcher identified what experiences each participant related with that led to possible “burnout” as a symptom of lost Gospel zeal. Ash gives examples of what he refers to as "burnout" and does not recoil from his experience that one can maintain a zeal for the Gospel but be overcome by physical, mental, and even emotional exhaustion if he or she does not succumb to the need to rest.

The researcher found it significant that an outwardly afflictive condition might not enhance Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders. Ash (2017) stresses that the best tactic of a Christian leader to avoid burnout is to remind himself or herself that “we need sleep and God does not” (p. 47) and to succumb to a renewing surrender to the care of Christ Jesus. The researcher investigated various leadership transformation experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal and allowed the interviewees to tell their real-life stories. In this phenomenological research approach, interviews revealed answers to fill the existing research gap.

Statement of the Problem

The researcher's problem was the literature gap regarding the enhancement of Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders devoted to sharing the Gospel through their commitment to Christian education and ministry. This study's need stemmed from a gap in research that did not address the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders as purposive participants with 20 plus years of experience (Achuff, 2018).

Houtman and Aupers (2007) report:

Post-Christian spirituality is socially constructed because people are socialized into a spiritual discourse about the self (e.g., Hammer 2001; Heelas 2006). We consider this another key issue for future research, especially because the overly confident claims about post-Christian spirituality as ‘fully privatized’ and ‘purely individualistic’ contrast strikingly with the virtual absence of empirical studies into the social construction of self-spirituality (p. 317).

Previous studies measure Christian educational leaders' success by longevities of teaching and ministering, devoid of mention of Gospel zeal (Achuff, 2018; DeLange, 2021). This qualitative phenomenological study filled the literature gap by identifying perceived Gospel zeal experiences through a questionnaire and virtual interviews. Through the results of this study, the researcher hoped to help future Christian educational leaders sustain Gospel zeal in their calling to fulfill the Great Commission. Beckman (2020) quotes Stedman (1995), “There’s no question that one of the most destructive forces in the church today is a conflict between Christians. Division among brothers and sisters has destroyed lives and brought the Gospel of Jesus Christ into disrepute” (p. 89). Brown (2012) shares in his thesis that:

God’s design for His children, for all ages, has remained fixed – they are to reflect the glories of the eternal creator passionately. God’s zeal for His own glory is unmistakable (Habakkuk 2:14). We were created for His glory (Isaiah 43:7; Ephesians 1:4-6), and we are instructed to do all things for His glory (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Peter 2:12,4:11) (p. 95).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate and reveal the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders in ministry. The researcher defined Gospel zeal by Ryle (1880, Chapter One, Para. 2):

Zeal in Christianity is a burning desire to please God, to do His will, and to advance His glory in the world in every possible way. It is a desire, which is not natural to men or women. It is a desire which the Spirit puts in the heart of every believer when they are converted to Christ, however, a desire which some believers feel so much more strongly than others that they alone deserve to be called ‘zealous’ men and women (Chapter One).

The theory guiding this study was that each Christian educational leader is unique, and his or her experiences regarding Gospel zeal are valuable. Furthermore, these experiences can impact others who willingly give their lives to Christ Jesus and desire to maintain a zeal to share the Gospel message until the Lord returns to earth for His chosen people.

Research Questions

The researcher used studies that suggest perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal for the qualitative questionnaire and open-ended interview questions.

The following research questions guided this study at different research intervals:

RQ1. What lived experiences do Christian leaders believe enhanced their Gospel zeal?

RQ2. What do Christian leaders perceive as major challenges to maintaining Gospel zeal?

RQ3. What do Christian leaders perceive as the best way to enhance Gospel zeal in new believers?

For this phenomenological study, the rationale for these questions was to delve into the real-life experiences and reveal the perceived experiences that each Christian leader believed enhanced their Gospel zeal, thereby enhancing the research with an accurate result. In addition, the rationale included identifying the experiences to equip and empower Christian educational leaders for a lifetime of ministry, sustaining Gospel zeal and wholeness, and aiding to fulfill the Great Commission.

Assumptions and Delimitations

Assumptions and delimitations structured the research providing a base from which to start. Delimitations explain the research boundaries. The researcher included assumptions and delimitations to understand the research framework better. By establishing a framework for a phenomenological approach, the researcher avoided outliers that did not pertain to the problem and omitted confounding questions that would have distracted the study's purpose and could have bewildered the participants and readers of the finished research study (Bredfeldt, 2018-2019). Assumptions and delimitations were meant to maintain a clear perception of the researcher's willingness to create an unbiased as possible research study that did not become a

platform for a wide-ranged opinion. Instead, she displayed a method of identifying experiences that enhanced the Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders from their own words.

Research Assumptions

Assumptions are what one takes for granted relative to the study (Roberts, p. 111). The participants answered all interview questions openly, honestly, and accurately reflected their professional opinions. The researcher assumed that a Christian educational leader is interested in maintaining Gospel zeal to help fulfill the Great Commission. 3 John 1-4 explains, “I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my [spiritual] children are living [their lives] in the truth.” (*Amplified Version, 1954*) As a Christian who has received redemptive salvation through Christ Jesus, an assumption is that the Christian leader is led by the Holy Spirit to share the Gospel and to influence others with a Christian worldview. The researcher assumed that Christian leaders yearn to be filled with the Holy Spirit with excessive zeal for service in God’s perfect will for their lives. As Ash (2017) concludes in his book *Zeal Without Burnout*, “I have assumed that those reading this are, by grace, filled with zeal and generally hard-working” (p. 109). The researcher assumed that to grow to be more Christ-like as a Christian leader, one purposely embraces a life of abundant joy, inevitable trials, and tribulation, which opens doors for the manifestation of God's ultimate healing power to testify of the Kingdom of God to the world. Finally, the researcher assumed that the interview participants would provide unique and un-urged answers to questions that would add to the study.

Delimitations of the Research Design

Editage Insights (2019) defines delimitations of research design as “The characteristics that limit the scope and describe the boundaries of the study, such as the sample size, geographical location or setting in which the study takes place, and population traits” (p. 1).

This research included the characteristics that limited the scope and described the study's boundaries, such as the sample size, the profession, the age, belief in and zeal to preach the Gospel, and the exemplary character of the participants. There was no geographical limitation to this study. However, the researcher delimited all Christian educational leaders who are currently pastoring for 20 years, have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are exemplars in ministry, and are over 60 years of age. This study represented a smaller number of purposive participants who had experienced the Gospel zeal phenomenon and dedicated their lives to fulfilling the Great Commission. The researcher delimited the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in random and specified participant studies (Hunsinger and Barth, 2000). Thus, the researcher did not analyze data about the longevity of a ministry, but instead the data produced by answers to open-ended interview questions that identified the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders.

Definition of Terms

Christian: One who believes in the non-negotiable birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus, and his status of Lord and Savior of whosoever will believe. Romans 10:11-13 explains what a Christian is, “ For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him [whoever adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Him] will not be disappointed [in his expectations]. For there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile; for the same Lord is Lord over all [of us], and [He is] abounding in riches (blessings) for all who call on Him [in faith and prayer].’ For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord [in prayer] will be saved.’” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Christian Educational Leaders [As defined by the Apostle Paul]: 1 Peter 5:1-3, “Therefore, I strongly urge the elders among you [pastors, spiritual leaders of the church], as a fellow elder and as an eyewitness [called to testify] of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory that is to be revealed. Shepherd *and* guide *and* protect the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not [motivated] for shameful gain, but with wholehearted enthusiasm; not lording it over those assigned to your care [do not be arrogant or overbearing], but be examples [of Christian living] to the flock [set a pattern of integrity for your congregation]” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*).

Fulfilling the Great Commission: Sharing the Gospel of Christ Jesus to the ends of the world until He returns for His church on earth. Mark 15:16 “And He [Jesus] said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation.’” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Gospel [Biblical of Christ Jesus]: Gospel identifies Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel, as the Son of God and God the Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, whose incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension fulfilled the Father’s saving will. His death for sins and his resurrection from the dead were promised beforehand by the prophets and attested by eyewitnesses. In God’s own time and in God’s way, Jesus Christ shall return as glorious Lord and Judge of all (1 Thess. 4:13-18; Matt. 25:31-32). He is now giving the Holy Spirit from the Father to all those who are genuinely his. Thus, the three Persons of the Trinity combine in the work of saving sinners (Sproul, n.d.).”

Gospel Zeal: The researcher refers to Ryle’s (1880, Chapter One, Para. 2) definition of “religious zeal” in her research: “A zealous man in religion is pre-eminently a man of one thing. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, whole-hearted, fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing, he cares, for one thing, he lives, for one thing, he is swallowed up in one” (Chapter One).

Christ Jesus Esteem: Value found in Christ Jesus rather than the value found in the self. “A person who has low self-esteem is going to be depressed, but how does this square with God’s Word, which says to deny oneself in order for God to use us? The answer lies in Christ-esteem, not self-esteem (Womack, n.d.).”

Significance of the Study

This study's significance was to identify the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal for the purposive participants who are Christian educational leaders who are currently pastoring for 20 years have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are exemplars in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older. The aim was to identify perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal by examining real-life experiences in intended lifelong ministry. In this phenomenological study, the researcher gleaned data from purposive participants in a virtual interview setting – they answered and elaborated on the researcher’s questions. Barna (2013) reported that Christian educational leaders focus on leadership numbers and undefined leadership qualities, not on Gospel zeal in a ministry dedicated to sharing the message of Jesus as Messiah. Thus,

the researcher reached the core of enhancing a leader's Gospel's zeal in the purposive population. Such data will assist present and future leaders in identifying experiences that enhanced a passion for focusing on the Gospel message. Barna Group (2013) reports that:

According to a survey of Christian adults conducted by the Barna Group, more than half of Christians in this country identify themselves as leaders (58%). However, more than eight in 10 (82%) of the same survey participants indicated that they believe the United States faces a leadership crisis because there are not enough leaders. What is more, the leadership qualities participants identified in themselves do not line up with the leadership qualities they expect in others.

As world leadership undergoes fast change and the substantial Gospel message risks becoming lost in metamorphosing societal philosophies, the necessity to reveal what perceived experiences enhanced Gospel zeal is valuable (Kendall, 2018). This study considered contemporary ministry trends that could create Christian educational leaders' experiences and enhance their Gospel zeal. This study's significance revealed which experiences most enhanced the Gospel zeal phenomenon as the church transitions. Erikson (1959) presents that Christian growth contains a fundamental transformation and development plan in his growth model. He contends that Christian educational leaders develop and transform through a crisis in a changing environment and maintain a correct perception of Christ Jesus during inner and outer dangers of radical change. This study fills the literature gap that identifies what perceived experiences enhanced a Christian leader's Gospel zeal. Moreover, identifying such experiences helps leaders prepare for any attacks on their perseverance to fulfill their calling to help fulfill the Great Commission. Marcy (2018) reports his study's findings of definitions for "distraction." Twenty-three of his fifty respondents defined distraction within the same framework:

As an interruption that causes one to lose focus or divert attention from the task at hand. P1 simply demarcated distraction as 'not paying attention' while P13 described it as 'Anything that blocks your focus.' The word focus was expressed repeatedly. P19 termed distraction as something 'to stop me from focusing on the Lord and the job for him,' and P20 noted distraction involves 'not being able to focus on service.' Similarly, P21

explained distraction as ‘Something that keeps me from my complete focus;’ P30 likewise described it as ‘Something to take away from the focus that you have in mind,’ and P4 labeled distraction as ‘Something or anything that takes you out of focus.’ Loss of focus was outlined by P5, as well: ‘Distraction is anything to differ your focus to something not as important to your main goal. Anything that makes you lose control of yourself or your focus is a distraction (p. 68).’

Etuk (1985) describes leadership in Christian missions and discusses a stance about not compromising the Gospel message to appease cultural diversity:

First, let the Gospel call go forth in even clearer and louder tones. To equivocate or seek compromise is to betray again the Lord of the church. There will always be liberal and free-thinking theologians. There will always be Christians who sell their birthright to the evil one under the guise of reviving culture. What we need in a situation of confrontation with culture, satanic devices and powers, mysteries, and oppositions is not less but more Gospel, more proclamation of the power of Jesus to save (p. 221).

Revelation 21:14 informs about the importance of the original Gospel message and the apostles who carried it with zeal, “And the wall of the city had twelve foundation [stones], and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Summary of the Design

The researcher used a phenomenological design to answer the research questions and investigated the phenomenon of Gospel zeal within the purposive participants’ real-life experiences. This study included a core phenomenological design to conduct interviews and descriptive instrumentation within an interview framework. She used a questionnaire and open-ended interview questions. This research design was appropriate because it revealed the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders who have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are exemplars in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older and 20 years of ministry experience. The role of the researcher was that of an observer who collected, secured and analyzed data. The researcher used a qualitative Delphi Method to narrow the

consensus from a panel of experts to develop an in-depth interview questionnaire with open-ended questions for six to twelve participants (Bredfeldt, 2018-2019), which linked to the research questions. The researcher received willing responses from start to finish from ten experts invited to participate in the Delphi Method, to re-create the interview questions, which created a consensus protocol questionnaire rather than risking the interviewer's bias or opinion, referred by a Liberty University Christian Educational Leader expert. Avella (2016) explains, "By using a Delphi Method within a qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher can limit any bias she could have by using an expert panel to create a questionnaire" (p. 307). He cites Yousuf (2007), "The first characteristic critical to the execution of the Delphi design is participant anonymity" (p. 309). This phenomenological study identified and examined what perceived experiences enhanced Gospel zeal for Christian educational leaders through words, dialogue, and unspoken gestures, including pauses.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review aimed to provide a theological foundation on which the researcher based the study, created a theoretical framework for the research, proved a context for her study by exploring literature relevant to the research problem, and demonstrated the importance of the literature gap of perceived experiences that enhanced the Gospel zeal phenomenon in Christian educational leadership.

Theological Framework for the Study

This theological framework acted as an introduction to the biblical references and religious scholarship that addressed Gospel zeal and possible experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in the life of each Christian Educational Leader (Christian leader) with 20 plus years or more of experience. Because the biblical foundation is the lifeline for any Christian in any capacity of servitude, this paper is not large enough to hold the power of God's Word. However, the content will hopefully inspire Christian educational leaders to look to the Word of God to identify what perceived experiences help feed and sustain their zeal for the Gospel that he or she can examine for his or her lifetime ministry.

Biblical Zeal Definition

The expression "zeal" in the Bible has various connotations. In this study, the word "zeal" illustrates the utmost passion for sharing the Gospel message of salvation in Christ Jesus, despite experiences altering that passion. Thayer's Online Greek Lexicon (1889) and Strong's Online New Testament Concordance (2011) defines Zeal as:

G2205 ζήλος *zēlos*, Zeal, envying, indignation, envy, fervent mind, jealousy, emulation; ardor in embracing, pursuing, defending anything: 2 Corinthians 12:11; 2 Corinthians 9:2; κατά ζήλος, as respects zeal (in maintaining religion), Philippians 3:6; with the genitive of the object, Zeal on behalf of, for a person or thing, John 2:17 from Psalm

68:10 (); Romans 10:2 (1 Macc. 2:58; Sophocles O. C. 943); ὑπέρ τίνος, genitive of person, 2 Corinthians 7:7; Colossians 4:13 Rec. with the subject. Genitive ζήλω Θεοῦ, with a jealousy such as God, has, hence, most pure, and solicitous for their salvation, 2 Corinthians 11:2; the fierceness of indignation, punitive Zeal, πυρός (of penal fire, which is personified (see πῦρ, at the end) (Studybible.info/Strong's/G2205, n.p.).

Strong defines the passion that zeal reflects on behalf of the Gospel, with the Holy Spirit as a fire that burns to bring salvation in Christ Jesus to humankind. Smiles (2002) expounds on connotations of biblical zeal as both passionate and defensive:

In several publications, from 1987 to 1998, James D. G. Dunn has pointed to ‘the classic examples’ of zeal as important background for understanding Paul's persecution of the church and his rejection, as an apostle, of ‘works of law’ as necessary for righteousness. Dunn notes ‘three striking features’ of such ‘zeal’: (1) It represented ‘an unconditional commitment to maintain Israel's distinctiveness, to prevent the purity of its covenant set-apartness to God from being adulterated or defiled, to defend its religious and national boundaries.’ (2) It involved ‘a readiness to do this by force,’ including ‘the slaughter of those who threatened Israel's distinctive covenant status.’ (3) It was directed not only against ‘Gentiles who threatened Israel's boundaries but against fellow Jews too (p. 283).

These zeal expressions are prevailing and reflect the power of the Gospel in a Christian leader’s lifelong ministry as Paul transforms from zeal for the law to zeal for the Grace Who is Christ Jesus. God equips the believer with a fierceness to chase after, embrace, and share the Gospel long term, as the Holy Spirit hones the leader’s human nature and guides from sin to light.

Zeal and Confidence in Christ Jesus

Purposefully developing confidence in Christ Jesus and His Word could enhance Gospel zeal in the purposive participants. Sharing the Gospel message of salvation to help fulfill the Great Commission may or may not be necessary to sustain and build a believers' ministry. In Romans 8:33, Paul reminds the first-century church, “Who can accuse the people God has chosen? No one, because God is the One who makes them right” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). Paul implies that nothing can keep them from God's calling once God has chosen a Christian

educational leader. Because this portion of the study's focus is the Gospel's power, the thesis is Scripturally based. In Romans 12:10-13, the Scriptures implore the Christian educational leader to focus on the Gospel and guides how, void of distractions:

Be devoted to one another with [authentic] brotherly affection [as members of one family], give preference to one another in honor; never lagging in diligence; aglow in the Spirit, enthusiastically serving the Lord; constantly rejoicing in hope [because of our confidence in Christ], steadfast and patient in distress, devoted to prayer [continually seeking wisdom, guidance, and strength], contributing to the needs of God's people, pursuing [the practice of] hospitality. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Henry's (1706) commentary exhorts:

We must not only do that which is good, but we must cleave to it. All our duty towards one another is summed up in one word, love. This denotes parents' love for their children, which is more tender and natural than any other, unforced, unconstrained. Furthermore, with Zeal for the Gospel, love to God and man will make the wise Christian diligent in his worldly business and gain superior skill.

Full Zeal for the Gospel

In the Book of Revelation 3:16, Jesus informs, "So because you are lukewarm (spiritually useless) and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth [rejecting you with disgust] (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)". The Scriptures reflect that maintaining a mediocre degree of Gospel zeal is not as pleasing to God as maintaining Gospel zeal or none at all.

Greer (2014) poses another biblically-based question to his readers regarding Revelation 3:19, by reasoning and seeking to maintain Gospel zeal:

The Christ-prescribed solution to this problem quickly followed: He counseled them to 'be zealous and repent.' We, too, should be zealous. As Christians, we should be eager, energetic followers of God and have a strong interest in His Way and His church. God inspired the prophet Isaiah to speak about His coming kingdom. In Isaiah 9:7, it is written that the 'zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.' If God is zealous about His Kingdom, shouldn't we, too, be zealous?

The literature gap included perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal, of which the above Scriptures speak. In 1 Peter 5:1-4, the author explains that Christian educational

leadership reflects a willingness to serve without a time limit and maintain a solid foundation for building Gospel fortitude. Verse 2 instructs, "...shepherd and guide and protect the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not [motivated] for shameful gain, but with wholehearted enthusiasm" (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). Biblical Scriptures reveal that Gospel zeal eclipses distracting motives.

Foltz (2017) informs concerning post-modern Christian culture,

It is hardly original to characterize modern secular culture as a culture of death. From the world-wars and death-camps of the twentieth century to the terrorist bombings and videotaped-beheadings and neatly landscaped abortion-mills of the twenty-first, this funereal orientation of modern Western culture has long been documented, with even Freud at the beginning of the twentieth century positing a death instinct or 'Thanatos' as a cosmic world principle (p. 117).

Foltz reveals that humanity has had free will to choose life and death between salvation and anti-Christ cultures since Christ Jesus' resurrection. The sin of humankind is not new to God. The choice to identify experiences that deplete from or enhance zeal to share the Gospel message in a Christian leader's lifetime is God-given freedom of choice. McBirnie (2004) exposes the demises of the 1st Century apostles of Christ Jesus, all of whom but John were martyred for their Gospel zeal. They would not quit. McBirnie confesses, "Mostly I wrote it to become more familiar myself with the apostles and to share that knowledge, and draw some conclusions from it, with as many people as I can; scholars, church members, young people, historians, ministers, and all those who feel as I do, that we need to find ways to make the apostolic age become more alive for us today" (p. xi).

In a similar tone, Kostenberger (2020) revisits his biblical-salvation-based article to address the importance of focusing on the original Christian educational leaders' mission. He depicts their journeys to help fulfill the Great Commission with Gospel zeal, as they are driven to martyrdom rather than a self-centered religion. Again, Kostenberger focuses on the zeal to share

the Gospel rather than the people. He writes, “In tracing the emergence of early Christianity, it is also helpful to study Paul’s letters in chronological order of writing and to consider the contribution of all of his letters to a biblical theology of mission. Rather than focusing on Paul individually and selecting one book (such as Romans) as the primary focus, such a chronological approach does greater justice to the historical unfolding of the early Christian mission” (p. 535). In addition, such literature helps examine the intensity of Gospel zeal the first apostles possessed to not give up to death despite their many contemporary cultural conflicts.

Zeal for the Gospel Culture

The marketplace is the present-day agora, where the Christian leader’s human nature and spiritual nature have the opportunities to conflict and set an example. Being spiritual at church is easy but challenging in a non-Gospel-based environment. The world is not anti-God but anti-Christ. Therefore, Gospel zeal experiences that aid the Christian leader to cope when only Christ Jesus is watching are pertinent. Sacrificing the Gospel or the church body for political correctness is non-biblical. Jesus reminds His disciples in John 2:16-17, “To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!’ His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) The zeal was displaced. Jesus supports maintaining zeal to preach the Kingdom of God while paying taxes to Caesar. Wesley (1872) cites Galatians 4:18 in his 92nd sermon, "It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing." In his era, Wesley preached of his concern that the definition of religious zeal was only “evil” without his contemporaries’ consideration for a zealous passion for fulfilling the commandment of Christ Jesus to spread the Gospel message:

But it is not all that is called religious zeal which is worthy of that name. It is not properly religious or Christian zeal if it be not joined with charity. A fine writer (Bishop Sprat) carries the matter farther still. ‘It has been affirmed,’ says that great man, ‘no zeal is right, which is not charitable, but is mostly so. Charity, or love, is not only one ingredient, but

the chief ingredient in its composition.’ May we not go further still? May we not say that true zeal is not mostly charitable, but wholly so? that is, if we take charity, in St. Paul's sense, for love; the love of God and our neighbor. For it is a certain truth, (although little understood in the world,) that Christian zeal is all love. It is nothing else. The love of God and man fills up its whole nature (Para. 10).

As churches “trend toward a sociological-media-focused age of church enterprise and local ministry online disbursement” (Barna, 2017b), zeal could be affected. For example, the Christian leader may have proper motives to enlarge his or her congregation but lack biblical wisdom about ethical methods that remain Gospel-based. Nevertheless, in contrast, Maxson (2018) writes about the zeal of some contemporary church societies, “Even as they expanded into new media, evangelicals did not abandon print, especially when striving to present their positions as intellectually respectable options to a skeptical society” (p. 375). Evangelicals who maintain Gospel zeal and a willingness to learn through change can inspire each generation that believers can share the Gospel throughout the world despite congregation sizes, building sizes, and ego issues. In this study, the purposive participants of Christian educational leaders submitted to questioning to reveal which perceived experiences, including biblical concepts, educational models, and ministry tools, help them sustain “Gospel zeal in online ministry” (Howe, 2010; Lowe, S.E. & Lowe, M.E., 2018; Farmer, 2020). Acts 2:46-47 reports, “Day after day they met in the temple [area] continuing with one mind and breaking bread in various private homes. They were eating their meals together with joy and generous hearts, praising God continually, and having favor with all the people. Moreover, the Lord kept adding to their number daily those who were being saved” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). Thus, biblically, God guides His Christian leaders to share the Gospel in varied settings passionately.

Zeal for Gospel Education

Richards and Bredfeldt (1998) write that:

The implementation stage of [Bible] study becomes highly individual and concrete. It is important that as readers of the Bible, we do not merely approach the Word of God as information only to learn, but as life-changing truth meant to transform us (p. 72).

An issue exists around the perception leaders have about how the Christian educational leader's church should look in the 21st Century, other than Bible-based. After all, the apostles went door-to-door teaching about the Kingdom of God. Application of varying teaching models enhances Gospel zeal within the teacher-leader in a chaotic or calm world. Educational preparedness is vital. Burnout is a condition that the Bible addresses as a possible experience that affects Gospel zeal, and consideration of burnout exists within its theoretical framework. The Christian leader focuses on when he or she is in a service-leadership position after 20 plus years with perhaps no human acclaim. His or her attitude most likely affects Gospel Zeal in some way. Nevertheless, in Matthew 11:28-29, Christ Jesus asks that the believer allow Him to take his or her burdens on His neck:

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavily burdened [by religious rituals that provide no peace], and I will give you rest [refreshing your souls with salvation]. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me [following Me as My disciple], for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest (renewal, blessed quiet) for your souls. For My yoke is easy [to bear], and My burden is light. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

This study does not give advice but instead identifies perceived experiences that enhanced the Gospel zeal phenomenon in the Christian leader's life to recognize a source of strength in times of weakness.

Ellicott's commentary supports:

As in the consciousness of this plenitude of power, the Son of Man turns with infinite compassion to those whose weakness and weariness He has shared and offers them the rest which none other can give them. Take my yoke upon you.—As the teaching of the Pharisees was a yoke too grievous to be borne, so the yoke of Christ is His teaching, His

rule of life, and so is explained by the ‘learn of Me’ that follows. [Easy—The Greek has a broader range of meanings—good, helpful, kind, profitable.]

Such possible experiences created a questionnaire with open-ended interview questions.

The answers identified which Christian educational leadership ministry experiences successfully inspire the Christian leader to carry the Gospel message. The effect on high Gospel zeal was deciphered based on fatigue, tribulation, suffering, or joy caused by non-biblical and Gospel-based Christian education models.

Zeal for Joy and Peace in Gospel Leadership

In the Book of Acts 20:24, the author expresses the zeal with which Paul surrenders his life for eternity to Christ Jesus and expresses his zeal to share the Gospel, “But I do not consider my life as something of value or dear to me, so that I may [with joy] finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify faithfully of the Good News of God’s [precious, undeserved] grace [which makes us free of the guilt of sin and grants us eternal life]” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) In the Book of John 16:33, the Apostle John shares the same zeal of sharing the Gospel message to death into eternity, “I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace. You have tribulation and distress and suffering in the world, but be courageous [be confident, undaunted, filled with joy]; I have overcome the world. [My conquest is accomplished, My victory abiding].” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). Such Christian leadership could be an experience that builds Gospel zeal in the follower and an example of the exhibition of joy and peace in Christ Jesus. An experience that could enhance Gospel zeal in the Christian leader is if he or she has such a leader in his or her life as a role model or mentor.

Maxson (2018) imparts that one of the significant challenges of the contemporary media environment is the absence of human contact or corporate fellowship and the discoverability of valuable quality internet Gospel resources. He searches for those void of propaganda and does

not deter from the portrayal of Scripture and the possible peace and joy the online Gospel experience creates. Because the Christian leader has a calling to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, he or she encounters new leadership responsibilities, including using the world wide web as a Christian outlet to share the Gospel. The Christian leader answers the call to pioneer his or her field. The Apostles Paul and John write of evangelical courage free from guilt and joy and grace with victorious peace during pressure. The Christian leader's attitude was to maintain Gospel zeal on purpose with joy and peace to enhance Gospel zeal long term. The specific actions that Christian educational leaders take to enhance their zeal on purpose to fulfill the Great Commission amid societal and cultural changes as they grow, persevere, and endure, was worth examining. By sharing decision-making-process methods during inevitable tumultuous years, the Christian leader can share experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal. Peter 2:5 states, "You [believers], like living stones, are being built up into a spiritual house for a holy and dedicated priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices [that are] acceptable and pleasing to God through Jesus Christ" (*Amplified Bible, 1954*).

For the Christian leader, distractions from the Gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus are unending, as the Christian leader fights a foe that knows he already lost to Christ Jesus on resurrection day. The call, therefore, to fulfill the Great Commission was a focus when questioning the purposive participants, as their choice of educational, leadership, and ministry methods are many. Because the leaders are proclaimed Christians, open-ended interview questions examined the Christian worldview approach as an umbrella that influences their decision-making processes and enhances their Gospel zeal phenomenon.

Contemporary Ministry Trends

For example, Romans 10:1-2 identifies where one might direct one's Christian educational leadership focus, "Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for Israel is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a certain enthusiasm [Zeal] for God, but not in accordance with [correct and vital] knowledge [about Him and His purposes]" (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). Paul's appeal to the disciples recognizes what they choose to concentrate on, either zeal for man or zeal for God, with the free will to make decisions. If any, the study revealed what contemporary ministry trends enhanced Gospel zeal as expectations for the Christian leader's servant-teacher role change. Barna (2020a) suggests that "Churches need more than good sermons to disciple in 'digital Babylon'; we also need other structures of learning: courses, programs, mentoring, field-based experiences, mission trips and more." Barna reports that a Christian leader is expected to be available to the congregation in person and via technology and mission work. Per Barna, the congregation expects the Christian leader to learn new subject matters other than their Sunday sermon and hospital visitations.

In every century, the Christian leader juggled duties as church cultures changed and congregations ebbed or flowed. New demands on time for family, recreation, and ministry could affect Gospel zeal in the Christian leader, depending on their perceived experiences. Changing pastoral job specifications could create a growth experience that enhances Gospel zeal in the Christian leader as he or she remains faithful to the Gospel despite secular ministry trends. Depuydt (2014) concludes after researching "The Wife of Jesus Fragment" text that suggests Jesus had a wife, "This fact by itself already suffices for me to expose the text as a forgery. The fully inadequate knowledge of Coptic evidenced when the author tries to strike out on his or her

own only confirms the spurious nature of the text, as well as the fact that the scribe cannot have been ancient” (p. 189).

Non-Negotiable Gospel Truth

Barna (2020c) suggests how to explain the Gospel, “We define the whole Gospel, based on thinking from many others, as a four-chapter Christian story: creation-fall-redemption-restoration. In too many places, we teach an abbreviated and insufficient two-part story: fall and redemption. You are a sinner, and you need Jesus.” In the 21st Century, the Christian leader anticipates confrontation with contemporary ministry trends that involve ever-increasing challenges. Barna supports the use of both the Old Testament and the New Testament to preach the Gospel, including Adam's fall in the Book of Genesis. Nevertheless, later in the same article, Barna uses the term “human beings” rather than “male and female” to define the *Imago Dei* as scripted by the Holy Spirit in the Book of Genesis 1:27, “So God created man in His own image, the image, and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). The Inclusive Bible (2009) boasts of “re-imagining of the Scriptures and our relationship to them. Not merely replacing male pronouns, the translators have ‘rethought’ what kind of language has built barriers between the text and its readers.”

Moreover, Barna (2017b) suggests preaching the Gospel fully and changing the wording to make unbelievers more comfortable with a new non-gender culture. Such contemporary diversions from the Gospel message could affect Gospel zeal in a Christian leader. The Book of Revelation 22:18-19 urges:

I testify and warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book [its predictions, consolations, and admonitions]: if anyone adds [anything] to them, God will add to him the plagues (afflictions, calamities) which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from or distorts the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away [from that one] his share from the tree of life and from the holy city (new Jerusalem), which are written in this book. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Re-Writing the Gospel in the 21st Century?

A counter-Gospel worldview approach to Bible education could be an experience that enhances a Christian leader's Gospel zeal, as he or she purposes to reveal the salvation in Christ Jesus while meeting opposition from those who edit Bibles. For example, an individual who has not heard the message of Jesus as Messiah, and wears blue jeans to church, does not change the Gospel message. However, rewording the Holy Scriptures to focus on appeasing contemporary anti-biblical cultures could delay or rob a sinner of the opportunity to receive redemptive salvation in Christ Jesus. One finds the clear redemptive choice for every person in the Book of John 3:18:

Whoever believes and has decided to trust in Him [as personal Savior and Lord] is not judged [for this one, there is no judgment, no rejection, no condemnation]; but the one who does not believe [and has decided to reject Him as personal Savior and Lord] is judged already [that one has been convicted and sentenced], because [a]he has not believed and trusted in the name of the [One and] only begotten Son of God [the truly unique One, the only One of His kind, the One who alone can save him]. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Ergo, the Christian leader could face challenges to share the original Gospel or succumb to pressures to use contemporary ministry trends that change the salvation message. If and how these experiences enhanced Gospel zeal is in question. When moving forward in his or her ministry, the Christian leader's endurance undergoes testing under trial. However, God gives strength to endure patiently. In the Book of Isaiah 59:17, God expresses the love for His people, and the foreshadowing of the sacrifice and love of Christ Jesus to come, "For [the Lord] put on righteousness as a breastplate or coat of mail, and salvation as a helmet upon His head; He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and was clad with zeal [and furious divine jealousy] as a cloak" (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). God expresses zeal in His Word for Christian leaders to share the Gospel, as He zealously loves them. This study aimed to understand the phenomenon of Gospel

zeal enhancement. Tietjen (2020) warns about the rhetoric and misinterpretation of zealousness in contemporary culture, writing, “By presenting religious zeal as a passion, the relevance of situational conditions can be downplayed; religious violence can be pathologized but also rationalized. These fragmentary considerations indicate that the presentation, interpretation, and conceptualization of religious zeal is always already entangled with the perspective of those offering the conceptual analysis and in danger of being misused for political purposes” (pp. 88-9).

Tribulation as an Experience that Enhances Gospel Zeal

Tribulation could enhance the Gospel zeal phenomenon, as each Christian leader faces earthly trials in every political era. Luke 21:11 forewarns, “There will be mighty and violent earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences (plagues: malignant and contagious or infectious epidemic diseases which are deadly and devastating); and there will be sights of terror and great signs from heaven” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). Henry’s (1706) commentary regarding this Scripture uplifts, “Christ tells them what hard things they should suffer for his name’s sake and encourages them to bear up under their trials and to go on in their work, notwithstanding the opposition they would meet with. God will stand by you, and own you, and assist you”. Because each generation experiences ordeals that vary in intensity, the interviewer addressed the

Christian leader participants about their experiences. Romans 8:38-39 states:

For I am convinced [and continue to be convinced—beyond any doubt] that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present and threatening, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the [unlimited] love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Such Scriptures explain that confidence is a possible experience that enhances Gospel zeal and suggest that all of the above-listed perceived experiences could cause a depletion of

Gospel zeal. However, biblically one needs not lose confidence or Gospel zeal amid tribulation.

Meyer's (1979) enlightens the Christian leader with the knowledge of the fact that:

Paul now confirms what he had said in Romans 8:37 by the enthusiastic declaration of his conviction that no power, in whatever shape it may exist or be conceived of; for the singular *πέπεισμαι* there is as little necessity for seeking a special reason (Hofmann, e.g., thinks that Paul wished to justify the confidence, with which he had expressed Romans 8:37) as in the case of *λογίζομαι* in Romans 8:18, especially as Romans 8:37 contains only the simple assertion of a state of fact, and not the how of that assertion.

External and Internal Strife

In a more recent study, Barna (2020c) reports that lack of predictability, non-Christian messaging via social media, and personal peace disruptors, such as blame, shame, control, and escape, could affect the Gospel message. Nevertheless, perceived experiences could enhance Gospel zeal and inspire zeal in the Grace of the Gospel message. In 1 Timothy 6:20, Scripture portrays how Paul instructs Timothy to learn to listen wisely and maintain his Christian mission during the persecution of the church, “O Timothy, guard and keep the deposit entrusted [to you]! Turn away from the irreverent babble and Godless chatter, with the vain and empty and worldly phrases, and the subtleties and the contradictions in what is falsely called knowledge and spiritual illumination”. The Bible offers vital examples of experiences that could contribute to a Christian leader's enhancement of Gospel zeal, including avoiding fruitless debate. The Bible offers clues for possible experiences that enhanced Christian educational leaders' Gospel zeal phenomenon. Paul further instructs in the Book of 2 Timothy 2:23, “But refuse (shut your mind against, have nothing to do with) trifling (ill-informed, unedifying, stupid) controversies over ignorant questionings, for you know that they foster strife and breed quarrels” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). Paul shares these solutions to strife and leaderships' internal and external attacks by suggesting a renewal of the mind and the restraint of the tongue.

In Philippians 2:22, Paul expresses endurance amid spiritual testing that one can experience as a Christian leader and yet maintain a zeal for the Gospel, “But Timothy’s tested worth you know. How, as a son with his father, he has toiled with me zealously in [serving and helping to advance] the Good News (the Gospel)” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). As Timothy traveled with Paul and Silas, he saw relationships start, end, and begin again with Barnabas and John Mark. Nonetheless, after observing the struggles between personalities in Christ Jesus’s church body, Timothy traveled to parts unknown as an assistant, a messenger, a missionary, a brother to the church, and a bondservant. The Christian educational leaders’ discipline in these areas could enhance Gospel zeal. Galatians 5:20-21 cautions, “Idolatry, sorcery, hostility, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions [that promote heresies], envy, drunkenness, riotous behavior, and other things like these; I warn you beforehand, just as I did previously, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). Thus, both internal and external behavioral experiences could enhance the Gospel zeal phenomenon as the Christian educational leader grows more Christ-like.

An Anti-Biblical Worldview Approach to Christian Educational Leadership

Erickson (2016) and Depuydt (2014) suggest that the Christian spiritual warfare battle between good and evil includes an anti-biblical worldview attack on the original Gospel message. They propose that “In fact, as Guelich points out, it may lead *to* the second of the two mistakes C.S. Lewis mentions regarding devils: ‘to believe in them and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.’ Thus, paradoxically, it may lead to becoming a victim of Satan’s battle plan”. In 2021, one can biblically recognize that Satan exists, and an anti-Christian movement is natural. In the Book of 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11, Paul prophesizes:

The coming of the [Antichrist, the lawless] one is through the activity of Satan, [attended] with great power [all kinds of counterfeit miracles] and [deceptive] signs and false

wonders [all of them lies], and by unlimited seduction, to evil and with all the deception of wickedness for those who are perishing because they did not welcome the love of the truth [of the Gospel] to be saved [they were spiritually blind and rejected the truth that would have saved them]. Because of this, God will send upon them a misleading influence, [an activity of error and deception] so they will believe the lie” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*).

Horowitz (2018), as cited in Hitchens’ (2007) book, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, “By the third week, it was on the New York Times bestseller list. Hitchens’ thesis is, ‘Religion is violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism, tribalism, and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive to children” (p. 229). Biblically, the Gospel does not meet any of these claims, as Christ Jesus died for all, is all-inclusive to those who believe, uses women as His first evangelists, and asks the disciples to bring the children to Him. In 2021 the Christian educational leader was under attack. Some Christian classrooms incorporate both biblical and anti-biblical worldviews. Estep et al. (2008) report that H. Norman Wright (1971) foreshadows, “The schism between Christian education and theology in the church due to the diminished appreciation of theology in many churches, the shift in the definition of education away from a theological discipline, and the demise of theological content in Christian instruction cause the Christian community to undertake a self-analyzation (p. 27)”.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

In this theoretical framework, Gospel zeal’s definition includes “One's sustained joy to share the redemptive Gospel message” (Pope Francis, 2013). This paper's theoretical portion explains the background of experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in a Christian Educational Leadership population. The study of these theories is significant because the New Testament Bible of salvation in Christ Jesus is over 2000 years old. The theories that could pose as perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal today are extensive. The critical gaps and

points of disagreement in literature will be both modern and ancient but primarily from the 20th and 21st Centuries, with some older commentaries that carry through the text. This study also identified significant themes and concepts of various researchers on Gospel zeal, as variations in definitions exist. Non-biblical theoretical implications that the Christian leader faces could affect his or her Gospel zeal. Trending theoretical and philosophical ideologies are inevitable as ministries change. However, the Christian leader identifying himself or herself as created in the *Imago Dei* also identifies with a non-negotiable Christian biblical worldview. Therefore, tackling non-biblical contemporary ministry trend theories could create perceived experiences that enhanced zeal.

Barna Group (2019) reports:

Resilient disciples are Christians who (1) attend church at least monthly and engage with their church more than just attending worship services; (2) trust firmly in the authority of the Bible; (3) are committed to Jesus personally and affirm he was crucified and raised from the dead to conquer sin and death; and (4) express desire to transform the broader society as an outcome of their faith (p. 1).

Possessing zeal for the Gospel is of God, but for the Christian leader, possessing zeal for an anti-Christian approach to ministry could deplete Gospel zeal. One reads of both positive and negative zeal in the Bible.

Gospel Zeal Versus Zealots

The Christian leader could face possible confusion when the Bible uses various definitions of the word “zeal.” Clinton (1996) simplifies:

The Latin *Zelus* is derived from the Greek *Zelos*, which denotes fervor. In biblical use, *Zelos* in the Septuagint, and the Hebrew word underlying means ‘jealousy’ or ‘zeal,’ the context alone determining the meaning of any particular occurrence of the Greek or Hebrew. Thus, God’s Zeal for his chosen people could be expressed as jealousy (ultimately an expression of His holiness) or faithful love (pp. 45-46).

The Christian leader replicates God's passionate love by loving others and sharing the Gospel with those He came to earth to save. With political and cultural diversity in most generations and non-biblical zealots expressing disdain for Christianity, the Christian leader can consider the importance of Gospel zeal. In 2019 the British Broadcasting Network reported that Christian persecution was near genocide proportions in parts of the Middle East and reported that political correctness is all but exterminating Christianity, “The interim report said the main impact of ‘genocidal acts against Christians is exodus’ and that Christianity faces being ‘wiped out’ from parts of the Middle East. The report comes less than two weeks after bombings at three churches in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday” (BBC News, 2019).

Therefore, each Christian leader could wonder about the necessity to share the Gospel in Christ Jesus, as the popularity of Christianity ebbs and flows. A promise for preaching the Gospel could be an experience that enhances and inspires the Christian leader to preach for a lifetime. Undoubtedly how people receive the Gospel message could create experiences that enhance the Christian leader's Gospel zeal. Scott, Jr. (2020) writes, “Some scholars associate Jesus with the zealot movement. The title over the cross, ‘This is the King of the Jews,’ may indicate Pilate condemned him as a violent nationalist. The whole of Jesus' teaching and actions indicate the contrary. A true zealot revolutionary would never advocate, ‘Love your enemies’ (Matt 5:44), paying taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25), and satisfaction with two swords (Luke 22:38).” Possibly some anti-Christ advocates have not heard the Gospel. This research fills the literature gap to identify what perceived experiences enhanced Gospel zeal in varying backgrounds. With 21st Century contemporary ministry trends, including high technology that produces an option not to preach in the same room, the necessity for Gospel zeal may be questioned as a face-to-face phenomenon. After all, if the Christian leader cannot see the

person he or she is identifying, one could question the need for Gospel zeal. However, for those who have found salvation through technology and experienced zeal to share the Gospel in cyberspace, this perceived experience could enhance the Gospel zeal phenomenon in the real-life experiences of Christian educational leaders.

Lowe M. (2108) and Lowe S. (2018) conclude that “The testimonies and comments received from online students in our courses and degree programs reveal the extent to which their experiences have had a positive impact on their spiritual growth and their development as a whole person” (p. 228). The Christian leader may have to decide to zealously protect his or her passion for preaching the Gospel with healthy jealousy that is spirit-born when educational changes occur quickly, as can relate to an increase in online education during the 2019 thru 2021 pandemic. Lowes’ work identifies the validity of the Holy Spirit's presence, where two or more meet, whether in person or online. Two years since the Lowes’ book’s release, a worldwide pandemic created a predicted platform for Christian educational leaders to ponder if online ministry supports and enhances Gospel zeal. The Christian leader could experience newer teaching standards moving forward, which could act as an experience that enhances the Gospel zeal phenomenon, as the Holy Spirit fills the living room or study and the classroom. In addition, the increase in online Christian educational leadership ministry experiences could enhance Gospel zeal in the purposive participants.

As the Christian leader advances in knowledge and obtains new responsibilities, focusing on the Gospel could become a valuable-lived theoretical experience. The Book of Colossians 2:2 comforts, “[For my hope is] that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in [unselfish] love, so that they may have all the riches that come from the full assurance of understanding [the joy of salvation], resulting in a true [and more intimate] knowledge of the

mystery of God, that is, Christ,” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) Alderfer (1969) helps guide this study toward revealing experiences of “existence, relatedness, and growth” to reveal why some Christian educational leaders preach the Gospel to death with zeal. Though a question arises if the phenomenon of Gospel zeal is a measurable experience, the researcher is confident that this qualitative phenomenological study serves as an attribute in collecting and coding data, categorizing data, and revealing themes expressed in patterns that enhanced Gospel zeal.

Gospel Zeal Versus Knowledge

Similarly, Shwe (2019) offers a debate between the importance of “The necessity of spiritual zeal versus the essential role of knowledge” (p. 45) or intellect versus spirit. The author insinuates that Christian academics and education, when not Gospel-based, could be counterproductive to pursuing Christian wisdom. Such topical barriers exist for the Christian leader, who can reflect on Paul the Apostle’s biblical teaching of zeal for the Gospel and intellectual knowledge. Paul writes in Galatians 1:6-7:

I am astonished and extremely irritated that you are so quickly shifting your allegiance and deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different [even contrary] Gospel; which is not another [Gospel]; but there are [obviously] some [people masquerading as teachers] who are disturbing and confusing you [with misleading, counterfeit teaching] and want to distort the Gospel of Christ [twisting it into something which it absolutely is not]” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Maintaining a focus on the original Gospel message despite adversities and distractions, including searching for knowledge and education, could create experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal. The Christian leader’s ability to teach and preach the Gospel long term where he or she is called is the primary incentive, and God may place the Christian leader wherever He pleases for His Glory. Paul’s concept of Gospel zeal was not for the Christian leader to separate himself or herself from knowledge and education, but rather to use those two theoretical approaches to minister and build Gospel zeal moving forward; because he knew the Christian leader would

need supernatural strength in the form of Gospel zeal to help fulfill the Great Commission. Shwe (2019) notes a necessity to fulfill a calling as a Christian leader, “He must have knowledge or wisdom to distinguish whether spiritual gifts or manifestations are right or wrong. At first, he must know the Word of God; then, to test or protect the doctrinal errors, he or she must have wisdom and knowledge from both the revelation of God and well-trained experience.” (p. 61). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to investigate and reveal the perceived experiences that enhanced the Gospel zeal phenomenon in Christian educational leaders in ministry. Participants are accessible by internet, telephone, and in-person interviews and adjust to ministering where the Holy Spirit guides.

This study includes research to reveal if intellectual knowledge and a willingness to learn are experiences that hinder or enhance Gospel zeal. As the Christian leader learns biblically that he or she is a vessel of the Holy Spirit and created in the *Imago Dei*, they will not be so self-minded during their lifelong maturation and can embrace biblical learning that hones with humility, even when it hurts. So, do the purposive participants who seek the voice of God in His Word during the growth process cling jealously to his or her Gospel zeal?

Christian Educational Leaders’ Zeal To Live In The *Image Of God*

In the Book of Acts, the reader learns that every believer is in a state of growth. As created in the *Imago Dei*, transformation is a process for the Christian leader and constitutes endurance. Diaz (2013) writes that leadership is not the end-all purpose of his ministry. He reflects on five leadership roles in the Bible and finds the standard variable as self-awareness in the *Imago Dei*. These include self-doubt, service to God and others, personal sacrifices, suffering in leadership, and total submission to God’s Will. These perceived experiences could enhance the Christian leader's Gospel zeal, dependent on their self-awareness of who they are in Christ

Jesus. Hurst (2006) shares, “A crisis of leadership and zeal is prevalent among contemporary American pastors” (p. 78). Reese (2022) writes, “We are living in days of crisis and change. There is no way of avoiding it. But God has given us resources” (p. 1). However, after 2000 years plus its authorship, the Gospel survives through God’s power and those who strive with zeal to spread the message of Jesus as Messiah. The question of what perceived experiences enhanced and maintained this intense zeal was the basis of this study. As the Gospel is spread through generations, the Christian educational leader called to fulfill the Great Commission could face circumstantial experiences that create barriers along the way that he or she has to decide to endure rather than leave his or her calling unnecessarily.

For example, Young (2020) discusses the importance of growth in Christian personality and “Not allow oneself to succumb to circumstances that create unforgiveness.” The Christian leader's ability to be honest with God, oneself, and a trusted mentor to detect spiritual improvement is paramount to growth. In interviews, the study participants explained what perceived experiences could keep the Christian leader from maintaining Gospel zeal when helping to fulfill the Great Commission, as one develops in the already possessed *Imago Dei*. Change is an inevitable experience, and this study examined if change affected Gospel zeal based on the Christian leader’s attitude and what various perceived experiences were prominent in the enhancement of that zeal. For those Christian educational leaders who might not have dealt well with change, an attitude of hope was an experience they considered for maintaining or enhancing Gospel zeal. Sanders (2007) writes of optimism, “Hope and optimism are essential qualities for the servant of God who battles with the powers of darkness over the souls of men and women. God’s ideal servant is optimistic until every part of God’s work is done” (p. 26).

Shifts in church policies and personal money issues could have caused the Christian educational leader to choose another vocation that led from the Gospel. The Christian leader could have interpreted leadership in others as straying from the *Imago Dei* that indicated that church administrators were indecisive about preaching God's Word as essential for Christian educational leadership. Mixed-non-Gospel message theories, such as Jesus of Nazareth as only a prophet, may have led to experiences that the Christian leader perceived as permissive to preach a more secular message of Christ Jesus. However, James 3:1 states, "Not many [of you] should become teachers [serving in an official teaching capacity], my brothers and sisters, for you know that we [who are teachers] will be judged by a higher standard [because we have assumed greater accountability and more condemnation if we teach incorrectly]." (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Therefore, living in the *Imago Dei* could be perceived as a blessing or an unattainable feat, dependent on the Christian leader's attitude and how he or she has been taught about dying to Christ as gain in humility (Philippians 1:21).

Gospel Zeal and False Educational Leadership Ministry Teachings

In the 21st Century, leadership has become a popular theme in business and academia. Online education has blossomed and provides an opportunity to expand leadership studies. Therefore, the Christian educational leader must sift through volumes of information and select those which hold a biblical worldview. Michale Ayers (2006) reports:

The story of Moses may in fact, be a precursor to the concept of discipleship. Moses' parents prepared him for the choice, Christ made him a disciple, and he then made 'faith' disciples of the entire Israeli nation (p. 81).

The dilution of the Gospel message in educational leadership could be an experience that affects Gospel zeal within the educational system. Thus, educators must seek purposeful educational materials that provide a biblical foundation. Farmer (2021) reports that "Deliberate course design

can provide opportunities necessary for students to experience community” (p. 133). The Christian leader can study both theological and theoretical methods on the ground or online to improve performance but will experience being led by the Holy Spirit not to degrade the Gospel message. Moreover, theoretically, theology is the ultimate leadership method essential for Christian leaders, and their lifelong ministries can reflect that faith in God’s Word. Finally, belief in a Christian worldview could extend to the Christian leader’s teaching methods and lifestyle, in which education by observation occurs between students and teachers. Hibbs (2020) comments, “The Christian leader loses zeal when living an abhorrent lifestyle.” Hibbs preaches that the farthest the Christian leader can find himself or herself from the *Imago Dei* is when he or she gives over authority to self instead of God, without reverential fear of God. He states that false teachers and ministries surfacing during social chaos fulfill the Scripture verses in 2 Peter 2, in which false teachers abound. In theory, 1 Timothy 4:1-3 reflects the cause of the rise and fall of Gospel zeal in 2021:

But the [Holy] Spirit explicitly and unmistakably declares that in later times some will turn away from the faith, paying attention instead to deceitful and seductive spirits and doctrines of demons, [misled] by the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared as with a branding iron [leaving them incapable of ethical functioning], who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from [certain kinds of] foods which God has created to be gratefully shared by those who believe and have [a clear] knowledge of the truth. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

The enhancement of Gospel zeal could attribute to the status of interest in maintaining and learning characteristics that support his or her Christian educational leadership ministry. Howell, Jr. (2003) asks the reader, “How does one learn to act consistently with the conviction that the Spirit of God indwells and endows with spiritual gifts all born-again believers?” (p. 256). Therefore, enhancing the Gospel zeal phenomenon could maintain and increase the desire to

serve God and humanity. Cochran (2020) explains, “Need-based service was a natural outgrowth of a church dedicated to loving their community and one with a zealous visionary leader.”

Perhaps enhancing Gospel zeal occurs when the Christian leader maintains a servant-leader stance as an educator. Commentary by Clarke (1820) comments that 1 Timothy 4 expresses, “A man may hold all the truths of Christianity, and yet render them of none effect by holding other doctrines which counteract their influence; or he may apostatize by denying some essential doctrine, though he brings in nothing heterodox.” Guzbrik (2018) theorizes that the Christian leader could lose the zeal to preach the Gospel because of a loss of focus toward fulfilling the Great Commission and instead focus on self-will and self-interest that does not support a biblical worldview. Paul pronounces in Acts 20:24, “But I do not consider my life as something of value or dear to me, so that I may [with joy] finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify faithfully of the Good News of God’s [precious, undeserved] grace [which makes us free of the guilt of sin and grants us eternal life].” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Zealous Christian Pastoring

Zealous Christian pastoring in 2021 is perhaps not much different than in the 1st Century church, given persecution worldwide (BBC, 2019). Nevertheless, Peterson (1987) states that “The pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers” (p. 78). Perhaps Gospel zeal ebbs when the church's business loses focus of the Gospel message out of fear and relies less on the Holy Spirit and more on the number of congregates, the size of the worship building, and the church finances to establish success and value. The literature gap includes revealing experiences, which lead to the defense from contrary Gospel theories that bully Christian leaders from their faith-based stance and block the enhancement of Gospel zeal.

Witham (2005) expresses another theory that the clergy face mounting challenges to compromise non-negotiable Christian facts in an increasingly secularized church. In addition, the declining popularity of Gospel-based preaching makes it more challenging to attract the “best and the brightest” young Americans to the ministry. Witham exhorts that as Christian churches dramatically adapt to ministry trends and changes, some ask where a clergy crisis might stem.

Therefore, in an attempt to pinpoint perceived experiences that constitute a suggested clergy crisis, focusing on the individual Christian educational leader’s phenomenological Gospel zeal experiences and attitudes that enhanced his or her Gospel zeal after 20 years of ministry are key. This process helped reveal motives that enhanced seasoned leaders' Gospel zeal in lifelong ministry. Scholars report that Christian leaders must create new norms because of inevitable change and decide if they will maintain the zeal to help fulfill the Great Commission. Drummond (2020) reports that change may cause new questions, unclear responsibilities, and new roles for leaders (Askeland & Schmidt, 2016; Baumgartner, 2011). Gospel zeal could be enhanced by some or none of these experiences. Wilson (2011) quotes Ray Ortlund, “Zeal is good. It is the pure heart of God, moving all of history toward final redemption. But our zeal is mixed. Our zeal can be of the spirit or the flesh” (p. 98). Perhaps the Christian leader has a choice? Edwards (1839) comments, “There is nothing that belongs to Christian experience more liable to a corrupt nature than zeal” (p.98). Ergo, the interview process determined what perceived experiences enhanced Gospel zeal and how the Christian leaders describe that phenomenological lived experience.

Christian Educational Leadership Ministry Burnout

Because the Christian journey is one of transformation, Ash (2017) and others (Fee 2018, Krejcir 2016, & Elkington, 2013) theorize about experiences of overwhelming responsibilities

and subjugations when deciding upon a lifetime of Gospel education, leadership, and ministry. Likewise, Bolman (2011) explains, “Revolutionary changes in technology, the rise of the global economy, and shortened product life cycles have spawned a flurry of efforts to design faster, more flexible organizational forms” (p. 11). During interviews, each Christian leader identified how he or she perceived “burnout” as a possible experience that affects Gospel zeal, as the above societal and organizational changes occur. In 2020, the focus had been the outbreak of COVID-19 and moving evangelism to the world wide web. Nevertheless, in Christian educational leaders, enhancement of Gospel zeal occurs in every generation, so when the ministry was online or on-ground, each Christian leader had unique experiences of joy and tribulation to relate. In recent history, the worldwide pandemic has been a catalyst for Christian leaders to view their roles in a biblical worldview approach to life and ministry in general and question how prepared they are to maintain Gospel zeal in cultural-societal-new-norms.

Ash (2017) shares examples of what he refers to as burnout and a Christian leader’s decision to quit the ministry, or not, under pressure. For example, Ash does not recoil from his experience that one can maintain a zeal for the Gospel if he or she feels overcome by physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. As he suggests an outwardly afflictive condition, Ash's statement is significant. Nevertheless, it might not affect an experience with the Gospel zeal phenomenon, as his zeal stems from his inner constitution. Other scholars argue that the Christian leader’s Gospel zeal is dependent solely on how he or she handles tribulation. Drickamer (1982) writes of Johann Arndt (1606) and his theory that “The more miserable you are in your heart, the dearer you are to God, the more and the more graciously God looks upon you” (p. 1010). Drickamer deduces that Arndt put too many pressures on the believer to be perfect and that Arndt taught what Drickamer calls a Law-religion rather than the Gospel of

Christ Jesus. Such a lack of Grace in the Christian leader's experience could constitute an experience that enhances Gospel zeal, dependent on their theoretical beliefs. Perhaps extensive intellectualizing about religion is a catalyst for burnout when the Christian leader allows secular doubt to outweigh spiritual knowledge. Such experiences could be informative.

McClanahan (2018) quotes Henry (1994) relating to the internal and external warfare that the Christian leader undergoes throughout a lifelong calling of Christian educational leadership evangelical servitude:

The combat for which we are to be prepared is not against ordinary human enemies, not barely against men compounded of flesh and blood, nor against our own corrupt natures singly considered, but against the several ranks of devils, who have a government which they exercise in this world (p. 131).

Gospel Zeal for Servitude

The experiences that are determinate of Gospel zeal enhancement could be many. This study's results were whittled down to the experiences that most enhanced Gospel zeal in the purposive participants. The researcher does not presume that the area of burnout is equivalent to the loss of Gospel zeal but that it could surface as an experience for discussion. As the born-again Christian becomes a new creature in a lifetime servitude to Christ Jesus, Howell includes in his profile the motive of a servant-leader in his or her "Passion for God's honor, a deep concern for the spiritual welfare, and the zeal of Moses for God's love and forgiveness of repentant people" (p. 298). As a servant leader, the Christian leader's zeal to preach the Gospel can act as a visual and a spiritual experience for the follower to emulate, as he or she observes the maintenance of Gospel zeal in the Christian leader's life despite a lifetime of circumstantial experiences.

Gospel Zeal for Leadership

Sanders cites Luke 14:25-33 when he writes, “It takes a leader to embark on a dangerous venture. It takes a leader to build for the kingdom. That is why Jesus’ words were so passionate: count the cost; take up the cross”. Such examples show the need for faith to maintain a zeal for the Gospel long term. Sizemore, Jr. (1976) writes that leadership within a rigid Christian community is a challenge. He equates the maintenance of zeal for the Gospel to renew the Christian leader’s mission work. Perhaps if Christian leaders do not use their gifts, they might lose the zeal to maintain them. He writes:

The inner nature of Christianity calls for a constant resurgence of the mission. The absolutizing of unconditional love inevitably causes the Christian to live before the world with a sense of concern and responsibility. Whatever their other personal apprehension of the Christian faith, the Christian motivated by a faith derived from Jesus Christ will feel a compulsion to share the Christian vision of truth and love with the world (p. 415).

One can define Christian educational leadership in various ways depending on the context of the leadership position. Therefore, experiences that enhanced and maintained Gospel zeal applied to the purposive participants interested in further research. Yukl (2013) shares that “It is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of a leader when there are so many alternative measures of effectiveness, and it is not clear which measure is most relevant” (p. 8). Therefore, the researcher aimed to reveal themes and patterns that surface in the IPA regarding leadership. Gratefully, this study was not to measure the effectiveness of the Christian leader. This study's challenge was not to evaluate but to provide a tool to help future Christian leaders to maintain Gospel zeal by identifying experience that causes its enhancement. The Christian leader could determine that Gospel zeal is perhaps a God-given trait, either inborn or developed, which can thrive only by recurring acts of Christian leadership in the capacity of his or her calling. The development process could include a growing foundational love for the Gospel and others.

Sizemore, Jr. (1976) suggests that humility versus arrogance is an experience that could affect Gospel zeal and affect how a follower receives or interprets the Christian leader's message. For the Christian leader to maintain Gospel zeal perpetuates the Gospel message.

Bredfeldt (2006) describes contemporary leadership paradigms, which include "Existentialists, humanists, progressive leadership, and classical leadership" (pp. 140-141). The Christian leader, who maintains Gospel zeal with many leadership methods to choose from, is part of this study's focus. The researcher is investigating to identify what experiences enhanced Gospel zeal.

Paul defends the Gospel with zeal as onlookers attempt to block the Holy Spirit's move in the early church. In Acts 13:9-10, the author notes:

However, Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, and led by Him, looked steadily at Elymas and said, "You [Elymas] who are full of every [kind of] deceit, and every [kind of] fraud, you son of the devil, the enemy of everything right and good, will you never stop perverting the straight paths of the Lord? (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) Paul, as a leader, unashamed, exhibits zeal for the Gospel as an example to followers,

who, in turn, spread the Gospel. Thus, a leader's actions to confront and defend Gospel zeal could be an experience that enhances Gospel zeal in the Christian leader and his or her followers. Conversely, fear of confrontation could be an obstacle that subdues the Gospel zeal and stifles the Christian leader.

Related Literature

This portion of the literature review delves into related thematic topics and sub-topics in this study of Gospel zeal in Christian Educational Leaders as a whole. Because the Christian leader's role is a multi-faceted calling, this research fills a gap in the literature for the individual Christian leader to gain information about what the above experiences could apply to them for decision-making regarding the importance of Gospel zeal. Another theme of this chapter is to

display the experiences that could skew Christian educational leadership ministry methods, which the Christian leader could encounter in long-term leadership ministry. The Book of Galatians 2:14 expresses:

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the Gospel, I told Cephas (Peter) in front of everyone, ‘If you, being a Jew, live [as you have been living] like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how is it that you are [now virtually] forcing the Gentiles to live like Jews [if they want to eat with you]?’ (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Perhaps the Christian leader can look to peers to question and learn which areas they need grooming to increase and sustain Gospel zeal for a lifetime. First, however, the researcher aimed to fill a gap in the literature to investigate and identify perceived experiences that enhanced and maintained the Gospel zeal phenomenon for Christian educational leaders to fulfill his or her Christian calling. The result may differ for each Christian leader, but this study attempts to identify recurring themes and patterns that apply to the purposive participants that enhanced Gospel zeal.

Themes of Gospel Zeal

The World Mission Fellowship (WMF) (2015) shares, “There are multiple themes today, including a zeal for the Lord and the balance we must-have alongside a zeal for God. The strongest theme is Paul the Apostle’s point that there is only one Gospel, and it is only by this Gospel that salvation is available by grace for all people.” WMF provides themes that could pose as experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in the life of the Christian leader, which includes: a) Avoidance of a Jezebel spirit, b) Remembrance of the fulfillment of judgment in Christ Jesus, c) Opting to be a person of conviction, d) Opting to be jealous for the Gospel, e) Finishing the job God has started in you, f) Not compromising the Gospel truth [do not distort the Gospel], g) Having a zeal for God, h) Killing sin in your life, i) Combining zeal with care, j) Seeking the approval of God and not man, and k) Not nullifying Grace in Christ Jesus”.

Sustaining Gospel Zeal in Christian Education Leadership Ministry

As the Christian leader's role is transformational, the mixed roles of teacher, leader, follower, and minister need balance. Hurst (2006) suggests a gap in the literature, in which he offers a further examination of Christian educational leadership that confirms and reveals specific insights and implications already in his study. "The new study would answer the following three questions: 1) Do pastors who are excelling in ministry in the twenty-first century see excellence with balance or with a bias toward competence and performance? 2) Do pastors who persevere in excellence see themselves as their number one obstacle? 3) Is spiritual well-being a prerequisite for persevering excellence?" (p. 153). These three questions can link to possible causes of better enhancement of Gospel zeal. Similarly, in her transcendental phenomenological dissertation, Achuff (2018) describes factors influencing teachers' motivation toward longevity in Christian schools in the United States Southeast region. However, the researcher noted that each Christian educational leader is unique, and personal experiences disclosed sensitive issues that did not pertain to longevity but the enhancement of Gospel zeal. Achuff suggests a gap in her research of participants with 20 plus years of experience, inspiring the researcher to fill that gap and other delimitations.

Coding and Measuring Gospel Zeal

The researcher examined Farmer's (2021), DeLange's (2020), Achuff's (2018), and Hurst's (2006) qualitative coding of their collections of data for a detailed description of each Christian educational leader's calling, love of preaching, human interaction, and institutional support. In addition, she compared experiences with the Gospel zeal phenomenon to fill a literature gap. Armstrong's (2009) collection of 10 church figures helped the reader to understand the Christian educational leader's call from God to preach and teach the Gospel.

Armstrong leads the reader to consider that God can transform all humankind, no matter the sin in which he or she falls, which some Christians may fail to recognize. The author interpreted ten individuals' human flaws as catalysts to their Salvation, which allows the Christian educational leader to consider judging less and trusting God more, open the hearts and minds of Christian students, and possibly convert to Christianity. He examined and measured the effect of trauma and human frailty on his Gospel zeal throughout his life.

Fulfillment of the Great Commission

As Armstrong (2009) suggested, the Christian leader could uplift others amid inevitable tribulation, focusing on the belief systems that enhanced Christian educational leaders' Gospel zeal. Every human has free will to enhance the zeal to follow his or her calling. This study considered the significant perceived experiences that cause enhancement in a Christian leader's Gospel zeal and help fulfill the Great Commission. Armstrong's chapter on Charles Simeon, entitled "Overcoming Wounds and Shaping Leaders" (pp. 130-147), mainly indicates the authentic struggles and satanic attacks the Christian leader can expect in his or her lifetime ministry. Therefore, this paper's focus included motives and methods that enhanced Gospel zeal.

Diluting the Gospel Message in Christian Educational Leadership

Data analysis in this research project revealed whether the purposive population had perceived experiences, if any, with contemporary ministry trends that could lead Christian leaders away from preaching Christ Jesus' virgin birth, sacrificial life and ministry, crucifixion death, burial, and resurrection, on the Christian leader. Reapsome (1995) discusses the need to refocus on preaching the Gospel, which is neither deficient in essential doctrine nor adulterated with nonbiblical additives. However, he immediately contradicts himself by cautioning against "An American evangelical culture." The author insinuates that one compartmentalizes his or her

Gospel zeal according to geographic or nationalistic locations. Perhaps such a lack of passion for the whole Gospel message to be shared in a biblical worldview culture could be an experience that affects the Gospel zeal phenomenon.

McKnight (2011), as cited by Hain (2018) in considering that:

Christians today need to fully commit themselves to embrace the story of Jesus as the culmination of Israel's story that they are new creatures, saved and transformed only by the Gospel story. Scripture reminds the Christian that they undergo a regular transformation, and the church can then be seen similarly as a culture that is being likewise transformed (p. 146).

To dilute the Gospel message could affect Gospel zeal if the Christian leader questions the magnitude of his or her calling as an educator, leader, and minister of the Gospel. Blackaby & Blackaby (2011) note that the ultimate goal of spiritual leadership is not to achieve numerical results, accomplish tasks with perfection, or grow for growth's sake. Instead, it is to take their people from where they are to where God wants them to be." For 2000 plus years, the Gospel message has carried people through Christianity, where God places them. As a result, the Christian leader can embrace individual growth with zeal as the church celebrates two millennia of nearing the Great Commission's fulfillment. Experiences that enhanced the Gospel zeal in the purposive population included attitudes about sharing biblical leadership history with the saints who have paved the way. Knight (2006) helps educate the reader about New Testament education, "Jesus was more interested in teaching knowledge that would help men and women in their daily lives than He was in conveying knowledge as an abstraction" (p. 251). Knight expresses that life as a Christian leader does not have to be lofty and that the Gospel-based lifestyle is a daily state of being.

Transformational Growth in Wisdom and Gospel Zeal

Lappenga (2012) reports about Paul's writings in the Book of Galatians describe the transformation in believers' lives because they participate in the crucified Christ and the arrival of the "new cosmos." Moreover, he continues, "Paul suggests that they not deter from the Gospel message. The same transformation is also called 'the scandal of the cross,' and in another context, Paul describes having ζήλος for lowly objects as 'power in weakness' (2 Cor 12:9)" (p. 795). Matsen (2009) suggests that the Christian leader could remain thrilled by his or her salvation but lose zeal and interest in acting as a tool to spread the Gospel message to others. He suggests that the reason could be either an inferiority complex or lack of compassion, both of which could pose self-centered experiences that affect Gospel zeal. However, instead of Gospel zeal waning in Christian educational leaders, an enhancement occurs with maturation and a gained reliance and trust in God through experiences. These experiences create evidence of His faithfulness and the Christian leader's inability to control Gospel zeal other than to rely on God occur.

In 2 Chronicles 1:11-12, Solomon asks God for wisdom, and God answers:

Because this was in your heart and you did not ask for riches, possessions or honor, and personal glory, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself so that you may rule and administer justice to My people over whom I have made you king, wisdom, and knowledge have been granted you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor will those who will come after you. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Perhaps growing older in Christ Jesus is an experience that does not tire but energizes the Christian leader. Could the same be said for Gospel zeal? DeLange (2020) informs that "most pastors believe the call from God is permanent and is never revoked. It may change in location and level of involvement but never in focus" (p. 36). Such an experience could be paramount

after 20 plus years of dedication to sharing the Gospel message through education, leadership, and ministry trials and joys.

Gospel Zeal Redemption

Redemptive salvation in Christ Jesus has been the foundation of Christianity since Jesus' resurrection. Without the divine birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, the human life and ministry of Jesus as fully God and man, the death of Jesus on the cross under the Romans, and His ultimate resurrection that followed, Christianity would not exist. In addition, Ochab (2021) reports, "One in eight Christians worldwide live in countries where they may face persecution" (p. 1), so maintaining Gospel zeal in tribulation is a biblical worldview reality.

Raymond (2014, para 1) writes, "Zeal then is the response to resting in God's promise. You might say that resting produces a flurry (zeal) of activity. When our zeal is low, we can be sure that we are not truly hoping in God (or at least wilting in it)" (Para. 1). For the Christian leader to maintain hope and zeal in the Gospel message and God, perhaps they must count redemption in Christ Jesus as the ultimate deciding experience to retain Gospel zeal. The Book of 2 Corinthians 12:9 explains the relationship between an over-achieving Christian leader and his or her relationship with God, "Nevertheless, He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you [My lovingkindness and My mercy are more than enough—always available—regardless of the situation]; for [My] power is being perfected [and is completed and shows itself most effectively] in [your] weakness.' Therefore, I will all the more gladly boast in my weaknesses so that the power of Christ [may completely enfold me and] may dwell in me." (*Amplified Bible*, 1954) Lias (1897) comments, "The meaning is 'Trust all to me. I will never fail thee nor forsake thee. Even that which thou feelest to be a hindrance will be overruled into a source of strength.' This was the answer; the thorn was not taken away, but strength was given to bear it" (p. 1). The

zeal is obtained by recognizing and receiving what God has already done. His Holy Spirit lives in every believer could be the most exciting experiences to consider that enhanced the Gospel Zeal phenomenon in the Christian leader long term.

Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature

This study considered the Christian educational leaders' perceptions of redemption in the questionnaire and the interview process. Redemption was relevant throughout this study regarding Gospel zeal. The renewal of the mind regarding the everlasting redemption in Christ Jesus is an experience on which the Christian leader can stand and rely.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale behind this study is to maintain Gospel zeal in the purposive participant pool to flag experiences that impact Gospel zeal enhancement. DeLange (2020) reports:

Within 10 years, more than 50 percent of all lead pastors in America will retire or be close to retirement (Barna, 2017). Retired pastors have a wealth of experience and knowledge. They may be a valuable asset in support to lead pastors in ministries by assuming some of the time consuming, non-leadership tasks that occupy a great deal of the lead pastor's time. Ignoring their wealth of information may exacerbate the pending pastor shortage issue. Second, it is important to have an in-depth understanding of the retired pastor's influence in the community and church. Third, it is vital to understand the retired pastor's propensity for ministry and involvement following retirement" (p. 61).

Therefore, it was vital to understand the purposive participants' perceived experiences and understanding of the Gospel zeal phenomenon relating to their biblical calling to help fulfill the Great Commission.

Embracing the Challenge with Zeal

This study included a qualitative phenomenological approach to examine why a Christian leader sustains or enhances Gospel zeal based on experiences stemming from the Gospel zeal phenomenon. Hood (1975) confidently expresses:

It seems fairly obvious that qualitative methodologies are more appropriately applied to some sources and subjects, while quantitative analysis is more useful in other cases. Neither method is inherently more scientific or more humanistic. A poorly conceived, conceptually bankrupt, or statistically unreliable quantitative study would hardly be any more scientific than a qualitative study with similar shortcomings (p. 288).

Because a phenomenological study leans on a qualitative measure, this study incorporated a qualitative instrument of measure by obtaining input from a 10-person expert panel to collect, measure, and then analyze data from a purposive population of Christian educational leaders. The initial focus was to determine the most prominent perceived experiences in a Christian leader's 20 plus year ministry to determine which most impact Gospel zeal. The participants' shared experiences decided the research results and what experiences contribute to the Gospel zeal phenomenon. The qualitative phenomenological study revealed how the Christian leader perceives his or her zeal to preach the Gospel message long term and helps other Christian educational leaders identify if the same perceived experiences enhanced their Gospel zeal phenomenon. Merritt (2020) preaches, "I read biographies to learn how to succeed and how to avoid downfalls."

The Christian leader's responsibility includes honing a desire to learn from peers and exploring new biblical Christian educational leadership methods within the Gospel message's guidelines. In Jesus' time, the citizens of Israel considered him radical to preach in the fields of Galilee, and His disciples and apostles were radically going door-to-door to present the Lord's Supper teach of the Kingdom of God. Perhaps contemporary trends are not destructive to Gospel zeal in the Christian leader if they are fully Gospel-based. Pastor participation in similar scholarly studies reveals their concerns about ongoing issues in 21st Century churches is necessary. Many pastoral problems are not dissimilar from the circumstances of the 1st Century church and the zeal with which the original apostles and disciples carried the Gospel message

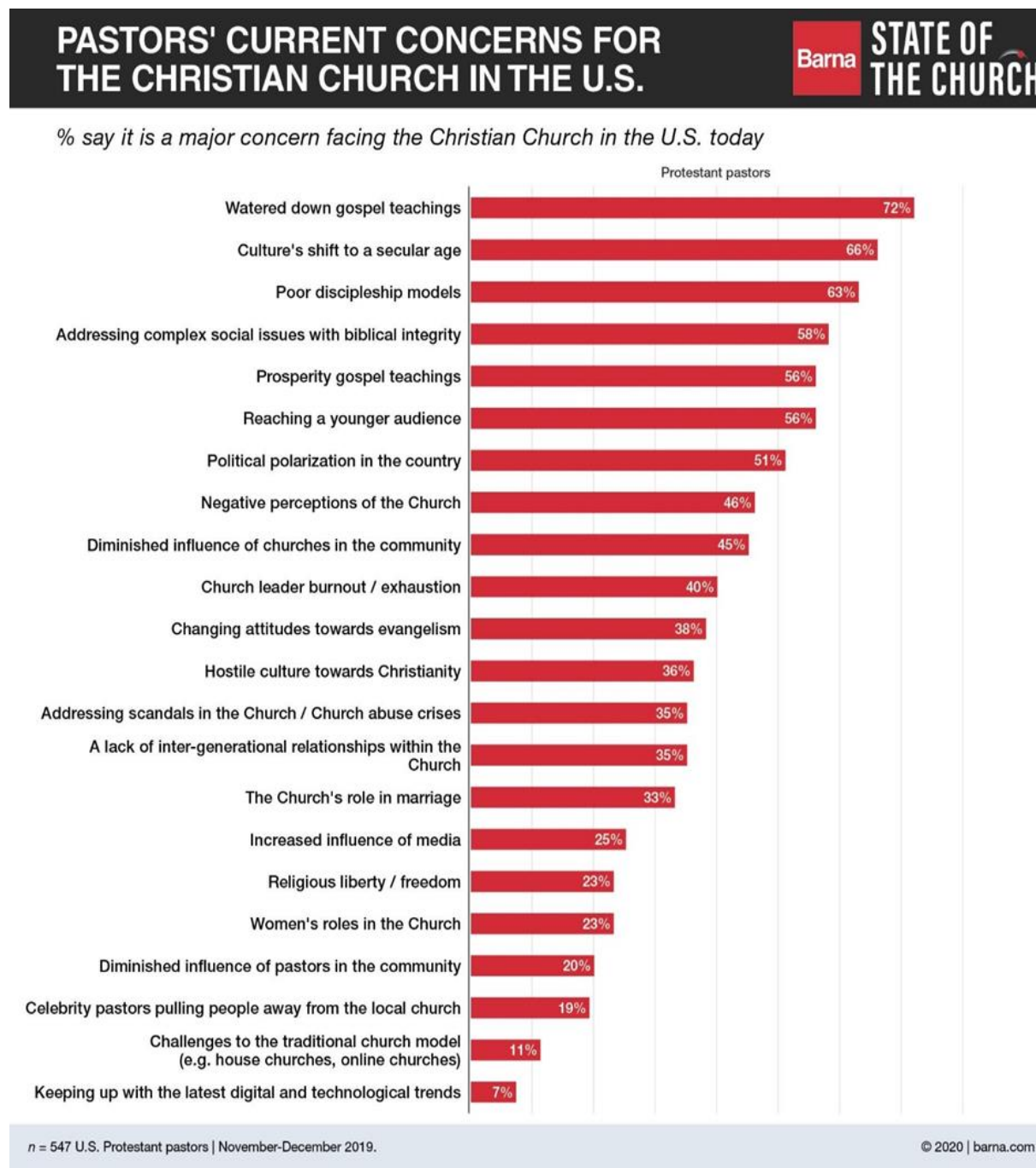
and replicated it in each generation. As Walker (2021) cites Stitzinger (2013), “The clarity and accuracy by which the Gospel message is proclaimed is an essential measuring stick determining effective evangelism” (p. 14).

Walker (2021) continues:

As representatives of the King, Christian ambassadors will be held responsible for the accurate delivery of the message that has been entrusted to them. The Gospel is so fundamental to the Christian faith that it cannot be taken for granted. It compels one to personally, entrust themselves to Jesus Christ, to yield in total submission, and to commit one’s life to His promises completely (p. 14).

By addressing possible perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal, the Christian leader can investigate, identify, analyze, and report a biblical Christian educational leadership worldview through experiences that support maintaining zeal for the Gospel. After which, Christian educational leaders can purposefully replicate experiences to enhance Gospel zeal for themselves and others. For example, Mitchell (2018) describes results from a study in spiritual leadership from a Christian perspective involving “metaphysical change described as the two-fold work of grace that transforms the inner person through the Holy Spirit's new birth” (p. 198). Foust (2000) warns that diluting the Gospel message could cause concerns in the Christian leader. Christian leadership could walk away from the original calling and realize their role with the Great Commission “unfulfilled.” Protestant pastors express concern that Christian leaders could fall prey to a gradual minimizing of the Gospel message. Therefore, identifying perceived experiences that enhanced the Gospel zeal phenomenon in Christian leaders could increase incentives to answer their calling. Such purposeful decision-making could not accept a nonbiblical worldview ministry approach to Christian education and instead enhanced Gospel zeal (See Table 1).

Table 1



Note: The above table demonstrates Protestant pastors' current concerns by primary categories and percentages for the Christian Church in the United States in November-December 2019 (Barna, 2020b).

Barna's Table 1 (2020b) helped create sub-questions concerning perceived experiences, including contemporary ministry trends enhanced Gospel zeal with the purposive participants (See Appendix E, Section III). By taking an active role in maintaining the Gospel zeal in his or her ministry, the Christian leader can purposely avoid the debating society in his or her mind about right and wrong methods to carry out one's calling long term. Focusing on the Gospel instead of performance ratings that are not biblically-based could add to perceived experiences enhancing Gospel zeal. Through quantitative statistical values, Barna (2020b) reveals some variables that "create concerns" for 547 Protestant pastors regarding their churches in November-December 2019. Mitchell (2018) concurs, "Spirituality, religion, and Christianity stem from the leader's heart and will that inform actions and decisions that demonstrate a leader's character. Religious and spiritual perspectives sentiments shape leaders' worldviews and commitments based on the reality in which they live move, and have their being (Acts 17:28; Beers, 2008; Hudnut & Keene, 1987; Sire, 2004)" (p. 7).

The Gap in Literature

This study's focus to fill a literature gap investigated Christian educational leaders' real-life perceived experiences who are currently pastoring for 20 years, have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are exemplars in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older to identify what enhanced their Gospel zeal phenomenon and their passion for fulfilling the Great Commission. This study fills a literature gap suggested in Achuff's (2018) qualitative transcendental phenomenological study about motivation in Christian schoolteachers, Chapter Five. The researcher offers further research to include plus 15 years of experienced participants as suggested by Achuff (2018) but fills the literature gap by using 20 plus years of experience population parameters.

Acts 17:28 reveals the servant leader's relationship with Christ Jesus “For in Him we live and move and exist [that is, in Him, we actually have our being], as even some of] your own poets have said, For we also are His children.” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) To yearn to educate, lead, and minister to fulfill the Great Commission with joy is to know the passion the Christian leader dares to maintain his or her calling to preach the Gospel. Believing in complete redemption of sins through Christ Jesus and His ultimate sacrifice for all of humanity could be an experience that sustains Gospel zeal. Barnes (1950) comments, “Philippians 2:7 states, “But made himself of no reputation - This translation by no means conveys the sense of the original. According to this, it would seem that he consented to be without distinction or honor among people; or that he was willing to be despised or disregarded. The Greek is “*heauton ekenōsen* . The word *kenōō* means literally to empty, ‘to make empty, to make vain or void’” (Biblehub.com, 2004-2021, p. 1).

Living Gospel Zeal

As a spiritual state of being, Gospel zeal could also be affected by the above experiences that cause an enhancement depending on whether or not the Christian leader maintains a long-term biblical Christian worldview. The Gospel is the lesson book of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the individual can identify and assess growth experiences that enhance the Christian leader’s external and internal zeal. Johansen (2019) observes that:

With the *Imago Dei* mission, human biology has a supportive role in ensuring that individuals are able to do their calling. In this light, even man’s biology has a mission. Of course, there are other aspects of reality that human beings also know are true. Our biology responds to spiritual factors in ways not explored (p. 98).

Such studies remind the reader that measuring religious phenomenon and Gospel zeal is no longer farfetched. Lias (1897) comments:

Zealous of good works] The force of this word can be seen in Luke 6:15, ‘Simon who was called the Zealot,’ Acts 21:20, ‘and they are all zealous for the law, Acts 22:3, ‘being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day;’ what the ‘Zealot’ party which set itself up

for extra loyalty and strictness to the Law as a nationalist badge was to the nation at large; what the Jewish Christians were to their better instructed Gentile brethren, and Jews generally to Christians, in respect of the old ritual observances: this Christ would have His Church be to the rest of the world in respect of good works shining before men, ‘zealots of goodness, charged with the genius of goodness—the passion for godliness.’ Dr. Reynolds. So, St Peter again has the word ‘who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealots of goodness?’

Thematically for this study, the realization that the Christian leader’s best guide to understanding himself or herself is by reviewing the Gospel message and reviewing Gospel zeal within could prove an intense educational experience. Mitchell (2018) reveals data based on the results of his study and the recent work of Allbaugh (2017), Crowther (2012), Henson (2014), and Self (2009) about the growing body of research that substantiates that the Scriptural texts provide a rich data source of scientific inquiry. These authors delve into the investigatory science of Christian belief and spirit-filled zeal. Mitchell (2018) states, “There is a need for additional research linking the Christian worldview to leadership and developing new constructs of Christian leadership that are nuanced and shaped by the gifts of the Holy Spirit (p. 200)”. The Gospel zeal phenomenon

In Ellicott’s (1979) Commentary, he cites Hofmann (1877) on the Book of Titus:

That he might redeem us from all iniquity that He for us might pay a ransom, the ransom being His precious blood. Our Savior, by the payment of this tremendous ransom—O deepest and most unfathomable of all mysteries!—released us from everything which is opposed to God’s blessed will. Here the mighty ransom is spoken of as freeing us from the bondage of lawlessness; elsewhere in the divine books, the same ransom is described as delivering us from the penalties of this same breaking the divine law—‘alles was der Ordnung Gottes widerstreitet.’

The Book of Acts 24:22 tells the history of the Apostle Paul in the prison of Caesarea Maritime for two years because he would not quiet himself of the Gospel of Christ Jesus, “But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded [in office] by Porcius Festus; and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). His situation did not

improve, but his Gospel zeal remained. The Gospel zeal of the Apostles is biblically recorded in their joys and struggles to death. The men and women who have helped spread the Gospel for over 2000 years have real-life perceived experiences with the Gospel zeal phenomenon that can inform others how to sustain Gospel zeal to help fulfill the Great Commission. Johansen (2018) studies metaphysics as a rationale for the power of the Gospel and the zeal that humankind embraces and from which he or she could lose hold. Mars (2017) and Johansen (2018) profess that the solution to the church's imminent death is small groups and Life Groups to bolster Christian educational leaders' bonding community of Christians building the church participants. These studies support that using the Book of Acts in the 1st Century church could help the Christian leader's mental health. These seemingly contemporary ministry trends are from the 1st Century church's trends.

The Apostles of Christ Jesus went daily from house-to-house breaking bread, but in the 21st Century, followers of Christ Jesus found other ways to share the Gospel message because of a worldwide pandemic. Because of the 2019-2021 mandates and restrictions about personal contact, new studies will surface and fill the literature gap regarding Christian educational leaders and whether physical corporate fellowship in Christ Jesus enhanced Gospel zeal or not. In 2021, perhaps a lack of physical Gospel-sharing intimacy with other Christian educational leaders and followers could be an experience that enhanced Gospel zeal in the purposive participants. For example, for some Christian educational leaders, seclusion may enhance Gospel zeal as they develop a deeper relationship with Christ Jesus. For others, estrangement from the assembly could affect Gospel zeal. Time alone spent to meditate on God's Word could be what some Christian educational leaders need, while others may tend toward isolation and despair (Barna, 2021). The researcher investigated and identified experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal

in these circumstances. Purposeful duration of intimacy with other believers enhanced Gospel zeal in the purposive participants. The Gospel zeal of the individual Christian leader and the Gospel's zeal is worth investigating.

Gospel Zeal for the Christian Leader and the Whole Church

Curiously, Mars' (2017) study discusses the varying perceptions of the importance of the growth of the church as a whole rather than the growth of the Christian leader as an individual:

In the area of a strong growth rate, the pastors and leaders stated it was weak, and only 30% felt they had a strong growth rate, whereas the congregation feels different as they responded by stating that the growth rate was strong at 94% (p. 119).

The focus of congregates and Christian leaders on growth statistics as a measure of success could affect Gospel zeal for the purposive participants based on how each perceives the importance of popularity based on the size of one's audience and how each group or individual Christian leader defines success. A clear gap exists between the pastoral/leader group and congregates their leadership insights and effectiveness in Mars' study. The survey's motives can be whether or not such polling and the results enhanced Gospel zeal. For the Christian leader, focusing on such statistics and measures of alleged success rates could distract from his or her lifelong calling to maintain Gospel zeal. As a new yet weathered Christian educational leader, Paul of Tarsus states in his Epistle Philippians 4:12:

I know how to get along and live humbly [in difficult times], and I also know how to enjoy abundance and live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret [of facing life], whether well-fed or going hungry, whether having an abundance of being in need. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Paul led with zeal despite his circumstances and leaned on the Gospel to see him through death and to eternal life. Perhaps for the Christian leader, his or her continual remembrance of who he or she is in Christ Jesus and his or her perception of a Gospel-based leadership/servant calling enhances the Gospel zeal phenomenon. Jensen (2017) Cites Robinson (1997), "Our world

has all but forgotten what church is about, [and] so have many churches. The greatest need in our time is for the church to be the church, 'the first church in a 21st-first century world" (p. 115).

Boone, Sr. (2019) reveals in his study of the acts of the Holy Spirit in leadership, "The Christian leader will be challenged periodically and will need to be strengthened regularly. There is no better way to be enhanced than to be empowered by praying the Scriptures for one's personal life" (p. 94). In Boone's study, one could perceive that reiterating the Gospel message to oneself could act as an experience that enhances a Christian leader's Gospel zeal. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 directs the Christian leader, "Rejoice always and delight in your faith; be unceasing and persistent in prayer; in every situation [no matter what the circumstances] be thankful and continually give thanks to God; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus" (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

So biblically, Gospel zeal is evident in the church as a whole and the individual Christian leader. The body of Christ can go out of the church building and preach the Gospel message with zeal while returning to the home base and serving in local communities. An excuse to quit and attitude of offense, insecurity about material wealth, unreciprocated love, and any other reason could act as experiences that affect Gospel zeal if the Christian leader does not remain deeply embedded in the Word of God. Beckman (2020) quotes Stedman (1995), "Great damage has been done to the cause of Christ by unhealthy saints who attempted to carry out evangelistic or social ministry with great zeal -- but without true spiritual health" (p. 39). Such stress could be an experience that affects Gospel zeal. Stedman refers to those who carry the weight of fulfilling the Great Commission on their shoulders without asking for help and perhaps forgetting what God has ordained the Christian leader to do on His behalf. The Amplified Bible (1954) uses the

original Hebrew and Greek word definitions in brackets to translate the more in-depth meaning of what it means to trust God and to possess Gospel zeal as a Christian leader: Hebrews 11:1-2:

Now faith is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things hoped for (divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen [the conviction of their reality—faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses]. For by this [kind of] faith, the men of old gained [divine] approval. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

In John 6:29, God defines belief, “Jesus answered, ‘This is the work of God: that you believe [adhere to, trust in, rely on, and have faith] in the One whom He has sent.’” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) Thus, the Christian leader can consider and perhaps believe that the continuity of Christianity theme is God’s loving zeal for his children. This zeal manifests in each Christian leader acknowledging God’s glory and spreading that Good News of the Kingdom of God. Brown (2012) shares in his thesis that “God’s design for His children, for all ages, has remained fixed – they are to reflect the glories of the eternal creator passionately. God’s zeal for His own glory is unmistakable (Habakkuk 2:14). We were created for His glory (Isaiah 43:7; Ephesians 1:4-6), and we are instructed to do all things for His glory (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Peter 2:12,4:11).” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

The researcher proposes that her study affords Christian educational leaders a biblical, theoretical, and thematic-centered resource to better prepare for the obstacles and possible confusing incentives that affect Gospel zeal in their long-term Christian educational leadership ministry. For example, tensions that arise from varying leadership methods and agendas can increase Gospel zeal when the Christian leader identifies perceived experiences and considers their effects on the Gospel zeal phenomenon. Because the participants of this study were over 60, the research results assist the individual Christian leader, the churches in which they work, and the followers who observe the humility of the Christian leader to undergo a long-term self-pruning process. To allow God to continue His good work to the ends of the earth by such a self-

inventory, the Christian leader can serve better where and when he or she answers. God is the Strength that inspires Gospel zeal and sustains that zeal long term.

Isaiah 40:29 states:

He gives strength to the weary, Even youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, But those who wait for the Lord [who expect, look for, and hope in Him] Will gain new strength and renew their power; They will lift up their wings [and rise up close to God] like eagles [rising toward the sun]; They will run and not become weary, They will walk and not grow tired. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Van Yperen (2002) shares about the benefits of biblical self-appraisal and the rewards that the Christian leader obtains internally and externally when he or she strives to fulfill the Great Commission, “This means that the Gospel offers much more than forgiveness. It promises transformation” (p. 178). In this study, the researcher aimed to learn from the participants as they learn from themselves. This sort of Gospel-led transformation by the Christian educational leader is a theme of this study. To establish which perceived experiences enhanced Gospel zeal most and identify which enhanced the purposive participants’ Gospel zeal for sharing the Gospel message. To secure the continuance of the call for Christian educational leaders to help fulfill the Great Commission, identifying the experiences that enhanced their zeal to preach the Gospel without ceasing fills the literature gap in purposive participants with 20 plus years of experience (Achuff, 2018).

Profile of the Current Study

In summary, the researcher’s incentive for this study was a genuine desire to help Christian educational leaders to maintain their Gospel zeal to proclaim the message of Jesus as Messiah of the redemptive salvation in Christ Jesus for their earthly lives. To fill the literature gap through biblical, theoretical, and thematic resources, she presented the most thorough literature to reveal the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in the Christian leader

without injecting her experiences at this time. The passion behind this study was to provide an educational tool that helps the Christian leader and future Christian educational leaders associate with and incorporate the results into their Christian educational leadership ministries about perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal. Therefore, this literature review is a step in the research to offer scholarly materials that expose a literature gap that needs filling. This entire dissertation occurred under a biblical, theoretical, and thematic canopy of scholarly literature, ever meant to assert Christ Jesus' Glory.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate and reveal the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders in ministry. The researcher aimed to fill the literature gap about this problem through an interview process followed by coding and data analysis to determine themes and patterns. Previous studies concentrate more on Christian educators' longevities than on the qualitative phenomenological findings of Christian educational leaders' experiences maintaining Gospel zeal throughout their lives (Achuff, 2018).

The study of Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders helps fill a literature gap by addressing the imperative need for Gospel zeal, a gift of Christ Jesus through His Holy Spirit for strengthening, comforting, enduring, and sharing the Gospel with zeal through life. The Book of Acts 2:28 reads, "You have made known to me the ways of life; You will fill me [infusing my soul] with joy with Your presence" (*Amplified Bible, 1954*). Reliance of strength in God other than self is a topic that was addressed in this study. The researcher chose to fill the literature gap regarding Gospel zeal to help equip and reveal to Christian educational leaders what experiences with the Gospel zeal phenomenon could enhance their Gospel zeal moving forward.

This chapter discusses the tools used to ask participants questions and, through their answers, glean revelations about the Gospel zeal phenomenon experiences of Christian educational leaders. In addition, this chapter discusses the research questions, the research method, the population, sampling, and data analysis used in this study. Finally, this chapter addresses the need for confidentiality, credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness, as required in a qualitative phenomenological study.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

Sanders (1994) asks the reader, “what stunts spiritual maturity, and why?” (p. 256). Neubert et al. (2015) support that a spiritual calling is associated with higher commitment, job satisfaction, and an effective organization. Barna (2020b) reports that in the 21st Century, 72% of United States Protestant Pastors listed “watering down the Gospel message” as their most current church concern. In its 2019-2020 survey questionnaire, The Barna Group reveals 22 main concerns of the pastors that included 66% concerned with culture shift to a secular age, 63% poor discipline models, 58% addressing complex social issues with biblical integrity, and 56% concerned with prosperity Gospel teachings (Barna, 2019-2020b). The researcher addressed a literature gap regarding the enhancement of Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders with 20 plus years of experience, have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are exemplars in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older. Achuff (2018) reports that Pastors and Christian educational leadership suffer burnout that affects organizational educational leadership in the United States and contributes to shorter teaching and ministering longevities. In 2 Timothy 1:6, the Apostle Paul tells a young Timothy, “For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God.”(*AV Bible, 1954*). “Our zeal and God's gifting on our ministry needs to be constantly refreshed by the Holy Spirit” (Whitney, 2021). Thus, Paul prepares Timothy on how to maintain Gospel zeal.

Hotchkiss and Leshner (2018) cite Vachon (1995) that “Exhaustive review of the international literature on occupational stress conducted supports that in addition to personal variables, organizational and societal issues are major causes of worker stress which lead to burnout.” Thus, Vachon does not discount burnout in ministerial settings. Nevertheless, none of

the former studies focused on the experiences that trigger enhancement of Gospel zeal nor the outcome that enhanced Christian leaders' followers and fellow leaders. In Romans 8:33, Paul reminds the first-century church that God has chosen and organized them to help fulfill the Great Commission. He does not mention a mandatory retirement age or date. Instead, in Romans 12:11, he expresses, "Never lag in zeal and earnest endeavor; be aglow and burning with the Spirit, serving the Lord." (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) DeLange (2020) reports that "Most pastors believe the call from God is permanent and is never revoked" (p. 36). In Revelation 2:4, Christ Jesus reminds the Christian leader, "But I have this [charge] against you, that you have left your first love [you have lost the depth of love that you first had for Me]." (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate and reveal the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders in ministry. The researcher defined the Gospel zeal phenomenon as:

Zeal in Christianity is a burning desire to please God, do His will, and advance His glory in the world in every possible way. It is a desire, which is not natural to men or women. It is a desire which the Spirit puts in the heart of every believer when they are converted to Christ, however, a desire which some believers feel so much more strongly than others that they alone deserve to be called 'zealous' men and women (Ryle, 1880, p. 116).

Ryle (1880) also relates:

A zealous man in religion is pre-eminently a man of one thing. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, whole-hearted, fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing, he cares for only one thing, he lives, for one thing, he is swallowed up in one" (p. 117).

The theory guiding this study was that each Christian educational leader is unique.

Nevertheless, within the assembly of Christ Jesus, the leaders' experiences regarding Gospel zeal enhancement can impact others, who willingly give their lives to Christ Jesus and desire to maintain the zeal to share the Gospel message until the Lord returns to earth for His church.

Research Questions

The researcher used studies that suggest perceived experiences that could enhance the Gospel zeal phenomenon for the qualitative protocol questionnaire.

The following research questions guided this study at different research intervals:

RQ1. What lived experiences do Christian leaders believe enhanced their Gospel zeal?

RQ2. What do Christian leaders perceive as major challenges to maintaining Gospel zeal?

RQ3. What do Christian leaders perceive as the best way to enhance Gospel zeal in new believers?

For this phenomenological study, the rationale for these questions was to investigate and identify the nature of Christian educational leaders' real-life experiences in their 20 plus years of ministry settings regarding perceived experiences and contemporary ministry trends that could enhance Gospel zeal. The rationale included identifying the perceived experiences that enhanced their zeal to preach the Gospel and thus equip and empower them and others to sustain Gospel zeal while helping to fulfill the Great Commission for their lifetime.

Research Design and Methodology

This study was exploratory and examined firsthand experiences of Christian education leaders who had encountered the Gospel zeal phenomenon. This researcher used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) because it is open-ended and semi-structured (Smith et al., 2009). This interview method involved the researcher using open-ended questions to draw out the real-life experiences of the participants. The qualitative interview method allowed the participant to freely tell their story in their time and manner. After much exploration, the researcher found few studies on the phenomenon of Gospel zeal. In Achuff's (2018) Chapter Five analysis, she suggests a need for further research for Christian educational leaders with

more than 15 years of experience and what perceived experiences enhanced their teaching “sustainability” (p. 46). This researcher aimed to fill the literature gap by interviewing nine purposive participants by the deadline. She defined the population characteristics by incorporating delimitations of people who were currently pastoring for 20 years, had a good reputation, were passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, were exemplars in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older.

Creswell (1998) describes qualitative research as:

An inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher built a complex, holistic picture, analyzed words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted the study in a natural setting (p. 15).

This study focused on the personal experience revealed in interviews that identified the subject’s beliefs about the enhancement of Gospel zeal. Furthermore, this qualitative research process:

Involved emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's virtual setting, data analysis by drawing a general conclusion from a set of specific observations, building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4).

Moustakas (1994) and Achuff (2018) suggest that “the phenomenological data analysis winnows significant statements and meanings to develop descriptions that arrive at the essences of the experiences” (p. 47). Creswell (2018) cites Giorgi (2009) and Moustakas (1994), who report regarding phenomenological research, “This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews” (p. 13). The researcher began by conducting a qualitative Delphi study to narrow the consensus from a panel of 10 experts to develop an in-depth interview questionnaire with open-ended questions for participants (Bredfeldt, 2018-2019). The phenomenological qualitative design helped the researcher create a

detailed theoretical description of each participant leader's individual experiences and provide a narrative analysis with the open-ended question method (Roberts, 2010) to limit bias. She then conducted two Pilot Studies to hone the interview process and found no need to change the protocol questionnaire format. The Delphi Method has provided a smooth-flowing interview experience for the interviewee and the interviewer.

This design was appropriate for the study because a qualitative constructionist IPA provided a blended approach for focusing on and a detailed examination of the Gospel zeal phenomenon-lived experience. The phenomenon included the Christian educational leader's background, experiences, and perception of experiences enhancing their Gospel zeal. IPA allowed the researcher to actively participate in the interpretive process (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). With broad and general questions, individuals expressed their developed subjective meanings from their experiences (Creswell, 2018) by elaborating on the fundamental questions and discussing the experiences that stemmed from them. The interviewer asked nine individuals across organizations to examine emotional experiences “across a broader range of occupations and organizations” (Fiebig & Kramer, 1998, p. 537). Not all Christian leaders shared duplicate titles. This study sought to identify themes in Gospel zeal phenomenon experiences across various settings through an interpretive approach.

Setting

The setting for all interviews was selected based on convenience for the subjects. All interviews occurred virtually because of COVID-19 virus regulations (USDH, 2021) and the participants' vulnerable age group of over 60 years status. The researcher met none of the participants physically face-to-face, only virtually. Some participants were active in both online and pulpit ministries, both virtual and in-person, and some found the setting easier than others,

though all participants could log into Microsoft® Teams without difficulty. Settings ranged from participant homes, offices, and church grounds. The researcher suggested and used Microsoft® Teams. The participants were familiar with the technology necessary to accept an invitation and join the virtual interviews. If a participant could not access Microsoft® Teams, he or she had church staff or a family member assist and, after assisting, left the room during the interview. The researcher maintains password-secure files and thumb drives of interviews locked in a safe at home, with a codebook locked in a separate safe. In this qualitative phenomenological interview study, the participants had the power to make their setting decisions rather than the interviewer. They chose the dates and times before the final deadline and their locations for the interviews. Karnieli-Miller et al. (2009) write that:

The feeling of true participation is based on a message of dignity and acknowledgment of one's equal right to contribute knowledge and an experience that matches the message. This message need not imply a simplistic view of a symmetric partnership but genuine respect for individual perceptions and experiences (p. 286).

The researcher “used the participants’ own language in writing, to best reflect what they wanted to say” (Forbat & Henderson, 2005, p. 1125) and related to each participant that his or her comfort during the interview was necessary. Therefore, all interviewees chose the preferred setting from their locations, and the researcher adapted to the interviewees’ timeframes and time zone to create a comforting and confidential interview experience. Virtual interviews were deemed the safest because of COVID-19 restrictions and proved the most convenient for the interviewees. Therefore, this study's setting did not affect the study's outcome per se, as the researcher respected the participants' perceptions and experiences as Christian educational leaders, whatever their setting and in whatever time zone or location they choose for interviews. For example, one pastor asked if he could interview over the telephone but was eager to interview on Microsoft® Teams for the recording.

The description of the geographic location of interviewees was broad only insofar as time zones and the availability in the mission field to schedule a time. All interviewees had one or two-syllable pseudonyms, with the first letters of the pseudonym ranging alphabetically from A to P, not determined by gender or nationality. This method created confidential data collection and results, in which the reader can better identify with the interviewees without revealing identifiable personal names or locations. The list of names started with the English Alphabet letters “A” to “B” to “C,” with random, one- or two-syllable names chosen by the researcher. Each interviewee had his or her file labeled by his or her pseudonym. Recordings were labeled on a thumb drive as “Transcript A, Transcript B, Transcript C,” and so on.

Participants

Research Population

This study consisted of purposive Christian educational leader participants whom the researcher defined as having characteristics of all people who are currently pastoring for 20 years, have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are exemplars in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older.

Research Sample(s) and Sampling Technique

Selecting the specific sample and the number of people in the study was a crucial choice by the researcher. For this study, the researcher used purposive sampling. Yin (2011) explains that purposive sampling is “the goal or purpose for selecting the specific study units to have those that yielded the most relevant and plentiful data, given your topic of study,” specifically in a qualitative study (p. 88). Achuff reports that Miles and Huberman (1994) define “a criterion-based strategy for selecting participants, as sampling where cases meet some criterion.” The researcher chose Christian educational leaders she defined as people who have pastored for 20

years, have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are exemplars in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older. The criterion for this study included Christian leaders with Gospel zeal phenomenon experience. Creswell (1998) writes that criterion-based selection supports phenomenological studies when each participant represents an individual who had experienced the particular study phenomenon. Therefore, the sampling technique was appropriate.

In this phenomenological study, the primary collection method was thorough and used in-depth interviews (Creswell, 1998). The initial qualitative purposive sampling process resulted in the researcher selecting participants she had witnessed preaching the Gospel under diverse circumstances of joy and duress. However, these Christian leaders did not meet the criteria post-proposal defense. Therefore, the participants for this study were referred by pastors that had been recruited but did not meet the researcher's post prospectus defense criteria: Christian educational leaders who are currently pastoring for 20 years, have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel, and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are exemplars in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older. After IRB approval, the researcher approached each interview candidate individually and confidentially through an e-mail account, using IRB-provided recruitment template letters and consent forms as attachments (See Appendices A, B, C, & D). She also communicated by telephone with the permission of the interviewee to set up dates and times for interviews. After consent, the researcher assigned each participant a pseudonym, chosen solely alphabetically, with no link to any participant's identity, gender, nationality, or title. The participant was given a name alphabetically and addressed by his or her pseudonym to maintain confidentiality from consent moving forward. Their institution of affiliation was referred to as "Church A" or "Church B" on the protocol questionnaire to

coincide with the first letter of the assigned pseudonym but was not addressed during the interviews. Instead, interviewees referred to “my church.” Each participant chose an interview date and time in his or her time zone within three weeks of the signed consent e-mail acceptance and confirmation of access to compatible vetted software.

Wilson (1952) writes about the power of anonymity in a fellowship he helped start in 1935, based on the biblical Book of James, “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.” Though this study was confidential and not anonymous, the researcher maintained the same spiritual principle of confidentiality not to create a false hierarchy of titled Christian leaders. She kept the study focused on the criterion and the equality of the participants by using pseudonyms. She focused on the safety of participants and protected the identities of the nine interviewees. She maintained a kind a gentle rapport with all her interviewees. Each Christian educational leader had decided to preach the Gospel for a lifetime. Their ministry settings remain unidentified using broad terms, such as regions, regarding locations on earth. The researcher does not mention the names of churches or missions. The participants are too widespread to use demographics as a delimitation for this study. Some participants are affiliated with specific Christian denominations, while others affiliate with non-denominational Christian missions. By not affiliating with one particular denomination, the study gained a broader scope of recognizing the Gospel zeal phenomenon in Christian educational leadership worldwide. This study's main delimitations were that each interviewee was currently pastoring for 20 years, has a good reputation, is passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, is an exemplar in ministry, and is 60 years of age or older. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate and reveal the perceived experiences that

enhanced the Gospel zeal phenomenon in these purposive participants engaged in ministry in settings accessible by the internet or telephone. However, in 2021, online interviews were the best and most realistic setting.

The qualitative purposive sampling method allowed the researcher to recruit and interview nine participants (Bredfeldt, 2018-2019) who had been referred by participants she had observed preaching the Gospel with varying experiences with Gospel zeal. Leedy and Ormrod (2019) define this snowball sampling as, “a method of identifying participants that involves asking existing participants to refer or recruit other individual (e.g., colleagues or acquaintances) who also have experiences and knowledge relevant to the topic under study” (p. 420). The researcher’s initial participants did not qualify for the study after the proposal defense but could refer candidates who met the revised criteria. Creswell (2014) and Roberts (2010), as cited by Walker (2021), explain qualitative research and the constructs that employ the use of theory in several ways, “Themes that participants uncover during interviews can lead to a basis of explaining behavior and attitudes and could include variables, constructs, and hypotheses” (pp. 83-84). This study investigated the experiences linked to the nine participants' attitudes with the Gospel zeal phenomenon. Since questions and answers within qualitative research tend to be open-ended, this study acted on Alderfer’s ERG Theory concerning the experiences of each participant. An interpretive lens or perspective provided a broad view of experiences to frame the researcher's developed sub-questions. The sub-questions influenced data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014). Roberts (2010) concludes, “theoretical framework provides the boundaries, or scaffolding, for the [research] study” (p. 147). All participants spoke English at an American standard eighth-grade level. The questions were critiqued, honed, and then structured using a

Delphi Method team of 10 experts to reveal answers that were not prompted nor expected by the researcher (See Appendix E, Section III).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role in the study entailed conducting interviews of purposive participants by compiling data from interviews and explaining the data analysis. The researcher used her speaking, listening, and documentation skills regarding the questionnaire's questions and answers, as she took few notes. The expert panel created a protocol questionnaire that provided research questions about Christian educational leaders' Gospel zeal ministry experiences. She determined how perceived experiences enhanced Gospel zeal by listening to the recordings, using transcribed interview data entered into NVivo (2021b) vetted software, and data analysis of each transcription for the final results. With this data analysis, the researcher aimed to fill a literature gap to help others learn what perceived experiences enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders until Christ Jesus returns for His church. The researcher acted as the only interviewer for this study and did not offer her individual experience. Leery and Ormrod (2019) describe this challenging, intentional action as "bracketing or epoche" (p. 233). Polkinghorne (1989) explains "the necessity in a phenomenological study to set boundaries for future research and readers is to clarify the experience of the interviewee" (p. 46).

Creswell (2018) directs regarding the writing of personal experiences in a phenomenological study, "The researcher's training and experiences also influence the choice of approach...individuals who enjoy writing in a literary way or conducting personal interview make up-close observations" (p. 20). The researcher was aware that coherence in writing defines ideas that tie together and logically flow from one sentence to another, not confusing any parties. In interviews, specific words provided "linkage" (p. 84). NVivo (2021b) provided cohesive

codes, threads, patterns, and themes. The researcher's role included creating settings for participants that did not stray from the purpose of the research and allowed for detailed documentation of all interaction and feedback within the research process, within the boundaries of confidentiality for physical and psychological safety measures. The interviewer did not know interviewees personally, as candidates who did not meet the criteria post-proposal defense referred them to the researcher. Confidentiality was secured even with pastor referrals and by using coding schemes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019) that did not identify personal information about the participants or the institutions in which they preach in the study.

Ethical Considerations

When dealing with human participants, researchers must continually anticipate and be attentive to any ethical issues that may occur. According to Creswell (2014), “Ethical issues today command more attention than ever, including any study with human participants that must receive prior approval from the IRB.” Therefore, this researcher sought approval from the IRB at Liberty University and did not interview any participants from a vulnerable population. Vulnerable includes minors under the age of 18, mentally incompetent individuals, victims of crimes, persons with neurological impairments, pregnant women or fetuses, prisoners, and individuals with AIDS” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 91). In this study, the risk to participants was considered minimal. Based on the nature of the interviews' conduction and the study's topic, the risks in the study do not seem “appreciably greater than the normal risks of day-to-day living” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 102).

This interview process gleaned information willingly provided and not by pressing the interviewee for selective answers or responses. This social science study informed each interviewee of the consent, interview, and withdrawal process and made each interviewee as

comfortable as possible for their private interview. The researcher followed informed consent per §46.117 (See Appendix A). The researcher made adequate provision for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects through private interviews. When appropriate, the researcher provided sufficient conditions to protect subjects' privacy and maintained the confidentiality of data with saved computer passwords, locked hard copies, and thumb drives.

Documentation was appropriate, per §46.117. There were adequate provisions to protect each subject's privacy and maintain the confidentiality of data. No vulnerable populations were used in this research. Additional safeguards, such as not mentioning names or institutions of employment, have been included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects. All participants received pseudonyms as soon as they agreed to participate in the study. After signing a consent form, the participants were referred to only by their pseudonyms throughout the study.

Anticipating ethical issues during the study was part of the writing process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Patton (2002) suggests that qualitative "analysts must monitor and report their analytical procedures and processes as fully and truthfully as possible" (p. 434). Before the study, the researcher identified the gatekeepers and other authorized personnel to obtain permission to interview participants for this phenomenological study. A contractual agreement was drawn, listing the researcher and institution's detailed agreement regarding the study's goals, processes, and length. In addition, the contract included details of the procedures if any of the information obtained would be published. Also, a consent form was required from all participants that contained information acknowledging human rights protection.

As according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the form included:

Identification of the researcher, identification of the sponsoring institution, identification of the purpose of the study, identification of the benefits for participants, identification of

the extent and type of participant involvement, notation of risks to the participant (which in this study are low to none), a guarantee of confidentiality to the participant, assurance that the participant can withdraw at any time, provision of names of persons to contact if questions arise (p. 163)

There were no vested relationships between the chosen institutions or participants in the research that benefited the researcher or the study outcome. The researcher used a systematic sample to select purposive individuals for interviews. Thus, there was no cost to participants. The need for ethics includes “human rights, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation” (Roberts, 2010, p. 31). Prior established codes of ethics within the social sciences establish how the researcher carried out her study. For example, Rossman and Rallis (1998), as cited by Roberts, state, “ethics in research serves as a standard for the ethical practice of research and are based on moral principles such as utilitarianism (the greatest good for the greatest number), theories of individual rights (the rights of the individual may supersede the interests of the greatest number), and theories of justice (fairness and equality)” (pp. 48-49).

Creswell (2018) reminds the researcher to enforce various ethical issues before conducting research:

Examine professional association standards, seek IRB approval, gain local permission from site and participants, select a site without a vested interest in the study, and negotiate the interviewee's authorship rites and publication interests. Ethical consideration includes 'giving credit for work done on the project'“ (p. 89).

All of the above considerations were applied, the researcher identified the research problem for the benefit of the participants, disclosed the purpose of the study, did not pressure anyone into signing consent forms, respected the cultural norms and charters of all societies, and was sensitive to the needs of vulnerable individuals (Creswell, 2018). In addition, confidentiality was secured using coding schemes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019) that did not identify personal information about the participants or the institutions contributing to the research. The researcher

made a few written notes and transcribed them electronically for storage. The research's hard copy transcripts remain in a locked digital safe at her home and on a thumb drive. Once identified, qualified participants were emailed a description of the research, IRB acknowledgments, confidentiality agreement, and consent form using his or her pseudonym.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Data collection occurred by a qualitative phenomenological interview process with the interviewer as an instrument and electronic coding software for helping categorize and analyze responses. The data collection process included a set of honed questions linked to the research questions, an expert panel to help protocol questionnaire development, handwritten and electronic notes, audio and video recordings and virtual meetings, and password secured computer data with vetted NVivo (2021b) software. The researcher used two locked home safes for hard copies of handwritten or typed materials and thumb drives. For interviews, the researcher used audio, and video recordings on vetted Microsoft® Teams software collected safely and confidentially for storage in the researcher's password-protected home computer. Microsoft® (2021) notes, "video conferencing can save time, boost productivity, promote collaboration, and help cut some costs such as travel expenses."

All documentation of participants' contributions and interviews, including hard copies of written and typed transcriptions and thumb drives, are stored in a locked safe at the researcher's secure home for three years after dissertation publication. After three years, all documentation, including computer files, hard copy transcriptions, and thumb drives, will be erased, deleted, shredded, burned, and smashed with a hammer.

Collection Methods

As briefly mentioned in the ethical consideration section, this phenomenological study used interviews to collect data. Marshall and Rossman (2006) explain that phenomenological interviews have a purpose to “describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share and are labor-intensive” (pp. 104-105). Therefore, the researcher conducted in-depth, semi-structured, detailed, one-hour interviews with participants to identify themes and patterns in describing their perceived experiences with the Gospel zeal phenomenon. Yen (2011) instructs that the questionnaire will guide the interviewer through an interview protocol “with a subset of topics relevant to the interview” to collect data from the interviewee. Thus, the interviewer used open-ended interview questions to compel responses from interviewees.

Data collection was most effectively achieved through forty-five-to-sixty-minute semi-structured, one-to-one interviews (Smith et al., 2012). Yin (2011) notes that “recording what you need without disrupting a participant’s rhythm or pace” (p. 156) was critical. The interviewer promoted participant engagement, eliciting thoughtful, authentic responses around the research questions. Therefore, it was imperative that the researcher establish a rapport with participants and help them feel comfortable and become accustomed to talking and not distracted by her note-taking. Open-ended interview questions allowed for interpretation and encouraged participants to speak at length (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2012). The semi-structured interview method allowed for fluidity. Helfrick (2019) reminds that “as IPA researchers want participants to engage with the questions and respond meaningfully organically, the prepared questions and corresponding prompts serve as guides as opposed to restrictions” (See Appendix E). When appropriate, the researcher elected to adjust the order of the questions to maintain the interview dialogue flow (Smith et al., 2012). Any changes only occurred when the interviewee

answered the following question before being asked. The unpredictability of IPA in-depth interviews was essential as it aligned with the inductive principles of phenomenological research. IPA researchers strive to uncover emotional responses that authentically reveal insights about the participants' situated perspectives about an experience, and researchers do not want interview schedules to "detract from the participants' experience accounts" (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2012); so, the researcher let the interviewee freely answer all questions.

The interview process was fluid, considered each participant's needs. The open-ended nature of the questions encouraged participants to speak freely, tell stories, provide anecdotes, and share in a manner most comfortable to them. Interviews were conducted in a neutral-virtual location selected by each participant to ensure they felt comfortable and safe, allowing for the vulnerability necessary to elicit authentic, thoughtful responses about their experiences with enhancing the Gospel zeal phenomenon. Interviews were conducted virtually and were digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher through Microsoft® Teams. Recordings were maintained for accuracy and security using a recording audio/video device. All names on transcripts were changed to pseudonyms. The recordings were used in conjunction with the transcriptions to verify responses and reflect upon the bodily and emotional affect revealed through participants' responses. Affective insights were leveraged when considering how to interpret and code responses during data coding and analysis. The interviewer reviewed the transcript quickly after the completion of each interview.

Data Coding and Analysis Process

Helfrick (2019) reminds that Smith et al. (2012) explicate, "The analysis process for IPA is iterative and inductive, in contrast to a systematic sequence of steps to be completed, as is often found in quantitative research." This iterative process supports the subjective

phenomenology that characterizes IPA, as the researcher's relationship to the data could shift as more information and insight are gleaned through each phase of analysis (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2012). The researcher strove to derive an insider's perspective on the phenomenon under investigation, drawing from the transcript to analyze verbatim excerpts that expressed the participant's experiences (Reid et al., 2005). IPA researchers work to stay true to the participant's voice and pauses to decipher the interpretation of experiences. This subjective narrative was authentically captured and explained through concurrent data analysis processes, which as Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) opine, involves examining additional research documents a participant chooses to share. "A detailed explanation of how the researcher engages in the mapping of various data points works to provide credibility to qualitative research" (Helfrick, 2019, p. 98).

Chenail (1995) asserts that this process helps create situational validity that provides the reader with a context for the study and how data is interpreted. Creswell and Poth (2018) further stress the necessity for a researcher to be open and transparent, detailing how the information is viewed, analyzed, and interpreted as a means for building credibility. This researcher used Statistics Solutions (2021) for collaboration to help create unbiased data input, coding, and analysis methods to investigate threads and patterns from the interviewees' confidential interview transcripts using only pseudonyms. IPA research's analytic process required balancing "emic and etic positions" (Reid et al., 2005; Smith, 2004). In contrast to its counterpart, the etic perspective encompasses an external view on culture, language, meaning associations, and real-world events. The etic perspective is often associated with the researcher in social behavior research since it comprises the "structures and criteria developed outside the culture as a framework for studying the culture" (Willis, 2007, p.100). The emic position was used when the

researcher engaged in analysis from a phenomenological, insider position, striving to present unique constructs to the participants, prioritizing the participants' worldview as the core of the analyses. The etic position was engaged when the researcher reviewed the data from an interpretative, outsider position, striving to make sense of the participants' experiences and elucidate patterns and themes that answer the research questions (Reid et al., 2005). Both positions were used in the coding process.

Saldana (2016) describes the organization of themes and patterns: Pre-coding of the primary raw data, including the interview transcript, field notes, and analytic memos, was manually conducted using inductive, open coding that allowed the researcher to generate tentative labels detailing ideas and themes that became apparent upon initial readings. The researcher examined her "jottings from field notes and analytic memos to conduct mini-analyses about what she thought she was learning both during and after data collection, using them as a lens for reviewing the transcript data" (Hendrick, 2019, p. 99). She reviewed transcripts to correct misspelled words. As suggested by Saldana (2016), "Preliminary codes were made to inform the next steps for the formal, first cycle coding. A close line-by-line analysis led to the identification of emerging patterns."

NVivo (2021b) coding was used to connect each participant's direct quotes from the transcript to provide insight into general trends within the data (Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2016). In addition, emotion coding was successively added to the NVivo (2021b) coding to convey the impact of experiences upon the participant (Miles et al., 2014), such as pauses and laughter. Evaluation coding was employed in conjunction with emotion coding to assign discernments about the significance of the events surrounding the participant's experiences with fluctuating Gospel zeal (Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2016). Next, provisional coding was used to

code the data based on categories derived from the literature review and the theoretical framework (Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2016). This method occurred individually after each interview, concurrently if interviews overlapped, and then was reviewed as an aggregate of data after all interviews were completed and uniquely coded (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2012).

The interviewees' cross-analyses generated different patterns and themes to interpret participants' accounts, meanings, and significance. Helfrick (2019) describes, "Abstraction will be subsequently used with the help of the NVivo (2021b) software to identify patterns between emergent themes and patterns to develop super-ordinate themes," and "the process of subsumption will be employed to bring together related themes under one, super-ordinate theme" (Smith et al., 2012). The researcher engaged Statistics Solutions (2021) services, an organization specializing in qualitative data analysis using NVivo (2021b) data entry and collection to consult. In this phenomenological study, relationships between themes were analyzed through the lenses of the study's situational context, relevant literature, and the theoretical framework (Smith, 2004).

The resulting prominent codes were grouped, and the researcher engaged in additional reflection to note significant impressions of the data. For example, she wanted to investigate if Christian educational leaders in different settings and callings experience the same Gospel zeal phenomenon. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate and identify the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders in ministry. Therefore, IPA was appropriate as it strives to "secure detailed, personal accounts of individuals' experiences with phenomena" (Smith, J.A. et al., 2009; Smith, J.A. et al., 2012). The researcher used a biblical worldview theoretical framework to guide the study using IPA.

Understandings gleaned through the literature review supported impressions to ground the unbiased findings within the research context.

Data Storage

Participants' confidentiality was a priority, and steps occurred to protect their rights and expectations throughout the study. Pseudonyms were used throughout the study, and the audio recordings did not capture identifying information; this will ensure that no person other than the researcher will access participants' personal information. Paper copies of handwritten materials and field notes are maintained in a locked safe in the researcher's private home. Only pseudonyms were used within the interviews and transcriptions to ensure confidentiality. Per IRB, all data materials will be stored for three years, after which they will be permanently destroyed. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the purpose of data collection in a qualitative study is to select purposeful sites for understanding the problem and questions posed by the research. The process will intentionally begin by obtaining permission for the study, identifying participants, conducting virtual interviews, acquiring information, and analyzing the results. The initial results will be used "to plan (or build on to) the second, qualitative phase," (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 278) Alternatively, follow-up dialogues could be needed with individual participants.

The first data collection method included interviewing participants with audio, video, and manual note-taking followed by transcription. The researcher opted to include any written materials a participant chose to have, which they did not. Initially, the researcher took qualitative memos to record her positionality "to reflect on her background, experience, past and current social roles and personal biases relating to participants, setting, and or the topic of Gospel zeal fluctuation" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 238), and to clarify what her position is as an

interviewer instrument. Qualitative memos were transcribed by hand and transferred to typewritten pages for secure documentation and safekeeping in a locked safe. Because this is a phenomenological study of a particular phenomenon about the Christian educational leadership ministry typically lived and perceived by human beings, the researcher attempted to answer what perceived experiences relate to the phenomenon of Gospel zeal by conducting interviews. Moustakas (1994) modifies Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's method of analyzing data through steps by using the full description of the interviewer's own experience of the phenomenon and from the verbatim transcripts of the interviewer's experience, co-researchers' experiences, and "individual textural-structural descriptions of the meaning and essences of the experience" to uncover if a universal experience exists (p. 122).

Patton (2002) writes, "The goal of qualitative data analysis is to uncover emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings. Integration of these components produces themes in data that identify patterns." This study aimed to reveal and examine how and why Christian education leaders' zeal to preach the Gospel is enhanced after 20 plus years of experience by listening to and documenting their experiences linked to the research questions and the Gospel zeal phenomenon. Sage (n.d., p. 367) cites Meister (2010), who is interested in the phenomenon of change and how it impacts practicing educators. Meister conducted in-depth interviews with ten teachers asking, "How were they able to remain engaged and enthusiastic throughout their teaching tenure?" and "How did they experience professional growth?" (p. 881). When beginning the research process, the researcher identified the research problem for the benefit of the participants, disclosed the purpose of the study, did not pressure anyone into signing consent forms, respect the cultural norms and charters of all societies, and be sensitive to the needs of vulnerable individuals (Creswell, 2018). In addition, collecting data from

individuals willing to share their real-life experiences with the Gospel zeal phenomenon in interviews made their responses less likely to be manufactured.

Instruments and Protocols

Data collection occurred by a qualitative phenomenological interview process with the interviewer as an instrument, open-ended interview questions, an expert panel of Liberty University administrators to hone questions and create an unbiased protocol. The researcher's Dissertation Supervisor suggested contacting a doctoral graduate of the Liberty University leadership degree program, an on-ground contact, Liberty University employed. The suggested leader provided the researcher names of experts. The researcher followed the Liberty University Doctor of Education in Christian Leadership Program Handbook (2020-2021), stating that "Any outside contact used in the Prospectus or Dissertation process, including consultation with outside academics or professionals, must be approved the Dissertation Supervisor or the Program Director." The Dissertation Supervisor approved the Delphi Method Panel. The researcher received a list of ten experts who were all willing doctoral experts employed by Liberty University. The experts helped form a professional-structured unbiased protocol questionnaire by reconstructing a protocol questionnaire provided initially by the researcher.

After completing the ten experts' critiques and suggestions, and a completed protocol questionnaire using the Delphi Method, the researcher, could start her interviews and use vetted electronic coding software to help categorize and analyze responses. The data collection process included a set of honed questions linked to the research questions. An expert panel helped with questionnaire development. Next, as an instrument, the researcher collected handwritten and electronic notes of interviews with password-protected computer audio and video recordings with vetted Microsoft® Teams. Security included password-protected computer data entry and

analysis with vetted NVivo (2021b) software and a locked home safe for hard copies of handwritten and typed materials and thumb drives. Statistics Solutions (2021) consulted the researcher about NVivo (2021b) software as the researcher had already assigned confidential pseudonyms.

For interviews, the researcher used audio, and video recordings on vetted Microsoft® Teams software collected safely and confidentially for storage in the researcher's password-protected home computer. All documentation of participants' contributions and interviews, including hard copies of written and typed transcriptions and thumb drives, will remain stored in a password-protected home computer at the researcher's secure home and a locked safe at the researcher's secure home for three years after the publication date of the dissertation. After three years, all documentation, including computer files, hard copy transcriptions, and thumb drives, will be erased, deleted, shredded, burned, and smashed with a hammer.

A cover letter was included explicitly stating what was being requested of the individual, the time involved, and the purpose and use of the research. After the study, academics and professionals who participated in the study received a letter of appreciation and a summary of the findings from the researcher. Acknowledgment of the participation of academics, professionals, and volunteers is made as appropriate. In this qualitative study, the researcher acted as a human instrument to extract information from participants in individual interviews about their perceived experiences that enhanced their Gospel zeal phenomenon. First, the general interview procedures that this researcher employed were 30-minute to 45-minute interviews. The expected sample size was six to twelve participants. Second, in-depth interviews were relatively unstructured (Leedy and Ormrod, 2019), and the interviewees elaborated on the questions in their own experiences.

Finally, because the purposive population is all seasoned Christian educational leaders, the questionnaire included language related to the field that everyone could understand.

The interviewer structured the interviews informally with each participant's interview setting. The researcher interviewed virtually from her home using Microsoft® Teams or similar security software. Qualitative interviews allowed respondents to share information in their own words. The interviewer took written notes to add to audio and video recordings to gather detailed information. Saylor Academy (2021) observes that “drawbacks of qualitative interviews include reliance on respondents’ accuracy and their intensity in terms of time, expense, and possible emotional strain” (Chapter 9). However, the researcher listened, documented, and recorded how perceived experiences enhanced Gospel zeal from interviewees’ verbal and non-verbal responses to set questions that became flexible. Yin (2011) suggests that the participants guide the interview, not the researcher. The researcher's instruments and protocols ensured only a recording device for research interviews. She financed the research, including recording devices.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted to connect to the purpose statement by asking interviewees questions that linked their perceived experiences with the Gospel zeal phenomenon. Maxwell (2013) writes, “data in a qualitative study can include virtually anything that you see, hear, or that is otherwise communicated to you while conducting the study” (p. 87). The researcher made handwritten notes throughout the interview while remaining attentive. Guest et al. (2017) consider that “an effective in-depth interview instrument begins with a review of the project’s research objectives since the nature of the data one is trying to capture will influence the format and content of the instrument and the questions within it” (p. 16). The researcher focused on the main research questions that she intended to answer. The primary content domains will meet in

the interview and the types of data the interviewer needs to provide, such as “opinions, experiences, knowledge, and attitudes” (p. 16). Before the interview, the researcher informed the participant that he or she could “pass” on any question he or she did not want to answer and that no penalty would ensue.

The interviewer's relationship as an instrument with interviewees was to ensure safety, professionalism, and calm. The researcher as an instrument relied on an interview guide that listed the questions that she covered during an interview. Leedy and Ormrod (2019) suggest, “Novice researchers typically have greater success when they prepare their general open-ended interview questions in advance, as part of an interview guide” (p. 245). This flexible tool guided the interviewer and outlined issues that she believed were important. Jamshed (2014) describes the importance of an interview guide, “To be precise, unstructured interview resembles a conversation more than an interview and is always thought to be a ‘controlled conversation,’ which is skewed towards the interests of the interviewer” (para 4).

The interviewer's opening question was consistent across all interviews; afterward, what the participant said formed how the interview proceeded. In-depth interviews were creative but challenging to conduct because the interviewer asked questions, intently listened to respondents, and noticed signals about when to follow up, when to continue, and when to allow the participant to respond without guidance or interruption. Saylor Academy explains, “Because participants are asked to provide answers in their own words and to raise points that they believe are important, each interview is likely to flow a little differently” (Chapter 9). The interviewer, an expert panel, the questionnaire, and data analysis software were the primary instruments developed according to IRB ethical standards and guidelines. Though Achuff (2018) uses a focus group in her qualitative transcendental phenomenological study, she cites the same trustworthiness from

Patton (2002) for use in the researcher's interview methods. She writes, "Trustworthiness of the inquirer is a dimension of rigor. The issue, then, is not really about objectivity in the abstract, but about research credibility and trustworthiness, about fairness and balance" (p. 576). Recorded recall interviews for 15 minutes were only necessary if the interviewer needed clarification of a verbal answer or gesture to add to the original record. If required, a recall interview has the interviewee review the interview recording, but no recall interviews were necessary for this study.

This study embraced an emergent design, in which "questions might change, as shifts in 'signals' are triggered as the researcher delves deeper into the phenomenological study" by using "multiple sources of data" when appropriate (Roberts, 2010, pp. 181-182). The researcher used "in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and purposive sampling of individuals" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 236). She recorded all research-interview activities manually and electronically but finally secured data on electronic devices that are locked and kept trustworthily confidential. The final study included specific questions that provided the study's rationale and triangulated results. The researcher conducted interviews electronically where the interviewee chose to meet, lasting up to one hour, dependent on interviewee responses and if he or she decided to stop or extend the interview. Thus, individual interviews took varying time, with no need to change the questions after two preliminary practice sessions.

The researcher formed open-ended interview questions by examining previous research suggesting perceivable experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal. After investigating similar research, the interviewer honed questions with an expert panel that indicated a literature gap. Avella (2016) explains, "In carefully designed and executed panels, the risk of researcher bias is minimal, if not nil, as the researcher's primary task is that of planner/coordinator/recorder, and

the back-and-forth communication between researcher and panel members provides for internal process auditing. One should note that ‘contributor’ appears nowhere in the responsibilities of a Delphi researcher” (p. 307). Reference materials included dissertations, peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and internet websites that scaffolded each sub-question question from the research questions regarding perceivable experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal, anticipating preparing, charting, and analyzing retrieved interview data. The researcher made appointments for each interview, with the interviewee choosing a date and time on Microsoft® Teams that best fit his or her schedule.

The researcher did not need to travel to where the interviewees were. Some leaders had help setting up their computers with a secretary or an IT person but were interviewed privately. The researcher followed up interviews upon agreement by participants. The open-ended interview questions pertained to how and why the phenomenon of Gospel zeal enhancement occurs and what perceived experiences when detected, were used by the purposive participants to maintain Gospel zeal in each Christian educational leader’s ministry. Therefore, this qualitative phenomenological interview was appropriate for the interviewer using a protocol questionnaire to glean the perceived experiences from each interviewee's words and non-verbal responses.

The interviewer sent an invitation to Microsoft® Teams, and after logging into the interview, introduced herself and explained the scaffolded interview process. She explained to the interviewees that their safety was ensured as she took notes and audio, video-recorded their responses and that all communication was confidential through alphabetical pseudonyms. The first interviewee received a letter “A” name, the second a “B” name, until the last interviewee. These names had no association with any participant and were randomly chosen based on the English alphabet (Racoma, 2018). Some letters of the alphabet were ascribed to participants who

chose not to continue with the study because of being recorded or not being able to meet the deadline timeframe.

Questionnaire/Open-Ended Interview Questions

The interviewer recorded the responses from a questionnaire and open-ended interview questions developed from the Research Questions using a Delphi Method (Dalkey, Helmer, 1963) of 10 experts from Liberty University who did not participate in the research and were doctoral professors of Christian educational leadership ministry. “Questions were straightforward to provide the same meaning for all participants, contain short and simple phrasing, be void of sensitive questions that could embarrass, and inject no hypotheses (Abawi, 2014).” Protocols included a pilot study with two Christian educational leaders who were currently pastoring for 20 years, have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are exemplars in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older. The experts did participate in the research after the researcher was permitted to include them. The questionnaire and open-ended interview questions linked to the research questions pertained to experiences that enhanced the Gospel zeal phenomenon, including contemporary ministry trends. The Delphi Method was appropriate to converge opinions with or without in-person interviews. Dalkey (1969) explains that:

The Delphi technique is a method of eliciting and refining group judgments. The rationale for the protocol is that using expert input is better to exact knowledge than is otherwise available by only using the researcher. The expert panel procedures have three features: response opinions iteration and controlled feedback-interaction in rounds, and statistical group response, and the final round (p. 408).

This method to create a questionnaire and open-ended interview questions helped validate and refine the questions by an expert panel suggested by Liberty University Online Rawlings School of Divinity Department Head(s) (LUO, 2021c). The questionnaire and open-

ended interview questions were in direct linkage to serve as an instrument to answer the primary research questions mentioned above, specifically how “contemporary ministry trends” (Barna, 2020b) could act as experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal. Thus, the questionnaire and open-ended interview questions included topics that stem from the research questions about specific contemporary ministry trends, the interviewees' reactions, perceived experiences because of those trends, and identifiable perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal. A panel of 10 experts validated the questionnaire and open-ended interview questions format. The LUO Handbook (2021c) explains:

Some research designs will require an expert panel of consultants for instrument design and face validity review, interview protocol development, and other roles in collecting or evaluating research data. Guidelines for using expert panels include using outside contacts used in the Prospectus or Dissertation process. Outside contacts include consultation with outside academics or professionals with approval by the Dissertation Supervisor or the Program Director (p. 33).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest the sample interview protocol includes “basic information about the interview, an introduction, an opening question, content questions, probes, and closing instructions” (p. 191). By creating a questionnaire regarding contemporary ministry trends and experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal, the researcher could sieve through the data and identify the cause of enhancement and supportive patterns.

Pilot Study

Leedy and Ormrod (2019) suggest that if deemed appropriate, a pilot study will act as a brief exploratory investigation to determine the “feasibility and validity of procedures, measurement, instruments, or methods of analysis that might be useful in a subsequent, more in-depth research study” (p. 417). A pilot study was used with volunteer Christian educational leaders who met the study's criteria and exhibited no changes necessary to the protocol questionnaire. The researcher submitted permission to her dissertation supervisor and department

head and was granted written permission to use the two pilot study participants in her study, as their interviews were valuable. As non-dominant and unbiased volunteers, who met the criteria, the pilot study participants incorporated no recommendations to improve the questionnaire. The pilot study participants and their materials were kept confidential like the other participants in safe housing in a locked, safe, and secure house in the researcher's private home. With permission, they were included in the study.

Procedures

IRB Approval, Approved Consent, Safety Measures

IRB approval was obtained prior to the collection of data. The IRB requires that informed consent be obtained from each subject; therefore, this researcher obtained informed consent, which was appropriately documented (Appendix D). The research plan made adequate provision for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of participants. There were sufficient provisions to protect participants' privacy and maintain the confidentiality of data. In this study, computer file encryption and hard copy materials were locked in a safe to secure all interview materials (LUO, 2021a).

Selection of Candidates

The selection of candidates was entirely based on Christian educational leaders referred by candidates the researcher had observed in active ministry, who did not meet the criteria post-proposal defense but afterward shared with her those who did meet the criteria. The researcher did not know these candidates and notified them formally through IRB recruitment materials. A confidential list was created that reflected Christian leaders who accepted and declined to be interviewed, so the pseudonyms have gaps in alphabetical sequence. Some candidates chose not to participate because of being recorded, and another could not meet the interview deadline. All

materials of those declining the invitation to participate or who did not meet the criteria have been destroyed.

Data Collection

According to Creswell (2014), “the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (p. 189). Therefore, data collection for this study consisted of qualitative interviews, administering unstructured and open-ended questions presented by the researcher to the participants via audio/video conference to obtain the participants' perspectives. The researcher achieved qualitative data trustworthiness by documenting the steps of the procedures (Creswell, 2014). Handwritten and electronic transcripts used for data collection were checked numerous times for accuracy to eliminate apparent errors and establish and maintain consistent clusters of themes to ensure drift does not occur (Creswell, 2014).

The questionnaire and open-ended interview questions were developed using a Delphi Method to glean data from interviews. A pilot test was completed with a review and input of two experts in the field, with results from those experts incorporated into the questionnaire to ensure the research purpose was achieved. No changes were necessary to the protocol questionnaire. The researcher recorded audio and video conference meetings using Microsoft® Teams to assist the data collection phase, and the researcher kept a reflective journal to record field notes. The researcher respected each participant's privacy and confidentiality by assigning pseudonyms. She used separate profiles and files for each participant stored securely in a safe. She ensured each participant was not required to participate in the study and could determine not to participate in the study at any point and that his or her recruitment and interview materials would be destroyed if they chose to exit the study.

Once each interview candidate committed as an interviewee, he or she received written documentation with the ethical guidelines via electronic mail consent. Data confidentiality included invitation letters that provided all participants with the study's details, including purpose, Liberty University affiliation, participation requirements, informed and unsigned consent forms, and directions for setting up the interview. In addition, this letter included a clear assurance of confidentiality and the notification that the study results would be available to them (IRB, 2021). Each interviewee received a pseudonym before interviews to protect his or her identity. Interview data took the form of IRB acceptance materials, interviewee and interviewer correspondences, the expert panel questionnaire, the research questions and responses of each interviewee, researcher memos, interview transcripts, data collection, and data analysis result documentation from typewritten or transferred materials.

Interview locations varied based on time zone and availability. Virtual interviews were conducted through technological means using Microsoft® Teams. Before the interviews began, the researcher reviewed the protocol for each interviewee. She secured the option to take breaks when necessary, and participants were allowed to opt out at any time prior, during, or after the interview. In addition, interviewees were allowed to take pauses in the interview process at their discretion. Seidman (2006) suggests, "Because of the time and energy required of both participants and interviewers, every step the interviewer takes to ease the logistics of the process is a step toward allowing the available energy of all participants to focus on the interview itself" (p. 49). Therefore, the 45-60 minutes interview length for this study was ideal. The interviewees' concerns included the downloading of Microsoft® Teams and any other equipment necessary to conduct interviews. The interviewees' concerns were checking the connectivity of audio and video devices to ensure that the equipment worked and the participant was safe and comfortable.

Each participant connected well with video and audio, even during rain and windstorms and noisy family members in adjoining rooms. Because interviews were online, the participant was read the protocol after a few minutes of “meet and greet.” Once he or she granted permission to be recorded, the protocol questionnaire continued, and recording began.

In summary, the researcher took the steps necessary to conduct her study's data collection by providing information about eliciting participants for the study, efforts in gathering and recording the data, and the process of securing the IRB approval. In addition, the researcher included all procedural material (e.g., IRB permission, instruments usage permissions, informed consent forms, implementation protocols, and any other pertinent information) in the appendices section (LUO, 2021). According to Creswell (2018), “Some options of recording data include videotaping the interviews, audiotaping the interviews, and taking handwritten notes.” This researcher used all three methods that Creswell outlines, and data triangulation was used to reveal what experiences enhanced Gospel zeal in the purposive population.

Microsoft® Teams

The researcher used Microsoft® Teams video conferencing and recording features as a first choice for documenting individual interviews. The recordings were saved to the researcher’s home computer. After sending a link to accept to attend the interview to the participant’s electronic mail address, the researcher joined with the participant, greeted the participant and, after about 5 to 15 minutes of building a comfortable rapport, establishing trust through talking, and beginning the introductory portion of the interview questionnaire, she asked if the participant permitted the interview recording to begin. Microsoft® Teams provided closed-captioning with recordings, but the interviewer found that the precision was inaccurate and inappropriate for this study during practice. However, she used the transcription section of Microsoft® Teams that was

most accurate, with a few spelling errors that were corrected manually and less distracting. The researcher took handwritten notes verbatim and relied on listening and viewing the audio and video recordings to catch specific phrasings and gestures after the interview and did not disrupt a participant's flow of speech and thought (Yin, 2011, p. 156).

Data Analysis

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2019), qualitative research is flexible and can change in different studies. Therefore, the detail for this study is imperative to reflecting themes and principles that guide the researcher concerning how best to analyze data. Leedy and Ormrod (2019) note, "In the analysis stage of the phenomenological study, the researcher must search for meaningful concepts that reflect various aspects of the experience" (p. 258). After collecting data to identify the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in the purposive participants, the researcher established a procedure to analyze consistency. Creswell (2007) suggests "prepare, organize, and code" to "condense codes" and "represent data in figures" (p. 148). All steps in data analysis "gave the researcher an overarching sense of the data as well as its potential meaning" (Farmer, 2021, p. 85). This researcher used every appropriate tool to gain the trustworthiness of the study.

Analysis Methods

To analyze data in a phenomenological design, Yin (2011) suggests "comparing the words of the participants alongside the researcher's interpretations," and Creswell (2018) explains that "Interpretation in qualitative researcher involves several procedures: summarizing the overall findings, comparing the findings to the literature, discussing a personal view of the findings, and stating limitations and future research" (p. 198). Because the researcher's role in a qualitative method includes data collection and analysis, the researcher used a "winnowing of the

data” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 192) strategy. Winnowing employed a thematic analysis for examining data. The interview process required patience to receive information and the discernment to filter out unnecessary data, “which is the winnowing data strategy's purpose” (Lewis, 2020). For assistance, the researcher used data analysis to summarize the collected data (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006, p. 467). The data retrieval and analysis included vetted qualitative computer software programs for assistance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For example, the vetted NVivo (2021b) software helped the researcher organize data and provide an online account, summarizing data in descriptive and interpretive data analysis by linking data. Small data were collected and combined to form general descriptions and conclusions (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p. 180). “Bracketing chunks” is a term used by Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 193), devised by Rossman and Rallis (2012), as a way to describe categorizing information in margins. For example, after analyzing data from interviews, findings were classified in bracketing chunks according to themes. A validity strategy was used for appropriateness.

Therefore, the researcher used qualitative descriptive-interpretive design methods. These methods used pre-existing categories to sort data and create themes for the interviewees (Miles, Gilbert, 2005, p. 148). Each participant’s data was collected, documented, categorized, coded, and analyzed individually and merged in vetted software. The values placed on quintessential phrases, themes, and patterns stemmed from the questionnaire answers linked to the research questions (SAGE, n.d) and entered into NVivo (2021b) (See Figures 2, 3, 4, & 5). The researcher used vetted NVivo (2021b) for Windows. Merging data cycles were ongoing, as the researcher input data while interviewing other participants. Data entry occurred concurrently and consecutively as interviews were scheduled at the interviewee's request and at pre-ordained interview dates and times. Data entry, coding, and analysis were generated from the researcher’s

private home. With NVivo (2021b), the research was able to organize data, data analysis with files, memos, nodes, sentiment, relationship, and relationship types. A secure NVivo online account linked descriptive and interpretive data processing capabilities with data summarization. Small data were collected and combined to form general descriptions and conclusions (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p. 180). Future researchers can validate the data through well-kept secure documents. The researcher transcribed answers and nonverbal gestures by hand and computer keyboard. She safely stored each participant's handwritten and password-protected electronic file, with each participant's data in a separate, safe-locked marked envelope.

Coding

Bryant (2016, p. 80) outlines the types of coding the researcher implemented in her qualitative phenomenological interview process to thoroughly create data sets, including initial coding, focused coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding. Sage (2021) and Silver & Lewins (2014) explain:

Qualitative coding is the process by which segments of data are identified as relating to, or being an example of, a more general idea, instance, theme or category. Data segments from across the whole dataset are placed together, or 'tagged' in order to be retrieved together at a later stage. In so doing you build up a coding system to organize data and your ideas about them (p. 158).

Initial Coding

Initial coding was the first step of data analysis. During initial coding, the researcher reviewed a participant's answers to determine similarities among the responses.

Focused Coding

In focused coding during data analysis, the researcher relies heavily upon recordings. The researcher listened to recordings several times. Listening to the recording allowed the researcher

to develop categories based upon the responses. “Focused coding allows for the most significant and frequent codes to sift through large amounts of data” (Smith, 2015).

Axial coding

Axial coding is typically used in qualitative phenomenological research to identify relationships between the categories found during focused coding. Axial coding allowed the researcher the opportunity to relate codes to each category through inductive and deductive thinking (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Theoretical Coding

Theoretical coding acted as the last step of the coding process. During this step, the researcher wrote memos to reflect the research process. Flick (2014) describes:

Categories guiding such theorizing can remain implicit until a researcher comes across the concept best suited for the data through a hypothetical inference (which may be experienced as a sudden insight). This comes close to Glaserian ‘theoretical coding’, which is an ideal approach for an experienced researcher with an extended theoretical background knowledge. Others may prefer to explicate sensitizing categories before or during qualitative data analysis to form a definite paradigm (p. 565).

In this study, axial coding develops by linking categories and interview responses as the process of “inductively locating linkages between data such as behaviors, events, activities, strategies, states, meanings, participation, relationships, conditions, consequences, and settings” (Allen, 2017, p. 80). Dumas and Anderson (2014) explain the use of qualitative phenomenological studies, “The information documented the lived realities of the participants” (pp. 13-14). The researcher used NVivo (2021b) software developed by QSR International. This software assisted in the secure and encrypted import of text and audio from various sources into a simple, intuitive interface, and NVivo centralized interview data from multiple sources to conduct as in-depth analysis as possible. When the researcher traveled, she used a secure laptop computer, and when

at home, she used a secured desktop computer. In addition, using NVivo assisted with data entry transcription of interviews for time management text storage to focus heavily on data analysis.

The researcher used NVivo (2021b) to organize coding for validation. Bryant (2016) explains that Axial coding is typically used to find relationships between the categories found during focused coding. Axial coding allowed for the opportunity to relate codes to each other through inductive and deductive thinking (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The interviewer recorded visual and voice reactions and responses and transcribed those interviews in detail, including voice inflections, pauses, and emotional, physical reactions such as smiles or closed eyes. The researcher organized and analyzed her data using a defined plan for data analysis before data collection (LUO, 2021). She used NVivo (2021b) to organize all data while maintaining hardcopies. Because in a qualitative study, one receives most qualitative data in words and dialogue, verbal content analysis is required. Therefore, coding involved a system that created a data set to determine the qualitative “values and measure” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 407) of responses and experiences regarding the Gospel zeal phenomenon. Measure translated as the frequency of revealed themes.

Though interviews were virtual, Dougherty and Drumheller (2006) report measuring “qualitative emotions in a rationalized context. Future research should explore the relationship between rationality and emotionality in situ [on site]” (p. 235). In determining the Gospel zeal phenomenon, White (2008) reports that “Those who scored high in 'sensibility' (feeling), and those who were more susceptible to social pressures or were introverted, were more likely to experience dramatic conversions. Intellectuals, on the other hand, including psychologists, usually were ‘intellect predominant’” (p. 437). Thus, this study clarified that some emotional, practical, mental, principle and spiritual observations were valid for the purposive Christian

educational leadership participants. The researcher included appendices, tables, and figures to organize her thinking and display her data for readers to understand better (LUO, 2021a).

Document Analysis

According to the procedure laid out by Leedy & Ormond (2019), the researcher analyzed phenomenological data by examining and thematically organizing the content of all interview transcripts and documents. She “identified and included criteria to validate the extent to which the results of the assessment strategy correlated with assessments of another presumably related characteristic or predictive validity of the related characteristic was assessed at a subsequent time” (p. 413). The researcher “systematically examined criteria using a coding process (LUO, 2021a)” described in the data analysis section. In summary, the researcher provided the documents she used, the criteria for selecting the records, and confirmed document accessibility.

Trustworthiness

In a qualitative study, the researcher defines trustworthiness in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Geer, 2016; Cope, 2014). The inclusion of these four safeguards forms the trustworthiness of research. First, using the Delphi Method to create an interview questionnaire from expert-non-dominant participants in the study minimized interviewer bias during questionnaire preparation. Therefore, in the researcher's study, she developed a “standardization of the assessment instrument or procedure to include similar content and scoring criteria for each participant” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 420). Instead, she set fewer boundaries than a quantitative study by standardizing the phenomenological study's flexibility. The researcher aimed toward credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (LUO, 2021a) based on the accurate data collection and analysis of the interviewees' actual answers and responses before, during, and after interviews.

Credibility

For credibility, the researcher incorporated what Leedy and Ormrod (2019) define credibility as, “A characteristic of a research study, the study's overall quality a judged by other scholars; includes the use of appropriate designs and methods, believable findings, and plausible interpretations” (p. 413). A triangulation strategy added credibility through interviews and observation to measure verbal accounts (Miles, Gilbert, 2005, p.151). Leedy and Ormrod (2019) describe triangulation as “Collection and comparison of multiple kinds of data, to find consistencies or inconsistencies among them” (p. 421). Statistics Solutions (2021) informed that “discrepant cases may not fit the overall pattern but can be recorded as another dimension of the phenomenon for further study.” This researcher included all data on the Gospel zeal phenomenon and did not discount any interviewee’s feedback. LUO (2021a), Field and Morse (1985), Hinds et al. (1990), and Perakyla (1997) mention that “Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings accurately describe reality.” The researcher collected evidence from the interview process that demonstrates the data was credible through audio recordings, written materials, and verification by the participants that no tampering occurred. She organized handwritten notes in individual files with any link to each interviewee's audio and visual aide materials and documented the participants’ described realities.

Interviews gained credibility by the honesty and rawness of the in-depth interview process. Interviewees could freely express their experiences and had the freedom to opt-out at any time. Confidentiality allowed for a more credible end-product because the Christian leader did not worry about unsolicited feedback. Finally, credibility existed because though interviewees gave individualized answers, the protocol questionnaire questions remained intact and linked directly to the research questions, designed using the Delphi Method and ten experts.

Creswell & Creswell (2018) suggest credibility in a qualitative phenomenological interview study, three to ten participants for interviews. Nevertheless, the authors include that “there is no specific answer to the questions of how many sites and participants one should have” (p. 186). Therefore, this study aimed to include two Pilot Study interviews and six to twelve participants for credibility (Bredfeldt, 2018-2019). This researcher’s result produced ten participants. The questionnaire created conformity to the research questions and provided an ability to categorize answers about Gospel zeal enhancement.

Triangulation provided a better sense of credibility by using more than one data source for validation, both audio and video recordings. The vetted NVivo (2021b) software assisted in data analysis. In addition, the researcher consulted Statistics Solutions (2021), who only viewed participants' data by pseudonyms. The research can be found credible through consistency by securely documenting the interviewees' responses and the processes by which the interviewer procured final documentation and data analysis results in more than one place. Because the phenomenological interview process used open-ended questions, the conciseness with which the interviewer documents answers with transcripts, recordings, and written correspondence was paramount to reflecting credibility. Through Statistic Solutions (2021), the researcher was able to produce duplicate analyses at various times to show that the same results occurred on separate occasions and documented those dates and times accurately, to “specifically analyze the unstructured text, audio, video, and image data, including (but not limited to) interviews.”

Dependability

The researcher included the concept of dependability that takes account of ever-changing contexts within research development. Dependability is the extent to which other researchers can repeat the study with consistent findings (DeLange, 2020). As a result, all participants and future

researchers can be confident that the work is accurate and conclusions are clear and concise. Furthermore, replication of the study as close to qualitative phenomenological research as possible makes available a detailed trail of documentation of the research process from beginning to end. The most frequently used standards for judging good and flawed qualitative research are validity and reliability. Duplication of interviewees' responses may not be exact in future studies, but answers to research questions could be classified equally. The rationale supporting the establishment of dependability includes Creswell's (2007) suggestion "to use an audit trail approach to provide proof that the process is effective." An audit trail provides a duplication process for this study to show that the structure and interview process is dependable.

Dependability relies on the researcher's actions to "account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study and changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 194). Therefore, the researcher concisely outlined research methods, instruments, processes, and analyses for other researchers to follow how she assessed findings and conducted the research at every step. Then, using the same protocol, the same questions, including the questions and their sequence used in data collection and analysis, a practiced researcher, using inquiry audit, will replicate the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree of neutrality in the research study's findings showing no bias nor personal motives for gain. The researcher documented actual data and described data collection and analysis processes in detail without skewing materials in her study (Statistics Solutions, 2022). As a result, other researchers can reasonably replicate her methods and find similar conclusions by doing so. Though confirmability is not guaranteed in a qualitative phenomenological method, the researcher accurately documented processes and procedures used

to collect and interpret the data. She provided an audit trail and written record of research activities to “document progress and enhanced the credibility of the research study by using qualitative research” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 412). Although it is not possible or practical to include all data, the researcher states that her data will be made available for review by other researchers upon request to add to the researcher’s sense of confirmability (LUO, 2021a). She keeps detailed notes in her locked safe at home. To protect confirmability and interviewer bias, the researcher noted any discrepancies and reviewed and analyzed the transcripts and audio recordings of participants repeatedly. In addition, she made sure to have all transcripts on a thumb drive kept locked in a private safe at her home. Reviewing the transcripts while simultaneously listening to the interview recordings helped the researcher confirm the recorded real-life experiences of the participants with written notes (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009).

Transferability

Transferability is how the qualitative researcher demonstrated that the researcher’s study results apply to other contexts. Leedy and Ormrod (2019) define transferability as the “Extent to which a research study's findings might be similar or applicable to other individuals, settings, and context, mostly by qualitative researchers” (p. 421). Slevin and Sines (2000) explain that validity in quantitative research “generally means that an instrument, or indeed the total study, measures what it proclaims to measure (Pout and Hungler 1999).” The researcher experienced limits in qualitative research transferability, as “validity is seen as the extent to which findings represent reality; therefore, issues of credibility and truth-value take prominence (Field and Morse 1985; Hinds et al. 1990; Perakyla 1997).” To ensure transferability in similar situations, similar participants, and similar Gospel zeal phenomenon, she used the same methods, the same questions, the same sequence, and the same demeanor as an interviewer with each participant to

maintain consistency. There is a consensus that qualitative researchers should utilize criteria to establish their truthfulness (Hammersley 1992; Shutz 1994). The setting for the participants of this phenomenological research was not delimited to the ministry location. Therefore, the generalizability was not as possible as in quantitative research. However, with the Gospel as the foundation for the study, the focus on the participants' experiences is stable for transferability. Furthermore, this study's transferability applies to other contexts as God's calling is universal. It, therefore, applies to Christian educational leadership and other phenomenological studies that research a particular phenomenon.

Hebrews 12:2 clarifies that:

Looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith [giving the first incentive for our belief] and is also its Finisher [bringing it to maturity and perfection]. He, for the joy [of obtaining the prize] that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising and ignoring the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (*Amplified Bible, 1954*)

All settings in which contemporary ministry trends focus on the Gospel message present experiences. The researcher heard from interviewees and investigated and identified which experiences most enhanced their Gospel zeal phenomenon.

Data Disposal

All computer data was secured in a password-protected computer. Written handwritten notes, computer data, handwritten interview data, and thumb drives are locked in a safe at the researcher's private home. The researcher is the only person to see any data that does not use pseudonyms. Data materials are being kept secure for three years after the completion of this study. After three years, the researcher will delete and erase computer programs and data, audio and video recordings, and erase and destroy thumb drives with a hammer. Written notes will be privately shredded or burned.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summary provides an outline of the methods and procedures that the researcher used in the study, including a detailed qualitative phenomenological research structure to offer future Christian educational leaders and researchers an opportunity “to replicate the study” (Achuff, 2018). In this study, a qualitative phenomenological research method acted as a strategy to investigate and identify perceived experiences that enhanced the Gospel zeal phenomenon in the purposive participants. A detailed protocol and database were created to assure that others could follow the procedures and replicate the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 201). Interview materials were organized beforehand, during, and after the interview process by handwritten, password-protected electronic audio recordings and thumb drives kept securely in a personal, locked safe in the researcher’s private home.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to identify and reveal the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leadership ministry. The themes that emerged from the data set are communicated and explained in detail about the participants' experiences. Furthermore, the qualitative phenomenological method used with confidential and transparent recordings with transcript results from the interview process gave this study an unbiased as possible platform of: Validity, reliability, credibility, authenticity, transferability, and trustworthiness. Finally, this research design was assessed throughout the study, and the purpose for using this design was thoroughly explained to glean data from lived experiences of the participants.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

Delphi Method

The researcher created a draft protocol questionnaire with an introductory session, interview background questions, main questions with follow-up questions, and a closing statement. Then, the researcher reached out to a total of ten experts, who were each sent an e-mail with the protocol questionnaire attached. Each critiqued the format, e-mailed back an attached a version that he or she had reviewed, and the researcher incorporated all critiques she received from the expert panel. The researcher made numerous revisions to the final document using this method, adding authenticity. The Delphi Method provided the researcher with a protocol questionnaire that minimized bias. The Delphi Method was an instrument designed for validation. Using the instrument creation method, when she interviewed her nine participants, there was a professional and straightforward question-and-answer formatted environment, which

she could not have created alone. This process reduced the researcher's potential self-oriented connection to the final protocol questionnaire document. By remaining as unbiased as possible, she built a more trusting rapport with the participants, explaining to each before the interview that her demeanor would be bland and straightforward, not because of uninterest in the topic but because their replies were most valuable without her input.

Pilot Study

The Pilot Study was conducted with two participants who met the criteria. In addition, both participants exhibited interviews that flowed without interruption, and thereby no changes were needed to the protocol questionnaire post-Delphi Method. Therefore, the researcher gained permission from her department head to use the Pilot Study participants as two of her nine participants in the overall study, as their contributions were valuable.

Demographic and Sample Data

For this study, the researcher's demographic was all Christian educational leaders who were currently pastoring for 20 years, had a good reputation, were passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, were exemplars in ministry, and were over 60 years of age. Thus, this study represents fewer purposively selected participants who have experienced the Gospel zeal phenomenon and dedicated their lives to fulfilling the Great Commission (See Page 32 for Definition of Terms). In addition, the participants' demographics included Christian educational leaders whom the researcher had not previously known, who met the criteria. The number of participants depended on the qualitative research approach. According to Creswell, W. & Creswell, D. (2018) and Creswell, J.W. & Poth (2018), qualitative phenomenological interviews consist of 3-10 participants. This researcher interviewed nine participants who ultimately met the inclusion criteria. Initially, the researcher sought

recruitment contacts from Christian leaders who had experienced the Gospel zeal phenomenon she knew. However, none of these possible recruits met the criteria after the defense of the proposal. Therefore, the leaders who did not meet the criteria referred participants who possibly did meet the criteria, which the researcher had not previously known. Therefore, the researcher obtained the population sample from recommendations by those who did not meet the criteria.

Of 15 potential recruits, nine were able to participate, one did not want to be recorded, one could not meet the deadline, and four did not respond after the follow-up recruitment letter was mailed; leaving the total number of interviews at nine participants who met the criteria and could meet the interview deadline. The participants were from various Christian denominations and non-denominational churches. This study did not have a delimitation to location, Christian denomination, or gender. The participants were candid and willing to speak at length of their Christian educational leadership Gospel zeal phenomenon experiences from varied Christian backgrounds.

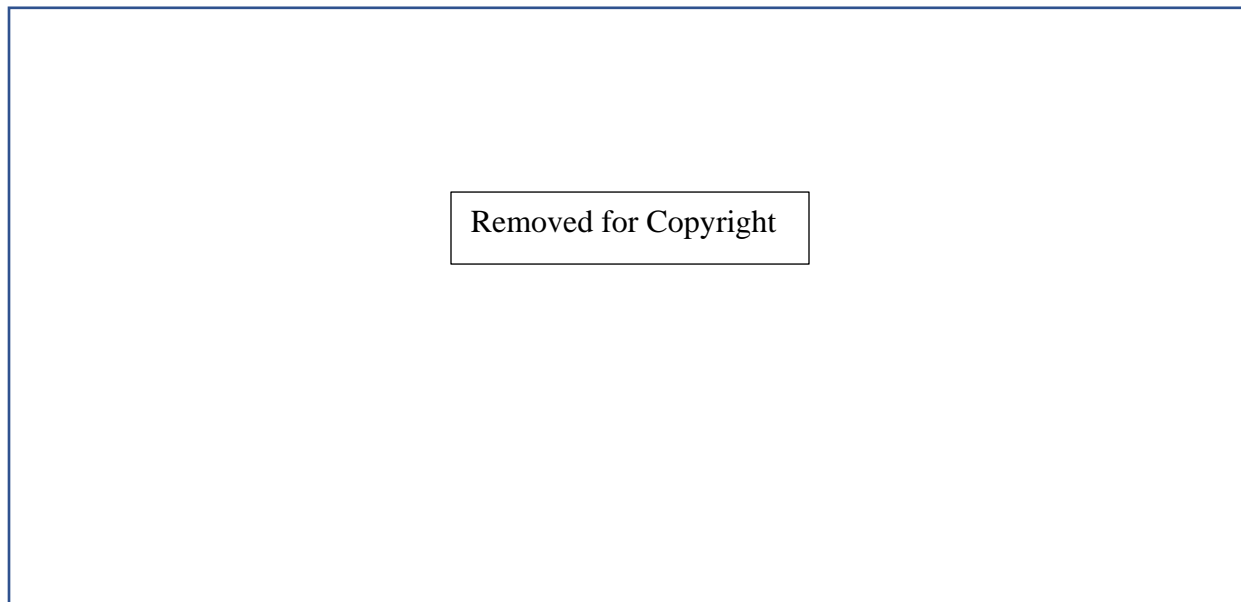
Data Analysis and Findings

Data analysis occurred after all interviews were conducted and transcribed into Word documents. The researcher created a Word file for each participant's interview and uploaded these files into NVivo (2021b). Because NVivo is a software program designed to assist qualitative researchers with the organization of textual data sets, like those generated in phenomenological studies, NVivo was appropriate for this study. The first step of the analysis process was to read and reread all transcripts to become immersed in the data. Following this was the step of initial coding. The researcher read each transcript in this step, highlighting text passages relevant to the research question.

In NVivo (2021b), after highlighting and selecting those passages, the researcher created a new code and assigned that block of text a short title. This initial coding was conducted across all interviews. Later in an interview or in a different interview, a passage of text fits into an extant code. That text was assigned to the code by highlighting it, then navigating to the existing code and selecting it. By doing this, the NVivo (2021b) program stored all segments of text with the same code in the same location, called a node, within the program. In doing so, the researcher could easily retrieve all associated text passages to identify patterns and relationships. The figure below reflects the phenomenological perspective sought by the researcher.

Figure 1

Phenomenological Perspective Sage Research Methods – Sage Publications



Note: Example. Edmonds, W. & Kennedy, T. (2017, Chapter 14).

During data analysis, the researcher used a pre-determined qualitative phenomenological method as a guide to report on human experiences. She used the data from nine interviews to reveal themes linked to the research questions.

Themes Linkage to Research Questions

Research Question 1

RQ1 asked: “What lived experiences do Christian leaders believe enhanced their Gospel zeal?” The themes that aligned with this research question were:

Theme 1: Transformative Experiences in Teens and Young Adulthood.

All participants had real connections to church or faith as children and teens whether or not they attended church regularly, and 22% noted their call to ministry as teenagers. In addition, key relationships, and exposure to the Gospel in college were noted. The Gospel zeal experience occurred for 88% of participants in college or after high school.

Theme 2: The Call to Ministry.

All participants made a purposeful decision to attend (or not attend) seminary. For 22% they chose not to attend seminary. About 33% of participants expressed an immediate call to ministry, while 66% shared experiences that could be considered gradual in nature and comparatively consistent with progressive waves of realization of their salvation in Christ Jesus. The discernment period involved questioning and patience about their calls to ministry. All participants’ Gospel zeal was enhanced stemming from experiences of spiritual growth from teaching. They all gained by giving back. Revised zeal “from grace to grace” (John1:16, *Amplified Bible, 1954*) helped them progressively preach more naturally and with more confidence. As they consistently studied the Gospel message, all participants realized that they had not called themselves to ministry but God had called them.

Theme 3: Importance of Mentors and Disciples on Gospel Zeal

About 78% of participants identified a specific Christian mentor that helped enhance their Gospel zeal, while 22% mentioned the influence of someone demonstrating Gospel zeal who

inspired them. Consistently, for 88% of participants mentors were vital to enhance Gospel zeal, including having multiple key people in their lives who provided mentorship throughout their lifetime. About 11% expressed that they had not been mentored in years though they knew it was necessary to maintain Gospel zeal; however, they were leaning on their original deceased mentor's influence. About 11% also noted people who were not personal mentors but who they admired for demonstrated Gospel zeal in their Christian leadership. For 88% of participants Gospel zeal was enhanced by devoting time to new believers as they were being mentored.

Theme 4: Lifelong Learning and Sharing the Gospel Through Teaching

A sentiment surfaced among all participants at the wonder that they were blessed to study, learn, and teach about the Gospel as a career or calling. Because all of the participants had different experiences with Christian education and the Gospel zeal phenomenon, their responses created relationships within the contextual data, which stemmed from the Research Question. All participants expressed enhancement of Gospel zeal in their transformational experiences as educators and learners. Teaching disciples enhanced each participant's Gospel zeal as their teaching enhanced the learner's Gospel zeal and deepened all participants' faith. Because teaching the Gospel message consistently was successful to enhance Gospel zeal despite adversities and distractions, the participants expressed that teaching experiences fed them with the zeal to continue helping to fulfill the Great Commission.

Research Question 2

RQ2 asked: "What do Christian leaders perceive as major challenges to maintaining Gospel zeal?" The theme that aligned with this research question was:

Theme 5: Challenges Create Opportunity to Enhanced Gospel Zeal

Participants spoke less in terms of major challenges and more in terms of what could be improved. Participants described contemporary challenges, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic; leaders seemed to view challenges as something to overcome positively. Challenges forced them to rethink their ministry and develop new ways of enhancing theirs and others' Gospel zeal. Participants looked toward the future and did not get hung up on the past.

Research Question 3

RQ3 asked: "What do Christian leaders perceive as the best way to enhance Gospel zeal in new believers?" The theme that aligned with this researcher question was:

Theme 6: Enhancing Gospel Zeal in New Believers

Christian leaders must be consistent and accessible to new believers. Christian leaders ought to share their own experiences with new believers, even if those experiences are not "remarkable." Christian leaders must emphasize that God is for all creation and all people. Finally, Christian leaders must walk the walk of the Gospel and Jesus' teachings. Sacrificing time was a major experience that enhanced Gospel zeal for the participant and the new believer.

Figures 2-5 present transcription of screenshots of the list of codes generated through the initial coding process directly from NVivo (2021b) software that was later considered for categorization.

Figure 2

Themes 1-3 Coding in NVivo

- Theme 1 – childhood and young adult life
 - o Call to ministry as a teen
 - o Influence of college
- Theme 2 – born again experience
 - o All questions led back to the ministry
 - o Being patient in learning God's will
 - o Calling moment
 - o Decision to attend seminary
 - o Gradual born again experience

- Multiple or continual
- Questioned decision to enter ministry
- Theme 3 – mentor who exhibited zeal
 - Being disciplined is a lifelong pursuit
 - Effective Christian educational leaders with zeal
 - Mentors who check-in

Figure 3

Theme 4 Coding in NVivo

- Theme 4 – learning and sharing Gospel through teaching
 - Book on holy communion enhanced Gospel zeal
 - Classes have enhanced Gospel zeal
 - Decision to teach and preach from early experiences
 - Emphasis on teaching, not preaching, where God led me
 - Emphasis on understanding Scripture
 - Influence of other people to teach and preach
 - Influence to teach and preach – being asked to do interim work
 - Influence to teach and preach – make disciples
 - Influence to teach and preach – youth to adulthood growth
 - Pastor is entire identity
 - Preaching is the most important thing I do
 - Purpose is to share the Good News
 - Transformation experience I am a vessel for God
 - Transformation experience learning to incorporate teaching into ministry
 - Transformational experience developing ed curriculum
 - Transformation experience leading Bible study
 - Transformational experience of studying the Bible as a career

Figure 4

Theme 5 Coding in NVivo

- Theme 5 – challenges and opportunities
 - Challenges to zeal
 - Greater stillness needed in Gospel zeal ministry
 - Greater support needed in Gospel zeal ministry
 - Looking toward the future, not past
 - Reconnecting community to God through technology
 - Revamp – learn more about church history
 - Revamp by getting mentors
 - Revamp by ministering to the lost
 - Revamp listening to God more
 - Revamp that God is God of everyone
 - Revamp would include the formational reading of the Bible
 - Revamp would include teamwork in discipleship

- Trend or method of sharing Gospel that enhanced zeal
- Vision for youth ministry

Figure 5

Theme 6 Coding in NVivo

- Theme 6 – enhancing Gospel zeal in new believers
 - Community of faith
 - Creates zeal when people want to know more
 - Experiences supporting sustaining new believers
 - Maintain Gospel zeal through others
 - New believers – consistent teaching word of God
 - New believers – trips to Israel
 - Sharing testimony to create zeal
 - Walk the walk – Christ-like live

In the second step of focused coding, the researcher reviewed the codes from the initial coding step and developed categories based on patterns within those codes. That is, categories included codes that were related to each other. Finally, in axial coding, the process of coding and categorizing continued as further relationships were identified and developed, and the relationship between the codes and categories was explicated to analyze and develop the participants' experiences in more detail.

In theoretical coding, which was the last step of the coding process, the researcher linked categories together conceptually and related these back to the research questions. The result of the analysis was six themes that addressed the three research questions of the study and illuminated the lived experience of the phenomenon of enhanced Gospel zeal among Christian educational leaders. The relationship between the codes, the themes, and the research questions is presented in Table 2.

Table 2*Alignment Between RQs, Themes, and Codes*

RQ	Theme	Codes	Interviews	References
RQ1	1. Transformative Experiences in Childhood and Teenage Years	Faith in childhood	2	2
		College experiences	4	2
	2. The Call to Ministry	Questioning/discerning	2	2
		Attending seminary	3	4
		Gradual born again	2	2
		Patience	1	1
	3. Importance of Mentors and Disciples on Gospel Zeal	Influential Christian educational leaders	7	8
		Mentors in faith	9	16
	4. Lifelong Learning and Sharing the Gospel Through Teaching	Make disciples	2	2
		Influence of others to preach	2	2
		Studying the Bible	3	4
		Teaching and developing an educational curriculum	2	2
		Understanding scripture	1	1
Pastor is identity		1	1	
RQ2	5. Challenges Create Opportunity to Enhanced Gospel Zeal	Stillness and support	2	2
		Technology to connect	6	11
		Ministering to the lost	2	2
		Formational reading of Bible	1	2
RQ3	6. Enhancing Gospel Zeal in New Believers	Walk the walk/Christ-like life	4	5
		Sharing testimony	2	3
		Generate zeal when others are zealous	1	1
		Consistency of teaching	2	2

RQ1 asked, “What Lived Experiences do Christian Leaders Believe Enhanced Their Gospel Zeal?” Themes 1-4 addressed this research question. Themes 1 and 2 establish a foundation and context for understanding participants’ experiences as Christian leaders. The first theme describes participants’ transformative experiences as teens and young adults that solidified their faith and journey toward Christian leadership. The second theme is about participants’ call

to ministry and their born-again experiences. Theme 3 has to do with discipleship and those people in participants' lives, such as formal mentors, who exhibited Gospel zeal in a way that enhanced participants' own zeal. Finally, theme 4 is about the lived experience of learning and sharing the Gospel through teaching. Participants described transformational experiences through teaching disciples, and they marveled that they were blessed to study the Gospel as a calling and career. All participants used pseudonyms throughout the study.

Theme 1: Transformative Experiences in Childhood and Teenage Years

This theme establishes a background context for understanding Gospel zeal in participants. In this theme, participants' transformative experiences as children and teenagers are explored. All participants had some connection to church or faith before college, and 22% believed their calling came during their teenage years. Most participants were born in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States and grew up attending church regularly, at best. Chris, who grew up on the West Coast and moved around every couple of years as a service member's child, described the childhood as a "good stable home" that was loving but not Christian. Chris recalled that the family "rarely went to church." Otto recalled going to church "fairly regularly" as a child. However, Otto said, "my dad dropped me off at Sunday school, and he went to the diner to have breakfast," which was the extent of the church experience as a child. Dan was born into a family that attended an American Baptist church and recalled the family being very involved in the church, saying, "It was natural for me to get involved as I grew older." Ely also went to church regularly as a child. The family attended a local United Methodist church, and Hal "hated every bit of" regularly attending an Episcopalian church as a child.

Pete's story was somewhat different due to growing up overseas and then moving to the United States as a teenager. Pete was one participant who felt the call to ministry relatively

young. Pete attributed the call to ministry at about 15 years old to grow up in a multicultural and inclusive setting, where he learned to love “people of all backgrounds and stations of life.” Ely was the other participant who experienced a call to ministry at a young age. “There was, I remember, kind of an initial awakening when I was about 13. I was in youth group and, within a few years, felt that growing and call to ministry, I would say,” Ely explained.

Theme 2: The Call to Ministry

For one participant, the born-again experience was not an experience that happened only once. Other participants described their call to ministry as a gradual experience that occurred in waves throughout their lives. Chris’s experience, like many other participants’, began in college. Abe worked at a Scout camp between high school and college and was exposed to “a group of very committed Christians” who were described as “very loving and very kind.” In college, Abe joined the Christian Fellowship, where faith and leadership in the church grew. After college, though, Abe’s affiliation with the intervarsity led to considerable doubt, and she left the fellowship for a different church until she met her husband. They attended an Episcopal church until she moved to the church where she ultimately settled.

Dan, like Abe, described a gradual process of being born again. Christ was an essential part of Dan’s life growing up in the church, but Dan explained, “I can’t remember the exact date or time” he would call a born-again experience. Instead, the experience “was kind of gradual...kind of a gradual dawning type [thing],” like Abe’s experience. However, Dan did describe several experiences and times when he felt close to God that he believed were part of the gradual born-again experience, including a time as a child at church camp when people were sharing and confessing and he “got up and I said that when I’m an adult when I grow up, I’ll be a minister.” Ely, who also described a gradual, born-again experience, likened the process to

“Ananias Road...rather than a Damascus Road experience because things kept happening.” For Ely, the experience was reconfirmed several times in college, and he believed similar experiences had “probably been happening ever since.” Ken, who recalled the first experience happening around the time he was eight years old at a Billy Graham rally, said, “I think I probably have more than one of those...There are other moments in life that would count as born-again moments.” Otto also believed the process of being born again was ongoing but had a slightly different way of thinking about this. Otto said:

Every once in a while, I get reminded that God loves me, and that’s an interesting thing. When you asked the question about being born again. Yeah, I’m not really a born-again type of person, except that over and over again, I get saved. You know, over again, I get saved by the fact that I have a sense of wholeness in the presence of God, and others in nature, and, uh, scriptures, ministry, and so all those things around you all the time.

Chris and Pete described a single experience that stood out to them as their born-again experience. Like other participants, Chris was exposed to Christianity in college, but he said he gravitated to it through his fraternity brothers. When he first met his wife, she told him he had to attend church and worship with her, so he did because he wanted to see her again. Chris continued attending church with his not-yet-wife for about six months and said, “On Easter, I went up and declared my acceptance of Jesus as my savior.” Pete’s born-again experience happened when he was “a youngster” at a leadership development retreat for youth. He was training to learn street evangelism, which was “quite a bit of a challenge because that’s not my orientation.” Through the experience, Pete had a “strong confirmation of my faith in Christ.” He elaborated:

This happened while I was given an opportunity to interact with a stranger...I was somehow led by the spirit kind of nudging to go talk to this man who was walking back and forth at the end of the pier, and I went out there and we struck a conversation...I decided to share my belief in Christ and what it means because something was telling me that this gentleman needed to hear the Good News. And actually, he accepted Christ there on the spot in front of me.

After this interaction, Pete said the man told him he should be a pastor and that he would pray for Pete. Pete also shared that the man told Pete that he was going to kill himself that day. Pete returned and shared what he learned and said the youth group he organized “became a truly Christ-centered [group].” Not all participants attended seminary, though, for some, this was an essential part of their experience and enhanced their Gospel zeal. In addition, seminary was part of the discernment process associated with their born-again experience and call to ministry with some participants. Abe, who did not elaborate on seminary, said the decision to attend seminary came after moving on from the Episcopal church, and she began seminary in her early thirties.

Otto, who also failed to elaborate on the decision to attend seminary, said he went to seminary for two years after college but took time off at the urging of a professor he respected. He said he was focused on much philosophy and the metaphysical mindful aspect of faith and creation. Therefore, after changing career positions and after working as a youth minister for about a decade, the pastor he worked with retired, and he reluctantly took over the position. Otto, on the other hand, finished seminary. After long reflection with himself and deliberation with his wife, Hal left a job in engineering to become a youth pastor, a position he wanted and held for seven years before he got a call about attending seminary. Hal explained the process:

I think most of us agree [seminary] is not like “I know I want to be a pastor,” or “I want to be a preacher.” It should be no, I wanted to discern my call and see if that’s what God wants me to do, and I very much went that way. Not sure, wondering, and so I would say over the term of going to seminary, it was confirmed to me that this is what I should do to be a pastor.

Theme 3: The Importance of Mentors and Disciples

Participants described either formal mentors or people they looked up to who demonstrated Gospel zeal and enhanced their own. Such mentors, or influential people, were significant for all participants. In addition, many participants described multiple people who

enhanced their Gospel zeal throughout their lives; some were Christians, and others exhibited Christ-like behaviors. According to participants, people who demonstrated Gospel zeal themselves and enhanced participants' Gospel zeal did so in myriad ways; this was not limited to a handful of practices for any participant. For example, Abe's musician mentor was important because "he had an art form that could really speak to me." However, Abe also had an influential mentor because of her connection with the natural world and giving voice to the voiceless, whom Abe described as living "a lifestyle as close to Jesus as she did."

Indeed, other participants noted people who influenced them and enhanced their Gospel zeal whom they identified as very different from themselves but were willing to give their time. Dan, for example, discussed a mentor who exhibited Gospel zeal and preached in what Dan called "a quote-unquote stereotypical African American style," which Dan said was "not my style." Dan admired this person's dedication to service, saying, "It was always the service piece for him," which was very similar to Abe's mentor, who was so Jesus-like in her service. Mentors who lived their lives in service, as Jesus did, appeared to have a profound impact on participants. Hal described his mentor in a way like Abe and Dan, calling the man "incredibly zealous." Hal's mentor was also "relentless in sharing the Gospel no matter what resistance he encountered." Hal rode his bike across the country with this mentor, a peer he met his first day at college. During that time, Hal said he observed this person "walked the walk and talked the talk, and so he was a profound influence."

Pete described a similar experience, though his mentor was found in a somewhat unexpected place. Pete's teacher tutored him after school in math and social studies. Through this, Pete said he not only learned "to be a better writer and a better mathematician, and things like that, [but] in his own exemplary ministry of teaching and the generosity." He learned from

his mentor “how to serve God with a generous heart.” In addition, Pete believed it was important that “every pastor or every Christian educational leader must have someone that he or she can relate to and learn from that individual.” In addition to mentors, participants described influential Christian educational leaders they knew who demonstrated Gospel zeal and provided a model upon which to base their zeal. Chris described one such leader:

[My pastor] was a long-time, respected Presbyterian pastor in [the town]. He’s since moved...and God’s got him, giving him a zeal for praying for 38 years, 2 hours a day with his wife about the idea of a revival in this community...that that will gain a foothold and the Holy Spirit will take and spread [locally] and then United States as a third great awakening. So, Tuesday nights at the local church here...we meet every Tuesday night for revival prayer for hour and a half. And we pray, and he’s been a very good mentor, an example for me to keep up the zeal...he’s very zealous for it. It’s contagious.

Hal also described his experience with an effective Christian educational leader who demonstrated Gospel zeal. For Hal, this person was a senior pastor with whom Hal interned during seminary. Hal explained:

He disciplined me later on in my life, he was working in my denomination and yet created a church that was very evangelical in nature and was growing rapidly, and so, during seminary, I did my seminary internships with him. And [I] got to see his style, which again was a very modernist linear approach to preaching. He came out of a young life background, and he was a key model to me. So, it was possible to grow a church and be evangelical in my denomination, which at that point, I was even questioning if that was possible and he did such a beautiful job for that, with that, and he had such a zeal to see people come to the Lord, that that was an incredible encouragement to me.

Otto’s experience with another Christian educational leader was a bit different because that person was from another denomination as Otto. Otto is Lutheran, and his friend, whom he identified as a leader with Gospel zeal, is Catholic. Otto described their relationship and its importance for Otto’s own Gospel zeal:

He had a way with the people; he had a way with the Gospel. So, we would often go out to breakfast together and sometimes get kicked out of restaurants because we were laughing too much. And we both shared a sense of trying to...we’d live out our churches and congregations and the community live out in such a way that we connected people to each. We connected people with God. And we kind of spoke the same language... So, to

have that sort of a companion for about ten years of the ministry that we worked together, that was pretty powerful witness...he was unique and once again, lived that, lived out in the Gospel...we learned to honor each other's background and give you a sense that you, the differences that separate us are really stupid.

One crucial commonality existed with formal mentors or people who more informally influenced participants' lives. Each person that participants mentioned lived their lives per the teaching of the Gospel and as Jesus did and were generous with their time.

Theme 4: Lifelong Learning and Sharing The Gospel Through Teaching.

All participants expressed awe that they were blessed to study, learn, and teach the Gospel as their calling, and embraced teaching the Gospel through preaching and teaching. Multiple factors influenced participants to teach and preach the Gospel with zeal. Jack moved from the East Coast to the West Coast for his ministry and admitted he knew little at the time, but he was zealous. Jack described the feeling that he was not familiar with scripture despite reading the Bible, meaning he had not studied it a lot. The ministry he was involved in, where he met his wife, preached a prosperity Gospel, and Jack said he and his wife "stayed there until we were sick and broke." Jack's desire to teach and preach the Gospel came from this experience. He said, "My mindset became 'don't tell me anything unless you can show me where it is in the Bible.' We'd been ripped off. [It] inspired me to...study the scripture, so I knew what I believed and why I believed it."

Ely's decision to teach and preach the Gospel came from an early relationship with the director of Christian Education when he was in junior high school and later a youth minister in high school. Both were fundamental in showing Ely he had a gift for ministry and helping him see "that I could actually do, [that] this is something I was actually capable of doing...it helped to define and refine my call to ministry." Ken's decision to teach and preach was partly because he was thrown into a ministerial position as an interim pastor, where he honed his preaching

skills. Ken said that after nine months as an interim minister while his congregation searched for a new minister, “I’m thrown into being confirmation instructor, being a regular preacher on every Sunday, and quite frankly, I think in the beginning I was giving lectures, not sermons.”

From there, Ken had to learn how to preach a sermon and not a lecture. He recalled:

One of the older ministers retired in that area came and said, “that wasn’t too bad for a sermon,” so it wasn’t really an endorsement of the, of the...oh I mean, “not too bad for a lecture.” It was not an endorsement of the sermon. But that was the start, and for the next ten years I did interim work.

During this time as an interim minister, Ken discovered that he was blessed to watch children and families grow up in the church. Even the children who were once “unruly” in his confirmation classes come back to visit him years later and thank him for the confirmation class. Jack, Ely, and Ken *discovered their passion for preaching through different mechanisms*, like others who recognized their gifts, the desire to know and study the Gospel, and develop preaching skills. For Pete, the decision was made because “my orientation is really the mission of the church.” Pete elaborated,

My nickname used to be ‘Mr. Mission’ in my local church because I would do all kinds of mission work, especially for the poor and have-nots. And so, out of that it became very clear to me that the ultimate call of the church, no matter what denomination or non-denominational, doesn’t matter, any church that seeks to do the will of God. But, we are called to do one important thing, that is to make disciples for the transformation of the world...The call of the Great Commission is to make disciples, and so it’s really out of my strong desire and the heart for making disciples really led me to preaching and teaching.

Hal suggested that in his own experience, pursuing mentorship was less important than studying the Gospel. “I think more of the transformation for me, to be honest with you, has been the Word itself. The Word of God...that I get paid to study God’s Word each week. That’s just amazing to me,” Hal said with wonder. Jack described a somewhat similar experience, but that occurred over time:

We started a Bible study, not intending that to be a church, and teaching through scripture, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, and the study began to grow. In seven months, there were 100 people coming and they wanted Sunday morning, which I had never thought of. And in June of '82, we went to our first Sunday morning service, and the fellowship had just grown since then...I never, as far as professional, looked at it as I need to get paid now, but then the responsibilities because so great I had to transfer into full-time ministry to do those things educationally...Now, I'm a student...I want to be a student for the rest of my life, and I am in constantly studying mode, um, professionally.

Like Jack, who was in constant study mode as a profession, Pete described himself as “a lifetime learner.” In addition, to be a lifelong learner, Pete told the transformational experience of recognizing that in addition to learning and preaching, teaching was an essential component of his ministry that enhanced Gospel zeal. “Lately, I’ve been applying more in my preaching. Even in my preaching, I have been putting two pieces into it as a way of guiding my thinking and preparing the sermons and delivering it,” Pete explained. He continued, “The preaching of the Word there that Big W, big Word of God involves both preaching and teaching.” Ely had a similar transformational experience when he led disciple Bible study, as he recognized his growth, and now just that of the disciples at his study groups. “It was the first time that I had ever sat down and read 99 to close to 100% of the Bible, beginning to end,” said Ely. The experience helped Ely put the entire overarching message of the Bible together in a way he had not done before. “What I find is, when I’ve been teaching disciples when I’ve been leading regular Bible studies and developing my own, I preach better,” Ely shared.

RQ2 asked, “What do Christian Leaders Perceive as Major Challenges to Maintaining Gospel Zeal?” Theme 5 addressed the second research question, which had to do with challenges maintaining their Gospel zeal. This theme is about those challenges, but perhaps more importantly, about how those challenges created opportunities. Participants appeared to reframe challenges as opportunities for spiritual growth and enhanced Gospel zeal by creating opportunities out of challenges.

Theme 5: Challenges Create Opportunities

Participants were asked about the challenges they faced to maintaining their Gospel zeal. When asked, participants spoke less about those specific challenges and more about how those challenges were really opportunities. Those opportunities included reaching new people by rethinking their ministry and developing new ways to enhance their Gospel zeal. For example, one pressing challenge when this study was conducted was the COVID-19 pandemic, which created a situation in which churches were forced online to live-stream worship services and Bible studies over various internet platforms and programs. According to participants, what began as a challenge was an opportunity to reach new disciples and, in turn, enhanced Gospel zeal. Otto explained:

Well, how about Zoom? It's kind of a silly answer, but in our congregation, I have to relate to several other congregations...The use of Zoom has become a way to reach people who only used to come to church, and now we have a full-on ministry to those people who don't get into the building, and so that's enhanced my zeal, because there's a whole cadre of people who we now have the opportunity to speak with and talk with and pray with...I think [it] is going to be meaningful even going forward after the virus runs...We've been worshipping outside for months now and I don't know if I want to go back in the building...We realize we're not out of the world but we're in the world, so there are some zeal for ministry that come out of what you might think could be something really negative.

Ely's experience of using Zoom was very similar to Otto's in that he found he was able to reach more disciples in a virtual environment, creating new opportunities for enhanced zeal:

Covid. We were forced to go to virtual services. We were forced to start live-streaming and to do things and we are reaching, you know, we have, we're reaching out on a regular basis now at least twice as many people as we were reaching before, at least, and it goes way up from there...it's a big change, but I think it's also one of the big opportunities we have that's opened things up, so we're reaching a lot more people.

In addition to reaching new people, Ely said another opportunity related to the challenge of the pandemic was that some old parishioners who had moved away and became disconnected from the church due to geographic location were now able to attend and reconnect. Dan, who

described himself as good with computers, also found moving to virtual worship services a bit of a challenge and wondered, “How can you have worship when you can’t have people come together to worship?” However, he found that, like Ely and Otto, he could make the most of the opportunity the challenge presented to him. Dan created the feeling of a church in his home study, where he recorded opening announcements and prayers. “The fact that we could continue ministry, although in a different type of setting with all of that stuff going on, was evidentiary of God’s presence in the middle of [the pandemic],” Dan explained.

Participants also described other areas of opportunity for their ministry that enhanced their Gospel zeal. First, Abe suggested there be more stillness and more support for the Gospel zeal ministry. “There needs to be more stillness...built into the whole system, built into the way we are one...The fabric of what it means to be zealous,” Abe explained. Further, a challenge that occurred with the ministry was loneliness, and Abe said, “You really need to find your own support systems on some level, but the church is so all-consuming, especially in this time of transition, that it’s hard to get my head around how to find the support I also need.”

According to Ely, an opportunity existed to require those at the beginning of their ministry to read and study the Bible. “One of the things that, and I’ve seen this a lot with people [who] drift in and out of ministry, they don’t have a foundation.” Such a foundation would enhance Gospel zeal. Ely elaborated, “The love of what you’re preaching about, that should stand first...you have to have that love of God, of Jesus Christ, and a have a formational understanding of scripture from the very beginning.” For Pete, the challenge was that pastors could only do so many things, and their role is “identify, recruit, and train” disciples, but this was challenging as a single person. Pete suggested that as ministers, “we have to work on...following the example of Jesus, doing so in the spirit of teamwork, which involves empowering laypeople,

too, as a team effort.” In addition to the opportunities the challenge of technology posed to his congregation and beyond, Dan described a challenging situation in his church when the congregation was split and people were leaving and how he transformed that into an opportunity.

Dan explained:

The attitude in the church was very, very defeatist. Yes, we’re doing this and this and this, like, you know, but where are we gonna be in five years? So, my approach was, oh, you know what so and so did last year, but it’s in the past. It’s over and done with. Let’s leave it there. Let’s, let’s concentrate and going forward rather than looking back.

Dan noticed a transformation in his church by focusing on moving into the future and not dwelling on the past. He began organizing social activities to engage parishioners and noticed that people started approaching him for advice on which translations of the Bible he recommended. Dan said, “I needed those kinds of things...[they] gave me an education that you can’t get in the class, and those things, for me, fired me up, gave my zeal, and informed my ministry.”

Theme 6: Enhancing Gospel Zeal in New Believers

Participants shared a variety of ways they engaged new believers. They also described the importance of sharing their own experiences. Participants were excited to share how they had developed to enhance Gospel zeal amongst new believers, perhaps because participants found discipling new believers enhanced their own Gospel zeal—this experience was not a one-way street. As Chris said, “Let’s be diligent in fanning the fires of the Gospel in each other’s lives and other gifts that we have.” Jack and Pete both identified being consistent in their teaching as effective for enhancing new believers’ Gospel zeal. “I think the consistent teaching of the word of God is one of the primary elements,” said Jack. Pete elaborated on the importance of consistency:

Our faith is not limited to just Sunday, but it's every day. So, this is a really living out our faith on a daily basis in a real sense of the word. And then we respond by serving others. So, that's really the mission of the church. So, we're trying to do, uh, those three things on a regular basis and then, and that's where we grow together on it.

The above quote from Pete illustrates another essential factor in enhancing Gospel zeal in new believers: living a Christ-like life. Ely and Otto both found that teaching new believers how to minister to others through hands-on was important. "The other thing that I found that I think is an important tool is to get engaged in hands-on mission, where people meet people, and where they start to see how...what it means to love your neighbor, to care for those who are on the margins," Ely shared. He believed this was critical for new believers to start asking questions and come to a deeper understanding of discipleship through ministering to others. Otto's version of a hands-on mission was taking new people to the hospital with him. Otto explained:

In that moment, when you take somebody who's new to their faith and new to some understanding of God's love for them, to do something like that, they haven't experienced what it is to be what Jesus would do, is to encounter people where they're at, and we would, if we can encounter people in their weakest moment...we can be grown spiritually, be empathetic, and be compassionate.

For Abe, living a Christ-centered life had to do with environmental discipleship, by engaging in natural world activities like gardening. She believed that engaging new believers in such discipleship and stewardship were a way to enhance new believers' Gospel zeal. So, when she worked with the United Methodist women, she "built methodologies of integrating people into deeper environmental work like gardening that could help people move deeper into their work." They were creating a community of faith, no matter how small. Whether for Bible study or prayer, their purpose helped participants enhance Gospel zeal in new believers and themselves. Investing time in others was valuable to enhancing Gospel zeal. Ely liked to engage people in Bible study because new believers "need to be immersed in the Bible continually." He

thought this because, with the “challenges and controversies that are coming up, and society and culture and everything around it...it’s easy to dismiss it as being irrelevant.”

By keeping new believers immersed in Jesus’ teachings, Ely believed this helped discipleship. Pete also suggested that the journey of discipleship and Gospel zeal was lifelong and continual, so new believers should be “learning and growing each day” in a community of faith. Ken suggested a way to keep people immersed and foster a sense of community was through confirmation classes, which helped enhance Gospel zeal amongst new believers. Otto gathered small prayer groups and invited new believers to those, saying, “That is an interesting experience for them.” Otto recognized that new believers who attended these small prayer groups started to see that they belonged to a community of people who care about one another. Sharing personal testimony and being intentional in this sharing was also something participants believed they could do to enhance the Gospel zeal of new believers. Chris acknowledged that while hearing the testimonies of extraordinary people may be exciting for some individuals, sharing testimony, no matter how mundane, also created zeal for new believers. Chris shared:

A lot of people think their testimony isn’t that exciting, or isn’t that relational, and they think the one about the murderer that got changed for Christ is the one that people want to hear. Well, fortunately, very few people are the murderer that got changed by Christ; more people are the fairly law-abiding citizens that don’t cause a lot of trouble.

Like Chris, Hal also believed it was essential to share his testimony. He said, “I’m going to tell them my story; my story always includes Jesus, and then I can tell them His story,” he said. He iterated that they might not want to tell him their story, but at least they know about Jesus as Savior. In addition, Hal believed it was necessary to keep Christ central in the message: “[We must] keep the priesthood of all believers sharing their faith central, but also keep a huge amount of grace and a huge amount of playfulness center if we want to see people keep that zeal for the long term.”

Evaluation of the Research Design

This qualitative phenomenological design was appropriate for this study as it focused on describing the lived experiences of individuals about a given phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). For this study, the lived experience phenomenon is that of Gospel zeal. The phenomenological design was appropriate because it provided the researcher with an in-depth and candid interview process that gleaned the data from participants who met the criteria and their perceived experiences directly related to the research questions. Creswell (2014, p. 14) states, “A phenomenological design culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals, who have all experienced the phenomenon.” The use of qualitative phenomenological design for this study met that purpose. The phenomenological design provided accurate and authentic data from detailed interviews with participants who have experienced the Gospel zeal phenomenon. This study identified that this phenomenon could be experienced throughout a Christian’s lifetime ministry. Thus, obtaining a direct account of how Christian educational leaders described their Gospel zeal experience and their perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal is a valuable means of understanding how they enhanced that zeal throughout their lifetime ministries under many conditions.

The researcher had the opportunity to interview nine pastors with 20 plus years of experience and over 60 years of age, providing pertinent data related to a phenomenological design and experience in that population. The findings that emerged from this study provide beneficial insights associated with the idea of the need, as biblically instructed, for the enhancement of Gospel zeal throughout lifetime ministry. More specifically, the major themes that emerged from this study were undiscovered until the data was coded, as each interview was unique unto itself. As a result of using a phenomenological design, this researcher now has a

better understanding of the experiences of Christian educational leaders who maintain their desire to preserve and enhance Gospel zeal as their ministries and lives affect their ministries and those whom they disciple.

Summary

Chapter Four provides a detailed overview of the analysis and findings for this qualitative phenomenological study. First, all interview protocol information is explained: “as well as the demographic information for the sample used for the study” (Farmer, 2020, p. 118). Additionally, the researcher explains the steps she took to code the data gathered for this study. Finally, research conclusions are covered in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

Chapter Five communicates the conclusions, implications, and applications of the findings from this qualitative phenomenological study. The significant conclusions, implications, and applications are arranged according to the research questions that guided the study.

Limitations of the study are also explained. Finally, future research suggestions resulting from completing this study are articulated in the final section of this chapter.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate and reveal the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders in ministry. The researcher defined the Gospel zeal phenomenon as:

Zeal in Christianity is a burning desire to please God, do His will, and advance His glory in the world in every possible way. It is a desire which is not natural to men or women. It is a desire which the Spirit puts in the heart of every believer when they are converted to Christ, however, a desire which some believers feel so much more strongly than others that they alone deserve to be called 'zealous' men and women (Ryle, 1880, Chapter One).

Ryle (1880) also relates:

A zealous man in religion is pre-eminently a man of one thing. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, whole-hearted, fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing, he cares for only one thing, he lives, for one thing, he is swallowed up in one.

The researcher acted on Alderfer's ERG Theory (1969) concerning the experiences of each participant. The theory guiding this study is that though each Christian educational leader is unique, his or her experiences regarding Gospel zeal enhancement can impact other leaders, who willingly gave their lives to Christ Jesus and desire to maintain the abundant joy of sharing the biblical Gospel message to help fulfill the Great Commission.

Physiological needs and safety-related needs were revealed by participants and were what the Christian leaders expressed as necessities with which to provide their disciples and congregants as they opened the door to preaching the Gospel. Their Gospel zeal was enhanced by accepting Christ Jesus as their ultimate provision. Relatedness needs were revealed with the importance of maintaining interpersonal relationships between mentors and mentees and investing one's time. These interpersonal needs were based on social interactions, and those needs aligned with enhanced Gospel zeal in love, friendship, and family. Self-esteem in Christ Jesus was revealed, as the Christian leaders identified best with the Christ Jesus of the Christian Bible as their ultimate mentor. Finally, growth needs were revealed by participants as desires for personal development by reading and receiving revelation in biblical Scripture. These theoretical needs "aligned with Maslow's esteem-related needs of self-esteem, self-confidence, and achievement, and self-actualization needs, such as morality, creativity, problem-solving, and discovery" (Lumen, 2022, p.1).

Research Questions

RQ1. What lived experiences do Christian leaders believe enhanced their Gospel zeal?

RQ2. What do Christian leaders perceive as major challenges to maintaining Gospel zeal?

RQ3. What do Christian leaders perceive as the best way to enhance Gospel zeal in new believers?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

Conclusions

The researcher answered the three research questions that guided this study based on the data and the themes that emerged by analyzing the data.

Implications

Enhanced Gospel Zeal for Christian Educational Leaders

The themes from RQ1 are that the participants' lived experiences varied as their zeal to share the Gospel message developed early or throughout college. Some participants attended Bible study youth groups, observed others with Gospel zeal, and had Christian role models. Some interviewees felt loss and disappointment in the church but persevered in their desire to maintain and enhance their Gospel zeal, having experienced the Gospel zeal phenomenon earlier in life. The participants stated that they believed God spoke to them personally (inaudibly) as children or young adults, indicating that they were to engage in a lifetime activity of sharing zeal for the message of the Bible. The study revealed that the enhancement of zeal transformed the participants as they habitually sought a personal devotion to Christ Jesus, stayed fixed in the Word of God, and observed other Christians with enhanced Gospel zeal to live and teach the Gospel message through mentorship and online access.

Thus, an effective way to enhance Gospel zeal occurred by living like the Jesus of the Bible by sharing the biblical Gospel message with others and observing other Christian leaders “walk the walk and not just talk the talk.” Thus, Gospel zeal exhibited in others was a central catalyst to enhancing Gospel zeal for each pastor at varying years of age. This study, therefore, answers RQ1 that the Christian educational leader experiences enhanced Gospel zeal when deciding to purposefully focus his or her attention on the Gospel and relationships with like believers and disciples, as defined in the Gospel. In addition, the application of biblical principles to share the Gospel message and offer time to others enhanced Gospel zeal. Thus, a Christian educational leader’s Gospel zeal is enhanced despite his or her background or modern

challenges when purposefully sharing the Word of God with Christians and non-Christians through mentorship and access to others.

Challenges of Change Become Opportunities

The theme that arose from and answered the research question RQ2 was that the main challenge that Christian leaders found could impede the enhancement of Gospel zeal was “change” of different sorts. The human condition of everyday ministry success, inevitable earthly loss, disappointment in people, disappointment in the church hierarchy, moving ministry locations, financial insecurity and personal burnout, and feelings of confusion about their purpose in the body of Christ as they aged were all addressed. Also, the challenge concerning one’s calling. To maintain enhanced Gospel zeal, the participants chose to turn to the Gospel daily for a reprieve and obtain biblical solutions to challenges. Each communicated with Christ Jesus through prayer and meditation on biblical Scriptures, translating challenges into opportunities. Participants stayed connected with like-minded believers and committed to consistent teaching, which enhanced their Gospel zeal. The act of giving time to others was a significant experience that enhanced Gospel zeal. The participants expressed that Christian leaders must invest their time in others as they have mentors who invest time in them. They believe in discipling but also believe in being mentored to enhance Gospel zeal to give back the gift of the message of Jesus as Messiah and of Salvation in the Kingdom of God for those who believe it is freely given to them. Gospel zeal is enhanced when Christian leaders devote their time to other Christians and receive inspiration from them.

Therefore, experiences that maintained enhanced Gospel zeal for the participants included a passion for being more Christ-like, which translated into exhibiting more mercy and kindness but mainly sacrificing their time. Significantly, each leader decided that circumstances

would not define who they were as Christian leaders but instead focused on God's purpose for their lives to maintain and enhance zeal. The study revealed intense gratitude from the participants for being chosen by God as Christian educational leaders. They expressed that the choice to answer their calling was not initially theirs, but God provided them the Gospel zeal phenomenon to answer and enrich their calling. The participants shared a belief that helping others, in general, was a direct link to helping themselves and others learn about the love of Jesus. Therefore, the main action to maintain enhanced Gospel zeal was staying rooted in the foundation of the Gospel itself with "love" and helping others feel "whole" in Christ Jesus by giving of themselves to keep their zeal. Participants expressed that humbly acknowledging their divine appointment and recalling their initial Gospel zeal phenomenon experiences continued to amaze them, and Gospel zeal was enhanced when they shared their experiences.

A challenge that participants expressed that they would have changed in 2021 if they could, in their experiences, was concentrating on the Gospel message rather than the doctrine of their particular denomination and creating a support system for themselves better. For example, two interviewees expressed that in their lifetime ministries, their time could have been spent better in the pursuit of sharing their Gospel zeal with disciples rather than fulfilling denominational clerical and business obligations, which separated them from hands-on evangelism and contact with their parishioners. The lack of time dedicated to direct contact with people challenged their zeal. Also, if they had shared this concern with other leaders, they would have felt less alone. They expressed that to maintain Gospel zeal better, they needed to purposefully continue sharing the Gospel more and better balance administrative tasks that distracted from their specific callings.

For example, participants expressed that the church's business had taken priority and led to questioning the Christian leader's purpose for enhancing Gospel zeal. This experience was the only one in which any participants expressed regret. Otherwise, they believed their challenges were part of God's honing and pruning, as biblically expressed in Hebrews 12:6-7, "For the Lord disciplines and corrects those whom He loves and punishes every son whom He receives and welcomes [to His heart]. Therefore, you must submit to [correction for the purpose of] discipline; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) They were amazed how God had faithfully used them "as they were" when they received Salvation in Christ Jesus and as their 20-year ministries had continued to 2021.

One pastor expressed that he and his wife's journey into full-time ministry were unexpected but stemmed from a negative church experience as new believers, which led them to lead a home Bible study, which led to a full-time 40-plus year ministry. Participants' responses reflected that focusing on the Gospel rather than church resentments enhanced Gospel zeal moving forward. Jack was as in awe of God for "using him" in 2021 as he had been over 40 years ago when God called him into the ministry; that God would "use a man like me." Recognizing the Grace of God enhanced Gospel zeal throughout his ministry. In this study, maintaining Gospel zeal was recognized in the humility of leaders who did not focus on their strengths or weaknesses but renewed their minds to receive God's ability to give them strength in their weaknesses and share the Gospel despite inner and outer resistance (Romans 8:6). Contemporarily, though the Covid-19 pandemic was a challenging factor for Christian leaders in their recent experience, other challenges throughout their 20 years of ministry were faced by

trusting in their calling and seeking comfort and direction in mentorship, especially in biblical Scripture.

Living and Sharing the Gospel Through Mentorship

The theme revealed from RQ3 is that enhancement of Gospel zeal occurs in new believers as Christian educational leaders share their Gospel zeal with them, enhancing Gospel zeal in the Christian educational leader. Christian leaders expressed that being a good role model, good example, and being a hands-on discipler were vital to enhancing zeal in new believers. In addition, witnessing others grow in Gospel zeal enhanced their zeal. Finally, they expressed that the time they spent discipling is a valuable commodity in God's Kingdom. One pastor shared that the young people embraced having church outside, informed their friends, and church restrictions turned into outdoor church revival during the pandemic. Only one participant stated that he could not recall discipling any new believer to enhance his or her Gospel zeal. Another pastor expressed that he had "not had a mentor since seminary, but 'maybe I should get one.'"

The interview process acted as a catalyst for some participants to re-think the value of mentorship and its relation to Gospel zeal enhancement for new believers and maintenance of their own. The Christian leaders revealed that they embrace life daily by reading the Bible and withstand challenges, meaning changing the ministry course could occur while maintaining Gospel zeal. Christian leaders' incentives were affected by observing how other leaders acted in change and confusion rather than what they preached, including how other leaders disciplined. Two interviewees expressed their dislike of the word "preach" as it negatively affects 2021 society in their environments. These two participants remarked, "actions speak louder than words." The same two expressed that obtaining more mentorships could help them lead others better with more biblical confidence and perhaps enhanced their Gospel zeal moving forward.

The prominent theme surfacing from RQ1 was that mentoring in faith enhanced Gospel zeal in their lives. Most participants mentioned mentorship as reflected in the Book of Acts concerning the early church and how the Gospel was preached worldwide. The prominent theme surfacing from RQ2 was using contemporary means to share the biblical Gospel message while maintaining its authenticity. Finally, the prominent theme surfacing from RQ3 was walking in the steps of Christ Jesus that the Christian Bible reveals in prophecy from the Old Testament and fulfillment of prophecy throughout the New Testament. These three main experiences were what most enhanced Gospel zeal in the participants.

Transformational Experiences Lead to Enhanced Gospel Zeal

Additionally, during interviews, participants were open-minded, and their willingness for biblical reflection and revelation about their experiences with the Gospel zeal phenomenon was evident within the population. All participants believed that investing in others is the way to enhance their Gospel zeal and that focusing on the Gospel message must be purposeful. Though each participant had his or her own story to tell, the overall enhancement of Gospel zeal was found in living the Bible daily, sharing Gospel zeal with others, and thereby undergoing transformational experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal within themselves.

Relationship of Conclusions to Literature

One of the significant contentions made in the literature was the idea that burnout and shortened longevity are Christian leaders' primary problems in the past two decades. However, the primary literature gap that this study filled was the lack of focus on Gospel zeal that precluded burnout and shortened longevity. Barna Group (2017a, 2020c) and Ash (2017) address studies in burnout trends in Christian educational leaders, while Achuff (2018) focuses on the longevity of educators. However, this study resulted in implications for a Christian educational

leader: God works effectively with each person individually. Participants expressed no foreseen retirement date to share the Gospel when Gospel zeal is enhanced in God's timing and their various environments. A significant aspect of this study was the participants' enthusiasm to share their tumultuous life experiences and laugh about their struggles. Their honest sharing of their transformation in Christ Jesus, their need for growth after 60 years of age, and their tenacity to stay fixed on the Gospel message to enhance their Gospel zeal shone. The *attitude* of the Christian educational leaders in this study toward the Gospel when he or she did not understand God's plan or did not want to feel confused when in physical, mental, or spiritual pain was paramount to their enhancement and maintenance of Gospel zeal. 1 Peter 1:13 states, "So prepare your minds for action, be completely sober [in spirit—steadfast, self-disciplined, spiritually and morally alert], fix your hope completely on the grace [of God] that is coming to you when Jesus Christ is revealed." (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) Finding Christian leaders over 60 years of age and actively pastoring for over 20 years was not easy for the researcher. Nevertheless, those who participated had enhanced Gospel zeal and expected to maintain that zeal through their lifetimes.

Though Blackaby, H., & Blackaby, R. (2011, pp. 313-350) detail the pitfalls of leadership, Dale (1986) details the business of pastoral leadership, burnout, and career development. DeLange (2020) reports that 50% of pastors leaving ministry to retire by 2030. This study revealed the Gospel zeal phenomenon experiences that extended to ongoing Gospel zeal experiences in Christian educational leadership ministry, without expiration dates. The nine participants lived the Scripture from Romans 8:28, "And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan *and* purpose" and 2 Peter

3:9, “ The Lord does not delay *and* is not tardy *or* slow about what He promises, according to some people’s conception of slowness, but He is long-suffering (extraordinarily patient) toward you, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should turn to repentance” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*), including during a worldwide pandemic. Thus, in 2021 the Christian leaders with enhanced Gospel zeal trusted in God and placed the Gospel first in all things. This study revealed that enhanced Gospel zeal came from the participants purposefully deciding trust in the Gospel message and staying enriched in God’s Word despite inward and outward adversities and distractions, helping to fulfill the Great Commission by sharing the Gospel in various circumstances. As a result, their trust became a habit.

In addition, they were focusing on the sacrifice of Christ Jesus rather than self-performance was found to be valuable. Finally, participants humbly shared the Gospel with Christians and non-Christians to “reach out” as they saw Jesus did in biblical Scripture. Ryle (1880) expounds, “We all know that exercise is good for the health and that regular employment of our muscles and limbs promotes our bodily comfort and increases our bodily vigor. Now that which exercise does for our bodies, zeal will do for our souls” (p. 125). The participants purposefully exercised their ministries despite unsettling changes. They exercised their right to dwell in Joy, where God had placed them. They purposefully used their Gospel zeal to maintain their enhanced Gospel zeal.

Further Implications and Applications

The further implications and applications of Gospel zeal enhancement are not limited to specific types of Christian ministries or denominations but the Christian educational leader’s devotion and inseparable relationship with Christ Jesus. In this study, Christian leaders' transformational Gospel zeal phenomenon experiences were followed by enhanced Gospel zeal.

Experiences originated and developed from a pulpit, or denominational conventions, or a seminary professor, or from a university roommate, or a man on a beach, or a high school tutor, or from a gardener in South America, or a Bible school in the Middle East, yet all focused on increasing wisdom from Christ Jesus' sacrifice for their redemption. All participants expressed that during the interview process, they were reminded of when they sought God's presence and guidance on purpose and trusted and accepted the outcome of that seeking [no matter how silly it may appear to them at the time] that in their trusting - their Gospel zeal was enhanced. Some of the experiences the participants shared that led to enhanced Gospel zeal were dramatic, while others were funny and most jovial. Some participants were passionate about applying the same belief system as when they had first experienced the Gospel zeal phenomenon. This study reveals that God does not stop working with His Christian educational leaders when they start to question themselves or their assignments within the delimited population. Some participants agreed that a sense of humor is attractive to would-be disciples and healthy for those who disciple them.

Further implications and applications of this study are that the results could help enhance a pastor's Gospel zeal ministry through change, as recognizing the availability of zeal to share the Gospel with others builds zeal within the Christian leader. Gospel zeal is enhanced within the Christian educational leader throughout his or her ministry when applied moving forward. As the Christian leaders chose to grow in biblical wisdom and share that wisdom, Gospel zeal was enhanced by focusing on the Gospel and not on self. Christian leaders can identify with the participants of this study, especially those with plus 20 years of experience, at 60 years of age or older. The findings of this study can be applied to create an atmosphere to share and enhance Gospel zeal through evangelizing, Bible study, prayer groups, pastoring through the daily living

of the Gospel for others to observe. In this study, new and seasoned believers immersed in God's Living Word and the teachings of Christ Jesus daily enjoyed enhancement and maintenance of Gospel zeal. In addition, small groups fostered a sense of biblical community, as Gospel zeal was shared and enhanced through mentorship, being mentored, and accountability. Christian leaders can educate others that sharing Gospel zeal enhances that zeal in self and others.

This study revealed that in 2021 the Christian educational leader might not understand God's ways, but he or she can recognize how God faithfully and creatively showed that He could move in his or her life throughout a 20 plus year ministry, at 60 years of age and older. This study revealed that through times of joy, error, change, wonderment, and spiritual transformation, God placed other leaders in each Christian leader's path who exhibited biblical Christ-like behavior and thereby enhanced their Gospel zeal, encouraging them to do the same. Jesus encourages in Revelation 3:19, "Those whom I [dearly and tenderly] love, I tell their faults and convict *and* convince *and* reprove and chasten [I discipline and instruct them]. So be enthusiastic *and* in earnest *and* burning with zeal and repent [changing your mind and attitude]." (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) This study revealed that Gospel zeal is a biblical contagion and can help leaders gain the courage to share the Gospel in various settings.

The Christian leaders perceived the best way to enhance Gospel zeal in new believers was with an attitude of gratitude for Christ Jesus's sacrifice and generosity of their time to share the Gospel truth that He loved them enough to sacrifice Himself and supports their redemptive calling. The gratitude of the sacrifice of Christ Jesus led leaders in this study to walk out the Gospel message and live Jesus' teachings, and their Gospel zeal was enhanced. Dedication to the Gospel enhanced Gospel zeal in new believers and seasoned believers alike sharing the message of Jesus as Messiah. This study revealed that Christian leaders' experiences need not be elaborate

to enhance Gospel zeal in others and themselves, as long as the Gospel is the foundation of their motive to help fulfill the Great Commission.

This study revealed that the root of enhanced Gospel zeal stems from a willingness to learn new methods to share the Gospel in every season without diluting the Gospel message throughout a Christian educational leader's lifetime ministry. The participants exhibited a willingness to answer a calling to share the Gospel that underwent renewal at every stage of their ministries, as they trusted in their calling that led to the enhancement of Gospel zeal in them and those they mentored. The leaders did not lose their zeal despite societal changes that could have persuaded them to dilute the Gospel message, but instead sought creative methods to enhance and share the Gospel in their lifetimes by using tools of Bible study and mentorship to stand firm, speak biblically, and primarily offer their time for discipleship.

Research Limitations

This study's delimitations were that each interviewee was currently pastoring for 20 years, had a good reputation, was passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, was an exemplar in ministry, and was 60 years or older. This study represents a smaller number of purposive participants who have experienced the Gospel zeal phenomenon and dedicated their lives to fulfilling the Great Commission. The researcher delimited the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in random and specified participant studies (Hunsinger and Barth, 2000). Thus, the researcher did not analyze data about the longevity of a ministry, but the data produced by answers to open-ended interview questions that identified the perceived experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders.

The setting for all interviews was convenient. All interviews occurred virtually because of COVID-19 virus regulations (USDH, 2021) and the participants' vulnerable age group of over 60 years status. The researcher met none of the participants physically face-to-face, only virtually. Some participants are active in both online and pulpit ministries, both virtual and in-person, and some found the setting easier than others, though all participants could log into Microsoft® Teams without difficulty.

Further Research

While this study yielded valuable data concerning Christian educational leaders' experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal, future research could provide additional insights on this vital topic. As noted previously, this study was delimited to participants 60 years or over. There are several options for ways to replicate this study in the future. One of the most obvious ways would be to have a more inclusive age group, such as missionaries who have been in the mission field worldwide for 20 plus years and are 38 plus years of age or older to participate. In addition, further research could include a mixed-methods study that could use qualitative interview and quantitative survey methods to reach a larger population to obtain more extensive data for specific perceived experiences that enhance Gospel zeal in the purposive population. Further recommended research includes that an observer be present during the interview process to add a layer of authenticity. The observer's job would simply be to insure the same questions were asked in the same way to each interviewee, and to observe any non-verbal cues of subjects during the interviews.

In 2021, with developing technology and the growing capacity for virtual surveys and interviews, a mixed-methods study could disclose more revelations for Christian educational leaders' experiences with the Gospel zeal phenomenon and the enhancement of Gospel zeal

internationally, especially with Christian missionaries out in the field. This researcher adds that the Covid-19 pandemic did not hinder her study, as online and virtual accessibility to participants did not change during a pandemic. Therefore, a mixed-methods study could be considered for further research.

Summary

Because this study is one of the first to fill the literature gap concerning the experiences that enhance Gospel zeal in the Christian educational leadership population, moving forward, this study can provide a steppingstone to help keep the momentum for Christian educational leaders to fulfill the Great Commission as instructed by Christ Jesus, despite their changing circumstances. There is a continued pressing need for the Gospel to be preached worldwide today, as Mark 16:15 shares, “And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach *and* publish openly the Good News (the Gospel) to every creature [of the whole¹ human race].” (*Amplified Bible, 1954*) Christ Jesus did not give the Christian educational leader a retirement date for this instruction.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Research

Per 45 CFR 46.111, the following criteria are to be met for a research project to be approved by the IRB: Risks to participants are minimized: (i) by using procedures that are consistent with sound research design and which do not unnecessarily expose participants to risk, and (ii) whenever appropriate, by using procedures already being performed on the participants for diagnostic or treatment purposes. Risks to participants are reasonable concerning anticipated benefits, if any, to participants and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result. In evaluating risks and benefits, the IRB considers only those risks and benefits that may result from the research (as distinguished from risks and benefits of therapies participants would receive even if not participating in the research). The IRB should not consider the possible long-range effects of applying knowledge gained in the research (for example, the possible effects of the research on public policy) as among those research risks that fall within the purview of its responsibility. The selection of participants is equitable. In making this assessment, the IRB takes into account the purposes of the research and the setting in which the research will be conducted and is particularly cognizant of the particular problems of research involving Liberty University Institutional Review Board vulnerable participants, such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons. Informed consent will be sought from each prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative, per 45 CFR 46.116. Informed consent will be appropriately documented, per 45 CFR 46.117. The research plan makes adequate provision for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of participants. There are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of participants and to maintain the confidentiality of data. Further, when some or all of the participants are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons, additional safeguards have been included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these participants (LUO, 2021a).

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Template by Electronic Mail

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Christian educational leadership with a focus on ministry. The purpose of my research is to identify experiences that enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be currently pastoring with at least 20 years of experience, have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are an exemplar in ministry, and 60 years of age or older. Participants, if willing, will be asked a date and time within three weeks of signed consent to participate and engage in an approximately one-hour virtual, audio, and video recorded private interview; using Microsoft® Teams or a similar vetted audio/video recording instrument. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential. If upon completion of the interview a short recall interview is necessary, it will pertain only to clarification of a specific answer or question.

In order to participate, please contact me at [REDACTED] Please confirm that you meet the criteria for the study by e-mail when you return the consent document attachment signed and dated and have checked the “permission box.”

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign and date the consent document and return it to me by e-mail as an attachment before the scheduling of an interview. A permission box and a secure electronic signature and date box are available on the consent form, with instructions.

Sincerely,

Arlynn G. Perley-Huebscher
Doctoral Candidate

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX C

Follow-Up Recruitment Electronic Mail

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the Christian Educational Leadership Department in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Christian educational leadership with a focus on ministry. [Last week/two weeks ago/etc.] an e-mail was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to please respond if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is [Date].

Participants, if willing, will be asked to choose a date and time within three weeks of signed consent to participate and engage in an approximately one-hour virtual, audio, and video recorded private interview; using Microsoft® Teams or a similar vetted audio/video recording instrument. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential. If upon completion of the interview a short recall interview is necessary, it will pertain only to clarification of a specific answer or question.

In order to participate, please contact me at [REDACTED]. Please confirm that you meet the criteria for the study by e-mail when you return the consent document attachment signed and dated and have checked the “permission box.”

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign and date the consent document and return it to me by e-mail as an attachment before the scheduling of an interview. A permission box and a secure electronic signature and date box are available on the consent form, with instructions.

Sincerely,

Arlynn G. Perley-Huebscher
Doctoral Candidate

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX D

Consent Electronic Mail

Title of the Project: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study on Experiences that Affect Gospel Zeal in Christian Educational Leaders

Principal Investigator: Arlynn G. Perley-Huebscher, Doctoral Candidate, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University Online

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be currently pastoring for 20 years, have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are an exemplar in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older. 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 explore the experiences that affect Gospel zeal in Christian educational leaders who are currently pastoring for 20 years, have a good reputation, are passionate about the Gospel and what Christians believe God is communicating in the Bible, are an exemplar in ministry, and are 60 years of age or older. Experiences will include contemporary ministry trends that could affect one's passion for preaching the Gospel for life.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. You will be assigned a pseudonym based totally on the English alphabet and use that pseudonym throughout the study.
2. You will e-mail the researcher with a choice of a date and time within three weeks for a total of a one-hour interview, which will be confirmed.
3. On your interview date and time, you will log in electronically for a video/audio interview for a total of one hour using Windows Teams or a similar, vetted online meeting instrument. In the interview, you will answer ten open-ended questions about your experiences, if any, with Gospel zeal fluctuation in your ministry life. The first 15 minutes will be an unrecorded greeting time, and the recorded interview will follow for 30-45 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Benefits to society include helping support the Great Commission's fulfillment by equipping Christian educational leaders with knowledge of what experiences could enhanced their zeal to preach the Gospel for life.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be confidential. 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.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be audio and video recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years after completing the study and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the e-mail address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and not included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Arlyne G. Perley-Huebscher. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [REDACTED].

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 e-mail at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher/study team using the above information.

In order to participate, please contact me at [REDACTED]. Please confirm that you meet the criteria for the study when you return the signed consent document.

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.

[Double click in the box and choose “checked” for permission, and the box will be checked, and press “OK.”]

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

[To sign and date below, double click on the X, sign, and date in the box, and press “sign.” After you type/sign the document, it can no longer be edited to ensure the signature can be trusted.]

X

Electronic Signature & Date

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol/Open-Ended Interview Questions Example

Institution: (pseudonym)

Interviewee: (pseudonym)

Interviewer: Arlynn G. Perley-Huebscher, Doctoral Candidate

Research Question: What perceived experiences enhanced Gospel zeal in Christian Educational Leaders?

Interview Protocol

Part I: Introductory Session

Hello. I am going to read you an interview introduction: You have been purposely selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who contributes and has a passion for preaching the Gospel. I want to better understand the experiences you have had in long term Christian leadership ministry that have enhanced your zeal to preach the Gospel. I hope to find what Christian leaders' experiences, if any, lead them toward continuing to help fulfill the Great Commission for a lifetime. This research will provide Christian educational leaders such as you with a platform to share insights about your passion to preach the Gospel under any and all circumstances, which I refer to as “the Gospel zeal phenomenon.” Your responses are essential, and I want to fully understand everything you say during the interview accurately.

Do I have your permission to record this interview? I will also be taking written notes to promote accuracy and cross-referencing. Please be advised that your participation in this interview is voluntary, and you may choose to discontinue it at any time. You can say "stop" or put your hand up. All personal details will be kept confidential, and your pseudonym of “Jack” will be used. If you choose to leave the interview, no part of your recording will be kept. I will be the only individual privy to the recordings, and all tapes will be destroyed after three years from the publishing of the study. Do you have any questions about the interview process or how your data will be used?

This interview is designed to last approximately 45 minutes. We will start with a few questions about your background, and then five short groups of questions about your experience with Gospel zeal. Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Part II: Interviewee Background Questions

1. Please summarize the circumstances of your childhood and young adult life, where you were born?
2. What was your born-again experience?
3. What influences or experiences led to your decision to teach about and preach the Gospel?

Part III: Main Questions and Follow-Up Questions

Now that I understand a bit more about your Christian walk, I'd like to turn our focus on the concept of Gospel zeal, as defined by Reverend Ryle (1880), "A zealous man in religion is pre-eminently a man of one thing. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, whole-hearted, fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing, he cares, for one thing, he lives, for one thing, he is swallowed up in one."

1. What does Gospel zeal, or the passion to preach the Gospel for a lifetime, mean to you in your experience?
2. How would you describe the emphasis you have placed on preaching the Gospel throughout your life?
3. I'd like to understand what type of discipleship you have received that specifically supported your passion to preach the Gospel with zeal.
 - a. Please tell me about your professional ministry transformational experiences as a Christian education leader with a zeal to preach the Gospel.
 - b. Did you have a mentor who exhibited the same zeal to preach the Gospel?
4. I'd like to know how essential enhancing Gospel zeal is for an effective Christian educational leadership ministry.
 - a. Please describe an example of someone who you recognize as an effective Christian educational leader with enhanced Gospel zeal.
 - b. What are some contemporary ministry trends, or recent methods of sharing the Gospel, in your setting that you recognize have enhanced your Gospel zeal?
 - c. If you could revamp your Christian educational leadership development experience in relation to Gospel zeal ministry in 2021, what main change would you make and why?
5. What are two examples of your most beneficial experiences in supporting and sustaining a new believer's Gospel zeal to fulfill the Great Commission long term?

Closing

Thank you for taking the time to discuss your views with me today. It has been a privilege to have this time to listen to your experiences. May I have permission to contact you with subsequent questions to provide clarity for accuracy if necessary? Please contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. Once again, it has been a privilege to include you in my study (pseudonym).

APPENDIX F

CITI CERTIFICATION PROGRAM COMPLETION RECORD VERIFY AT:

<https://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?we7588139-7526-4a56-a550-693415b8768d-34258245>

The image is a screenshot of a PDF document titled "citiCompletionReport8668338.pdf". The document is a CITI Program completion record for Arlyne Perley-Huebscher. It includes the CITI Program logo, a world map, and the following information:

- Completion Date: 21-Nov-2019
- Expiration Date: 20-Nov-2022
- Record ID: 34258245

This is to certify that:

Arlyne Perley-Huebscher

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher
(Curriculum Group)

Social & Behavioral Researchers
(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Liberty University

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?we7588139-7526-4a56-a550-693415b8768d-34258245