

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**The Decline of Youth at Ministry Under The Sky**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by

Wanda E. Belvin

Lynchburg, Virginia

October 2021

Copyright © 2021 Wanda E. Belvin  
All Rights Reserved



Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

Wanda E. Belvin

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

March 14, 2022

Mentor: Dr. Joe Easterling

The decline of youth attending their services is no secret for many churches. The influences of the world, technology, wanting to fit in are just a few reasons youth find other things to do than attend their church services faithfully. Ministry Under The Sky is a small ministry with a big heart. At its birth in 2001, Ministry Under The Sky's start was in the researcher's home and her husband, the Overseer of the ministry. God blessed Ministry Under The Sky with its first building in 2007. The church outgrew the first two buildings less than two years each. The third location's stay was three and a half years. The ministry was known in the community for being relational, helping others, and their energetic youth learning about the Lord and how to live for Him. However, as the youth began to age out, some went to college, the Army, and moved out-of-state, the youth's attendance began to dwindle. The things the ministry was well known for to attract youth and families, inadvertently they got away from doing them. The lack of youth in their services actively engaging and their parents is an issue at Ministry Under The Sky. The Compassion Authentic Respect Educate Mentoring Empowerment mentoring ministry's birth will help the ministry become relational once again, see current and new youth emerging actively at Ministry Under The Sky, and families evolve and grow spiritually once again.

**KEYWORDS:** Declining youth in services, mentoring, ministry, prayer, and spiritual disciplines.



**Contents**

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....1**

**Introduction.....1**

**Ministry Context.....1**

**Problem Presented.....8**

**Purpose Statement.....10**

**Basic Assumptions.....12**

**Definitions.....14**

**Limitations.....16**

**Delimitations.....17**

**Thesis Statement.....19**

**CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....22**

**Literature Review.....22**

    Decline In Attendance:

        Understanding Religion / Born-again Christian / Christian.....23

        Sin / Character / Culture.....24

        Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer / Scripture / Bible.....27

        Personal Spiritual Experiences With God.....30

        Attending Church /Community / Social Gatherings.....32

        Decreasing Attendance.....33

        Conclusion.....35

<b>Theological Foundations</b> .....	36
Biblical Teaching for Families in the Old Testament.....	37
The Role of the Parents and Family.....	38
The Role of Pastors, the Church, Church Leaders and Parents.....	40
Small Groups in the Old Testament.....	42
Small Groups in the New Testament.....	43
Biblical Teachings for the Church and Families in the New Testament.....	45
The Role of the Mentor and Discipleship.....	49
<b>Theoretical Foundations</b> .....	52
The Importance of Children in the Old Testament.....	53
The Importance of Children in the New Testament.....	53
Family and Community.....	55
Successful Small Groups.....	56
Conclusion.....	57
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY</b> .....	59
<b>Intervention Design</b> .....	59
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS</b> .....	73
<b>Youth, Youth re: Parental Perspectives, Young Adult, and Adult Questionnaires</b> .....	74
Youth Results for Week One Through Four.....	76
<b>Youth Results – Perspective From Their Parent(s) for Week One Through Four</b> .....	84
<b>Young Adults Results for Week One Through Four</b> .....	89
<b>Adult Spiritual Growth Results From Week One Through Week Four</b> .....	92

<b>Conclusion</b> .....	101
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION</b> .....	103
<b>Does the Research End Here?</b> .....	104
<b>Comparison of the Results Versus Previous Studies</b> .....	105
<b>Comparison of the Results Versus Literature Review Information</b> .....	106
<b>Researcher’s Spiritual Growth and Knowledge Gleaned During the Study</b> .....	109
<b>Implementing This Project for Ministries or Companies</b> .....	110
<b>Possible Future Research</b> .....	114
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	118
<b>Appendix A</b> .....	122
<b>Appendix B</b> .....	126
<b>Appendix C</b> .....	130
<b>Appendix D</b> .....	131
<b>Appendix E</b> .....	132
<b>Appendix F</b> .....	133
<b>Appendix G</b> .....	134
<b>Appendix H</b> .....	136
<b>Appendix I</b> .....	139
<b>Appendix J</b> .....	141
<b>Appendix K</b> .....	142
<b>Appendix L</b> .....	143
<b>Appendix M</b> .....	144



<b>Appendix N</b> .....	145
<b>Appendix O</b> .....	146
<b>Appendix P</b> .....	147
<b>Appendix Q</b> .....	152
<b>Appendix R</b> .....	153
<b>Appendix S</b> .....	154
<b>Appendix T</b> .....	155
<b>Appendix U</b> .....	156
<b>IRB Approval Letter / Waiver Page</b> .....	157

## Tables

1.1	Parental Spiritual Growth Questionnaire .....	62
1.2	Youth and Young Adult Spiritual Growth Questionnaire .....	62
1.3	Adult Spiritual Growth Questionnaire .....	62
1.4	Outline of Topics .....	66
1.5	Youth Spiritual Growth Percentages - Week One Through Week Four .....	79
1.6	Youth Spiritual Growth Percentages - Perspective of Their Parent(s) .....	86
1.7	Young Adult Spiritual Growth Percentages - Week One Through Week Four .....	90
1.8	Adult Spiritual Growth Percentages – Week One Through Week Four.....	96

## **Illustrations**

### Figures

2.1 Youth Spiritual Growth - Weeks One Through Four.....	83
2.2 Youth Spiritual Growth – From the Perspective of the Parent(s).....	88
2.3 Young Adult Spiritual Growth – For Week One Through Four.....	92
2.4 Adult Spiritual Growth – For Week One Through Four.....	101

## Abbreviations

AAMLPL	<i>Agenda and Meeting Lesson Plan</i>
ASGP	<i>Adult Spiritual Growth Percentages – Week One Through Week Four</i>
ASGQ	<i>Adult Spiritual Growth Questionnaire</i>
ATOL	<i>A Time Of Learning</i>
CAMFBSD	<i>Coaching &amp; Mentoring for Business Success Diploma</i>
CARE ME	<i>Compassion, Authentic, Respect, Educate, Mentoring, Empowerment</i>
CGPE	<i>Customized Growth Plan Example</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
IQ	<i>Interview Questions + Research Interview Questions for MUTS</i>
IRB	<i>Institutional Review Board</i>
MUTS	<i>Ministry Under The Sky</i>
MUTSPP	<i>Ministry Under The Sky Personal Prayer and Devotional Journal Outline of Topics and Questionnaire Booklet</i>
OOT	<i>Outline of Topics</i>
PSGQ	<i>Parental Spiritual Growth Questionnaire</i>
PPADJ	<i>Personal Prayer and Devotional Journal</i>
YASGP	<i>Young Adult Spiritual Growth Percentages – Week One Through Week Four</i>
YAYASGQ	<i>Youth and Young Adult Spiritual Growth Questionnaire</i>
YSGPPP	<i>Youth Spiritual Growth Percentages - Perspective of Their Parent(s)</i>
YSGP	<i>Youth Spiritual Growth Percentages – Week One Through Week Four</i>



## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

The world seems to become more and more complex as the day goes by. More distractions deter children from chores, school, and church. Churches realize the value of engaged youth. However, churches must consistently assist their youth in attending and engaging in their services. Ministry Under The Sky (MUTS) was successful the first few years of its birth by having Fun Day, where the youth had safe and entertaining activities every month, including an annual trip. In addition to the monthly fun activities, the youth oversaw most of the second Sunday service. The activities were open to the community and other church youth that desired to attend. The problem is that the youth have become disengaged in their services, resulting in declining youth attendance at MUTS.

### **Ministry Context**

MUTS is currently fellowshiping with the home church in Palmetto, Florida. Now, there are approximately thirty members left. Of the thirty, about fifteen are small children to young adult age. Nonetheless, none of the youths are currently attending services at MUTS. MUTS was given its name in 2001 by the Holy Spirit to the author's husband, the Overseer. MUTS has witnessed many miracles by the hand of God. The Overseer has been a prime example as a heart transplant recipient since 2001 and currently on dialysis for over three years. Through prayer and fasting, the Holy Spirit has moved freely during services at MUTS. MUTS' youth have experienced the hand of God and how He moves when His Spirit can move about the services freely.

However, the researcher and her husband, though ordained in 2001, did not get their first building until 2007. Moreover, on Sunday mornings, MUTS had fellowshiped with the home church. Bible studies and weekly praise services were done in the home until 2007, with MUTS moving into their first location. Different members, including the youth, prayed, sang worship songs, ushered, and assisted in taking up the tithe and offering. When MUTS obtained their first building, the Lord had already blessed them with over five families. Most of the families were either not accustomed to weekly services or had stopped attending for whatever reasons life had dealt them.

Other leaders and I taught the youth to be faithful in their services, including Sunday School and Bible study. MUTS developed several praise dance team groups, and one of the requirements to dance was being devoted to service and striving to live a life worthy of the Lord. The Baby Angels Dance Team was aged six and younger, Angels Under The Sky's Dance Team were aged six to nineteen, and MUTS' By God's Grace dance team was aged twenty and over. When led by the Holy Spirit, I would do spiritual dances at the church unto the Lord for His glory.

There has never been formal discipleship training at MUTS, but I see the importance of teaching regarding discipleship for all ages in the future. There were no set times to meet with the youth outside of service or Fun Day, but the young people knew that they could always come to the pastor or church leaders with any issues about the church, home, school, work, or friends. If there were personal issues, the leaders would inform the youth that parents would be privy to the information for clarity and peace. Nonetheless, teachings were in correlation with the Word of God in how to live pleasing to the Lord with faithfulness, obedience, love, and giving, for instance.

The ministry started with the leaders being faithful and leading by example. Sunday services were planned in a traditional style with Sunday School as a part of the Sunday morning service. After some time had passed, I noticed that the majority in attendance were the teacher and the young people for Sunday School. After prayer, the Holy Spirit led me to change the name from Sunday School to A Time of Learning (ATOL). I explained that Sunday School was a time for learning for all ages, not just young people. As a result, attendance increased for all ages. Eventually, ATOL grew to the point that there were multiple groups on Sunday. The smaller kids had a teenager as their teacher for their class. Young adults oversaw the teenagers' classes. The men and women were in the same adult class, but at some points, they were also divided, with a volunteer male teaching the men and a volunteer female teaching the women. At the end of ATOL, each class would give a review of their lessons. Some days it would be one person selected from each class, and some days the entire class would get a chance to say what they learned from their class.

MUTS would rally with the youth several times and hand out blankets and other essential toiletries for the homeless. The blanket give-away ministry was always during the wintertime, and this ministry was successful for quite some time. The youth also provided clothes for less fortunate individuals whenever there was a need in this area. They learned that these activities are visible signs of Christian living. They understood love is an action word to do something for others when one says they love someone. MUTS hosted church yard sales, bake sales, and carwashes for various fundraisers over the years, but MUTS also believed in giving away things to be a blessing to the community and others.

During ATOL and youth Sundays, the young people were encouraged to engage in the discussions. They would share what they got from the lessons. They would do the opening



prayer. They would bring messages from the Word of God and assist with taking up tithe and offerings. They also read the announcements and ushered on their Sunday and special occasion services.

Constant teachings, meetings, and one-on-one interaction with families were influential in showing genuine love for each person. The availability of the leaders nurturing upcoming leaders and members played a vital part in the spiritual maturity of each person who became acclimated with MUTS. Effective prayer, fasting, reading the Word of God, and shut-ins were taught and implemented periodically at the church. During the shut-ins, there were spiritual and family videos that taught life and spiritual lessons for all ages.

Three symbols that best represent MUTS are the cross, the faith fish (*ichthys*), and a circle. MUTS' family understands the meaning of Christ's death on the cross, and they express their faith in God with strong convictions (*ichthys*). The circle represents the Lord's love and bond that has held the MUTS family together, and they have no problem expressing it to one another. However, since 2017, the ministry gave up its building and went back to the home church. Though the attendance dwindles, the MUTS family supports each other whenever needed.

MUTS family learned the value of love, family, and fellowship from the start of the ministry. They understand that family is not just one's biological family but the body of Christ and the community of like-minded believers that the Lord brings together. The ministry would have a potluck and different types of fellowship activities to strengthen the bond of love and family for each other from the Lord. The first location was a small building that a previous well-known church had before MUTS. The kitchen was small, but it was suitable for the MUTS family as they bumped into each other, laughing, cooking, serving, and cleaning.

Whenever reminiscing, the mention of family togetherness in the kitchen, fun events, and programs are at the top of the conversation. They are a unique and loving set of people; if anyone asked them who and what they value most, it would be the Lord, family, and fellowship. They appreciate having their own, as well. They love the people where the MUTS family is fellowshiping, but they miss having their building.

MUTS grew fast by the hand of the Lord. The first few years, the ministry kept outgrowing buildings. People were talking about MUTS because it was a community church. MUTS was known throughout the community for showing love and acceptance of all of God's people. MUTS' birth was like another ministry from under the home church, so it is more than one congregation. Moreover, they had their services, as did MUTS, but monthly all three, and at one time, four churches came together for the district meeting.

By 2010, MUTS branched out from under the home church for several years. I got ordained as a prophetess by my mentor during this timeframe. The church continued to multiply until approximately 2015, and the decline happened almost as quickly as the incline. By 2017, MUTS was down to about six active families attending, and one of those six families was my family and me. These are not the only members, but it was down to about three to six families actively attending weekly. By April 2017, after much prayer and some deliberating, MUTS returned to the home church.

MUTS has fluctuated its locations back and forth from Palmetto, Florida, to Bradenton, Florida. Both are cities, but they are not large cities. MUTS was blessed to attract all ages because many faithful families attended at one point. The young people of MUTS were a strong force in the community by actively recruiting other youth, fun day events, and actively engaging fundraisers to assist for the annual trip.

Church attendance is inconsistent. Some of the reasons are not having a place they can call their own. The current pandemic has many churches online. Some of the youths have aged out and are not attending their services. Some are attending college, and some have moved out of town. Technology has also been a competitive battle for MUTS before the pandemic. In other words, the author looks for practical ways the ministry can engage their youth in trying times such as are experienced in the past few years. The kids were younger when the church began, possibly all under thirteen. MUTS, during its beginning stages, can fit the statement of how well word-of-mouth advertising works because the ministry did not do any advertising when it started.

MUTS had mentioned starting a mentoring program, but it never got fully underway. Though mentioning mentoring girls and boys in separate groups, it never got underway. Some leaders discussed that the youth would start with older members in the church and then move throughout the community by doing odd jobs for members such as painting, cleaning, and small chores as acts of love and caring for the elderly. However, none of these ideas came to fruition. The youth enjoyed yard sales held at the church and car washes at different locations. During this time, most parents were hands-on with the young people in these various functions. These functions helped empower MUTS and its families to strengthen the family bonds of love, fellowship, and caring.

MUTS is a nondenominational church. The slogan for MUTS, as inspired by the Holy Spirit to me, is, "Imperfect People Serving a Perfect God." MUTS does not want to box in anyone, but its teaching is in line with the Word of God. The slogan is not saying that one can go around sinning without any consequences. It encourages and empowers each person who attaches themselves to the ministry or sees the banner of how God has created each person

intricately. Spiritually, the aim was to teach as they mature, to strive to live worthy lives before the Lord with every flaw.

Christian leaders and parents were always encouraged to listen to the young people attentively. Nonetheless, the youth were always encouraged to listen attentively to the adults. To become a great leader, one must have the ability to be good at listening to what is said.<sup>1</sup> The book of Proverbs also encourages “sage”<sup>2</sup> advice for readers to obtain the art of good listening skills and clarity. For the remainder of the youth who are members of MUTS, I have managed to keep an active relationship in different ways and timeframes with the young people. I believe what worked at the beginning of the ministry, the Lord, can revitalize MUTS once again by getting involved with the young people at the church and off-site locations. Gaining clarity, many of the things that the ministry was doing over the years were in the sphere of discipleship; it will assist teaching in the future. I feel that proper teaching and training of the leaders and the youth about discipleship will be a start to bring life back into the youth and families at MUTS. Furthermore, this new life in the young people at MUTS can empower them and get them back engaging actively and consistently in their services at MUTS. Therefore, the availability of leaders and parents can once again revive the family atmosphere and love that MUTS is well known for over the years.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ronald B. Adler, George Rodman, and Athena du Pre’, *Understanding Human Communication* Thirteenth Edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 125.

<sup>2</sup> Definition – Google Search – *Sage*. Sage Defined – Google Search <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sage>. Accessed on February 16, 2022.

### **Problem Presented**

As the complexities of life continue to spiral seemingly out of control, the youth at MUTS have stopped attending their services. Many distractions and vices pull at them and lull them away from faithfully engaging and attending their services. For instance, some of the declines are due to students going away for college, joining the military, or not being of legal age to drive themselves to the services. I am saddened each Sunday when there is no youth committed to MUTS not currently in attendance.

This decline and inactivity of the youth attending their services at MUTS can be deemed detrimental to the future existence of MUTS. The common adage, "The youth are the church of tomorrow," is well-stated. However, if there are no youth actively engaging at MUTS, the church of tomorrow is still in question. Youth need to be loved and nurtured. The ministry started upon the instructions of the Holy Spirit and love, and these are always effective together. MUTS' youth need a helping hand to re-engage in their services with faithful attendance.

No matter how busy the world or life gets, no one is immune to stress. If the parents get too busy to bring their young children to church, how else will they learn innovative ways to process their stress levels is a common concern. They should see how well their parents deal with stress to handle being busy or stress well for themselves.<sup>3</sup> The pandemic is a concern to younger age children as time has passed. When the pandemic first emerged, the talk was it affecting the elderly, so many, if not all, were not concerned about its impact on them. However, some young have now been affected by the pandemic and are trying not to succumb to depression.

---

<sup>3</sup> Chap Clark, Hurt 2.0: *Inside the World of Today's TEENAGERS* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 133.

Some young people, whether college or age out, feel they can now drink or deal with marijuana when they are of age.<sup>4</sup> When young people turn on their television, go on social media, and talk to many friends who have done drugs or drink, they feel they should do the same. Moreover, when this type of behavior occurs, they may have conflicts about whether they should go to church when knowing what they are doing is wrong. Some deal with, they were made to attend service when they were younger, so their feeling could be attending service is a choice. Put differently; their choice is either to go or not to go. Biblical principles instilled into the younger generation as soon as possible to save them is imperative to help keep the young people actively engaging in their services. The prayer is to help them as much as possible to not fall into the various snares and traps in the world the enemy has devised.

From in-house fighting, self-righteousness, leadership issues, MUTS began to undergo one battle spiritually after another. The spiritual warfare was real, and it took a toll on the adults first. If children cannot drive or have a ride to service, the church loses the adults and the children, and the whole family, in some cases. Family worship is beautiful and interwoven in the fibers and structure of MUTS. This current state has hurt MUTS drastically, but all hope is not lost as there is still engagement via texts and phone calls. There is some attendance via the zoom morning worship, and Bible study held on Tuesday nights. Furthermore, whenever asked if they are still a part of MUTS, their response is enthusiastic, "Yes!" This project, the researcher feels, is a way the Lord is going to reshape and rebuild MUTS to be better than ever this time around.

It was enjoyable to know that approximately fifty or more youth were members of MUTS. Furthermore, about fifteen to twenty were actively attending and engaged in their services at MUTS. The accuracy of the numbers varies depending on the timeframe at given

---

<sup>4</sup> Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 155.

times. The youth were also consistently helping the adults to recruit family and friends who were already not affiliated with a church. One focus element is not trying to recruit anyone affiliated with another church. The problem is that the youth have become disengaged in their services, resulting in declining youth attendance at MUTS.

### **Purpose Statement**

This DMIN action research project aims to develop and implement a safe mentoring program focusing on fundamental youth activities at MUTS. The safe mentoring ministry will involve activities at MUTS that will teach Christianity, spiritual formation, commitment, and problem-solving. Some of the activities in the past which were successful in building strong relationships within the church included bowling, flag football, volleyball, and basketball. Spiritually, MUTS did early morning worship, overnight and weekend shut-ins filled with teachings about Jesus, love, living holy, idols, and worship, among other teachings. MUTS taught the importance of giving their time and money to the Lord and His Kingdom's work. MUTS started with at least ten youth in 2007, and by 2010, this number had more than tripled. However, the few youths that are left are not attending MUTS at all at this time consistently.

The researcher's love for the youth at MUTS, her passion for youth, and knowing the value of young people make the action research vital to me. I understand that when youth are empowered, they are a force with which to be reckoned. MUTS and all churches need the new life and energy that youth bring to their churches. The birth of Compassion, Authentic, Respect, Educate, Mentoring, Empowerment (CARE ME) will attempt to re-create the success and increase of youth attending MUTS services consistently and help other churches successfully engage active youth in their services as well. The success of the CARE ME mentoring ministry will bless the young people at MUTS and me. My hope, desire, and prayer are that the Lord

brings strength, compassion, authenticity, respect, education, mentoring, and empowerment for the youth at MUTS and solidifies bonds between young people, their leader, and the adults and families of MUTS.

After a few months, MUTS incorporated youth Sunday to be every second Sunday. When a memorable holiday such as Mother's Day or something similar arose, leadership adjusted to a different Sunday; the youth oversaw the service. The desire was for the leaders and me to empower the young people at MUTS by making them feel loved, cared for, and needed. The nurturing of MUTS' young people allowed their value to shine consistently throughout their services during this time.

When church and leadership tend to get busy doing church, they inadvertently overlook the young people as if they do not exist. Or treat them as if they do not matter. Then, when they begin to disengage or stop attending services altogether, they wonder why. However, when the church takes time for its young people, it thrives with new life and energy. This new life and zeal were at one point the norm for MUTS. Inadvertently, the subtle actions of the enemy caused the youth's participation to become eliminated over time. Church leaders and parents must be wary of these ploys of the enemy before they lose their young people to the world.

Whenever given positive attention, young people can bring a different perspective into the worship experience and church overall. This statement is not to say it is okay to dishonor the church. The reverence must continue to be in the forefront for the Lord and His House. However, it would not hurt the church and leaders to look at service through the lens of the young people. MUTS modeled this, and it was successful, and going back to the original drawing board or similar is at the forefront of my mind.



As I explore this new ministry at MUTS, its primary focus will be to engage youth first at MUTS. Next, explore creative ways to increase attendance consistently. Youth are not yet adults, but they thrive for the same thing that adults desire: to be loved, cared for, and know they are appreciated. When the church and leaders show their young people that they matter, it surges passion within them. The world has many pitfalls and detours to snare the young people from all churches; this being, the church must be counterproductive and develop strategic and effective ways to help their youth grow spiritually. Lastly, my prayer is it will cause a spark worldwide with youth engaging actively and consistently in their services.

### **Basic Assumptions**

All people want to feel like they matter. Whenever people speak up, they want to detect their opinion matters. People do not want to be unheard or unloved. Consequently, this research will allow them to be heard as they participate willingly in the study. The researcher's attentiveness to hearing them out, understanding their feelings, and where they are coming from will make a positive difference. The result is that everyone sees the problem clearer and works towards the best solutions to make things better.<sup>5</sup>

The questionnaires' design is in line with the ages of the participants. However, they may not want me or the parents to know their answers, so I will ensure the questionnaires are anonymous for extra preventive measures if needed. The assumption is that most people, children included, will find it easier to answer questions when they have no fear of anyone knowing they are the participant. The parents are going forward with information beforehand

---

<sup>5</sup> Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research* 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc, 2014), 14.

when allowing their children to participate in this study. Still, anonymity is at the strictest of confidence for every participant.

By getting the young people re-engaged in their services at MUTS, the assumption is that they will become actively engaged and faithful consistently. Furthermore, the assumption is that this re-engaging of the young people will pour over into their parents, making it a family affair to worship together. The premise continues that as the young people fall in love with the Lord, they will commit to His service faithfully and dutifully at MUTS. Even if they attend college, military, or move out of state, they will consider MUTS their home church and fellowship when they are in town. MUTS has a family in North Carolina who is a part of the MUTS family when they come to town and occasionally via zoom services.

There is the assumption that birthing CARE ME ministry will create active involvement with all the youth at MUTS. Their involvement will be contagious and spill over into the community resulting in the growth of the youth department once again at MUTS. A further assumption is that reviving the Fun Day, including the parents and various activities, will rebuild a rapport with MUTS young people. Moreover, I assume that this will be fun for everyone involved.

Another assumption is that this research study will resurface the love of the MUTS family to be visible as a community in the here-and-now instead of waiting for a building. The knowledge of another building is unknown when that blessing will materialize, and no one knows when their time is up. With that, I see it is imperative to start this work now. This study seeks to fill this void within MUTS.

## Definitions

Action Research: “Action research is a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives. Unlike experimental or quantitative research, which looks for generalizable explanations related to a small number of variables, action research seeks to engage the complex dynamics involved in any social context.”<sup>6</sup> This type of research helps to make things run smoother for all people involved.<sup>7</sup>

Agape Love: “Agape, Greek *agapē*, in the New Testament, the fatherly love of God for humans as well as the human reciprocal love for God. ... In John 3:16, a verse that is often described as a summary of the Gospel message, agape is the word used for the love that moved God to send his only son for the world's redemption.”<sup>8</sup> The relationship between God and Jesus is an excellent example of selfless love.

Covenant: “A covenant is a two-way promise, the conditions of which are set by God.”<sup>9</sup> God makes and keeps His promises to bless His people, and God expects His people to keep their promises to Him.<sup>10</sup>

Disciple: “A disciple is a person who has trusted Christ for salvation and has surrendered completely to Him. He or she is committed to practicing the spiritual disciplines in community and developing to their full potential for Christ and His mission.”<sup>11</sup> By finding one has a

---

<sup>6</sup> Stringer, *Action Research*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Agape in the Bible. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/agape>. Accessed on February 15, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Understanding Our Covenants with God An Overview of Our Most Important Promises [https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2012/07/understanding-our-covenants-with-god?lang=eng&cid=14503511667&adlang=eng&source=google&network=x&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhvz7kMff9AIVAs93Ch17rgZQEAAAYAiAAEgLOJ\\_D\\_BwE&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhvz7kMff9AIVAs93Ch17rgZQEAAAYAiAAEgLOJ\\_D\\_BwE](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2012/07/understanding-our-covenants-with-god?lang=eng&cid=14503511667&adlang=eng&source=google&network=x&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhvz7kMff9AIVAs93Ch17rgZQEAAAYAiAAEgLOJ_D_BwE&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhvz7kMff9AIVAs93Ch17rgZQEAAAYAiAAEgLOJ_D_BwE). Accessed on December 12, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is... How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 28.

relationship with the Lord, they are willing to make sacrifices, and their life is continually changing from the inside out, one can ascertain they are a disciple of Jesus.<sup>12</sup>

Mentor: “A wise and trusted counselor or teacher.”<sup>13</sup> “An experienced and trusted advisor.”<sup>14</sup> Someone older and seasoned that works with another once they have established a rapport and trust, they work together to promote the other’s growth.<sup>15</sup> The mentor’s relationship is to share their knowledge and experience as they commit to helping others grow in the area(s) needed personally. The relationship can range from weeks to a lifetime. They are intentional regarding helping others.

Sage: “Wise through reflection and experience.”<sup>16</sup> Proceeding from or characterized by wisdom, prudence, and good judgment.”<sup>17</sup> A wise person.”<sup>18</sup> A person of wisdom who brings clarity into the context of something or for someone.

Shut-In: This discipline is when one gets away from the hurried and busyness of life to have quality time with the Lord. They are in constant prayer, listening, and meditation mode. Spiritual growth usually shows up when one listens to the voice of the Holy Spirit telling them they need to get away from all the noise of the world. It is health to the soul, and some people do shut-ins individually or corporately.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 28.

<sup>13</sup> Mentor – Definition. <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/mentor>. Accessed on February 15, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Define Mentor – Google.

<https://www.google.com/search?q=define+mentor&oq=define+mentor&aqs=chrome.69i57j0i512l6j0i10i512j0i512l2.3023j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>. Accessed on February 15, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> What is a Mentor? Definition. <https://www.guided-ai.com/blog/what-is-a-mentor>. Accessed on February 15, 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Sage Defined, Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014.

**Vetting Process:** This process investigates one's background, especially when working with young children.

**Youth:** When using this term, the author is refers to any child from five to young-adult age who can understand what it means to love the Lord and serve Him with their heart, mind, soul, and body. They ascertain that they are to make better choices as they grow in the Lord consistently.

**Zoom:** Zoom is a way of interaction via a video app.<sup>20</sup>

### **Limitations**

This project aims to evaluate the youth at MUTS to find out why they are not attending their services. The researcher will seek to find out what to do to re-engage them in their services. Moreover, it will seek answers and ways to keep them actively engaged and faithful to the Lord and their services at MUTS. In observing and interviewing the young people of MUTS, I understand that participants will encounter some limitations. Some restrictions can be foreseeable, whereas some may not be foreseeable unless a limitation occurs.

During interviews or questioning, I realize the participants may desire to please me, which will balance the scales indecisively. If the participants are not truthful with their answers, the accuracy of the results will be limited. I will convey to all participants the need, to be honest with all answers. I will also let participants know their honesty is needed and will not affect their relationship negatively. Another limitation would be that if they are not currently attending services at MUTS, I will have to find a way to meet with them collectively. Since most young people left at MUTS are underage and cannot drive, I will have to cooperate with the parents to

---

<sup>20</sup> Zoom App. <https://www.appurse.com/zoom>. Accessed on February 16, 2022.

meet me at a suitable location. It is to be at the forefront of my mind that the questions created, and the participants chosen are limited because they are not random people.

I am optimistic that I will gain the support of the parents and their children to do this research. However, as some children age, it may limit how many participants I will have. There is also a pandemic currently going on in the world. If the parents are concerned about limiting their children to extracurricular events outside of school and sports, it will produce another limitation. Again, I am optimistic about gaining support. Even if it is a slow start, I am hopeful that things will work out well.

The other option with the parents' cooperation is to work with their children, and if they cannot drop them off at a designated location, she will have to meet them individually. This process will take more time, but the research is vital to me. To express differently, I am willing to be assertive to help regain the momentum of the young people at MUTS and attract new young people who do not have a church home.

### **Delimitations**

In line with the topic, the researcher will only work with the youth and families at MUTS. If there are unchurched individuals during the recruitment efforts, they can participate, but I will focus only on the MUTS' youth and families. The topic chosen is due to the passion I have concerning the things of the Lord. I am passionate about the young people the Lord has entrusted to my care. I could have chosen something else to write about, but it makes more sense first to obey the Lord. The decline and disengagement of youth at MUTS prevents me from doing prior research on the issue or the reason for their lack of attendance. When a problem occurs, the best solution is to solve it as quickly as possible, with the help of the Lord. There is a problem

currently at MUTS with the decline and nonattendance at MUTS, so the delimitation first is the topic to the author's heart, getting the young people back engaging actively at MUTS.

The second delimitation would be the location of the ministry. Though MUTS is currently fellowshiping with another church, I do not foresee a negative issue. I do not feel it will be a problem to utilize a smaller room or dining area to conduct my research with the participants if needed. Though the members are not currently attending, they are all familiar with the current location and the members there. Friendly sites usually help the rapport flow well. Therefore, I desire to conduct the research within a familiar place or via zoom. I will only use an area(s) that MUTS is already comfortable with for the duration of the study.

The third delimitation is that I feel there will be at least twelve participants under the age of fifteen, and possibly four or five young adults. The gender of the participants is almost equal to males and females. Currently, there is one Caucasian young adult, one bi-racial young adult, a part of MUTS. However, in the first few years, multiple races were a part of the MUTS family.

Currently, all the younger children are African American. Considering that the younger children cannot drive, I will include the adults in the research. Nonetheless, this is not to undermine their value or input, as they are valuable to the Lord and MUTS. I have seen cases where the Lord touches the children to draw the adults. I have also observed that the parents are usually happier when their children attend services together as a family.

The fourth delimitation to consider is the questions that I will create. I know all the participants, which should help me develop appropriate questions for positive but truthful responses. Furthermore, the development of questions, their foundational structure will have the intent to be unbiased. The basis of the questions will focus on the future existence of empowered young people continuously being added to MUTS.

I am interested in the salvation of all young people and people abroad, and I feel the Lord is pressing me to help the youth at MUTS to regain their zeal and passion for Him and MUTS. The activities selected are things I understand they are already engaged in, so the focus will be incorporating these activities to be done consistently at MUTS. The spectrum of the research is narrowing the research to MUTS, but if any other ministry deems it necessary, they are welcome to use the information.

### **Thesis Statement**

Youth being birthed and placed on the earth for a reason and a purpose by God is paramount. This researcher wants to know the best ways that churches can help youth feel loved, safe, cared about, and empowered to be authentic and compassionate through fun and educated interaction. When people are valued and cared for to show love and appreciation, something beautiful emerges from the inside outward. CARE ME will instill values in youth, spend quality time with safe measures due to the current pandemic as they learn about the Lord and what they have to offer for the Kingdom of God and the body of Christ.

When looking back over my life, I cherish my Baptist upbringing. My parents were faithful in their attendance and giving. I watched this over the years and wanted to pattern this behavior in my spiritual formation journey. As time passed, I strayed somewhat but stayed close to the church. I remember how the Lord kept me close-knitted in connection with each church He led me to, and He held me closer in His care. I remember in past services, I also modeled faithfulness before my children. Though I did some things over the years, staying connected to the church actively kept me close to the Lord. I feel that keeping MUTS youth engaged in their services without fearing anyone being sanctimonious over them will flourish how the Lord wants them to thrive.



Though previous churches I attended did not have mentoring programs, they offered activities for young people. Some of the activities were ushering and singing in the choir. The previous churches also had separate Sunday School classes for the young people to feel comfortable engaging with the discussion without fear of adults present or taking over the conversation. MUTS was good about allowing their youth to talk during Sunday School and ATOL whether they had separate classes or engaged with the adults.

The CARE ME ministry will have safe and fun church activities, allowing young people to enjoy church again. It is felt, from experience, that positive involvement and accountability will ensure reviving their zeal and passion for wanting to be there. One key is making church fun, refreshing, empowering, and life-transforming. Most will find that people, including the young people, will attend. Still, they will also be actively engaged and hungry to learn about the Lord and what positive changes they need to make during their spiritual formation journey. By empowering the young people at MUTS, the parents will want to bring them, but they will stay to experience the spiritual journey with their family.

The church can be fun without defiling the house of God. By listening to the young people, positive changes can emerge. Discipleship teaching should start as young as possible. Teaching the young children how to love the Lord, love others genuinely, and the ability to serve are some of the spiritual formation characteristics that the Lord looks for in His disciples. The faith of a small child is in Jesus' teachings, and some older Christians can learn from their youth the art of having childlike faith. MUTS was successful in all areas when the consistency of structure was in the confines of the ministry.

I feel that the youth are falling through the cracks at MUTS. Though they are loved, as are their entire family, the change of locations and the pandemic significantly impacted the

attendance at MUTS. The decline, however, had started before the changing of sites. If the CARE ME ministry starts at MUTS, there will be an increase in youth involvement and attendance.

## CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

By setting out on this endeavor for the DMIN project in interesting yet relevant ways of importance, the researcher will attempt to build upon it as I observe the works of other scholarly researchers who paved the way before me. The following will accumulate themes found throughout the research and determine any gaps exhibited during the study. If any gaps are determined, I will seek to bridge that gap. The bridge will seek to enhance the knowledge and intimacy of Christ within local youth and spark this engagement and interaction with others and consistent attendance from participants engaging at MUTS. My hope, desire, and prayer are that this project will spark a spiritual fire in youth worldwide to help many churches desiring and praying for their youth to be empowered and actively engaged consistently in their services. The following presentation will include the precedent literature that assisted the research process.

### Literature Review

The decline of youth in their services is not foreign to local, global, or foreign churches. In the case of the Millennials, the trend continues. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of this generation rarely or never attend religious services.<sup>21</sup> This pattern has been an issue at MUTS for a few years now, and when speaking to others, it seems to be a growing issue in churches worldwide. The current pandemic, due to Covid-19, has greatedened this decline in the youth attending services. Millennial Christians are not content with business-as-usual churches,<sup>22</sup> and they are looking for something new, innovative, yet life-transforming. The literature review will

---

<sup>21</sup> Thom S. Rainer & Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 236.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

cover the decline of youth attending services at MUTS, which, unfortunately, is not an isolated incidence.

### **Decline In Attendance**

#### **Understanding Religion / Born-again Christian / Christian**

In going over the themes, when conversating with others, knowing what it means to be born-again, religious, and a Christian can differ for many. For youth to become engaged in their church services for rewarding relationships with the Lord and being on the lifelong journey of spiritual formation, they must understand what it means to be born-again. It is rightly understandable that “not everyone has the same meaning attached to each of [their]”<sup>23</sup> terminology when using phrases indicating they are a Christian, they have been born-again, and for some, they say, “I am saved.” Being a Christian is a lifestyle of being holy.

On the shoulders of church leaders, there lays the burden of “the preacher's responsibility to lay out biblical principles so that everyone can develop Christian values.”<sup>24</sup> These “[o]pinion-formers and policy-makers in the congregation need to be inspired and encouraged to apply these principles wherever they have influence.”<sup>25</sup> Youth can be very impressionable, and adults have positive and not positive influences over them. In their quest to teach what it is to be a Christian, church leaders must know that their “task is to help Christians develop a Christian mind, to lead them into maturity.”<sup>26</sup> Clarity about how one defines themselves and their stand or the lack thereof regarding Christianity is a step forward towards their spiritual formation journey.

---

<sup>23</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 227.

<sup>24</sup> John Stott, *The Challenge of Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 39.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

During their research, Francis, Fisher, Lankshear, and Eccles write, “For the notion of spirituality clearly differentiates among four groups of people: those who describe themselves as religious and spiritual, those who describe themselves as spiritual but not religious, those who describe themselves as religious but not spiritual and those who describe themselves as neither religious nor spiritual.”<sup>27</sup> As a youth knows their name, address, date of birth, and things of this sort, they must be taught as early as possible what it means to become a Christian, not just with words but deeds, and a lifestyle to match their words.

### **Sin / Character / Culture**

An observation is that a few reasons that have caused the youth to become disengaged in and actively attend their services are continual sinning, flawed character, and cultural issues. When one comes of age understanding they have been born into sin, they need to adhere to education, love, and nurturing to understand they no longer willingly sin. Most teachings about the story in the Bible of “Adam and Eve [which gives] an account of the first sin.”<sup>28</sup> The inclination to have power or things out of one’s control usually leads to sin, which generally takes one out of their character. Far too many can relate to the words, “And then comes Paul’s piercing cry, ‘Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?’ (Rom 7:24 RSV).”<sup>29</sup> Youth want to explore life, and there is nothing wrong with that, but there must be a help to help show them a better way without sacrificing their character or souls.

---

<sup>27</sup> Leslie J. Francis, John Fisher, David W. Lankshear, and Emma L. Eccles. “Modelling the Effect of Worship Attendance and Personal Prayer on Spiritual Well-Being among 9- to 11-Year-Old Students Attending Anglican Church Schools in Wales.” *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* 23, no. 1 (February 2018).

<sup>28</sup> John H. Westerhoff, III., *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Third Edition (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 2012), 174.

<sup>29</sup> Robert M. Mulholland, Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 144.

Nonetheless, when one understands their belief and teachings, they ascertain two ways to look at when they are sinning. The other is that they are born into sin. It can be confusing, but the study of the Word of God brings clarity in this and other issues.<sup>30</sup> Discipline starts at a young age by telling one not to do something or that they can do it, for instance. However, there is not always a reason given. All humans inevitably sin, but youth need the teaching that there is a difference between willingly sinning and their start of being born into sin. This knowledge of sin can help them understand how the broken world is not out of God's control, and only the Lord can fix His world. If any give in to a life of sin, they are not only dealing with a broken bond between them and the Lord, but they will see how evil begins to evolve in their life if they go this route.<sup>31</sup> Sin can hold a firm grip, but as the youth's character and nurturing occur, leaders can empower them to grow on their spiritual formation journey. Through His Son, Jesus, God has afforded every human a measure of grace that no one should take for granted. Sin may feel good, but there are always consequences. The youth need constant teaching to help them know how to fight sin and the enemy.<sup>32</sup> The youth need help to learn how to fight the enemy and their fleshly desires, and this is a daily battle with sin.

It is vital to instill in youth that “[a] genuinely Christian spirituality is not only rooted in a vital, growing relationship with God at the heart of one's being but also incarnated in the reality of the social, economic and political context one lives in. Such spirituality is relevant, revolutionary, transforming.”<sup>33</sup> Learning about oneself, their character, and their culture can

---

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Root and Kenda Creasy Dean, *The Theological Turn in Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 147.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 165.

<sup>33</sup> Mulholland, *Invitation To A Journey*, 186.

enhance their spiritual formation journey. Usually, when one finds out what makes them tick, they can seek to make the necessary adjustments in their life.

Westerhoff writes, “Formation is an intentional effort to engage in enculturalization, the natural process by which culture, a people's understandings and ways of life, their world view (perceptions of reality), and their ethos (values and ways of life) are transmitted from one generation to another.”<sup>34</sup> Effectively tapping into the youth's value system, heart, and what matters to them are essential keys to helping them feel loved, empowered, and become overcomers as they jump over the hurdles they encounter during life. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons write, “Pastors play an essential role helping to fine-tune a church's balance of discipleship and cultural engagement, the inside-outside dynamic.... The church sets itself apart as a counterculture by devoting sustained energy to both inward and outward expressions of discipleship.”<sup>35</sup> Family and spiritual bonds are necessary to grow one's relationship with the Lord. One must see themselves as a sinner, see the error of their ways in flawed character despite their culture during times of reflection to enhance their spiritual growth.

By God sending His Son, Jesus, in the flesh, Christian leaders and mentors can help continue to build cultural and spiritual bridges to bring together a body of believers. To reword, people whom God will use over time for His glory. He used mouthpieces generations ago, and He will always have people to speak for Him until He returns.<sup>36</sup> With the example in the Word of God, God shows how to intermingle and coexist with others effectively. It is about feeling what they feel and experience in their lives, and by this, teaching and preaching can heal their

---

<sup>34</sup> Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, 141.

<sup>35</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant And Extreme* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2016), 248-9.

<sup>36</sup> Stott, *The Challenge of Preaching*, 32-3.

brokenness for holistic healing.<sup>37</sup> As a bridge covers water and gets travelers from one destination to the next, youth need a bridge to close the cultural gaps and help them develop a rewarding relationship with the Lord as they seek to understand Him. A new relationship, a new way of living, loving, and interacting becomes the norm for Christians as they change one way of living for another.<sup>38</sup> MUTS can benefit by bridging the cultural gaps of their youth. Youth have their way of speaking or not speaking; for that matter, church leaders must find creative and effective ways to speak their language to reach them.

### **Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer / Scripture / Bible**

Adults have inconsistencies with their spiritual disciplines, whether reading the Word of God, taking out prayer time, meditation, or even fasting. By being authentic with their struggles, they can explore ways with their youth to find effective ways to be consistent with their spiritual disciplines. It would be beneficial to explain that being faithful in their services is seen as a spiritual discipline.

Rainer and Rainer write, “Despite the relative few Millennials who affirm basic Christian beliefs, exactly 50 percent of those we surveyed said they prayed once a week or more. On the other extreme, 38 percent indicated they prayed rarely or never.”<sup>39</sup> Prayer daily, as a conversation with God, is empowering. By empowering and educating youth on how to have a dedicated and authentic prayer life, with the expectancy of positive results, they can enhance their faith to grow, and evidence of their spiritual maturity can be visible. As they grow, their faith grows, their diligence for their services should also increase. Prayer is a vital ingredient for

---

<sup>37</sup> Stott, *The Challenge of Preaching*, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 235.



a spiritual group as it promotes spiritual health and helps others look for ways to help others around them locally or abroad.<sup>40</sup> People do not always realize they are praying because it can be second nature. Nevertheless, prayer, reading the Word of God, diligence in spiritual disciplines is critical in one's spiritual formation.

The Apostle Paul was a mighty Man of God who taught the power of having a powerful prayer life. A powerful prayer life helps the person yield their way to adapt to God's ways and honor Him by making necessary spiritual changes in one's life.<sup>41</sup> As with engaging communication, it requires openness and interaction from both sides. Furthermore, having an active and continual prayer life takes submission from the person assuming this state of humility before the Lord. Praying people are good at praying before they do anything or engage with anyone daily.<sup>42</sup>

This discipline should be second nature and flow like a person who breathes in the air daily. With this term, Paul seems to call us not to isolated actions but to a habitual orientation of our being toward God at the deepest levels. This is an inner discipline of life which, in every circumstance, leads the heart to 'swing like the needle, to the polestar of the soul.'<sup>43</sup>

MUTS youth were taught from the start of the ministry how to pray and pray effectively. With new youth onboard, this practice needs to be taught again to the newcomers who need to be engaged and active at their services.

The disciples watched, trained, and learned from Jesus during His earthly ministry. They developed the discipline to continue learning by staying close to Him and keeping their prayer

---

<sup>40</sup> Kinnaman and Lyons, *Good Faith*, 244.

<sup>41</sup> Mulholland, *Invitation To A Journey*, 104-5.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

life active and influential.<sup>44</sup> When the church began, they already knew the power of prayer. Moreover, they knew its importance as a part of their inner fiber. Flaws and all, Jesus taught the disciples to be prayer warriors for Him and their future work.<sup>45</sup> Prayer should be genuine, not to be like or sound like others. It is not something to be afraid of either; it is heartfelt communication with God. Jesus left an example in the Word of God for followers to pattern their prayers unto Him. It is not the only way to pray, but it gives a pattern for reverence unto Him. As one allows the Lord to touch their heart, the necessary changes occur from thinking, speaking, and acting.<sup>46</sup> In correlation with researchers, Mancini and Hartman share, “. . . a Latin motto: *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. Translated, it means, ‘The law of prayer is the law of belief.’ What the church regularly does when it gathers to worship and pray--before, during, and after anything is said--communicates more about what the church believes than what it says during the gathering.”<sup>47</sup>

Reed and Reed state, “Rivertree Christian Chapel strives to serve as a resource for prayer. We believe that prayer is the original wireless connection.”<sup>48</sup> As one begins to believe in the Word of God, they begin to learn how to pray and that it is their way of talking to the Lord. They start sharing an intimate relationship with Him as they learn to relinquish their ways, thoughts, and life to Him. This way is submissive and humble before a more prominent God and bigger than life.<sup>49</sup> Francis, Fisher, Lankshear, and Eccles write, “Applying this renewed interest in the

---

<sup>44</sup> Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making*, 69.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 108.

<sup>47</sup> Will Mancini and Cory Hartman, *Future Church: Seven Laws of Real Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2010), 102.

<sup>48</sup> James R. Reed III and Lorrie C. Reed, *Reimagining the Great Commission: 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Digital Discipleship* (Coppel, TX: Center Street Consulting, 2020), 70.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

psychology of prayer to research among children and young people, a series of recent studies has consistently drawn attention to the psychological benefits of prayer, over and above the effect of worship attendance.”<sup>50</sup> Their research ascertained that “First, the data demonstrated a significant positive relationship between frequency of personal prayer and perceived purpose in life, even after controlling for individual differences in frequency of church attendance. Second, personal prayer was shown to be a stronger predictor of perceived purpose in life than church attendance.”<sup>51</sup> However, this researcher feels that a powerful prayer life can promote faithfulness in their church attendance.

### **Personal Spiritual Experiences With God**

Ultimately, as everyone matures and experiences the positive effects of living in harmony and unity with a community of believers, they can find that the children learn from their example. Each is sharing their life experiences, good and not so good, as they share what the Word of God teaches; it can and will promote faith and growth for children for years to come.<sup>52</sup> People can associate their memories and experiences, usually in categories of good or bad. Having personal encounters with God can enrich the lives of area youth. Generally, one will be biased to something or someone who makes them feel their value and including any spiritual disciplines they are developing. There is joy and fulfillment when one feels their worth.<sup>53</sup> Thinking persons will tend to be more theological, analytical, and structural in their spirituality.<sup>54</sup> Working with youth, how they think and perceive things will also assist them with their spiritual

---

<sup>50</sup> Leslie Francis, John Fisher, David W. Lankshear, and Emma L. Eccles., *Modeling the Effects of Worship*, Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, 60.

<sup>53</sup> Mulholland, *Invitation To A Journey*, 69.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 70.

experiences with God. Theory and principles of spiritual life will be their focus. Still, they may slight the affective, emotional aspects of their relationship with God and others that could keep their spirituality from becoming a legalism.<sup>55</sup> Perception-oriented persons will tend to lean toward a very unplanned, unstructured spirituality that is open to God in whatever comes but resist a more planned and structured spirituality that would bring some order and regularity to their spontaneity.<sup>56</sup> There are times when youth have spiritual experiences with God alone, but they do not understand what has happened. They need someone to share with to help nurture and develop them spiritually in this event. Teaching and nurturing them will aid them in realizing their need for the Lord and being engaged in their services consistently.

Some people look at the cross with an opposing view, whereas others look at the cross and see the sacrifice God did when He came in the form of His Son, Jesus. This act of sacrifice is love at its finest. God sent His best, and the cross is a reminder of the suffering and His undying love for His people.<sup>57</sup> People can see God through the acts of His Son as they begin to increase their knowledge and intimacy in their relationship with Him.<sup>58</sup> Willard states it best when saying, “. . . [the] aim will be to assist the seeker who has been found by Christ. We will indicate and encourage some small but efficacious steps through which he or she will quite certainly be met by God to accomplish the amazing work of spiritual formation in Christlikeness.”<sup>59</sup> When Jesus encountered the first upcoming disciples, they took haste and dropped everything in obedience to His call.<sup>60</sup> Modern-day disciples do not have nets to drop, but once they encounter Jesus, they

---

<sup>55</sup> Mulholland, *Invitation To A Journey*, 70.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Root and Dean, *The Theological Turn in Youth Ministry*, 178.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 94.

<sup>60</sup> Adam Thomas, *Digital Disciple: Real Christianity in a Virtual World* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press: 2011), 85.

can follow Him. Thomas writes, “But whether we meet Christ in a rush of immediacy or in a long, slow courtship, our daily walking with Jesus happens not in minutes, but in moments-glorious indefinite moment filled with God's presence. These moments are neither fast nor slow nor too slow; they just are.”<sup>61</sup> It is essential to teach the youth that God and their timetables will not always match, but their hearts with His should emulate a love for Him as He loves His Father. Technology, jobs, church, school, a family can make one's life seems as if it is going too fast. One must step back, take a deep breath and spend quality time with the Lord in these moments. God proved His love, and He waits patiently for His children to include Him in their busy schedules.<sup>62</sup>

### **Attending Church /Community / Social Gatherings**

If one is not careful, they can quickly desire to isolate themselves from the world, not in the act of depression, but for peace's sake. However, the Lord intended from the examples He exhibited with the disciples, the teaching of the apostles, and the early church that it is vital to mingle and fellowship with others on their spiritual journey. Churches need to seek wholeness effectively to help their community of believers. This investment of wholeness helps promote spiritual growth for the eternal resting of a person's soul to be with Jesus.<sup>63</sup> Without full attention to internal growth-both inside each believer (growing as a disciple) and among the church (growing as Christ's body)-Christians are merely do-gooders lacking the power that comes from being transformed by the Holy Spirit.<sup>64</sup> Community believers do not mean there will not be any conflict or issues, but the result should be genuine love and fellowship. This teaching regarding

---

<sup>61</sup> Thomas, *Digital Disciple*, 85.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>63</sup> Kinnaman and Lyons, *Good Faith*, 243.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

conflict and unity will be valuable for the youth at MUTS and at large. Even when there are disagreements, getting along will always prove invaluable for relationship building. The community of faith is the primary and essential means by which individual believers get nurturing to understand and live their lives as citizens of God's New Jerusalem amid a fallen-Babylon world<sup>65</sup>

When Jesus called the disciples to follow Him, He called them to live a life of a community. They not only began to spend months at a time traveling and living with Him, but they also spent months living with each other. Their learning was influenced and enhanced by being with the Master and being with each other.<sup>66</sup> Spiritual formation cannot be a 'private' thing because it is a matter of whole-life transformation. You need to seek out others in your community who are pursuing the renovation of the heart.<sup>67</sup> Willard expounds, "Hopefully, they might even be members of your own family or in a nearby congregation of Christians. But this is not always possible. We must pray that God will lead us to others who can walk with us with Christ — whoever and wherever they may be. And then in patience stay with them."<sup>68</sup>

### **Decreasing Attendance**

In the case of the Millennials, the trend continues. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of this generation rarely or never attend religious services.<sup>69</sup> Attendance at Sunday services is decreasing. Whereas the older people want a traditional service, the new folk want something different. The church school attendance is also dwindling. Young families frequently go away on

---

<sup>65</sup> Mulholland, *Invitation To A Journey*, 126.

<sup>66</sup> Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making*, 70.

<sup>67</sup> Willard, *Renovation of The Heart*, 114.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 236.

weekends, teachers are hard to secure, and children drop out early.<sup>70</sup> Frank and Iannacone write, “The fall in church attendance is by no means steady over time, nor by any means uniform across nations, but we see it among girls and boys, mothers and fathers, and Catholics and Protestants; not one nation or subpopulation displays rising rates of attendance.”<sup>71</sup> McDowell states, “Studies show that Christian youth in the United States are dropping out of church because they are disillusioned with organized religion, not because they have lost faith in God.”<sup>72</sup> Scholars propose that these youth approach spirituality in individualistic ways and find God on their own instead of in buildings designated as a church.<sup>73</sup>

Technology has become an increasing attention-getter for all ages. When children see their parents with their phones in service, it will be hard to get the youth not to do the same. Morrow shares, “Most teenagers today are overstimulate [sic], perpetually connected to technology, and bored. These aren't unrelated. They have learned well from their parents-the baby boomer generation-that happiness is bound up in seeking pleasure. Well, we reap what we sow.”<sup>74</sup> To help the youth, Christian leaders and parents must assist them along this journey. Technology in many forms is capturing them by a storm, in a sense. This area is an excellent place to steer them away from unlimited technology distractions and to spend valuable time with them in a way that nurtures and empowers them to be all that the Lord wants them to be in their life.<sup>75</sup> Church growth is hard enough to come by, but it is even more complicated when you are

---

<sup>70</sup> Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, 113.

<sup>71</sup> R. Franck, and L. R. Iannacone. (2014). “Religious Decline in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century West: Testing Alternative Explanations.” *Public Choice*, 159(3-4), 385-414. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s11127-013-0103-9>, 399.

<sup>72</sup> Amy D. McDowell, “Christian but Not Religious”: Being Church as Christian Hardcore Punk.” *Sociology of Religion*, 79.

<sup>73</sup> McDowell, “Christian but Not Religious”, 79.

<sup>74</sup> Jonathan Morrow, *Think CHRISTIANLY: Looking at the Intersection of FAITH and CULTURE* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 54.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

rowing against the current known as the decline of attendance. In this tidal shift, a church must surge forward just to stand; still, it must grow just to maintain.<sup>76</sup> Stanley states, “Leaders need objective ways to measure effectiveness of ministry environments. As church leaders, we need objective means by which to measure the effectiveness of ministry environments. Attendance is a measure. But it is only one measure.”<sup>77</sup> This trend is evident in various demographic groups — across genders, generations, and racial and ethnic designations.<sup>78</sup> Having a solid family base has been vital in one’s spiritual growth, albeit some do not have a stable family background and are still blessed to find the Lord and develop a lasting relationship with Him.

## Conclusion

The decline of youth attending services at MUTS is not new, but this has been the worst decline of the youth attending their services. Nevertheless, this researcher believes that the same methods the Lord used to grow the ministry with active, engaging, and faithful youth can reemerge. Furthermore, with the utilization of safe, structured, skilled, and trained mentor(s) with the addition of the CARE ME Mentoring ministry, the Lord will bless the current youth members returning faithfully. Therefore, I am encouraged to attract new youth, but they too will become active, faithful, and engaging at MUTS. Everyone can then do as stated in Acts 2:47, “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”<sup>79</sup> MUTS’ life was more visible when God added the youth as they brought joy, love, and new energy, which attracted more youth, but in some cases, it brought their family members to become a part of the MUTS family. In some cases, it was the other way

---

<sup>76</sup> Mancini and Hartman, *Future Church*, 77.

<sup>77</sup> Andy Stanley, *DEEP & WIDE: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2016), 159.

<sup>78</sup> Reed and Reed, *Reimagining the Great Commission*, 2-3.

<sup>79</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the King James Version Bible.



around. As the parent(s) became faithful, it encouraged them to bring their children and extended family members to become a part of the MUTS family.

I find from the emerging themes that Millennials are valuable assets to any ministry that they become engaged with as they have determination, zeal, and passion. All churches should capitalize on their energy, not for self-gain, but for continual new life and energy to be a constant at their churches. There are various reasons that youth begin to decline in their services. Some of the reasons MUTS and churches that I am familiar with are attending college away from home, joining the Armed Forces, or having freedom because they have graduated from high school as experienced at MUTS. These are issues that most churches experience during some course over time. I also find that sports, gaming, and jobs have impacted and caused the decline of youth attending their services at MUTS. These are issues others experience from time to time in their churches. Church leaders, including MUTS, must assist youth in understanding what it means to be a Christian, understand their personal experiences with God, what ways to grow spiritually to overcome sin, and the grip it can have on them. As the pastor of MUTS, the researcher understands the responsibility lies on her first to be the first partaker and lead by example. Essential elements to the themes are an effective prayer life, commitment, learning to all equate spiritual formation. Finally, having a Christian community they can rely upon will be beneficial to the growth of youth engaging and faithful at MUTS for years to come.

### **Theological Foundations**

The Christian doctrine of holiness by example will always be the best blueprint for families and the church community as a daily guide. God set up His foundation for the family from the beginning of time. Christians and families worldwide should build their theological foundation as outlined in the Word of God. The wisdom in the Word of God can steer one on the

right path. Emulating one's theological foundations according to the Word of God helps one love others, build faith, serve the Lord, and grow spiritually.

### **Biblical Teaching for Families in the Old Testament**

God started with families in the book of Genesis. After creating such beauty in His magnitude, Genesis 1:25d-26c states, "God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." God started the family by creating a male as the head. By Genesis 2:7, readers see that man is the first human created by the hand of God. As readers continue reading Genesis, they see that God saw the need for Adam to have companionship. Genesis 2:18 states, "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." God knew from the beginning the value of having someone in the life of others. After eating the forbidden fruit, some things changed, but the mention of children is in Genesis 3:16. This mention is just the start of family and relationships throughout the Bible.

The start of the family is in Genesis 4:1-2a, "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel." God started the world with the first human male. Eve, God used a rib from Adam, and together, Adam and Eve conceived two sons. This family was far from perfect. God allowed the story of Cain and Abel and others insertion to show readers that families will have dysfunction. Still, love and forgiveness are the valuable nuggets to share consistently with each other.

Enoch's family is mentioned in Genesis 5:22, stating, "and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." Enoch walked by example for his children and others to see it is possible to walk right before God. We read of

Noah in Genesis chapter five, and Noah is well known for obeying God and building the ark for the safety of him and his family.

### **The Role of the Parents and Family**

There are instructions for parents in Deuteronomy 6:4-7 which state:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Further instructions are given for parents to follow in Deuteronomy 11:18-21 state:

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

The biblical principles above are expressed to the parents to let their love for God and His Word be visible in their actions, home, and lifestyle. Upon waking, the tasks during the day, and before going to bed, there should be some types of memorial signs and teachings to instill God and godly living to their children. God sent His Son, Jesus, to live His Word out loud for the world to see how to live holy. Jesus wants all followers to emulate His example of obedience and holy living. However, “Jesus had within him both the human and the divine nature.”<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Perry G. Downs, *Teaching For Spiritual Growth An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 31.

Moreover, Jesus was given “unique attributes”<sup>81</sup> that “others could never hope to emulate.”<sup>82</sup> These statements are a reminder that Jesus’ followers are imperfect, but they are to strive continuously toward spiritual perfection until He returns or calls them home. Three of the top ingredients for the Christian are living holy, genuine love, and obedience to God.

Deanna A. Thompson writes, “Israel is called to follow these commands not simply because God desires it but because such commands are foundational to the structure of a just and well-functioning society.”<sup>83</sup> Following these instructions are paramount for parents. Nonetheless, they are pertinent for pastors and leaders overseeing their children. Family structures are major to God, and children should be respectful to parents and elders.<sup>84</sup>

Respect and love have many shades. One may love because they are loved first. Furthermore, one may only respect another because they receive respect first. In some ways, this is healthy whereas, in other ways, it is not healthy. God wants His people to love one another with agape love. When children see selfless love and respect from their parents’ healthy marriage, it can assist them on their spiritual formation journey. When parents exhibit a healthy marriage before their children, according to Malachi 2:15, they “might seek a godly seed.” The foundation needs to be firm for good spiritual health to be the outcome from the parents to their children.

The Bible is a book to assist in outlining the principles for a solid foundation for individuals. Parents and children each have their part to abide according to the commands from

---

<sup>81</sup> Downs, *Teaching For Spiritual Growth*, 32.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Deanna A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*, Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=5974228>. Accessed on September 14, 2021.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 53.

God.<sup>85</sup> The Bible should not be forced but taught to the children early in life. One of the most significant examples started with the early church. “They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the preaching of the word. They continued in the apostles’ doctrine”,<sup>86</sup> and it would benefit the church to continue with this example.

Furthermore, as one changes their life to be a disciple for Jesus, they must read and listen to His Word for application.<sup>87</sup> Following these instructions are paramount for parents. After all, hearing and doing complement one another. Nonetheless, they are pertinent for pastors and leaders overseeing their children.

### **The Role of Pastors, the Church, Church Leaders, and Parents**

Pastors, church leaders, and parents get excited when they are revived or introduced to new information. Where this is okay in some ways, the direction should always be from the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The world is ever-changing and trying to entice young and vulnerable youth daily. The pastor and youth leaders must balance what they learn, what the Word of God teaches, and where their youth are. They are not guinea pigs; they are God’s children of value. The church and leaders must treat them as such when presenting new knowledge or anything else to them.<sup>88</sup> Acquiring new information should correlate with the biblical principles according to God’s plan. Leaders must remember that in grooming disciples for the Lord, they must handle them with care. The researcher made this mistake in the past and

---

<sup>85</sup> Richard D. Nelson and Ri Jones 2004. *Deuteronomy (2002): A Commentary*. Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Accessed September 14, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>86</sup> Matthew Henry’s *Commentary In One Volume* Edited by Rev. Leslie F. Church, Ph.D., F.R.Hist.S. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), 1644. FIX this!!!

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> R. Allen Jackson, “Theology And Youth Ministry, Then and Now” *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* JBTM 13:1 (Spring 2016). 34. Accessed September 10, 2021. <https://www-galaxie-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/article/jbtm13-1-05?highlight=decline%20of%20youth%20in%20church%20attendance>.

now knows the importance of learning and applying new information promptly as orchestrated by the Holy Spirit.

There are different methods and styles for a church to outline its services. In other words, they can find creative ways in line with the Word of God to include their young people. God expects children to grow on their spiritual formation journey as they become adults who love and honor Him. The combined efforts from parents and the church can flow and coincide with the enriching advice from Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go: And when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Some feel this means they will never stray, however; that is not always the case. It is better to see it as instilling valuable spiritual nuggets early in them to ponder throughout life when faced with life’s challenges. This teaching can help them develop on their spiritual formation journey.

Churches must do church and still be a church. The church should be what some call the “Spiritual Hospital” for (e.g., the sin-sick, broken, and hurt). “The church is not sent on a mission by God; rather, God is on a mission and the church is called to join Him.”<sup>89</sup> The church should bring spiritual and natural healing and growth for the people who attend. People should enter one way and leave different, and they should leave revitalized, refreshed, and empowered to do the Lord’s will as they continually grow spiritually.

The world has a lot to offer young children; that is why teaching them about the Lord as soon as possible is vital. It is with the intent that the teaching will penetrate their hearts and mind.<sup>90</sup> The average parent wants good children, but at the same token, they must not feel they

---

<sup>89</sup> Neil Cole, *Church 3.0 Upgrades for the Future of the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 47.

<sup>90</sup> Matthew Henry, "Commentary on Proverbs 22 by Matthew Henry." *Blue Letter Bible*. Last Modified 1 Mar, 1996. [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Pro/Pro\\_022.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Pro/Pro_022.cfm) (Accessed September 15, 2021).

can tell their children what to do without setting a good example for them. The adage, “Do what I say, not what I do,” will not always be sufficient with today’s children. Though some parents set good examples and the child may not emulate that pattern, the instructions are plain in Scripture that the parents should set the pace for holy standards.

### **Small Groups in the Old Testament**

God is a covenant keeper, and He laid the foundation for families to learn together in harmony. Before there was a church, there were families. This family starts in Genesis 1:26. God, the Father, Jesus, the Son, and the Holy Spirit has always functioned in unity. Though Jesus was not on the physical scene in Genesis, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have always been together as a team.

Noah’s family was an example of a small group in the Old Testament. Noah and his family had to make things function while inside the Ark. Noah and his family were confined together for quite some time in what some may say was a tight-fitting space. However, the footage, living together can be a complex situation. Nonetheless, Noah and his family made the situation work and learned from each other.

Moses was another leader who set an excellent example of small group living. He was leading God’s people to the best of his ability. His father-in-law, Jethro, came along and administered sage advice to help Moses be a better leader and not to wear himself thin. This example is in Exodus 18:21-26. Moses also worked with his brother, Aaron, and Miriam, his sister.

In Daniel 2:17-18, readers learn how Daniel and his friends modeled small group learning successfully. God endowed these men with gifts from Him, and they valued their skills and

learned to work together and help others. Each man had a strong faith in God and left a trail blazed to assist others in their faith.

### **Small Groups in the New Testament**

Jesus chose His twelve disciples early in His earthly ministry. The Gospel depicts different perspectives from the view of the perspective. Jesus set out on the mission that His Father assigned Him to do. Jesus eagerly did His Father's will as He led by example. During His time, He trained His disciples on various things (e.g., living holy, proper teaching, preaching, recruiting disciples, suffering, love, serving, and humility).

Jesus set the trend for small groups by selecting His disciples. Jesus set the example for His disciples. They lived, ate, and slept with Jesus along their journey, and they observed the things that Jesus said and the things He did. Jesus held them accountable to His teachings. As they learned, they began to teach others the valuable things Jesus taught them. In Matthew, readers know that Jesus was born to be a leader to be feared and revered.

Matthew 18:20 informs the readers, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This passage encourages that there does not have to be a large gathering for the Lord to dwell among them and answer their prayers. Mark 3:13-19 outlines Jesus calling and appointing His disciples. Jesus knew His assignment, and He knew that He would not physically be with the disciples forever. He trained them extensively to be leaders to make Him proud. Their small intimate groups helped each grow spiritually as upcoming future leaders to learn how to learn from one another. It is paramount to be humble on one's spiritual journey. Mark 6:7 shows how Jesus allowed them a chance to apply His teachings as they went out to do His will. In their excitement, Mark 6:30, they share with Jesus the things they experienced. Spiritual growth is contagious and spreads from the inside outwardly.



The disciples are examples of the different struggles one experiences; some things they grasped quickly, whereas others not so fast. The New Testament accounts where some fell in their faith, were angered, and even cursed. Nonetheless, they learned continuously from Jesus and one another through it all. Jesus was there constantly, encouraging the disciples to go to another level. This teaching is for everyone to learn; there is always room for improvement to go higher in the Lord.

The birth of the church is in Acts chapter 2. Acts 2:42 states, “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” From these first Apostles, community living soared another level. Acts 2:44 states, “And all that believed were together, and had all things common.” They had a genuine love for Jesus and each other. They were living selflessly by putting away selfishness. Their selflessness is explained in Acts 2:45, “and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” Jesus taught His disciples that love, and unity were invaluable. Through small groups, the disciples taught others how effective love and unity work when they are at the forefront of one’s mind and heart. These passages sum up for the readers the value of being together, genuinely loving and caring for others, and trusting the Lord to meet everyone’s needs.

Reading Acts 4:32 solidifies the value of selflessness. Acts 4:32 states, “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.” It is all about what one’s true treasure is in their heart. Moreover, reading further, Acts 2:46-47, “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”, is the valuable

lesson the act of selflessness. The more one trusts the Lord, their love for Him and others grows. They will enjoy Him and each other, and these affections will be visible. Furthermore, the lessons are the importance of sharing, caring, loving, and trusting in the Lord and fellow believers. The Christian journey is about Jesus and shining with His attributes daily.

Galatians 6:2, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” The size of congregations varies worldwide, and one benefit of small groups is connecting with others and feeling their hurt and undergirding them with prayer. The growth of a church is beautiful, but sometimes larger churches lose that sense of family and closeness due to the large size of the membership. This insight is further reiterated in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

Hebrews 10:24-25, “and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” The visible need for the community of believers to draw closer to the Lord and each other is now more than ever. Instead of churches closing and no one making attempt to fellowship, Christians should connect with other believers in the home, on zoom, Facebook, or any other safe and effective ways to not only come together, but to love, fellowship, and grow together on their spiritual formation journey. This thought brings the readers to 1 John 1:3 and 7, which encourages fellowship with one another, the Lord and allowing our lights to shine for Jesus.

### **Biblical Teachings for the Church and Families in the New Testament**

There was a saying years ago, “Dare to be different.” Matthew 5:14-16 teaches the readers to be different from the world. Collectively, it teaches to be the light that the world can see. Christian leaders and parents should not mirror the world. Their lives, actions, and lifestyle

should emulate that of Jesus when He walked the earth. Christians must set the example into motion for all followers to follow. When the church looks like the world, the young people get confused about following who they are following. Whenever anyone is in doubt, they can read 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” This passage directs the readers to strive to put away their old way of living to look like Christ daily.

As parents grow in their walk with the Lord, transformation spiritually occurs. This transformation is in correlation with discipleship. Parents are to disciple their children and others. Church leaders are also to disciple the young people of their church. Jesus walked the earth and did His earthly ministry. When it was time for Him to return to His Father, He left the instructions known as the Great Commission. These words are in Matthew 28:18-20 stating:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Change occurs within oneself and spreads outward; similarly, positive influences in the home affect the children in various ways to enhance their growth. One mistake is trying to make a massive change all at once, but when using the methods that Jesus did, the process will change, but the results will be the same. One mistake parents and the church tend to make is trying to change the whole person all at once. Transformation is a process that is a lifelong journey. Jesus believed in interacting with the person, and He was not impressed with the crowds.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> R. Torrey, "Pastoral and Personal Evangelism, or Winning Men to Christ One by One by R. A. Torrey." *Blue Letter Bible*. Last Modified 6 Oct, 2003. [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/torrey\\_ra/fundamentals/51.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/torrey_ra/fundamentals/51.cfm) (Accessed September 15, 2021).

Nonetheless, this reminder is vital for pastors and leaders that the focus should not be more about filling a seat than changing lives. Jesus made sure the disciples knew what they were to do when He left.<sup>92</sup>

Baptism is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism ceremonies are a sacred act unto the Lord. After giving oneself to the Lord, they can be eager to participate as did the eunuch after Philip's preaching to him in Acts 8:35-39. Romans 6:3-7 instructs the readers more in-depth teaching on Baptism and its role in displaying a changed lifestyle for Jesus. First Peter 3:21 aids the reader with more knowledge concerning Baptism. Baptism is more than getting immersed into water. Baptism is a part of the spiritual transformation journey. Churches should implement teaching about Baptism consistently and the sacred act of performing Baptisms. Baptism is not the only step one must forego on their spiritual formation journey. Moreover, one must not feel that Baptism is the only step to secure them on their spiritual journey. All too often, people think after participating in a Baptism, they are secure with Jesus for eternity.

David A. Roozen state, "the percentage of Americans who have a great deal of confidence in organized religion declined dramatically from 2000 to 2010."<sup>93</sup> He continued, "Indeed, this was the largest decline for any family or age group except among younger black Protestants."<sup>94</sup> However, it seemed this group Roozen mentioned was not affected by the decline

---

<sup>92</sup> David Guzik, "Study Guide for Matthew 28 by David Guzik." *Blue Letter Bible*. Last Modified 21 Feb, 2017. [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Mat/Mat-28.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Mat/Mat-28.cfm) (Accessed September 15, 2021).

<sup>93</sup> David A. Roozen, "Negative Numbers: The Decline Narrative Reaches Evangelicals." *The Christian Century* 130, no. 25 (December 11, 2013): 10-11. Accessed September 11, 2021. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=Isdar&AN=ATLA0001965609&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

of MUTS' youth during that timeframe. The researcher recognizes that their decline in youth attendance began approximately sometime in 2012.

Churches are getting creative in doing church, whether strictly online or a little of both, online and in-person. However, pastors and leaders must not lose the value of a person's spiritual growth.<sup>95</sup> The more technology advances, the more it distracts children. Jesus was strategic in getting people's attention by whatever means He needed to do so. Since technology, gaming, and things of this nature are attractive, the church could find positive ways for technology to work to their advantage without watering down the gospel. Young people are talented, so this is an area in that church leaders can delegate some control to the responsible youth to help engage the current and future youth at their ministries worldwide.

The world, in their eyes, is trying to make sin appealing and seem okay. Nevertheless, Christians are to stand out and look different from the world. Their actions are to be different from the world. As a reminder, Christians should read 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Christians must not think it is okay to read the Word of God and not make positive changes in their spiritual walk. Even when they do not fully understand, they must read and apply His teachings to their lifestyle.<sup>96</sup> Whenever in doubt, the Word of God is as God-dad Sims

---

<sup>95</sup> William Young, "Artificial Intelligence and Online Spirituality: REVEREND ROBOT: AUTOMATION AND CLERGY." *Zygon* 54, no. 2 (June 2010): 479-500.  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=Isdar&AN=ATLAIiREM190610000357&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>96</sup> Shayla Jordan, 2019. "'To Be Saved Is to Be Gathered': Bonhoeffer on Discipleship, the Extraordinary Christian Life, and Fighting Racial Injustice." *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 18 (1).  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=Isdar&AN=ATLAIiGW7200131000531&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

used to tell the church, “It is Route 66.” Meaning, follow the sixty-six books in the Bible as the spiritual roadmap for holiness.

In developing young people in their formative years, parents must devise an effective training system to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. As encouraged in Ephesians 6:4, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Jesus was an excellent example by showing others how He trained His disciples. The disciples listened and watched Jesus during His earthly ministry, and they experienced almost everything that Jesus experienced. Watching is a form of modeling and learning from example. Just as the disciples watched and learned from Jesus, the young people learn from the adults at the ministry they attend.

### **The Role of the Mentor and Discipleship**

For discipleship and mentoring, parents and church leaders can read an example in 2 Timothy 1:5, “when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.” This passage of Scripture depicts a pattern of faithfulness and holiness unto the Lord. Following what appears to be perfect patterns does not solidify ideal outcomes but can guide one in the right direction.

Proper training is a must for mentors to be skilled in working with young people. According to biblical principles and other training materials that correlate with the Bible, mentors’ and youth’s desires should line up. Teaching and training can equate to proper application. Matt Thomas writes, “Mark’s Gospel though, is not without a concern for Jesus’

teaching, but his teaching is directly related to his activity.”<sup>97</sup> Jesus mainly taught in parables, but no matter what, His life measured up to the standards expected from His Father. Jesus was not all talk, as His life and words were perfectly aligned. The teaching and lifestyles should line up with the Word of God. Influential leaders model the way for their followers to follow. The school systems equipping teachers with what is needed to teach Christianity and the fundamental study skills would be ideal.<sup>98</sup> Children can learn about the Lord at home, church, and school.

Mentoring and discipleship go together. Youth should know they can go to their pastor or any leader if they have questions or concerns. Good leaders know how to step back and delegate responsibilities.<sup>99</sup> Though it is hard for some leaders to relinquish authority,<sup>100</sup> they recognize it is a must to see the growth in the leaders they are grooming. The goal of leadership is raising youth to be successful leaders and adults to be great leaders handling different duties.<sup>101</sup> Doing so gives the leaders, mentors, and youth confidence as they grow in their spiritual walk.

The intimacy between a person and the Lord is also preeminent of their relationship with the Father. Everyone does not know what love means, but it changes lives when love is visible, expressed, and felt. The sacrifice of Jesus displayed God's love for the world, and Jesus' love is still seen and felt today.

---

<sup>97</sup> Matt Thomas, “The Indispensable Mark of Christian Leadership: Implications from Christ’s Methods of Leadership Development in Mark’s Gospel.” *Perichoresis* 16, no. 3 (July 2018): 107-17. Doi:10.2478/perc-2018-0019. Accessed September 11, 2021.

<sup>98</sup> Jonas Svensson, “Religious Education and Teaching Young People about Humanity: Suggesting a New Role for RD and for the Academic Study of Religion in Sweden.” *Temenos* 51, no. 2 (2015): 177-99. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=Isdar&AN=ATLAn3836313&site=ehost-live&scope=site>. Accessed on October 02, 2021.

<sup>99</sup> April K. Buschelman, “COVID and Clinical Practice: Now Is the Time to Engage Future Educators.” *Journal of Catholic Education* 23, no. 1 (2020): 142-48. doi:10.153365/joce.2302092020, 145.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 146.

The Word of God gives examples of discipleship and mentoring in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The readiness of the church to implement and cultivate mentoring with consistent structure will aid their youth to live godly lives, parents nurturing their children, and mentors trained to assist in the process of mentorship. Though the word mentor is not in the Bible, there are multiple examples throughout the Bible of mentoring relationships.”<sup>102</sup>

In Exodus 18:17-27, readers see the bond between Moses and his father-in-law, Jethro. This passage of Scripture expresses Jethro sharing wisdom and guidance with Moses, and Moses allowed the mentoring relationship to flourish, which proved valuable results. Both men were great, but Moses showed humbleness by listening to Jethro. Later, in Numbers 27:18-23, the readers visualize Moses now mentoring Joshua as instructed by God.

Eli and Samuel walked together, and though Eli was not Samuel’s father, Eli loved Samuel as if he were his son. He mentored Samuel and taught him how to hear and obey the voice of God. Their story is in 1 Samuel 3:1-21. Elijah mentored Elisha for several years. Elisha walked with Elijah and learned how he walked during his spiritual journey. This hands-on experience not only nurtured Elisha, but he gained a double of Elijah’s anointing upon his life when Elijah departed this life. A portion of their story is in 2 Kings 4:38-41. In Esther, the story of Mordecai and Esther is a story of two cousins who shared a relationship as uncle and niece, as an example. Esther looked up to and respected Mordecai. She intently listened to him and followed his instructions which resulted in her spiritual growth and saving her life, Mordecai’s life, and the Jews of that time.

---

<sup>102</sup> What is the Best Example of Mentoring. <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-best-example-of-mentoring-in-the-Bible#:~:text=The%20word%20%E2%80%9Cmentor%E2%80%9D%20is%20defined,remaining%20leaders%20of%20his%20army>. Accessed on February 15, 2022.



In Acts chapter 14, Barnabas mentored Paul for several years; Acts 14:28. They shared a strong bond and worked well in unity and amidst adversity. Paul became a great man of God during his spiritual conversion as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Acts 16:1-3 opens for the readers the beginning of a beautiful relationship for Paul and Timothy, and Paul was a valuable mentor for Timothy in his younger years. Both were incredible men of God who the Lord used during their spiritual formation journey. Paul and Timothy were friends who worked well together (Romans 16:21) and exhibited a father-son bond and a mentoring relationship. Second Timothy 2:2 reiterates their experiences are currently teaching others, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” Teaching and learning should continually be the desire of all disciples as they mature in Christ.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Youth becoming disengaged or declining in their attendance is nothing new. The literature review shows this is a concern for churches regarding their youth attending services. Many times, the church will say they are concerned about their youth attending services, but on the contrary, they do nothing about it. They have no voice, no activity, nothing to do but sit and wait for service to be over. The pastors and church leaders say they want more youth to grow, but they have them do nothing but sit or expect them to worship the same way they have become accustomed. Matthew 19:14 state, “But Jesus said, ‘Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’” Jesus wants the children to come to Him and have a relationship. Some churches devise youth churches and have separate areas for the young people to attend separately from the adults. If this plan is doable, it is excellent, but if it is

not an option, the church must prepare to interact with its youth in another manner. The churches need to adjust by utilizing their young people and fast.

### **The Importance of Children in the Old Testament**

The approach will be intentional studying the Bible weekly with the youth and any parents who desire to participate with the researcher as the primary mentor. As the primary mentor, the youth and I will study together to learn what God says in the Bible on selected topics (See Outline of Topics OOT Appendix M). Joshua 1:8 encourages the study of God's Word continually. The church slogan is "Imperfect People Serving a Perfect God." The Holy Spirit inspired this slogan through me. It is not a crutch or ticket to sin, and it is a reminder that Jesus loves all His people despite their flaws and shortcomings. Proverbs is considered a book of wisdom. Proverbs 24:16-17 lets the reader know that they can get back up and keep striving to live for the Lord though they fall.

### **The Importance of Children in the New Testament**

Matthew 19:14, "But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Jesus wants the children to come to Him and have a relationship. Some churches devise youth churches and have separate areas for the young people to attend separately from the adults. If this plan is doable, it is excellent, but if it is not an option, the church must prepare to interact with its youth in another manner.

When taken seriously, a mentor possesses excellent potential and influence in a person's life.<sup>103</sup> The researcher agrees the mentors the Lord placed in her life over the years helped

---

<sup>103</sup> Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, xii.

promote spiritual encouragement and growth to each new level. Mentoring teaches others how to deal with life and what the world offers in practical ways not to live defeated. Mentoring the disciples, enhancing one's spiritual growth, and one becomes healthy spiritually for the world to see what is different about them. The bonding of family, community, and mentors plays a vital part in this growth.<sup>104</sup>

Jesus engaged with people and met them on the level they were in their life. To build the youth ministry at MUTS, implementing the CARE ME mentoring ministry will be the starting point. I understand that any future mentor(s) will need proper training. I will utilize Doug Fields *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth and Your First Two Years In Youth Ministry a Personal and Practical Guide to Starting Right* for some instructional teaching materials.

Throughout the Gospels, the reader can find an example of Jesus praying to His Father. Jesus prayed for His disciples and many others. Luke 11 is an area one can read what is known as The Lord's Prayer. The aim is to engage the youth in prayer actively and for others. Prayer is an integral part to include in daily life activities. When one is upset, they should not retaliate, but rather, they should pray for them instead. Jesus exhibited this pattern in Luke 23:34. Forgiveness is the route that all Christians should take.

There will be small groups as Jesus did not just deal with the multitudes. He dealt with small groups on occasion. Jesus starts out calling out to His newly appointed disciples to follow Him (Luke 5:27). Small groups were influential at MUTS, but MUTS will incorporate them more systematically. The time at hand is an opportune time to focus more on the inner person

---

<sup>104</sup> Muholland, *Invitation To A Journey*, 134.

than the crowd. Too many times, if not careful, ministries gauge their success on how many seats are occupied and not how the inner person is growing spiritually. The small groups aim to help encourage and empower the mentor(s) and youths to grow intentionally in their spiritual walk with the Lord. Romans 3:23 is a reminder to Christians that they, too, had lived a life in sin (i.e., there is no room for anyone to look down on another).

The approach will be intentional studying the Bible weekly with the youth and mentor. As the primary mentor, the youth and I will explore to learn what God says in the Bible. Moreover, 2 Timothy 2:15 encourages the need to study God's Word. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, the instructions are to read, meditate, study, and apply God's Word to the lifestyle of every believer. The youth will be allowed to read from the Word of God and tell in their words what they understood it to mean. Everyone will be able to share what they received from the different passages from the Word of God, should they desire.

### **Family and Community**

A song with the lyrics, "A family that prays together, stays together." Family fellowship is biblical, and Doug Fields successfully engaged the parents of their ministry. There is always the parents' potential to send their children to church without them. Maybe to get a break but incorporating the parents to participate will eventually enhance their involvement. The aim will be to empower families and future leaders. In unity, family and community believers are a perfect picture of what the Lord wants for His family. Psalm 133:1 encourages the body of Christ to be in harmony. Psalm 127:3-5 is a foundational passage for children and parents to know they are a blessing from the Lord.

Romans 12:9 teaches the readers to love what is right and stay away from what is not correct. If hatred seems to out rule love, the aim will be to nurture a love for the youth,

mentor(s), and families. The objective will be to encourage, promote, instill, and exhibit love for the youth, mentor(s), and families, which becomes contagious and flows outwardly. Some consider 1 Corinthians 13 as the book of love, and this passage is a reminder of what love is and what it is not. Jesus was about loving everyone, but He did not love the sin they partook in on the wrong path.

### **Successful Small Groups**

Doug Fields was successful in youth ministry, and Rick Warren was successful in church growth. They utilized vital principles from the Word of God, such as (e.g., relying on prayer, fellowship, discipleship, and worshipping the Lord). These two men stay consistent with the teachings from the Word of God for practical application. The researcher, as the primary mentor, and youth with any participating parents will engage with me in praying together weekly.

Rick Warren poses the question, “Who Is Your Target?”<sup>105</sup> The knowledge of my target being the youth at MUTS is a step in the right direction. Often, people lose time by not knowing who their target audience is to help. Too many churches fall into the competition of competing against each other. Rick Warren states, “No single church can possibly reach everyone.”<sup>106</sup> The Word of God explicitly state in Matthew 9:37, “Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.” There is enough work for God for everyone, and the key is knowing what God has for their hands to do for His kingdom.

Rick Warren shares, “A Christlike ministry still attracts crowds. You don’t have to use gimmicks or compromise your convictions to gather a crowd.”<sup>107</sup> I knew this at the start of

---

<sup>105</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church Every Church Is Big in God’s Eyes*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 155.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

MUTS but got sidetracked. This information will continuously be in my mind, keeping the church in order as God instructs. This teaching corresponds with 1 Corinthians 14:10. Everyone must remember that God is a God of order. I desire to see the Lord bless this research to successfully “[build] up the church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity”<sup>108</sup> according to “Ephesians 4:12 (LB)”<sup>109</sup> for the glory of God.

Doug Fields encourages leaders; one key is “Healthy Youth Ministries Have Spiritually Healthy Leaders.”<sup>110</sup> Dr. David Earley and Dr. Rodney Dempsey successfully teach this same practical theory. Their thought processes are in line with the Word of God, which states in Luke 6:39, “And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?” The health spiritually of leaders is vital for helping others properly. Doug Fields outlines different approaches for successful small groups in line with God’s Word.

I find value in these words by Doug Fields, “Youth ministry — like the Christian life — is a race that requires both training and endurance. Fortunately, our endurance and strength increase as we run the race and follow the course God has set out for us.”<sup>111</sup> Love, faith, and accountability for spiritual formation are the goals for the future of MUTS. These are fundamental core values for living a holy lifestyle glorifying God.

### **Conclusion**

Lastly, the aim would be disciples setting good examples. Disciples should know how to treat one another (Luke 6:31). When one treats the other properly, the expectation is peace

---

<sup>108</sup> Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 331.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Doug Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 27.

<sup>111</sup> Doug Fields, *Your First Two Years in Youth Ministry a Personal and Practical Guide to Starting Right* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 21.

towards one another, as indicated in Romans 12:18. Disciples will be encouraged and empowered to let Jesus be the rule and peace over them and their lives, as encouraged in Colossians 3:15.

### **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter attempts to implement the birth of the Compassion, Authentic, Respect, Educate, Mentoring, Empowerment (CARE ME) mentoring ministry at Ministry Under The Sky (MUTS). The aim will use questionnaires, small groups, and home-based services, and the researcher is the primary mentor to work with the youth regarding their spiritual growth. The decline in youth attendance at MUTS was evident before the pandemic, but the attendance has slipped even more. This time of growing together is with the intent of future disciples empowered to do the will of God at MUTS.

#### **Intervention Design**

The researcher will first speak to the Overseer of the ministry, the bishop and pastor of the fellowshipping church (See Appendix F), followed by the church administrator, church mother, and deacon (See Appendix G). Next, I will inform the young adult who has been attending most Bible Studies and zoom services and another couple (See Appendix G) of the intent to do the action research to get the youth and families re-engaged at MUTS. I will conclude these conversations by speaking with the remaining members, including the North Carolina family (See Appendix H), of the direction the Holy Spirit is leading me regarding MUTS. Then I will post on Facebook the intention for the future direction of MUTS (See Appendix I) to recruit youth who are not affiliated with a church currently.

Upon approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the action research will begin by making the General Consent form available for the participants (See Appendix A). Parents with underage children will be given the Parental Consent/Combined Parental Consent and Student Assent/Parental Opt-Out form on behalf of their children (See Appendix B). Weather permitting, I will conduct the action research at the fellowshipping church



or via zoom, where participants will receive the Interview Questions for MUTS (IQ) (See Appendix E), Parental Spiritual Growth Questionnaire (See Appendix K, Youth, and Young Adult Spiritual Growth Questionnaire (See Appendix L), Adult Spiritual Growth Questionnaire (See Appendix M). If face-to-face sessions are not feasible, I will host the meetings via zoom, which is a way the participants and I can see one another during the sessions.

Because I am certified by the International Association of Certified Coaches (See Appendix J), I will serve as the primary mentor for the CARE ME mentoring ministry until the completion of the study. Though life coaching and mentoring are different, there are similarities. I intend to help empower the youth to the best of my ability with the help of the Lord.

As part of the recruiting effort, I will call and follow up with text messages to all current members, including the North Carolina family (See Appendix H; recruitment script for Facebook (See Appendix I, and the recruitment script Appendix Q). First, there will be a group meeting, Agenda And Meeting Lesson Plan (AAMLPL) (See Appendix D) to discuss ideas and plans for the future of MUTS' youth department. After the first meeting, one-on-one sessions will get scheduled for further clarity, if needed. At this time, I will notify the parents of the general nature of the questions in the questionnaire to gauge the spiritual growth of their child(ren) (See Appendix K). The age of the participants will vary according to the available youth at MUTS. The parents will have to be included to a certain degree because some participants are underage to sign consent forms legally. Therefore, the parent(s) are allowed to participate in the research and answer questionnaires (See Appendix M). I will keep in mind the age range of the participants for their questionnaire (See Appendix L).

With the help of the Lord, I will oversee parents and youths participating in small groups to discuss disciplines regarding spiritual formation. Participants and youth will have the

opportunity to suggest ideas that would encourage improvement and build healthy and positive relationships within the home. Furthermore, parents and youth will sit with me to express their feelings about their spiritual growth. Parents will receive a questionnaire inquiring about observable behaviors in their child(ren)'s spiritual growth (PSGQ) (See Appendix K).

Table 1.1 represents the Parental Spiritual Growth Questionnaire (PSGQ) (See Appendix K). The questionnaire's design captures preliminary themes from the parents' responses. Next, the youth will also receive a questionnaire. Table 1.2 represents the Youth and Young Adult Spiritual Growth Questionnaire (YAYASGQ) (See Appendix L). As with the PSGQ, the questionnaire's design captures preliminary themes from the youth's responses. Table 1.3 represents the Adult Spiritual Growth Questionnaire (ASGQ) (See Appendix M). The youth and any parents participating will also be encouraged to start daily spiritual journals (See Appendix N) to chart their spiritual progress (See Customized Growth Plan Example (CGPE) (See Appendix P).

As part of the meetings, I will keep a reflective journal to capture observable behaviors and seek to maintain my bias. Familiarity with the participants is a given, but I will continually monitor myself and not pressure any participant to answer in a manner pleasing to me. In most cases, the parents may be in earshot of the youth giving their responses, but I will attempt to ensure them being comfortable when providing honest answers. After all, it should be the desire of everyone to be honest, to gauge results honestly and effectively.

Table 1.1 Parental Spiritual Growth Questionnaire

Questions	Theme
1. How would you rate your child's spiritual growth?	Prayer Life
2. How would you describe any changes?	Discipleship
3. In what ways has his/her/their character changed?	Discipleship
4. In what ways has his/her/their behavior declined?	Spiritual Non-Formation
5. How often has your child(ren) begun reading the Bible independently?	Spiritual Formation
6. What type of questions have they asked you since they started reading the Bible?	Spiritual Formation
7. Has your child begun to pray independently?	Prayer Life
8. In what ways has your child(ren) become receptive to family prayer?	Prayer Life
9. In what ways has your child(ren) become resistant to family prayer?	Spiritual Non-Formation
10. How often have they expressed interest in attending church services?	Spiritual Formation

Table 1.2 Youth and Young Adult Spiritual Growth Questionnaire

Questions	Theme
1. How would you rate your spiritual growth?	Prayer Life
2. How would you describe any changes?	Discipleship
3. In what ways has your character changed?	Discipleship
4. In what ways has your behavior declined?	Spiritual Non-Formation
5. How often are you reading the Bible independently?	Spiritual Formation
6. What type of questions do you ask since you started reading the Bible?	Spiritual Formation
7. How often have you begun to pray independently?	Prayer Life
8. In what ways have you become receptive to family prayer?	Prayer Life
9. In what ways have you become resistant to family prayer?	Spiritual Non-Formation
10. In what ways has your desire increased in attending church services?	Spiritual Formation

Table 1.3 Adult Spiritual Growth Questionnaire

Questions	Theme
1. How would you rate your spiritual growth?	Prayer Life
2. How would you describe any changes?	Discipleship
3. In what ways has your character changed?	Discipleship
4. In what ways has your behavior declined?	Spiritual Non-Formation
5. How often are you reading the Bible independently?	Spiritual Formation
6. What type of questions do you ask since you started reading the Bible?	Spiritual Formation
7. How often have you begun to pray independently?	Prayer Life
8. In what ways have you become receptive to family prayer?	Prayer Life
9. In what ways have you become resistant to family prayer?	Spiritual Non-Formation
10. In what ways has your desire increased in attending church services?	Spiritual Formation

The intervention intends to reverse the decline of the youth's attendance at MUTS. Youth bring new life to families and ministries. Parental involvement with love, support, and nurturing enhances to help the church grow to its full potential. It is all about investing quality time and consistently pouring it into their lives. Obtaining success getting the youth engaged in their services, the researcher knows all the parents and feels confident they will return to be faithful at MUTS with their children. As the primary mentor, youths and parents will seek to build healthy relationships with me.

Both leaders understand that the Lord has me on this academic journey. I am the pastor of MUTS and, for the most part, make most of the decisions about the ministry. Other than the Lord directing me and then by His Holy Spirit, I do not see getting approval for anything being an issue. However, if MUTS chooses to use the dining area or the conference room at the current fellowship church, I would have to get permission from the bishop or my youngest son, Pastor John. Nonetheless, I do not see either person prohibiting this area as they both want to see the success of MUTS. As for the overall part of the research project, there are no other authorizations needed from outside parties.

I am aware of the decline in attendance, and with that knowledge, I will be the primary mentor. I will work with the youth and, in some cases, the parents to empower them in their spiritual growth. None of the youth of MUTS is attending their services in person or online via zoom. I realize they are not of age to drive; therefore, they would need a ride to church, or they will not be able to attend in person physically. As a single mom raising three sons for years alone with the help of the Lord, I know how imperative and valuable it is to consistently have family and community support in one's life, especially the formative years.

The first key will be relationship building at MUTS. Since the pandemic, having on-site services are limited and scattered. Healthy relationships are integral to the growth of any ministry. Healthy relationships mingle and interact with one another. This type of fellowship shows throughout the Gospels, and an eagerness to hear Jesus' teaching. Jesus came to heal His people. Jesus wants everyone to be healthy and whole. MUTS' focus will be on assisting through biblical principles helping people holistically.

The second key's focus will be on discipleship training. Jesus chose His disciples. Mentors and leaders are to focus on discipling their youth at MUTS. As each youth's growth becomes evident, they will disciple other youth on their spiritual formation journey. Discipleship is all about learning about Jesus, working on things that need improvement, telling others about Jesus, and growing spiritually. To become a disciple, one must be willing to be teachable. The youth at MUTS are humble kids, and they have teachable spirits. The teachings will start with the pastor leading them as the primary mentor.

When dealing with people, it is about coping with life. Dealing with people and things which occurs in their life brings the truth that life does happen to people is true. Meaning life and ministry can be unpredictable as for how many will be visible on a given Sunday or any service. With that in mind, I feel a month would seem feasible to see the initial direction the project is heading. During the minimum of the first four weeks, intervention phase, the youth and parents participating will meet with me once a week on Tuesdays or Saturdays from 6:00-6:30 pm via zoom. However, if they desire to attend both sessions weekly, they can do so. As I meet with the current youth, it is okay for any new participants are welcome to join the group as more youth become interested in attending the mentoring sessions. There will be teachings on different characteristics that enhance one's spiritual formation. During the first week, I will utilize chapter

eight, pages 141-2; 148-9 of Doug Fields' *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, and Hebrews 11:1-40 to mentor the youth and parents on faith, accountability, and great faith. Briefly, John 1:1-51 will cover the importance of Baptism and discipleship. This meeting and all meetings will begin and end with a prayer by a selected youth or an adult. In the second week, I will meet with the participants to discuss passages in the Old Testament in Exodus 18:13-26. Also, from Chapter nine, page 157 from Doug Fields' *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, and from the New Testament from Acts 16:1-2, John 3:16, and Acts 11:26 (in this order) on discipleship in the Old Testament, Discipleship in the New Testament, and being a believer / Christian. Briefly, Acts 2:1-47 will cover the Holy Spirit and community according to the early church. In the third week, I will meet with the participants to discuss love according to 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 and church/community according to Hebrews 10:25 as outlined in the Word of God. Briefly, Exodus 3:1-22 will cover God as our deliverer. In the fourth week, I will meet with the participants to discuss spiritual disciplines from the Word of God in Psalm 1:1-6, Matthew 6:5-13, and Doug Fields' *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry* in chapter nine on page 160. Briefly, Matthew 28:1-20 will cover the importance of discipleship and the Great Commission as outlined in The Outline of Topics (OOT) (See Appendix O). The OOT will assist the participants and me as we engage in meetings weekly to learn more about Jesus. Other topics include (e.g., being a believer / Christian, faith, accountability, discipleship in the Old Testament and the New Testament, love, church and community living, spiritual disciplines, Baptism, the Holy Spirit, and God as our deliverer) from the Word of God and Doug Fields' *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry* intentionally.

TABLE 1.4 OUTLINE OF TOPICS

Weekly Outline for Study	Topic for Discussion	Time and Day for Meeting
<p><b>Week 1:</b></p> <p>Pray and Recruit</p> <p>Chapter 8 Doug Fields pp 141-2; 148-9</p> <p>Hebrews 11:1-40</p> <p>John 1:1-51</p>	<p>Opening Prayer by All</p> <p>Faith and Accountability</p> <p>Great Faith</p> <p>Baptism and Discipleship</p>	<p>Tuesday 6:00-6:30 pm</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Saturday 6:00-6:30 pm</p>
<p><b>Week 2:</b></p> <p>Exodus 18:13-26</p> <p>Chapter 9 Doug Fields p 157</p> <p>Acts 16:1-2 John 3:16 / Acts 11:26</p> <p>Acts 2:1-47</p>	<p>Discipleship in the OT</p> <p>Discipleship</p> <p>Discipleship in the NT Jesus and Christian / Believer</p> <p>The Holy Spirit and Community</p>	<p>Tuesday 6:00-6:30 pm</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Saturday 6:00-6:30 pm</p>
<p><b>Week 3:</b></p> <p>1 Corinthians 13:1-13</p> <p>Hebrews 10:25</p> <p>Exodus 3:1-22</p>	<p>Love</p> <p>Church / Community</p> <p>God as Our Deliverer</p>	<p>Tuesday 6:00-6:30 pm</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Saturday 6:00-6:30 pm</p>
<p><b>Week 4:</b></p> <p>Psalm 1:1-6 / Matthew 6:5-13</p> <p>Chapter 9 Doug Fields 160</p> <p>Matthew 28:1-20</p>	<p>Spiritual Disciplines</p> <p>Spiritual Habits</p> <p>The Great Commission / Discipleship</p>	<p>Tuesday 6:00-6:30 pm</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Saturday 6:00-6:30 pm</p>

The plan would be to interact regularly with the parents and the youth considering the pandemic via zoom. However, I realize that the intervention needs to continue as a regularly practiced discipline throughout my life with the participants, future mentors, parents, and newcomers as time progresses. The research is a start to get the youth and parents back engaged in their services actively at MUTS with God's help and blessings.

It is fair to say this timeframe is considering the pandemic and that some people are still not comfortable being in person around other people unless necessary. The more I meet, observe, and interact with the parents and youth, I will learn about them, myself, and the MUTS family. These actions are a continuing process of showing one another love, compassion, nurturing, and empowerment to build the health of the body of believers at MUTS.

To see one or more youth attending their services in person or on zoom seeking a closer walk with the Lord would be a sign of success for the intervention. The reason being is that no youths are attending online or in-person now. The youth should be in services for the research to be considered successful. The youth should be engaging in their services, and there should be a rapport continually emerging with the mentor. Youth will begin to see the importance of interacting in service, learning about the Lord, and being one of His disciples. As their interest is piqued, they will want to know more about the Lord. Jesus wants His disciples to read the Word of God and learn about Him as they grow in Him. I desire to see the youth bond and spiritual growth being visible consistently in the youth at MUTS.

With the availability of the zoom service, this is another way that I will utilize for youth to interact with services and the mentor. Zoom will prove helpful to assist with interaction when in-person is not possible due to the pandemic. The rapport of the youth with me and communicating visible signs of spiritual growth is vital. The youth will have access to me as



their primary mentor to ask questions in their lives. In essence, (e.g.), God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, living holy, wise choices, spiritual disciplines, and how to live a disciplined life spiritually).

These are what the research will look for to evaluate the success of the intervention.

The things in the past had some structure. However, the focus was not on gauging the success of the spiritual maturity of the young people. The old approach was to tell them and their parents about the church to get them there. There were monthly Fun Day events open for the community to let them know that MUTS was a new ministry, and they were welcome. There was no attendance or roll book to track who came or did not come. However, MUTS purchased a membership book, but the record-keeping was inconsistent and left undone shortly afterward. The old approach did not try a mentor program to build a healthy spiritual relationship for MUTS.

The new approach will be more systematic as I learn a lot on this academic journey. I will consider what the parents, youth, and young adults have shared regarding past mistakes or things considered unsuccessful, not repeat those same steps. For instance, having the youth lead service once monthly was successful from the old approach will transition to the new approach. By birthing the CARE ME mentoring ministry and keeping notes and journals, I will utilize this new information and implement it. I feel this new method will prove more successful than the old method.

I will use the zoom app or a tape recorder device and a notebook for recording all meetings for accuracy. The General Consent Form (See Appendix A), the Parental Consent/Combined Parental Consent and Student Assent/Parental Opt-Out Form (See Appendix B), and the Consent Form and Recording Permission Form (See Appendix C) will inform as such. Each has a box/line to inform the participants of recording the meetings. They must give

their verbal or written permission verbally, by hand, text, email, or HelloSign document signing app. Depending on the location of the participants and availability, if they are not hand-delivered, they will be distributed to personal emails or via the HelloSign app for me to email to participants and any parents to complete and return to me promptly. All participants will know that recording the meetings is a must for the validity and credibility of the research. I will secure all forms and recordings on a password-locked computer and recording device. There will be the use of purposive sampling as one of my tools. I feel this type of sampling best fits the topic and the potential participants. I also think that the parents of underage youth will also participate in the research. If this is the case, I will incorporate the maximum variation sampling tool. I will do questionnaires as tools during the study consistently. In the event of many participants, the T-test will assist me in measuring the data and how effective or not the intervention is going.

I have done journals over the years and know how successful they can be. The participant journal, Personal Prayer and Devotional Journal (PPADJ) (See Appendix N) is one option. The participants will have a Ministry Under The Sky Personal Prayer and Devotional Journal Outline of Topics and Questionnaire Booklet (MUTSPP) given to them by hand or email which has a cover (See Appendix R) and back page (See Appendix S), which includes two Appendices N, one Appendix K, one Appendix L, one Appendix O, and Appendix P), (in that order), to track their daily spiritual disciplines, (e.g., praying and their feelings during prayer). They can journal if they read their Bible. They can journal what they read as well. They will be able to reflect on what they learned from the passage(s) in the Bible. They will be encouraged to apply what they read in the Bible to their lifestyle to be a better disciple of the Lord. They will be encouraged to show love to others and help others when the opportunity avails itself. These are actions for the disciples of Jesus to follow. They can journal to keep track of when encouragement is needed,

look back, and see the hand of God. All participants will receive a copy of the CGP (See Appendix P) included to give them a visual outline of how to structure their quality time with the Lord.

Interviews will cover the IQ (See Appendix E), PGSQ (See Appendix J), YAYASGQ (Appendix K), and the ASGQ (See Appendix L) to follow any spiritual growth or decline by calculating the totals every week as another option I will be utilizing. The interviews will assist in my' notes during observation to see if participants are stagnant or responsive to the intervention. It also will show me by doing these face-to-face interviews, when possible, or via zoom, to see and feel the participants' hearts and spirits for signs of spiritual growth. I spoke to Dr. Adam McClendon, Associate Dean of John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, concerning another matter. His directions assisted in another level of growth for me. Talking to others, getting them to reveal their hearts help, and building bonds can all be intuitive to promote spiritual growth. I will also be doing questionnaires (See Appendices J-L) which are the same for the interviews. The difference is that the questionnaires will ask the participants to give a number ranging from zero to ten for each answer regarding the quantitative results of each participant. At the same time, the interviews will seek spiritual growth for the qualitative sphere of the research. The questionnaires will assist me during the observation of the participants.

I will keep a journal the entire project to reflect on thoughts, and things learned and observed. I will journal all thoughts concerning each participant. I will put thoughts concerning what I observe of myself and all participants for personal reflection over time. I will continuously reflect in my journal from start to finish during the research. I will maintain the journal for future reference as well. I do not want to do anything wrong to obtain the desired results. The journal will be my focal point to assess the different levels or directions the research

takes the participants and me. However, I plan to utilize this journaling process for the ministry's success for the ministry's life, the youth, and the future mentors. In other words, I am preparing for this to complement the structure for MUTS' help of their youth and the CARE ME ministry. I understand there will be meetings for clarity with potential participants if needed. I realize the participants will have to believe in me and the research to commit their valuable time to help me.

I will explain verbally that their information is confidential, meaning they do not have to put their name on the paper. However, I will inform them that I will be collecting the reports to understand from their eyes the problem(s) and what caused it to happen at MUTS. I will tell them that their input is valuable and is needed. This information gathering can also help me as the primary mentor to successfully encourage and implement the health of MUTS' whole body. The data collection will aid the intervention for the participants and me to reach a healthy resolution for MUTS. It will enhance discipleship modeled at MUTS to help themselves and others recruit and train disciples for Jesus.

I anticipate fifteen or more participants as the sample size for the research. I hope and pray that none drop out of the research process; however, I will make any revisions needed to continue the research. If a participant does drop out, I will shred their information, and delete their recordings. I will be hands-on during the study as I work with all participants within the confines of the pandemic. This effort is to continue to keep up the morale of all participants. The current problem is that no young people attend their services or engage at MUTS online or via zoom. However, there is one young adult who is consistent currently. Going forward with implementing the birth of the CARE ME mentoring ministry, it is hopeful that more people will join and not drop off. Nonetheless, life happens, but I will adjust accordingly if a participant drops off before completing the research.

I plan to keep detailed notes from start to finish. Everything will assist in knowing the outcome of whether the research is successful. After the IRB approves the study, as stated above, I will begin with the calls, texts, and posting on Facebook to obtain as many participants as possible; should anyone drop off, it would not halt the research. Again, I will work with whomever the Lord blesses to join the research and make any necessary adjustments. Jesus dealt with small numbers when it came to transformation on multiple occasions. For this research, one or more participants showing spiritual growth will show some success for the intervention. However, I am prayerful and hopeful there will be sufficient participants for the entire duration of the research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Learning is a powerful tool! Years ago, a commercial stated, “The mind is a terrible thing to waste.” The art of teaching and leading by example, reading the Word of God to children at a young age will help lay a solid foundation for children early on. These are the questions that assisted the researcher in teaching topics to enhance the participants' spiritual growth (e.g., What is a Christian? What does it mean to follow Jesus? What is a disciple?).

Church, discipleship, parents, and children will all equate to learning about Jesus and how to grow in Him continually if they are incorporated correctly and implemented in one's daily existence. Some people often say, “I do not need to attend church to be a Christian.” Where this is a true statement to some degree, it serves only a part of the truth to believers. Going to church does not make anyone a Christian, and however, attending church faithfully should be a part of the Christian's life.

Spiritual disciplines should be visible in the home, preferably by both parents. This thought process is not to say that youth will not learn about the Lord if the parent(s) are not living a holy lifestyle in front of them. Parents and discipleship can complement one's spiritual formation by thinking of an example of physical fitness training. For example, no one, typically, would jump out and start a marathon or lift weights over one hundred pounds without proper training and nutrition to prepare themselves for this feat.

From start to currently, MUTS' success has always been traced back to the hand and favor of God and positive interactions with its pastor and leaders. As the Lord sent youth and families to MUTS, it continued to grow as they felt the love of Christ and genuine love from the pastor and its leaders. Proverbs 17:22 states, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.” One

can feel happy when they feel they are loved and valued. The successful formula is entrusting youth to the Lord as they model a holy lifestyle before them.

My expectancy was to obtain five or more participants who would commit to weekly lessons that focus on enhancing their spiritual growth. During their participation and after that, my prayer and desire were to see evident signs of spiritual formation growth from my perspectives, the youth participants, the young adult participants, and the adult participants. The Lord blessed my expectancy of results to be successful. However, in hindsight, I noticed some struggles with answering or explaining some of the questions to participants initially. As the research continued, I gained more clarity and conveyed the message of the vision in more depth for the participants. These statements are not to say I did not give them clear information as I kept in line with the prepared scripts for all participants to receive the same information at the start of the research.

### **Youth, Youth re: Parental Perspectives, Young Adult, and Adult Questionnaires**

Claiming the decline of attendance was evident regarding the youth and families at MUTS. As outlined in Chapter Three, the researcher spoke to the Overseer first and then made phone calls to the Bishop and Pastor John (See Appendix F). Furthermore, the existing and remaining members of MUTS, including my son, Kevin, Sr., and his family who resides in North Carolina (See Appendices G-H). Including Kevin, Sr., and his family is because they attend some online and in-person services when they come to town. These steps were to keep them abreast of this action research and ask for their prayers as I endeavor to do God's will. Similarly, regarding questionnaires for participants, I noticed the youth and adult spiritual growth questions are identical; this was intentional to make the questions applicable for a wide age range (i.e., to make answering the questions fast and honestly).

The ages of the participants range from ten to seventy-one. The North Carolina family was very excited about participating in the action research during this action research. MUTS gained three new members, one youth, age fifteen, a granddaughter, and two twenty-five-year-old young adults. All three new members are African American females. I did not particularly anticipate new members during the action research study; however, this was a welcomed blessing from the Lord. Six grandchildren and one family recommitted to MUTS, also, during this action research. Five of the grandchildren who recommitted to MUTS relocated to Georgia over four years ago, and the family relocated to Lakeland. The fact and accessibility to the Zoom app service made it possible for this connection. Everyone expressed joy when participating during the weekly lessons.

The Head Deacon and Church Mother desired to participate, but they could not commit to the research due to health and schedule conflicts. Willie, Jr., my oldest son, his wife Rasheia, their two sons, my granddaughter, Brittnaye, and one of the young adults who has gone to the military shared interest to help during the action research. Still, prior out-of-state and in-town commitments prevented them from participating. Still, they shared valuable encouragement, as did others during the initial call to update them on the direction going forward for MUTS. One member was undergoing moving but expressed a desire to participate as did other members, but their work schedules or other factors prevented them from committing to the action research. One member that started with MUTS was about to undergo surgery, but she conveyed a desire to participate. One member I thought had left expressed he is MUTS family for life. Lastly, one member and I had a heartfelt conversation which encouraged me to no avail. She could not participate due to technical issues, but I will always value the wisdom she shared with me during



the call. Nevertheless, every member I reached out to said they are still members of MUTS even though substantial time had transpired from MUTS being actively having services in a location considered their own.

I participated in the Adult Spiritual Growth Questionnaire (ASGQ) as the first partaker of the action research. I feel this was fitting to do not only to test the flow and accuracy of the action research study but also to get an overview of my spiritual growth in percentages. In doing the ASGQ, due to the nature of some questions, it was impossible to obtain one hundred percent due to nature of some questions. Though initially, this was disconcerting, the Holy Spirit spoke to my spirit, encouraging me on one's spiritual journey; there is always room for improvement, motivating me to continue striving and growing spiritually over the entire course of my life journey. Though everyone has their complacent moments in life, it is befitting to encourage themselves as the adage states, "There is a light at the end of the tunnel." There are always bright moments to experience in one's lifetime.

#### Youth Results for Week One Through Four

Table 1.5 Youth Spiritual Growth Percentages From Week One Through Week Four (YSGP: see below) depicts the results obtained for all the youths who participated in the action research project. Other children desired to participate, but factors unforeseeable prevented them from participating at this time. Nonetheless, they expressed excitement about MUTS getting back underway via Zoom until the Lord opens a physical location of worship later. There were a few areas where there was significant growth visible in the spiritual growth of the young participants. However, the researcher noticed some participants either plateaued or declined somewhat in their spiritual formation during this research.

Some factors that caused the decline for some youth include the expression of homework load, chores, and other factors that caused them to slip in some areas. Nonetheless, they expressed their desire to work on their spiritual disciplines of prayer, reading the Bible, and family prayer as the top three areas desired for growth. Some of the youth asked more questions about the Bible than others. The children, young adults, and parents all stated they either asked God, themselves or a parent the questions as they came up. Some also used Google or me to ask any questions or concerns as they read their Bibles.

Zoe and Kevin, Jr. have a spiritual foundation. Still, they both expressed that weekly accountability was a positive factor in enhancing their spiritual growth and getting them back on track in areas they saw some decline. They are MUTS' North Carolina youth as they visit MUTS and see it as their other church home. They also participate from time to time in some of the Zoom services to fellowship online with MUTS. By the fourth week, Zoe and Kevin, Jr. was asking for the link as they looked forward to the weekly lessons. Kevin, Sr., Alexis, Zoe, and Kevin, Jr. each expressed the accountability factor was a vital tool for them during the weeks of lessons.

Sermarjay was another church member elsewhere but had stopped going due to the pandemic, so this action research was a welcome change for her to reconnect and fellowship with other believers. She also got permission from her mother to join the MUTS family. Sermarjay's mother gave her approval for Sermarjay to participate in the action research study and join MUTS as a member of the MUTS body. At the age of fifteen, Sermarjay does not have an issue with expressing her love for the Lord by openly praising the Lord during service.

Khadijah was a part of the MUTS family when she was younger. She was actively engaged in the services for years with her parents and younger brother, Reggie, Jr., at the time before they relocated approximately two hours from Bradenton, FL. It was hard on her somewhat since she loves MUTS, me, the overseer, and their MUTS family. She loves doing spiritual dances for the Lord and singing for His glory.

Reggie, Jr. was also a part of the MUTS family when he was younger. He actively engaged in the services for years with his parents and older sister, Khadijah, before relocating to another city approximately two hours away from MUTS. It was hard on him since he loves MUTS, me, the overseer, and their MUTS family. He also participated on the spiritual dance team and the youth choir at MUTS. At the time of the action research, Khadijah and Reggie, Jr. was not members anywhere else, so they, with their parent's permission, reconnected to the MUTS family. They were vocal in some of the lessons, and they are both curious youths. Reggie, Jr., and Khadijah will participate online with their parents and two younger siblings as much as possible. Whenever the family visits Bradenton, they will attend the services at MUTS.

**Table 1.5 Youth Spiritual Growth Percentages From Week One Through Week Four**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Zoe</b>	51	57	12%	56	-1%	50	-11%	<b>Consistently Growing range</b>
<b>Kevin, Jr.</b>	49	44	-10%	56	27%	48	-14%	<b>High range of fair + striving for Growing</b>
<b>Sermarjay</b>	63	64	1.6 %	67	4.7%	66	-1.5%	<b>Growing Consistently</b>
<b>Khadijah</b>	17	10	-0.4%	10	0%	10	0%	<b>Currently poor</b>
<b>Reggie, Jr.</b>	31	10	-65%	10	0%	10	0%	<b>Currently poor</b>

**(Four of the Youth Above Received Observations From at Least One Parent)**

Table 1.5 (above) ages are 11 - 18 years of age. Each of the youth has spiritual foundations and have themselves at different variations of their spiritual growth spectrum over time fluctuates due to some nature of the event at the time during their life.

Zoe notes excitement looking forward to the lessons, but she also observes that homework and other things can factor in one's spiritual disciplines to get off track from time to time. Zoe's first week's score was 51 out of 100. Her score range constitutes growing spiritually. Zoe did not think of rating herself or her spiritual growth the first week, but once the lessons started, she said it made her more conscience of praying and reading her Bible more consistently. Zoe was known for both spiritual disciplines from a much younger age. She loves the Lord and expresses it tenderly when sharing her love for the Lord with others. The love for the Lord spills

over in Zoe's prayer life for family, friends, and loved ones. During week two, Zoe gained a 12% spiritual growth as she eagerly anticipated the lessons and the value of accountability in one's spiritual disciplines. Her score is 57. She noticed she started to see things through the eyes of Jesus to help her gauge in daily interactions with family and friends. Since the pandemic, Zoe expresses she prefers virtual church over in-person services. Zoe ranges display a -1% decrease in her spiritual growth by week three. Her score is 56. However, in the fourth week, Zoe's score was 50. This number denotes an 11% decrease in her spiritual growth. When asked what happened this week, Zoe noticed her distraction level had increased this week, and she got off track but eagerly expressed a readiness to grow continually in her spiritual formation walk. Zoe is also taking guitar lessons, and this was a heavy week for chores and homework.

Kevin, Jr.'s first score for week one was 49. This range is for 25 to 50 and is considered fair. Kevin, Jr., states this first week, he was reading his Bible and praying more, and he looked forward to doing the weekly lessons. However, Kevin Jr.'s spiritual growth declined in the second week of the study, with a score of 44. He said his homework level and chores were heavy this week and contributed to this decline in his spiritual formation. But by lesson three of the third week, he observed his growth and efforts to try harder on his spiritual journey. His efforts paid off with his score of 56, which is 27% spiritual growth. He also noted the following week of the fourth week; he declined due to his homework and chores being heavy that week. Kevin, Jr. expresses during this action research study he sees a desire to connect with God more; he loves the Lord and displays a sincere and heartfelt prayer life. He enjoys reading his Bible more, and if he has questions, he usually will ask his parents concerning any Bible questions. As for attending church, Kevin, Jr. says it depends on how his feelings are that Sunday morning when waking up. He does prefer virtual services since the pandemic.

Sermarjay is a new member of MUTS. She joined during the start of the action research study. When I asked if she was affiliated currently with a church, she responded that she was not and was interested in becoming a new member of the MUTS family. She is no stranger to loving the Lord. Her score the first week was 63, which is in line with growing spiritually. She is fifteen and an intelligent person. The second week, her score went up to 64, with a 1.6% spiritual growth this week. In the third week, her score continued to soar, with 67. This percentage indicates a 4.7% spiritual increase in her spiritual walk with the Lord. However, by the fourth week, her score was 66, which showed a -1.5% decline in her spiritual growth. Upon hearing this rating, she responded with excitement that she was still proud of herself. I also informed her I was proud of her, and considering she was out-of-town doing her nationals competition for the high school dance team, this was a remarkable feat with a heavy-loaded week for her.

Sermarjay also expresses that she recognized that her love for God and others was expanding each week. She sees where she was getting more of a positive outlook and finding ways to be nicer to people. She explained that she is not a mean or nasty person, but like everyone, has her moments, but during these lessons, she sees her growth. She said English is her favorite subject, so when it comes to reading the Bible, her questions usually are grammar-related wording from biblical times and some events in the Bible. She usually goes to Google to search her questions as she says she loves doing research. She was actively praying and reading the Bible before interacting more with me, but each area has increased spiritually for her. Her joy and love for the Lord, church, and school continually expand. She rated her desire to attend church weeks one through two at a nine, a consistent rating. And weeks three and four, Sermarjay's scores are ten for each. She said attending church is fun, and she enjoys time with

the Overseer, and me, who are her grandparents. She said the different church environment is good for her and she enjoys attending.

Khadijah and Reggie, Jr., has had a lot going on currently. Khadijah loves the Lord and recognizes she will get back on track with her parents' help. A transition of church issues and schedule conflicts was a crucial factor that got them off track, but her parents are growing and are working with her to get her back on track spiritually. Still, I know them all personally that Khadijah loves the Lord. She was an active member of the dance team at MUTS, and at one point, she was in MUTS' youth choir. When Khadijah has questions about the Bible, Khadijah usually asks one of her parents or will have her mother call me to ask whatever question that may arise at the time. For her age, the questions can get deep as she and her brother have inquiring minds and desire to know about God.

Reggie, Jr., also loves the Lord and recognizes with his parents' help, he will continue to go forward in his spiritual walk. As stated above, a transition of churches, church issues, and schedule conflicts were crucial factors that got him off track. However, his parents are growing spiritually and will continually assist him with his spiritual growth. I know Reggie, Jr. and can attest to his love for the Lord. He was an active member of the dance team at MUTS, and at one point, he was in MUTS' youth choir with his sister and other young people at the time. He takes his Bible questions to his parents, and there are those times he will have his mother call me with questions from time to time that he may have. Reggie, Jr.'s questions sometimes are more profound than his sister's, even though she is older than him. He has a heart for God.

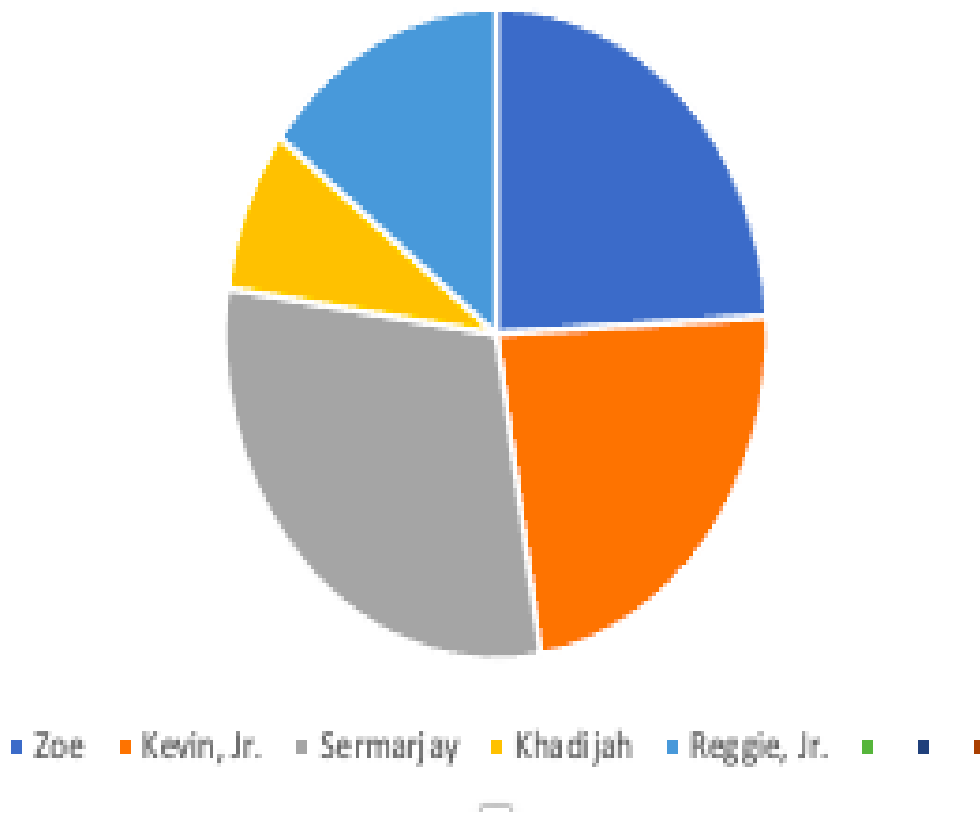
It was encouraging for me and each participant to see how the youth were eager to participate in the weekly lessons. Whether it was doing the opening prayer, the closing prayer, or being able to comment on specific passages or things that the Lord blessed me to share with the

group, it is refreshing to remember that the youth have minds, opinions, questions. All parents and Christian leaders should do their best to help provide children with sufficient answers or help guide them to locate the proper solution. This action is the value of pouring into them as they glean the knowledge to apply later.

**Figure 1**

**2.1 Illustration for Youth Spiritual Growth Week One Through Four**

Youths % + Week 1 - 4





The five youth participants love the Lord and desire to have a closer walk with the Lord. The percentages above are the course over four weeks. Though Khadijah and Reggie Jr.'s scores are lower, the researcher and the parents recognize this timeframe poised a lot of schedule conflicts and things going on in their lives. Their parents and I are all optimistic that Khadijah and Reggie, Jr.'s spiritual growth will increase over time, as will Zoe, Kevin, Jr., and Sermarjay's. The goal is never to get content with the same level. In contrast, everyone should seek ways to stay connected to the Lord as they continuously grow spiritually.

### **Youth Results – Perspective From Their Parent(s) for Week One through Four**

It was intriguing for the researcher to see some variations from the perception of Zoe and Kevin, Jr.'s assessment of themselves. Subsequently, Kevin, Sr., and Zoe's assessment for Zoe was closer proximity than were from the sphere of Kevin, Jr.'s assessment of himself and that of his spiritual growth from the lenses of his father. This variation is in no way an indication of anything wrong. Consequently, the clarity of this variation indicates to me when participants answer honestly, the view is always from the one who is giving their take on any subject or event *per se*.

Zoe is the older sister of Kevin, Jr. Since approximately the age of five, Zoe has shown a love for the Lord. She is humble and helpful at home with her parents and younger brother, Kevin, Jr. Zoe is intelligent and loves to pray independently and with her family. She prays for her family, friends, and the world.

Kevin, Jr. is the younger brother of Zoe. As with Zoe, Kevin, Jr. expresses a love for the Lord. He is humble and helpful at home with his parents and older sister, Zoe. Kevin, Jr. is intelligent and loves to pray for his family, friends, the world, and loved ones. As the world says,

Kevin, Jr., and Zoe both have “A heart of gold.” They are average kids, as in, they love things that kids love to do today.

Khadijah is a fun-loving young teenager who is humble and loves her family. Khadijah helps with her three younger siblings. She loves school, singing, dancing for the Lord, and having fun. Khadijah asks inquisitive questions that, for her age, can seem like deep questions. She has great aspirations for her future. Khadijah loves sports, and she has a precious heart as well.

Reggie, Jr., is a fun-loving growing young male, humble, and loves his family. Reggie, Jr. helps with his younger two siblings. As with his older sister, Khadijah, he asks inquisitive questions for his age and is younger than Khadijah. He loves sports, and he enjoys doing things for the Lord. Football is his favorite sport. He also has great aspirations for his future. He has a tender heart.

**Table 1.6 Youth Spiritual Growth Percentages - Perspective From Their Parent(s)****Week One through Four**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Zoe</b>	48	49	2%	62	27%	65	4.8%	<b>Growing Spiritually</b>
<b>Kevin, Jr.</b>	46	48	4%	62	29%	65	4.8%	<b>Growing Spiritually</b>
<b>Khadijah</b>	17	10	-0.4%	10	0%	10	0%	<b>Currently poor</b>
<b>Reggie, Jr.</b>	31	10	-68%	10	0%	10	0%	<b>Currently poor</b>

**(Sermarjay's parents were not given a questionnaire to monitor her spiritual growth)**

Zoe and Kevin, Jr.'s father, observe from his perspective that both are growing spiritually consistently. He witnessed them desiring to pray more and read their Bibles independently.

Week one, Zoe's father gave her a score of 48, week two a score of 49, week three a score of 62, and week four a score of 65. These scores range from 0 to 100. Zoe's highest score is 65, which flows with growing. Kevin, Sr.'s evaluation of Zoe is consistent with Zoe's observation of her

spiritual growth, even though the numbers are different. Kevin, Sr., notes that Zoe loves the Lord, has an active prayer life that is sincere, and reads her Bible independently. Whereas, before the pandemic, Zoe loved attending church in person. He and his wife note that Zoe's preference is now virtual worship service. Again, this is in line with Zoe's spiritual assessment of herself.

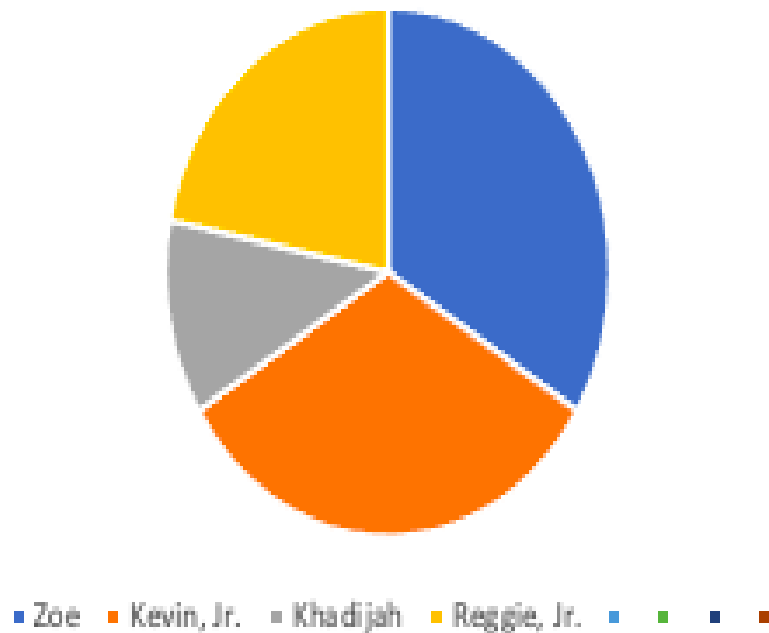
Kevin, Jr.'s father gave him a score of 46 the first week, 48 the second week, 62 the third week, and 65 the fourth week. Kevin, Jr. and Kevin, Sr.'s observations vary more. Kevin, Jr.'s highest score from his father, Kevin, Sr. is 65. This score flows with growing. Kevin, Sr., notes that Kevin, Jr loves the Lord, has an active and sincere prayer life, and has observed him reading the Bible independently. As with Zoe, Kevin, Sr., and his wife, also notes that Kevin, Jr.'s preference is virtual church services over in-person services. Kevin, Jr.'s observation concerning attending church is consistent with his father's observation.

Khadijah and Reggie, Jr.'s mother, noted the decline in the spiritual growth of her older children. Still, she also stated they would be working on implementing more creative ways to get them back eager in displaying their spiritual disciplines. Khadijah was not as vocal during the lessons as was Reggie, Jr. Nonetheless, they both seem to enjoy being on zoom participating in the studies. Khadijah and Reggie, Jr.'s assessment of their spiritual growth or decline is consistent with their mother's evaluation of their spiritual growth or decline, respectively.

Figure 2

### 2.2 Illustration for Youth Spiritual Growth – From The Perspective of the Parent Week One Through Four

Youth % + From Parent's Perspective  
Week 1 - 4



Though there were five youth participants, there are only four assessments by parents above. The researcher's oversight, unintentionally, was to ask Sermarjay's mother if she would assess Sermarjay's spiritual growth for the four weeks of lessons. Although her mother consented to allow her to participate in the action research study, she did not think beforehand to ask Sermarjay's mother to either participate in the research or at the least to observe her daughter's spiritual growth for four weeks. The above percentages are the course over four weeks. From Reggie, Jr.'s mother lenses, he is assessed at more spiritual growth in the above chart when looking at the entire pie chart.

### **Young Adults Results for Week One through Four**

Roderick, Jr.'s and Thomas' information is in Table 1.7 (YASG: see below). Both are over the age of twenty-one. Be that as it may, both have experienced some hard knocks in their young life. One vital takeaway for them is their efforts to learn from their past mistakes. They recognize they are imperfect yet strive to serve a perfect God. They acknowledge they still have multiple areas they need to grow in spiritually.

Roderick, Jr., is one of the grandsons who relocated to Georgia. Roderick was a member of MUTS from its birth until they relocated to Georgia. However, when the researcher presented the action research to Roderick, Jr., his siblings, and one of their Florida cousins, another grandson, it was during a time he and neither of them had an active church home. Roderick, Jr. expresses a desire to change and continually become closer to the Lord. He danced in one of the spiritual dance teams at MUTS, and he also was in the youth choir at MUTS.

Thomas has been a member of MUTS since its beginning. He is also the family member of the Overseer and me. Thomas has always been actively engaging in some activity to help MUTS wherever he is needed. Thomas is always a willing worker, from MUTS' youth choir, videoing services, operating the sound system, the radio ministry, ushering or serving; he is a willing worker for the Lord. Thomas' spiritual growth has soared since doing the weekly lessons. MUTS not being active had some impact on Thomas's spiritual growth. Thereby, the action research came at a needed time in his life for promoting his spiritual maturity. Whenever Thomas is not at home, as he lives with the Overseer and me, he listens to Zoom worship service, lessons, or Bible Study, and he allows his friends to listen over his speakerphone with him. I explained to Thomas this was a form of discipleship as he allowed others to hear about the Lord, learn from His Word, and the availability to ask questions should they have any at the time or later.

**Table 1.7 Young Adult Spiritual Growth Percentages From  
Week One Through Week Four**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Thomas</b>	31	39	26%	45	15%	45	0%	<b>Consistent Fair / Striving for Growing</b>
<b>Roderick, Jr.</b>	45	53	18%	46	-13%	50	8.7%	<b>Consistent Fair / Growing</b>

The young adults in Table 1.7 (YASG: see above) have a few participants. Still, they each express excitement to participate not only for the action research but for a personal desire to grow spiritually. Thomas has exhibited an eagerness to grow in the Lord, as have Roderick, Jr. They both have spiritual upbringing and strayed away for a while. Nonetheless, this time of study has helped them become actively engaged in family prayer whenever held, reading their Bibles more, praying on their own, and having a desire to live a Christian life more than mere words.

Thomas realizes the lessons are helping him. He participated both days each week. Thomas was also instrumental in others who would be around him, allowing them to listen to the Zoom lessons to get spiritual insight for their spiritual growth. I explained to Thomas this was a form of discipleship as he was allowing others to hear and learn about Jesus and how to grow consistently on their spiritual formation journey. Thomas expressed an increased desire to attend service as the pandemic had made him stagnant with being in-person. However, he is

consistently faithful in attending the services in person or zoom. Thomas' scores range from 31 to 45. Week two, Thomas gained 26% spiritual growth, and the third week was 1 % spiritual growth. However, in week four, he did not incline or decline spiritually.

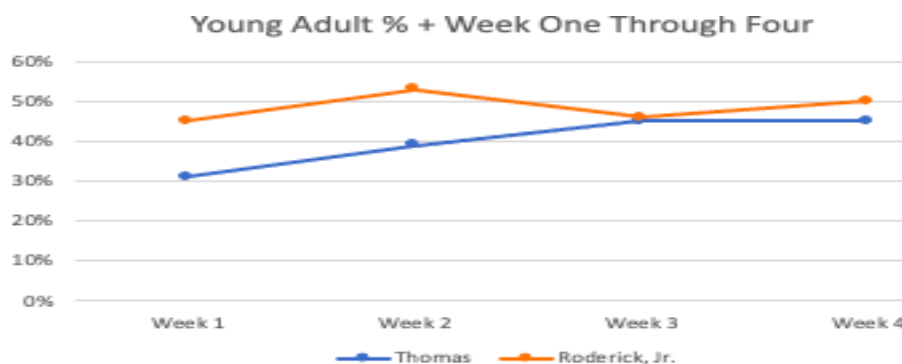
Roderick, Jr. also sees the value in the weekly lessons. He had no desire to attend church before the weekly lessons because he did not have a church home in Georgia. Since recommitting to MUTS, his desire has gone from 0 to 10 for wanting to be in his service online. He also expresses that when he is in town, he will attend MUTS. Though he has access to the Bible app, he admits he has not been good about reading his Bible or having family prayer with his daughter.

Moreover, Roderick, Jr. admits the need to improve on reading his Bible more, and he is attempting to do so currently. As for family prayer, his daughter is eight months old, he said family prayer had crossed his mind, but he has not been partaking in family prayer. Roderick, Jr.'s scores ranges are 45 to 53. After the second week, his spiritual growth was at 18%. He experienced a -13% decline in his spiritual walk in the third week. He said he got off track and lost his focus due to a few events in his life. However, his spiritual growth was at an 8.7% increase in the fourth week.



Figure 3

### 2.3 Illustration for Young Adult Spiritual Growth – For Week One Through Four



I am optimistic that the interaction of the zoom lessons and phone calls will continue to prove essential for Thomas and Roderick, Jr., regarding their spiritual formation journey as they mature in the Lord. They are both aware and alert of their weak areas, and they know what is needed for their spiritual maturity to increase consistently. They see the world has a lot to offer, but they also see the brighter side of serving the Lord. Ultimately, they have not conquered this feat yet, but no living humans have. This revelation is refreshing as it keeps believers on their spiritual toes and seeks the Lord consistently for their spiritual growth to remain visibly apparent to themselves and the world. Figure 3 above shows how Thomas excelled each week and leveled off on the fourth week. Figure 3 above shows that Roderick, Jr. declined a few weeks, but he did incline in his spiritual growth by the fourth week.

#### **Adult Spiritual Growth Results from Week One through Week Four**

All adults who agreed to participate in the action research study were excited when they began to see their spiritual growth in discussion and numbers. When people decide to serve the Lord, one of the last things they choose is to calculate their spiritual progress weekly or monthly.

That said, this action research study was refreshing for each participant, and it reminded each of the importance of accountability in one's spiritual growth being vital to their spiritual existence. Everyone recognizes that it is easy to fall into the cracks of life and just exist as they flow along with the rest of the world. Fortunately, there is more to the Christian's life than just living.

The researcher has been a Christian nonstop since September 25, 1985. I have grown and fallen multiple times during my spiritual formation journey. I love the Lord and am determined to do what I must to cultivate spiritually on my spiritual formation journey continually. I love the Lord and His people. People consider me a people person, and I desire to help them in ways the Lord blesses me to help them along their spiritual journey. The Overseer has been serving the Lord for many years. He has seen and done a lot over the years. His street-smarts, wisdom, age, and knowledge are valuable tools that Overseer uses to share with others when the opportunity avails itself. He loves gospel music and good preaching. Some of his favorite things are sports and court television shows. He loves the Lord.

The church administrator and I knew each other when we were at the same church years ago, before anyone but the Lord knew that He would birth MUTS. She had left that church, but I continued contacting her over the years. During this timeframe that God birthed MUTS, she immediately came aboard by the second month of its birth. The church administrator loves the Lord. Sis *Resilient* was also a member of the same church, years ago, with me before knowing that MUTS would give birth. She also left that church, and I kept in touch with her off and on. In approximately 2012, the Holy Spirit led her to the MUTS' family. Sis *Resilient* has always shown a love for the Overseer and me, and she loves the Lord.

Kevin, Sr., is my middle-born son. He always supports me in things the Lord has for me to do. He loves the Lord, and he is an outstanding husband, father, son, brother, and

businessman. He is known for his continued support throughout the North Carolina community. He considers MUTS his first church home away from their North Carolina home. They participate online via zoom from time to time, and when they come to Florida, MUTS' service is on their list. He is an intelligent young man. Alexis is Kevin, Sr.'s wife, and she supports Kevin, Sr., as Kevin, Sr., assists me. Alexis is an outstanding wife, mother, daughter, and professional school counselor. She participates, as does Kevin, Sr., and their kids via Zoom services from time to time with MUTS and in-person when they come to Florida.

Terry, Sr. met me through Misha, loves the Lord, and Terry, Sr. loves his wife and children. He has a tender heart for helping others. Terry, Sr., enjoys learning about the Lord supporting his wife and children in all the ways they need. He is a proud businessman. When asking them about current church affiliation in their area, they were not attending as committed members at the time, so he agreed to be a part of the MUTS family. Misha started with the MUTS family at its birth. She, at the time, had only two children. Misha and her children were on different spiritual dance teams at MUTS. Misha was also in the MUTS mass choir. She loves the Lord and is a proud businesswoman.

All participants love the small family fellowship network phase of MUTS. Moreover, Kevin, Sr., and his family attend a larger North Carolina church. They love the church up there, but they also love the family atmosphere they experience when attending with their MUTS family in Florida or online via Zoom. MUTS' church administrator is a hands-on person, she is a worker for the Lord, and accolades are not what drives her to do for the Lord and His people. She is most happy when doing for the Lord, her family, MUTS family, and friends. Sis *Resilient* is another one who loves doing for the Lord, her family, her MUTS family, and friends. She is happy when she can do for others. Terry, Sr., and Misha are avid workers for the Lord. Like all

the participants, they are the most comfortable when allowed to flow and interact freely with the Lord and others. When God blesses churches with individuals mentioned above, they have valuable assets to cherish. Though these are apparently, not the only adult participants of MUTS, they are the ones who were able to participate in the action research at the time.

**Table 1.8 Adult Spiritual Growth Percentages From Week One Through Week Four**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Researcher</b>	75	76	1%	76	0%	80	.05%	<b>Developing Consistently</b>
<b>Overseer</b>	40	48	20%	56	17%	56 (hospital)	0%	<b>Health Issues Growing Consistently</b>
<b>Church Ad</b>	62	67	8%	74	10%	75	.01%	<b>Growing and Developing Consistently</b>
<b><i>Resilient</i></b>	38	44	16%	57	30%	49	-0.14%	<b>Fair / Growing</b>
<b>Kevin, Sr.</b>	49	54	10%	59	9%	66	12%	<b>Fair / Growing Consistently</b>
<b>Alexis</b>	55	64	16%	70	.09%	66	-4%	<b>Growing Consistently</b>
<b>Terry, Sr.</b>	31	37	19%	46	24%	58	26%	<b>Growing Spiritually</b>
<b>Misha</b>	28	25	-0.11%	30	20%	38	27%	<b>Fair Spiritual Walk</b>

I participated in the questionnaire process for the results listed in Table 1.8 (ASPG: see above) as a first partaker of the action research. From Lesson One, week one through Lesson Four, week four, my scores ranged from 75 to 85%. Moreover, one hundred is the highest score one can obtain. The ratings set for each spiritual growth form is 0 to 25; poor, 25 to 50; fair, 50 to 75; growing, and 75 to 100; developing. I realized in doing the questionnaire, due to the nature of some questions it was impossible to obtain one hundred percent. Though, initially, this was disconcerting, the Holy Spirit spoke to my spirit encouraging me on one's spiritual journey, there is always room for improvement, thereby giving a motivation to continue striving and growing spiritually over the entire course of one's life journey.

I was intrigued to see how my ratings from week one through four would pan out. The lessons were fun and invigorating. Week two, I exhibited 1% increase in my spiritual growth. Whereas weeks two and three remained at 56%, resulting in 0% spiritual growth by numbers during this timeframe. Week four, however, my spiritual growth increased by .05%. This spiritual increase was encouraging to me.

The Overseer has been dealing with health issues from a heart transplant in 2001 and currently at three plus years on dialysis. There were visible signs of spiritual growth during the first four weeks when working with the Overseer, however, he had a brief four-day hospital stay and it showed in his numbers from weeks three to four. Nonetheless, he did not decline in his spiritual growth as he maintained a consistent 56% for week three and four. Week two, there was a 20% spiritual increase, and week three, there was a 17% spiritual increase in Overseer's spiritual growth.

The church administrator quickly agreed to assist in the action research project. From the start of joining MUTS, she has always displayed an eagerness, joy, and desire to grow and learn

about God, grow spiritually consistently, and do whatever she can do for MUTS, the leaders, and the family of MUTS. After one week, the church administrator grew spiritually by 8% in her spiritual growth. Concluding the third week, she displayed a 10% spiritual growth. Moreover, at the end of week four, her spiritual growth number for the increase is 0.1%. The joy and eagerness in her voice as she anticipated what she would learn each lesson was evident.

*Sis Resilient* was excited about participating in the action research study. She did convey concerns that her participation was not to her fullest potential; however, it has spiked her desire to increase consistency with her spiritual disciplines. During these past four weeks, she notes an increase in faith and states that this time with the lessons helped. There was evidence of consistent growth in weeks one through three, but in the fourth week, she realized that life happens, and she got off track somewhat. She had a 16% increase in her spiritual growth by the second week. At the end of the third week, her spiritual growth is at a 30% increase. However, by the end of the fourth week, her spiritual growth declined at -0.14 %. She expresses she is going to work harder to maintain her spiritual disciplines.

Kevin, Sr. was delighted to say yes and help as a participant in this action research study. He has always been supportive of his mother. Though he and his family reside in North Carolina, they all consider themselves a part of the MUTS family by supporting when they come to town, via zoom, and in other ways as deemed necessary. One key element that stood out for him was these lessons, and weekly meetings have helped him be accountable for his spiritual disciplines more readily. He understands that when someone helps regarding accountability, it helps to enhance one's spiritual growth and maturity. At the end of the second week, his spiritual growth increased by 10%; in the third week, his spiritual growth increased by 9%. At the end of the

fourth week, his spiritual growth spiked to an increase of 12%. He shares these lessons have been beneficial for him.

Alexis emphasizes that the lessons also helped her regarding accountability and the awareness that the pandemic caused her to become in a relaxed mode of protection for her and her family, but she sees and feels the need to begin again at some point with fellowshiping with the community of believers. Alexis has a solid spiritual foundation and her spiritual growth improved weekly the first three weeks. After the second week, Alexis' spiritual growth was calculated at 16%. At the end of the third week, Alexis' spiritual growth had increased by .09%. However, subsequently, there was a -4% decrease for spiritual growth the fourth week as she and Kevin, Sr. went out of town for the weekend.

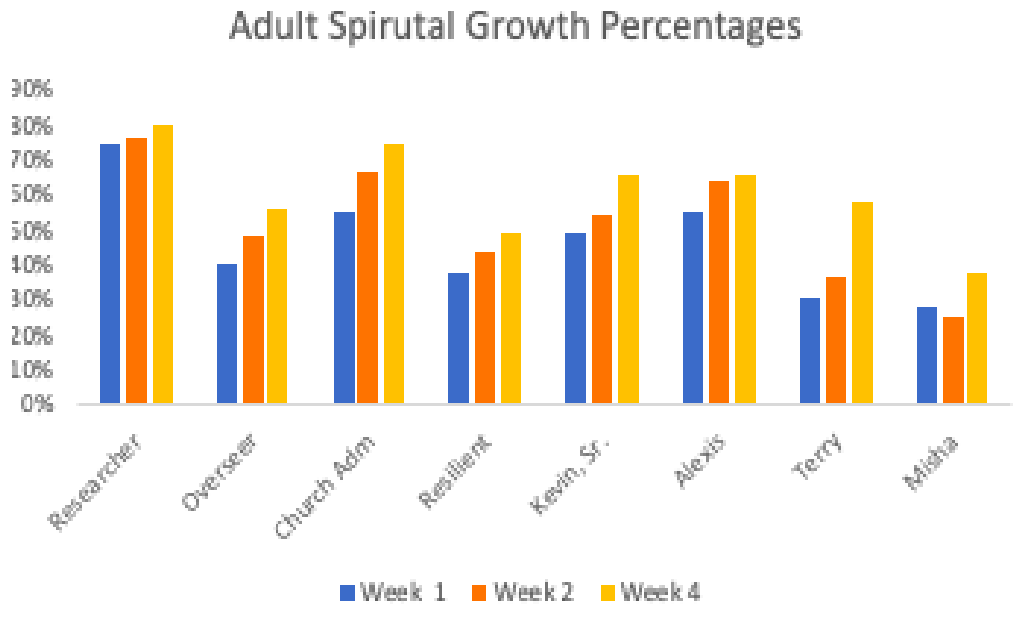
Terry, Sr. enjoyed each lesson. He expressed how he learned some things, and this was a joy for him. One valuable takeaway for Terry, Sr. was the fact that he felt his prayers were not effective because he did not pray over one minute. During week four, discussing about prayer in Matthew chapter six, the discussion shared how everyone should pray consistently and sincerely from their hearts. Prayer is considered communication to the Lord and should not be about quantity but rather quality. I explained that what was more beneficial to touch God's heart, someone praying twenty minutes repeating themselves and have no meaning or someone who prays one to five minutes from their sincere heart and reverence to the Lord. He said that made a lot of sense to him and will encourage him to pray more whether short or long but ensuring it would always be from his heart. He displayed consistent spiritual growth throughout the entire four weeks of this action research study. At the end of the second week, he gained a 19% increase spiritually. By the third week, his spiritual growth increased by 24%. And the fourth week, his spiritual growth was at 26% increase.



Misha and her family live approximately two hours away but have recommitted to MUTS via Zoom and whenever they come to town. She remembers how her older two children enjoyed actively engaging at MUTS when they were younger. They moved to another city a few years ago, but her older children always state that MUTS is and will always be their church. And that I will always be their pastor, affectionately known to them as “Pastor Wanda,” as they affectionately call me. They are all fond of the Overseer as well. Misha exhibited some spiritual growth, declined, and improved the last two weeks. She recognizes it is time to get back where she once was spiritually and then strives to conquer that level and meet her next element of spiritual growth. Misha had a -0.11% decline in her spiritual growth at the end of the second week. However, at the end of the third week, she gained a 20% spiritual increase for her spiritual growth. And similarly, at the end of the fourth week, her spiritual growth increased by 27%. These numbers encouraged her as she was able to see visible spiritual growth on her spiritual journey.

Figure 4

## 2.4 Illustration for Adult Spiritual Growth – For Week One Through Four



### Conclusion

The researcher feels the research has proven successful with active and engaging youth, young adults, and adults participating throughout the four weeks. A few things I recognize as successful tools are prayer consistently, fasting for God’s favor, availability, and hands-on with the participants. I am what people consider “a people person,” and from the start of the ministry, these were all successful. As I drifted from being as hands-on and available due to schoolwork, in hindsight, I own up to some of the declines, if not the majority. Due to my neglect and taking for granted, the members would be okay with my schooling and distance. However, both schools encourage their students not to neglect God, their home, families, or ministries. She did let members know she was available to them, but she feels they did not want to feel they were interrupting her schoolwork at the time.

The research has been a blessing for me and all participants. Going forward, I understand the Overseer's participation may not be as visible due to his health, but I want his voice heard as this was another issue the members expressed in the past. This research is the start of MUTS getting back on track and going forward for kingdom work to glorify and honor the Lord. The members and participants all express excitement to get back going. Everyone also understands that there will be some limitations and restrictions with the pandemic, but they are okay with Zoom for the time being. The pandemic has changed church for what most consider church forever, but our God yet lives, and He is working in MUTS's favor and all His churches worldwide.

The four weeks of study for the action research were on Tuesdays and Saturdays. I, going in, thought that Tuesdays would prove the night for most participants. However, Saturday evenings proved the night with most participants weekly. I thought Tuesday would be more participants because this is already a Bible Study evening at the fellowshiping church at 7:30 pm. I was wrong with my assessment of this theory and feel going forward, Saturday evenings will be the only night scheduled at this time for the lessons unless the Holy Spirit leads me differently.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit gave unction to the researcher to birth the Compassion, Authentic, Respect, Educate, Mentoring, Empowerment (CARE ME) mentoring ministry at Ministry Under The Sky (MUTS). The birth of the mentoring ministry was one of the criteria for me to complete and obtain my Doctor of Ministry (DMIN) degree while attending classes online via Liberty University Online program. The brick-and-mortar of Liberty University is in Lynchburg, Virginia. Nonetheless, their online programs make furthering one's academic journey affordable and accessible no matter their location.

The Lord led me to birth CARE ME because I recognized a drastic decline of youth at MUTS. Thus, the project's name is *The Decline of Youth at Ministry Under The Sky*. The fundamental keys for the CARE ME mentoring ministry are that the youth, young adults, and parents will experience empowerment and a new thriving to start back being consistently engaging and active in their services at MUTS. I acknowledge it must begin somewhere and that somewhere is the birth of the CARE ME mentoring ministry.

To embark on this action research journey for clarity and success, I started with prayer and fasting as I sought the help of the Lord through the Holy Spirit. The tools I physically utilized throughout this action research study were from the Word of God, books I owned before Liberty University enrollment, and since enrollment at Liberty University. Also, I was able to access multiple resources available to students through the Jerry Falwell Library. Liberty University provides its students with a vast amount of knowledge from various sources that are scholarly-peer approved. From journals to articles, commentaries, and former dissertations and thesis, these and more sources are available to online and campus students at the tip of their fingertips.

### **Does the Research End Here?**

The research can end here, but the desire to continue working with current and future members of MUTS should continue throughout the life of MUTS. Nevertheless, the researcher plans to continue reading books and materials that promote spiritual growth for people from the inside out. The success of MUTS' start was the outpouring of love, compassion, acceptance, forgiveness, and keeping things real before the people. Therefore, the concept is one does not change a perfect recipe. They may attempt to perfect it, but they do not modify the ingredients. I realized that I inadvertently changed the recipe from how the Holy Spirit led the Overseer and me to do things at MUTS. It is a mistake I readily own, and I pray not to make the same or worse mistakes regarding God or His people going forward.

In essence, it may sound contradictive, but the research will continue as I continue to grow by reading the Word of God, applying biblical principles to my life, and teaching biblical principles to the MUTS family. As I continue to educate myself, with the help of the Lord, biblically and academically regarding discipleship and mentoring, I will implement them, which are beneficial for the spiritual growth and holistic health of MUTS and the body of the MUTS family. After submitting the thesis, the Holy Spirit led me to take the *Coaching & Mentoring for Business Success* (CAMFBSD) (See Appendix T-U) course through the Centre of Excellence to aid me in the future as the primary mentor for MUTS CARE ME mentoring ministry. The information from the course will be essential for future training of MUTS leaders who desire to be a mentor at MUTS. If needed, they will complete the vetting process.

### Comparison of the Results Versus Previous Studies

From reading materials from Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* and Doug Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, and *Your First Two Years in Youth Ministry*, the researcher sees some success for MUTS. However, the success is not of the same magnitude as their success as far as numbers. Nonetheless, I know that small groups were influential for Jesus' ministry. Multitudes followed Jesus for who He was and what He could do for them. Nevertheless, Jesus was more concerned about His followers turning from their old ways of living in sin to live holy lifestyles for the world to see their difference. Having every chair filled is probably the prayer and desire of almost every pastor, but if the seats are full but there is no spiritual growth, leaders can miss the desired growth intentions according to the Word of God. Reading the Bible is one part, but a belief must be into action, such as Acts 14:1 mentions. The Holy Spirit spoke to me regarding spiritual growth for MUTS on February 26, 2022, at 10:07 pm. I heard, "Maybe it will not be one hundred in number or a megachurch, but one or more being transformed spiritually from the inside out in my eyes will always be a success, and I feel in the eyes of God." Churches must not lose sight of the people for things that would cause their spiritual growth to be stunted or decline.

Rick Warren shares, "One of the impressive characteristics of Jesus' ministry was that it attracted crowds. Large crowds. *Enormous* crowds."<sup>112</sup> It cannot be stressed enough that it is okay to have a large congregation, but the emphasis should not be only to brag or impress others. It should not be at the expense of souls lost for eternity. Jesus was Himself; He was not trying to impress others, and Jesus maintained focus to do His Father's will. His motivation was His love

---

<sup>112</sup> Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 207.

and obedience to His Father. His goal was getting people to love doing the will of God as they strived to live holy daily.

Consistency of spiritual disciplines is paramount for people to see their spiritual growth increase. There will be stagnant moments in everyone's life, but as in Acts 14:22-23, faith must continue with consistent praying and fasting to make it through life's obstacles. Prior research is in line with Acts 14:27-28, which encourages the community of like-minded believers to join with one accord as they watch the favor of God increase over their lifespan.

The action research clearly showed me that love is all about God. Doing life as He wants His people to do life. Christian living expresses love. Not only agape love of selflessness but love that is transparent. When people attended MUTS, the people felt the love of God, and the ministry continued to surge as it catapulted seemingly by leaps and bounds by the hand of the Lord and His favor.

The scope of the action research study's span was four weeks. The participants and I interacted with scheduled zoom lesson meetings, available twice weekly from 6:00 to 6:30 pm. Some participants were present both times weekly. By the end of the research, participants were inquiring about sending the lesson link to others as they had started sharing their spiritual growth. Their excitement was apparent.

### **Comparison of the Results Versus Literature Review Information**

As Rainer and Rainer state, "The Millennial Christians are not content with business-as-usual churches."<sup>113</sup> Throughout the research, the authors conveyed their message to the researcher that between the pandemic and things seen in churches, youth want more from the

---

<sup>113</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 255.

church, and they do not see attending church in the same manner as they did in the past. Stott recognizes that "the preacher's responsibility to lay out biblical principles so that everyone can develop Christian values"<sup>114</sup> is necessary. When I was pouring into the members and being hands-on, their spiritual growth and attendance were more apparent. This statement is not to say any of them are not growing spiritually. The desire and faithfulness to attend church services had decreased over time. As the primary mentor, I have been calling or texting the members more, and the rapport is increasing between all participants more consistently.

As a reminder, one of the successes for MUTS was loving people authentically. "Jesus loved lost people and loved spending time with them."<sup>115</sup> People know when they are loved unconditionally and receive genuine affection. Warren state, "Loving unbelievers the way Jesus did is the most overlooked key to growing a church. Without his passion for the lost, we will be unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary to reach them."<sup>116</sup> Many have gotten into the comfort zone of doing life by themselves or their immediate family. Many seem not to have enough time for anyone else. Then there is the battle of when new people show up, jealousy seeps in, and the new ones are not accepted. People tend to forget they have a past. All have some type of sin(s) in their lives. Jesus forgives sins. Too often, people want forgiveness from the Lord for their trespasses, but when it is time to reciprocate the same for others, they grudgingly do so or not at all.

Love in words and loving someone is different to some degree. People will often say, "I love you." Their actions do not reflect they love others as they say they do. When people say, "I

---

<sup>114</sup> Stott, *The Challenge of Preaching*, 39.

<sup>115</sup> Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 208.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.



love them, but." Or "I love them, but I do not do them." It takes me back to the old saying, "What Would Jesus Do?" Zoe, the granddaughter of the Overseer and me, reminded me of this saying during one of the previous lessons. Jesus did not just say He loves His people. Jesus expressed His love as He interacted with others whether they were a wretch undone, holier than Thou, or humble Christians needing to grow more like Him. One of my mentors sings a song that says, "When Love is in the House, the House is Packed!" Whether physically packed with numbers, spiritual growth, or both, signs of love cause growth for the individual's total health on the receiving end. People should not hold onto love; however, it should be a continuous cycle of giving and sharing one's love as Jesus displays now and as He did during His earthly ministry.

For the most part, things I learned during the Literature Review align with what Overseer and I were doing at MUTS. The sources emphasize messages of love, prayer, and accountability as top factors for success for spiritual growth to be evident consistently. Previous works talk about the ability to get along with others. The church is no different than the home or work when dealing with people; it is just that, dealing with people. People often tend to think that church people are to be perfect, conflict-free, and not back-stabbers. They forget that church people are people who desire to fellowship and worship the Lord and with others.

Mark DeVries state, "Getting good players, that's the easy part. Getting them to play together, that's the hard part."<sup>117</sup> To some degree, where this is true, it is not the entire truth. MUTS' family started with wonderful people who loved to fellowship, cook, and serve together. They fell in love with the small family, "Everybody Knows Your Name" atmosphere. Almost everyone was related to someone at MUTS, and that, no doubt, helped the rapport with the

---

<sup>117</sup> Mark DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church can do About It* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2008), 154.

MUTS family at the initial stages. As time continued and MUTS grew, conflicts and tensions became more evident within the body. This statement is not a negative comment; it is just life's observation, evident in all families, jobs, churches, and ministries. Strife, contention, and jealousy are all dated back to the Bible days.

### **Researcher's Spiritual Growth and Knowledge Gleaned During the Study**

The spiritual growth began for the researcher in a previous class with Liberty University Online Program last year. I have been known for sending out daily devotionals for over two decades. With studies and heavy homework loads, I began thinking it was okay that since I was sending out the devotionals, which had passages of Scripture, it was sufficient to classify as reading the Word of God. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit began dealing with me when developing a *Spiritual Growth Plan Chart*. I had all but stopped reading the Word of God other than the Scriptures within each app I read to create the devotionals to send out daily. I began back reading my Bible daily. I faithfully read the Word of God daily from one or more chapters. This notation is not to brag but rather to encourage others that there are new things to learn when reading the Word of God daily. It promotes spiritual growth, enhances one's knowledge, and helps overcome life's obstacles.

I would hear over the years, "Another level is another devil." The Word of God reminds followers that Jesus suffered during His earthly ministry so that they will suffer in some type of way as well. Jesus had to fight the enemy often, and He set the example for His followers. "Trailblazers always get arrows shot at them."<sup>118</sup> This statement and the following, "But criticism by other Christians should never keep you from ministering the way Christ did. Jesus

---

<sup>118</sup> Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 238.

should be our ultimate model for ministry, not anyone else.”<sup>119</sup> I needed this reminder. At one point, I would tell MUTS that “Jesus is my boss.” This statement was my recognition that I tried hard to please the Lord and the MUTS family as a people person. Even though I knew the Lord was the top priority, I also recognized in the last few years of having a building, it became apparent I was trying to please the people more to keep them happy. Unfortunately, I had temporarily forgotten the Holy Spirit used me to draw the people to MUTS because of my free spirit of allowing the Holy Spirit to use me and speak His Word in the ways He was leading me.

This action research is a chance to take MUTS back to “When the Church Was a Family.”<sup>120</sup> Two of the top reasons MUTS flourished, in the beginning, was the fact they were relational, and it “grew because of the content of its teaching.”<sup>121</sup> MUTS was known for realizing the “obstacles to church growth faced by those first followers of Jesus”<sup>122</sup> as a reminder that growing pains are real. As MUTS experienced miracle after miracle over the years by the favor and hand of the Lord, MUTS “triumphantly multiplied in the face of vociferous opposition”<sup>123</sup> as the enemy tried to stop the ministry time and time again, but God!

### **Implementing This Project for Ministries or Companies**

This action research study could easily transition for other ministries, churches, or businesses. As for the outline of topics concerning firms, they would change to business-related topics. Nonetheless, their approach will continue with a continual expression of love, respect, compassion, and genuine care for their employees. Moreover, with churches and ministries, the

---

<sup>119</sup> Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 238.

<sup>120</sup> Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family* (B & H Publishing Group: Nashville, TN, 2009), front cover.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

ease of implementing this action research study in their services would be the art of incorporating consistent teachings that are appealing and encourages engagement from their audience. One essential key for nurturing the members is to integrate lessons that range from all ages. The lessons should not be too deep or superficial. When dealing with small groups, the intimacy level usually comes with ease.

The other integral thing to remember is it is okay to want a large church but not to let it be at the expense of losing the evident results being evident in the spiritual growth of others. Dave Browning shares, “Whenever intimacy and impact converge, there is synergy. Synergy is a ‘buy two, get one free’ proposition.”<sup>124</sup> This formula is like Jesus’ ministry. Jesus mingled with small groups, which in most cases resulted in multitudes. However, whether it was one person, a handful, or a multitude, Jesus shared intimacy with each person He encountered. His motives or intentions never wavered. His desire was the same from start to finish that people would love Him enough to serve Him, as stated in Psalm 96:9, “O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Saying that one is a Christian or a disciple is not sufficient. There should be life-transforming evidence that their life is constantly changing over time.

Starting with a general meeting to rally in their people, being available for one-on-one sessions, for clarity if needed, is the starting place. Leaders should listen to their followers. Hearing them is not enough. When some listen to the voice of others, they realize they are loved cared for, their opinion matters, and they are respected. Things felt with the heart and emotions of others is apparent. These acts of caring will help ministries and businesses to uncover the valuable people that the Lord entrusts with them.

---

<sup>124</sup> Dave Browning, *Hybrid Church The Fusion of Intimacy & Impact* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 99.

The interaction should not be limited to when they initially encounter others or new people. This step should be a reminder; things done to get people the same or more are needed to keep them. For instance, if acknowledging someone is what the Lord uses to draw them, the acknowledgment should continue. Not to appease or baby individuals, but rather do what Jesus did during His earthly ministry. He recognized people even amid a crowd.

The other thing in implementing this action research study to make it personal, the leader must continue to keep their people abreast of what is going on within the ministry, church, or business. Some things may not constitute for everyone to know, but the overall vision should be visible and communicated well for others to follow the dream.

Too many gauge their success by dollar numbers and physical numbers. Quantitatively, numbers have their appropriate place in the home, church, school, and businesses. Browning shares a thought to help along this line when stating, “The challenge of the hybrid church is for every ministry to get smaller and larger at the same time. It is about the small church thinking big, and the big church thinking small.”<sup>125</sup> This statement equates to everyone thinking and dreaming big without losing sight of the humble start. Browning also states, “It is about the church stretching itself and not settling for its current reach and range.”<sup>126</sup> One practical thing for MUTS in the past and many others has always been the tact of word-of-mouth advertising. The art of being happy where one is and not settling for that being the end simultaneously. It is wanting more for themselves and their followers as they reach to live selfless lives daily.

Leaders should stay away from the pitfall, all too well known, in many churches of comparing themselves or their start. Whether the location is a home, storefront, stand-alone

---

<sup>125</sup> Browning, *Hybrid Church*, 99.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

building, or an actual church building, it should be about the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Browning shares, “The house church can start to achieve greater influence simply by publicizing its existence.”<sup>127</sup> MUTS’ start was also in the home. It was small and intimate as everyone knew everybody. There was a lot of fun, but at the same token, the members were learning about the Lord. The church should not just be worship, pray, sermon, money, and go home. There should be active interaction outside of the church itself as much as possible. MUTS’ fun activities were monthly and created an intimate bond between the members.

Structuring a solid foundation should be implementing this action research in one’s setting. Schedules are best when leaders stick to the plan. People love consistency and hate change, even when that change means a good thing for them. Nonetheless, when they have structure, a guide, an outline, they seek that constant, and they tend to grow. In growing, they feel better about themselves.

There is a booklet titled *Ministry Under The Sky Personal Prayer and Devotional Journal Outline of Topics and Questionnaire Booklet* prepared by the researcher. The booklet shares information from the start to finish of the action research study. The booklet was given to all participants either by hand, text, email, or the HelloSign app. The booklet gave the participants knowledge beforehand of things expected from them, and I included the questionnaires and interview questions. There was an outline to structure their quality time with the Lord. It gave an overview of how to start with one spiritual discipline for the first week, increase another spiritual discipline the second week, yet another spiritual discipline the third week, and then another spiritual discipline the fourth week. The purpose for this inclusion of the spiritual guide is to help anyone who needs help in gaining structure when having time with the

---

<sup>127</sup> Browning, *Hybrid Church*, 100.

Lord. I informed them that they did not have to keep the same passages of Scripture or timeframes, but it is a guide to guide them with their time with the Lord and promote spiritual growth and health.

### **Possible Future Research**

The researcher began learning more in-depth about small groups since the tenure of her academic journey at Liberty University Online Program. It has been intriguing to understand the powerful effects of small groups and church planting. Before this educational journey, it was not something I was familiar with in detail. However, as time passes, I see the importance and the value of how small groups can promote spiritual growth.

Dave Earley shares concerning one couple and small groups that “Chris and Susan did not lose sight of their dream. They worked hard to apply other habits that would help their dream. Eventually their efforts started to pay off. It continued to grow and eventually it multiplied. The dream made the difference.”<sup>128</sup> The ability to see past a dream for its fruition to reality is a blessing from God. I desire to do more study to understand the best way(s) to do effective small groups and church planting as the Lord leads. My desire to see past the natural eyes and see through the lenses of what God is saying by His Holy Spirit is essential. Earley state, “The first habit of the highly effective small group leader is to dream of leading a healthy, growing, multiplying group.”<sup>129</sup> The first step to take for me is to pray for direction.

I understand it is more than about a dream or dreaming, but it must be the will of God in my life. After that, I must do as Proverbs states about studying the Word of God; I must research

---

<sup>128</sup> Dave Earley, *8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders Transforming Your Ministry Outside The Meeting* (Cell Group Resources, Houston, TX: 2001), 19.

<sup>129</sup> Earley, *8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders*, 19.

my private collection and other sources concerning small groups and church planting. As Earley state, “Goals are dreams in increments. Highly effective small group leaders have a big dream broken down into specific, simple, attainable, and challenging goals. They set goals for such habits as praying, inviting people, fellowship, and things of this nature.”<sup>130</sup> To help mentor others, implement small groups, and possibly church planting will sanction the need for guidance from the Holy Spirit, searching the Scriptures, and further research on the subject matters on my behalf.

I completed a Life Coach program over a year ago. As my course is almost complete for this thesis, I desired to investigate further getting certification as a mentor. Life Coaches and mentors are similar, but they have dissimilarities as well. Furthermore, doing more research in the Scriptures and credible sources will assist current and future members of MUTS in becoming active mentors for the CARE ME mentoring ministry at MUTS. I will “[p]ray about the best method and the best timing for”<sup>131</sup> going forward. After submitting the thesis, I took, completed, and passed the *Coaching & Mentoring for Business Success Diploma* course (See Appendix T-U). The valuable information gleaned will assist future mentors and me for MUTS.

I saw hands-on how each participant approached the lessons every week. For the most part, it was evident that as they became acclimated to the structure and timely manner of the lessons, they were more willing to participate. The lessons promptly began with an opening prayer by one of the participants or me. I discussed the topic for the week in detail. I covered all the information in some lessons, and then the open discussion was allowed or some lessons, one or more of the participants or I would read, and then discussion will follow.

---

<sup>130</sup> Earley, *8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders*, 21.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.



I also realized that there was more involved in the action research study. I created charts, graphs, and tables. I took many notes, and I assessed the information at different intervals. Though some things were tedious and frustrating to learn or do, I experienced such joy when talking to the current and new participants each week. I enjoyed watching them grow spiritually. I enjoyed hearing the excitement in their voices, questions, and comments each week. It was a blessing to listen to the increase in their prayer life. The spiritual hunger for each continues to grow, and this blesses me.

I recognized one thing to improve going forward is delegating responsibilities to the capable leaders the Lord has entrusted the Overseer and me. From the start of the ministry, I appointed leaders for every possible department. I even created new positions to help others see their worth and value, step out of their comfort zone and do more for the Lord. After approximately eight years, inadvertently, I would assign duties, but if not done in what I felt was a timely manner, I would end up doing the task(s) myself. I did not realize that the boldness and spiritual growth I assisted the leaders to display made them feel as if they were no longer capable of doing their assignments. This oversight was a regrettable mistake I am not trying to duplicate with the help of the Lord.

In closing, being a Christian, a disciple, a follower of Christ, a believer, no matter the title or name used, everyone must remember that this Christian journey is not to be selfish. Christians are to live their lives selflessly. They were with one accord during the early church and shared their possessions readily. Acts 4:32, “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.” It takes help from the Holy Spirit to live a selfless life and acquire a heart to help others.

Words of advice for me, MUTS' family, and everyone who reads this thesis are “*Don't give up*. We can change only when we stick with spiritual discipline.”<sup>132</sup> He continues with advice from “[t]he apostle Paul wrote, ‘Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up’ (Galatians 6:9).”<sup>133</sup> Jesus was the perfect example for His followers to emulate. He adhered to the spiritual disciplines for a holy lifestyle without sinning. As His human followers, it is for everyone to follow His pattern to the best of their ability. In going back to the slogan for MUTS given by the Holy Spirit, “Imperfect People Serving a Perfect God.” This slogan is not giving anyone a crutch or a free ticket to sin. Instead, it is saying the Lord made His creatures, He knows every flaw and imperfection, but He also knows that with His help, His people can live in victory daily with the help of the Holy Spirit and keeping in tune with their spiritual disciplines.

---

<sup>132</sup> Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship On Being And Making Followers of Christ* (NavPress: Colorado Springs, CO, 2006), 204.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

## Bibliography

- Adler, Ronald B, George Rodman, Athena du Pre'. *Understanding Human Communication* Thirteenth Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Agape in the Bible. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/agape>.
- Belvin, Wanda. "Personal Spiritual Growth Plan" *Customized Growth Plan*. (Paper presented for prior Liberty University class, unpublished, Bradenton, Florida, May 05, 2021).
- Browning, Dave. *Hybrid Church The Fusion of Intimacy and Impact*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Buschelman, April K. "COVID and Clinical Practice: Now Is the Time to Engage Future Educators." *Journal of Catholic Education* 23, no. 1 (2020): 142-48. Doi:10.15365/joce.2302092020.
- Clark, Chap. Hurt 2.0: *Inside the World of Today's TEENAGERS*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011.
- Define Mentor – Google.  
<https://www.google.com/search?q=define+mentor&oq=define+mentor&aqs=chrome.69i57j0i512l6j0i10i512j0i512l2.3023j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>.
- DeVries, Mark. *Sustainable Youth Ministry Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church can do About It*. InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2008.
- Earley, Dave. *8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders Transforming Your Ministry Outside The Meeting*. Cell Group Resources, Houston, TX: 2001.
- Earley, Dave and Rod Dempsey. *Disciple Making Is... How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013.
- Fields, Doug. *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.
- Fields, Doug. *Your First Two Years in Youth Ministry a Personal and Practical Guide to Starting Right*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Francis, Leslie J, John Fisher, David W Lankshear, and Emma L Eccles. "Modelling the Effect of Worship Attendance and Personal Prayer on Spiritual Well-Being among 9- to 11-Year-Old Students Attending Anglican Church Schools in Wales" *International Journal of Children's* 23, no. 1 (February 2018): 30–44. doi:10.1080/1364436x.2017.1419938.

- Franck R., and Iannaccone, L. R. (2014). "Religious Decline in the 20th Century West: Testing Alternative Explanations." *Public Choice*, 159(3-4), 385-414.  
<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s11127-013-0103-9>.
- Guzik, David. "Study Guide for Matthew 28 by David Guzik." *Blue Letter Bible*. Last Modified 21 Feb, 2017. [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Mat/Mat-28.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Mat/Mat-28.cfm).
- Hellerman, Joseph H. *When the Church Was a Family*. B & H Publishing Group: Nashville, TN, 2009.
- Hull, Bill. *The Complete Book of Discipleship On Being And Making Followers of Christ*. NavPress: Colorado Springs, CO, 2006.
- Jackson, R. Allen. "Theology And Youth Ministry, Then and Now" *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry JBTM* 13:1 (Spring 2016). 34 <https://www-galaxie-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/article/jbtl3-1-05?highlight=decline%20of%20youth%20in%20church%20attendance>.
- Jordan, Shayla. 2019. "'To Be Saved Is to Be Gathered': Bonhoeffer on Discipleship, the Extraordinary Christian Life, and Fighting Racial Injustice." *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 18 (1).  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=Isdar&AN=ATLAI7200131000531&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Kinnaman, David, and Gabe Lyons. *Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant And Extreme*. Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2016.
- McDowell, Amy D. "Christian but Not Religious": Being Church as Christian Hardcore Punk." *Sociology of Religion* 79, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 58-77).
- Mancini, Will and Cory Hartman. *Future Church: Seven Laws of Real Church Growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020.
- Matthew Henry's *Commentary In One Volume* Edited by Rev. Leslie F. Church, Ph.D., F.R.Hist.S. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), 1644
- Matthew Henry, "Commentary on Proverbs 22 by Matthew Henry." *Blue Letter Bible*. Last Modified 1 Mar, 1996. [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Pro/Pro\\_022.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Pro/Pro_022.cfm).
- Mentor – Definition. <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/mentor>.
- Morrow, Jonathan. *Think CHRISTIANLY: Looking at the Intersection of FAITH and CULTURE* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

- Mulholland, Jr., Robert M. *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016.
- Nelson, Richard D., and Ri Jones. 2004. *Deuteronomy (2002): A Commentary*. Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Accessed 14, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. (86).
- Rainer, Thom S. and Jess W. Rainer. *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011.
- Reed, III, James R. and Lorrie C. Reed. *Reimagining the Great Commission: 21st-century Digital Discipleship*. Coppel, TX: Center Street Consulting, 2020.
- Root, Andrew and Kenda Creasy Dean. *The Theological Turn in Youth Ministry*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011.
- Roozen, David A. "Negative Numbers: The Decline Narrative Reaches Evangelicals." *The Christian Century* 130, no. 25 (December 11, 2013): 10-11.  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=Isdar&AN=ATLA0001965609&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Stanley, Andy. *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.
- Stott, John. *The Challenge of Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015.
- Stringer, Ernest T. *Action Research* 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2014.
- Svensson, Jonas. "Religious Education and Teaching Young People about Humanity: Suggesting a New Role for RD and for the Academic Study of Religion in Sweden." *Temenos* 51, no. 2 (2015): 177-99.  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=Isdar&AN=ATLAn3836313&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Thomas, Adam. *Digital Disciple: Real Christianity in a Virtual World*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011.
- Thomas, Matt. "The Indispensable Mark of Christian Leadership: Implications from Christ's Methods of Leadership Development in Mark's Gospel." *Perichoresis* 16, no. 3 (July 2018): 107-17. doi:10.2478/perc-2018-0019.
- Thompson, Deanna A. *Deuteronomy: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*, Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=5974228>.

Torrey, "Pastoral and Personal Evangelism, or Winning Men to Christ One by One by R. A. Torrey." *Blue Letter Bible*. Last Modified 6 Oct, 2003.  
[https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/torrey\\_ra/fundamentals/51.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/torrey_ra/fundamentals/51.cfm).

Understanding Our Covenants with God An Overview of Our Most Important Promises  
[https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2012/07/understanding-our-covenants-with-god?lang=eng&cid=14503511667&adlang=eng&source=google&network=x&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhvz7kMff9AIVAs93Ch17rgZQEAAAYAiAAEgLOJ\\_D\\_BwE&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhvz7kMff9AIVAs93Ch17rgZQEAAAYAiAAEgLOJ\\_D\\_BwE](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2012/07/understanding-our-covenants-with-god?lang=eng&cid=14503511667&adlang=eng&source=google&network=x&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhvz7kMff9AIVAs93Ch17rgZQEAAAYAiAAEgLOJ_D_BwE&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhvz7kMff9AIVAs93Ch17rgZQEAAAYAiAAEgLOJ_D_BwE).

Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church Every Church Is Big in God's Eyes*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

Westerhoff, III., John H. *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Third Edition. New York, NY: Seabury Press, 2012.

What is a Mentor? Definition. <https://www.guider-ai.com/blog/what-is-a-mentor>.

Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014.

Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012.

Young, William. "Artificial Intelligence and Online Spirituality: REVEREND ROBOT: AUTOMATION AND CLERGY." *Zygon* 54, no. 2 (June 2010): 479-500.  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=Isdar&AN=ATLAIaREM190610000357&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

**APPENDIX A**  
**GENERAL CONSENT FORM**

**Title of the Project:** The Decline of Youth at Ministry Under The Sky

**Principal Investigator:** Wanda E. Belvin, Doctoral Student, Liberty University

**Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 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.

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

The purpose of the study is to implement the CARE ME Mentoring Ministry at Ministry Under The Sky. The purpose is to get the youth engaged in their services and growing spiritually. The youth need to be empowered for spiritual formation for daily living for their goal of Heaven.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**

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

1. The first task will be to meet with the researcher to discuss thoughts and reflection of what would help the mentoring program and increase youth at Ministry Under The Sky.
2. There will be monthly meetings with the researcher. The researcher will take field notes, and the meetings will be recorded by the researcher. The approximate time for the research is one month.
3. There will be small group and home-based meetings and services via Zoom or in-person. The meetings will consist of teachings that pertain to discipleship. There will also be community involvement activities to teach the importance of doing for others.

**How could you or others benefit from this study?**

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are growing spiritually, working with youth, and helping others. Also, possibly, to receive training for mentoring.

Benefits to society include cleaning for the elderly and small errands, if needed.

**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.

As a mandatory reporter, any information that there is child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, must be reported.

**How will personal information be protected?**

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

- Participant responses will be anonymous. Participant responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms, if desired. 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. The researcher will delete all electronic records after three years.
- Interviews/focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Ministry Under The Sky. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

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

**Anonymous Survey Research:** Inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.



**All Other Research:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Wanda Belvin. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her or the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Joe Easterling.

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

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

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

**Your Consent**

**Anonymous Survey Research:** 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 using the information provided above.

**Option 2: All Other Research:** 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 can print a copy of this document for your records, and the researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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

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

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

## APPENDIX B

### PARENTAL CONSENT/COMBINED PARENTAL CONSENT AND STUDENT ASSENT/PARENTAL OPT-OUT

**Title of the Project:** The Decline of Youth at Ministry Under The Sky

**Principal Investigator:** Wanda E. Belvin, Doctoral Student, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

Your child is invited to participate in a research study. Participants must be ten years or older, and taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to allow your child(ren) to take part in this research project.

#### What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of the study is to implement the CARE ME Mentoring Ministry at Ministry Under The Sky. The purpose is to get the youth engaged in their services and growing spiritually. The youth need to be empowered for spiritual formation for daily living for their goal of Heaven.

#### What will participants be asked to do in this study?

If you agree to allow your child(ren) to be in this study, I will ask him or her to do the following things:

1. The first task will be to meet with the researcher to discuss thoughts and reflection of what would help the mentoring program and increase youth at Ministry Under The Sky.
2. There will be monthly meetings with the researcher. The researcher will take field notes, and the meetings will be recorded by the researcher. The approximate time for the research is a minimum of one month.
3. There will be small group and home-based meetings and services via Zoom or in-person. The meetings will consist of teachings that pertain to discipleship. There will also be community involvement activities to teach the importance of doing for others.

**How could participants or others benefit from this study?**

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are growing spiritually, working with youth, and helping others. Also, possibly, to receive training for mentoring.

Benefits to society include cleaning for the elderly and small errands, if needed.

**What risks might participants experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks your child(ren) would encounter in everyday life.

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private

- Participant responses will be anonymous. Participant responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms, if desired. 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. The researcher will delete all electronic records after three years.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to allow your child(ren) to participate will not affect your or his or her current or future relations with Liberty University or Ministry Under The Sky. If you decide to allow your child to participate, she or he is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

**What should be done if a participant wishes to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw your child(ren) from the study or your child(ren) chooses to withdraw, please inform the researcher that you/your child wish[es] to discontinue his or her participation, and you/your child(ren) should not submit the study materials. Your child's responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Wanda Belvin. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her or the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Joe Easterling.

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

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

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University

**Your [Consent/Opt-Out]**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to allow your child(ren) to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You can print a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of 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 allow my child(ren) to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record my child(ren) as part of his/her participation in this study.

---

Printed Child's Name

---

Parent's Signature

Date

---

Minor's Signature

Date

**APPENDIX C**

**CONSENT FORM AND RECORDING PERMISSION FORM**

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY ACTION RESEARCH

THESIS: THE DECLINE OF YOUTH AT MINISTRY UNDER THE SKY

BY

WANDA E. BELVIN

**++ GENERAL CONSENT FORMS HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO PARTICIPANTS EITHER BY HAND, EMAIL, OR TEXT FOR THE ABOVE NAME ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT. ++**

\_\_\_\_\_ I have received a copy of the General Consent Form before signing this document, and this is an acknowledgment that I have read the General Consent Form and agree to be a participant in this action research project.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have received a copy of the Parental Consent/Combined Parental Consent and Student Assent/Parental Opt-Out Form before signing this document.

\_\_\_\_\_ This is an acknowledgment that I have read the Parental Consent/Combined Parental Consent and Student Assent/Parental Opt-Out Form and have given my child(ren) permission to participate in the above name action research project.

\_\_\_\_\_ I acknowledge that the researcher has my permission to record our initial meeting, all lessons and meetings via zoom or in-person, and any part deemed necessary for this action research. I understand that the researcher will secure the information correctly. I understand that the researcher will respect my request in any event if I do not want my responses recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree for my child(ren) to be recorded during any meetings or lessons via Zoom or in-person and any part deemed necessary for this action research. I understand that the researcher will secure the information correctly, and the researcher will respect my request in any event if my child(ren) or I do not want our responses recorded

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand the information will be published and have given my verbal consent.

Please initial the line(s) and sign appropriately.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

CHILD: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D**  
**AGENDA AND MEETING LESSON PLAN**

Opening Prayer and Greetings

Briefly cover the initial conversations, CARE ME mentoring ministry

Open Discussions regarding the past, present, and future of MUTS

Inform Booklets, and Future Forms will be emailed, texted, or delivered later

Open discussions for any other comments

Reflections (For any participant to share their day, experiences or ask any questions they have)

Teaching on Love (1 Corinthians Chapter 13)

Vs. 1            The difference between making noise and showing love for others

Vs. 2            The difference between prophecy, faith, and showing love for others

Vs. 3            The difference between sacrificing and showing genuine love for others

Vss. 4-7        Examples of what love is not

Vs. 8            The endurance of love

Vss. 9-12      Knowledge, maturity, and God revealing things to His people

Vs. 13          The value of faith, hope, and love, which is the greatest of the three, love

Reflections (Participants can ask questions, share concerns, or comment during open floor time).

Closing Prayer



**APPENDIX E**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS +**  
**RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MUTS**

1. What brought you to MUTS?
2. What kept you coming to MUTS?
3. What are the key things enjoyed most at MUTS?
4. What are things not enjoyable at MUTS?
5. What made you stop attending MUTS?
6. What will help you to return to your services at MUTS?
7. What would you like to see to assist you in being engaged at MUTS?
8. Why are you not currently attending MUTS?
9. How would you describe your membership of MUTS?
10. Why are you not consistently engaging at MUTS?
11. What would be the determining factor to get you back faithful at MUTS?
12. What way do you see yourself growing in the future at MUTS?
13. What are your thoughts about being paired with a trained mentor?
14. In what ways has having a mentor helped you in the past?
15. Do you think adding a youth minister would be beneficial for MUTS?
16. As the parent, how do you feel about MUTS?
17. As the parent, how do you feel about your child(ren) returning to MUTS services?
18. As the parent, how do you feel about your child(ren) paired with a mentor?
19. As the parent, how do you feel about being trained to help mentor MUTS' youth?
20. As the parent, what are your thoughts on a youth minister at MUTS?

## APPENDIX F

### SCRIPTS FOR OVERSEER, BISHOP, AND PASTOR JOHN

"Overseer, as you know, the Lord has me on this current academic journey, and I have been in school at Liberty University since January 2021. I am coming to the stage where I will have to do action research. In this portion of the action research, I will actively engage with the members after speaking with the Bishop and Pastor of the fellowshiping church once the IRB department gives clearance. I will be working with the members, finding out what went wrong in their eyes, getting their perspectives on future ideas, and working with our youth to get them re-engaged and consistently attending their services. MUTS will be birthing the CARE ME mentoring ministry during this action research. I will be the primary mentor to work with our youth to assist in the spiritual growth of our young people at MUTS. Let's keep this endeavor before the Lord in prayer."

"Hi Bishop, as you know, the Lord has me on this current academic journey, and I have been in school at Liberty University since January 2021. I am coming to the stage where I will have to do action research. In this portion of the action research, I will actively engage with the members upon clearance from the IRB department. I will be working with the members, finding out what went wrong in their eyes, getting their perspectives on future ideas, and working with our youth to get them re-engaged and consistently attending their services. MUTS will be birthing the CARE ME mentoring ministry during this action research. I will be the primary mentor to work with the youth to assist our young people's spiritual growth at MUTS. We may have to use the dining area for some of our meetings. Thank you in advance for your help in this portion of the research. Please keep this endeavor before the Lord in prayer."

"Hi Pastor John, Son, as you know, the Lord has me on this current academic journey, and I have been in school at Liberty University since January 2021. I am coming to the stage where I will have to do action research. In this portion of the action research, I will be actively engaging with the members after the clearance of the IRB department. I will be working with the members, finding out what went wrong in their eyes, getting their perspectives on future ideas, and working with our youth to get them re-engaged and consistently attending their services. MUTS will be birthing the CARE ME mentoring ministry during this action research. I will be the primary mentor to work with our youth to assist in the spiritual growth of our young people at MUTS. I have already spoken to Bishop, he is okay, but I wanted to follow up with you. As I mentioned to Bishop, we would like to use the dining area possibly for some of our meetings. If so, is this okay with you as well? Thank you in advance for your help in this portion of the research. Please keep this endeavor before the Lord in prayer."

**APPENDIX G**

**SCRIPTS FOR CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR,  
CHURCH MOTHER, DEACON, SIS “RESILIENT”, AND WILLIE AND RASHEIA**

“Hi, as you know, the Lord has me on this current academic journey, and I have been in school at Liberty University since January 2021. I am coming to the stage where I will have to do action research. I will actively engage with you and the members in this portion of the action research. I have already spoken to the Overseer, Bishop, and Pastor John. I will be working with you and the members, finding out what went wrong in everyone’s eyes, getting perspectives on future ideas, and working with our youth to get them re-engaged and consistently attending their services. MUTS will be birthing the CARE ME mentoring ministry during this action research. I will be the primary mentor to work with our youth to assist in the spiritual growth of our young people at MUTS. I am looking forward to working with everyone. Let’s keep this endeavor before the Lord in prayer.”

“Hi Mother and Dec, as you both know, the Lord has me on this current academic journey, and I have been in school at Liberty University since January 2021. I am coming to the stage where I will have to do action research. In this portion of the action research, I will be actively engaging with the members, finding out what went wrong in the eyes of everyone, getting perspectives on future ideas, and working with our youth to get them re-engaged and consistently attending their services. MUTS will be birthing the CARE ME mentoring ministry during this action research. I will be the primary mentor to work with our youth to assist in the spiritual growth of our young people at MUTS. I am looking forward to working with everyone. Let’s keep this endeavor before the Lord in prayer.”

“Hi Sister “Resilient,” as you know, the Lord has me on this current academic journey, and I have been in school at Liberty University since January 2021. I am coming to the stage where I will have to do action research. I will be actively engaging with you and the members in this action research portion. I will be in the field working with the members, finding out what went wrong in the eyes of everyone, getting perspectives on future ideas, and working with our youth to get them re-engaged and consistently attending their services. MUTS will be birthing the CARE ME mentoring ministry during this action research. I will be the primary mentor to work with our youth to assist in the spiritual growth of our young people at MUTS. I am looking forward to working with everyone. Let’s keep this endeavor before the Lord in prayer.”

“Hey, son, Willie, and daughter, Rasheia, as you both know, the Lord has me on this academic journey, and I have been in school at Liberty University since January 2021. I am coming to the

stage where I will have to do action research. In this action research portion, I will actively engage with the members. I will be in the field working with the members, finding out what went wrong in the eyes of everyone, getting perspectives on future ideas, and working with our youth to get them re-engaged and consistently attending their services. MUTS will be birthing the CARE ME mentoring ministry during this action research. I will be the primary mentor to work with our youth to assist in the spiritual growth of our young people at MUTS. I am looking forward to working with everyone. Let's keep this endeavor before the Lord in prayer."

**APPENDIX H**  
**SCRIPT FOR PHONE CALLS AND TEXTS TO MUTS' MEMBERS**  
**(INCLUDING THE NORTH CAROLINA FAMILY)**

**Phone Call to the parents of under-age youth:**

"Hi, this is Pastor Wanda. This call is to share some recent updates with each of you. The Lord has your pastor furthering her academic journey at Liberty University to obtain a doctorate. During this time, I will have to do action research at this point. I wanted to know if I can count on you and the participation of your child(ren) to do the research required for my degree successfully. I recognize your time is valuable and will be mindful each time when scheduling meetings. We will be implementing a mentoring ministry. The name of this new ministry will be titled CARE ME; Compassion, Authentic, Respect, Educate, Mentoring, Empowerment (CARE ME). The Holy Spirit inspires this name, and it is an attempt to re-create the success MUTS experienced in the beginning as it increases our youth attending MUTS services consistently. The focus is not just getting them in the building, but it is to aid, encourage, and nurture them on their spiritual journey as they grow in life to learn to love the Lord more and more. Can I count on you? You may want to ask, "What shall I do?" "What is required?" Making disciples is a command from Jesus and Jesus has a special love for children. The scheduled lessons are a good time to pour into them as they glean from each of us. You will have to sign a consent form for your underage child(ren). Would you pray and consider this valuable opportunity to play a vital part in the future spiritual lives of the youth at MUTS? I will get back to you in a week if I have not heard from you before. What would be a good day and time for you?"

**Follow-up text message to parents with under-age youth:**

"Hi, this is Pastor. I wanted to send a quick text to touch bases with you regarding our recent phone call. Have you had time to pray and think about my request for your assistance? It is an honor and a privilege to work with you as we endeavor to do the will of the Lord in this action research process for MUTS' current and future youth. Let me know your thoughts, concerns, or questions you may have since we last spoke."

**Thank you, follow-up text message, to parents with under-age youth:**

"Hi, this is Pastor. I wanted to send a quick text to touch bases with you regarding our recent phone call. I just wanted to say thank you again for accepting the call for help in this action research project to benefit the youth at MUTS. I want you to know it is an honor and a privilege to work with you as we endeavor to do the will of the Lord in this action research process for MUTS' future youth. I am excited about the CARE ME ministry about to become a reality, and I hope and pray you are too! Please let me know if you have any other thoughts, concerns, or questions since we last spoke?"

**Phone call Script to young adults:**

"Hi, this is Pastor Wanda. This call is to share some recent updates with each of you. As you may or may not know, the Lord has your pastor furthering her academic journey at Liberty University to obtain a doctorate. During this time, I will have to do action research. I wanted to know if I could count on you to do the research required for my degree successfully. I recognize your time is valuable and will be mindful each time when scheduling meetings. We will be implementing a mentoring ministry. The name of this new ministry will be titled CARE ME;

Compassion, Authentic, Respect, Educate, Mentoring, Empowerment (CARE ME). The Holy Spirit inspires this name, and it is an attempt to re-create the success MUTS experienced in the beginning as it increases our youth attending MUTS services consistently. The focus is not just getting you in the building, but it is to aid, encourage, and nurture you on your spiritual journey as you grow in life to learn to love the Lord more and more. Can I count on you? You may want to ask, "What shall I do?" "What is required?" Would you pray and consider this valuable opportunity to play a vital part in your future spiritual walk at MUTS? I will get back to you in a week if I have not heard from you before. What would be a good day and time for you?"

**Follow-up text message to young adults:**

"Hi, this is Pastor. I wanted to send a quick text to touch bases with you regarding our recent phone call. Have you had time to pray and think about my request for your assistance? It would be an honor and a privilege to work with you as we endeavor to do the will of the Lord in this action research process for MUTS' future youth. Please let me know if you have any other thoughts, concerns, or questions you may have since we last spoke."

**Thank you, follow-up text message, to young adults:**

"Hi, this is Pastor. I wanted to send a quick text to touch bases with you regarding our recent phone call. I just wanted to say thank you again for accepting the call for help in this action research project to benefit the youth at MUTS. I want you to know it is an honor and a privilege to work with you as we endeavor to do the will of the Lord in this action research process for MUTS' future youth. Please let me know if you have any other thoughts, concerns, or questions since we last spoke?"

## APPENDIX I

### FACEBOOK SCRIPT

#### **Facebook Post for the ministry page, group page, and personal page:**

"Hi, this is Pastor Wanda Dixon-Belvin. I am the pastor of Ministry Under The Sky (MUTS), and this post is to share some recent updates with each of you. As some of you may or may not know, the Lord has me furthering my academic journey at Liberty University to obtain a doctorate. During this time, I will have to do action research. I wanted to know if I can count on you and your child(ren) to do the research required for my degree successfully. Of course, this is for youth who are not engaged or members of any other ministry. I recognize your time is valuable, and I will be mindful of it each time a meeting is scheduled conveniently for your availability. We will be implementing a mentoring ministry. The name of this new ministry will be titled CARE ME. This acronym stands for Compassion, Authentic, Respect, Educate, Mentoring, Empowerment (CARE ME). The Holy Spirit inspires this name, and it is an attempt to re-create the success MUTS experienced in the beginning as it increases our youth attending MUTS services consistently. The focus is not just getting them in the building, but it is to aid, encourage, and nurture them on their spiritual journey as they grow in life to learn to love the Lord more and more. Can I count on you? You may want to ask, "What shall I do?" "What is required?" Making disciples is a command from Jesus and Jesus has a special love for children. This mentoring experience is an excellent time to pour into them as they glean from each of us. You will have to sign a consent form for your underage child. Would you pray and consider this valuable opportunity to play a vital part in the future spiritual lives of the youth at MUTS? I will get back to you in a week if I have not heard from you before. What would be a good day and



time for you? Furthermore, for any young adults who read this post, this is a call for you to become a part of MUTS. If you do not have a ministry connection and you have been praying and wondering where to attend, please comment below or inbox me for us to arrange a time to speak in more detail about the ministry and answer any questions you may have. I look forward to hearing back from anyone the Lord touches to become a part of the MUTS family. It would be an honor as we embark on a spiritual journey for transformation from the inside out together."

**Follow up post on Facebook pages:**

"Last week, I reached out to you, and I wanted to see if anyone had responded to the call to become a part of the MUTS family. As indicated, if there is any other clarification needed, please inbox me to meet to discuss the details further."

**APPENDIX J**

**LIFE COACH CERTIFICATION FOR MENTORING**



**APPENDIX K**

**TABLE 1.1 PARENTAL SPIRITUAL GROWTH QUESTIONNAIRE**

Questions	Theme
1. How would you rate the spiritual growth of your child(ren)?	Prayer Life
2. How would you describe the change?	Discipleship
3. In what ways has his/her/their character changed?	Discipleship
4. In what ways has his/her/their behavior declined?	Spiritual Non-Formation
5. How often has your child(ren) begun reading the Bible independently?	Spiritual Formation
6. What type of questions have they asked you since they started reading the Bible?	Spiritual Formation
7. Has your child(ren) begun to pray independently?	Prayer Life
8. How has your child(ren) become receptive to family prayer?	Prayer Life
9. How has your child(ren) become resistant to family prayer?	Spiritual Non-Formation
10. How often have they expressed interest in attending church services?	Spiritual Formation

NOTE: Please rate your child(ren) honestly. On a scale of 0 to 10; with 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.

	0-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
	None Noted	Little Noted	Varies/Changes	Good	Consistent
1) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_ 25 and under /Poor, 25 to 50/Fair, 50 to 75/Growing, and 75 to 100/Developing

NOTE: Strive to do better daily. Disciples are imperfect, but they strive to serve a perfect God.

## APPENDIX L

### TABLE 1.2 YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions	Theme
1. How would you rate your spiritual growth?	Prayer Life
2. How would you describe any changes?	Discipleship
3. In what ways has your character changed?	Discipleship
4. In what ways has your behavior declined?	Spiritual Non-Formation
5. How often are you reading the Bible independently?	Spiritual Formation
6. What type of questions do you ask since you started reading the Bible?	Spiritual Formation
7. How often have you begun to pray independently?	Prayer Life
8. In what ways have you become receptive to family prayer?	Prayer Life
9. In what ways have you become resistant to family prayer?	Spiritual Non-Formation
10. In what ways has your desire increased in attending church services?	Spiritual Formation

**ADULTS:** Please rate yourself honestly. On a scale of 0 to 10; with 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.

	0-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
	None Noted	Little Noted	Varies/Changes	Good	Consistent
1) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
2) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
3) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
4) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
5) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
6) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
7) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
8) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
9) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
10) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_ 25 and under, Poor /25 to 50, Fair/50 to 75, Growing, and 75 to 100/ Developing

NOTE: Strive to do better daily. Disciples are imperfect, but they strive to serve a perfect God.

**APPENDIX M**

**TABLE 1.3 ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH QUESTIONNAIRE**

Questions	Theme
1. How would you rate your spiritual growth?	Prayer Life
2. How would you describe any changes?	Discipleship
3. In what ways has your character changed?	Discipleship
4. In what ways has your behavior declined?	Spiritual Non-Formation
5. How often are you reading the Bible independently?	Spiritual Formation
6. What type of questions do you ask since you started reading the Bible?	Spiritual Formation
7. How often have you begun to pray independently?	Prayer Life
8. In what ways have you become receptive to family prayer?	Prayer Life
9. In what ways have you become resistant to family prayer?	Spiritual Non-Formation
10. In what ways has your desire increased in attending church services?	Spiritual Formation

**ADULTS:** Please rate yourself honestly. On a scale of 0 to 10; with 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.

	0-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
	None Noted	Little Noted	Varies/Changes	Good	Consistent
1) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
2) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
3) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
4) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
5) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
6) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
7) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
8) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
9) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____
10) _____		_____	_____	_____	_____

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_ 25 and under/Poor, 25 to 50/Fair, 50 to 75/Growing, and 75 to 100 is Developing

NOTE: Strive to do better daily. Disciples are imperfect, but they strive to serve a perfect God.

**APPENDIX N**  
**PERSONAL PRAYER & DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Reflections for the a.m.: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My personal prayer request(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What have I read in the Bible today?: \_\_\_\_\_

What did I learn from the Bible today?: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do I need to improve on today?: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What lessons have I learned recently?: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Did I show love to anyone today?: \_\_\_\_\_

Did I apply anything I learned from the Bible today?: \_\_\_\_\_

List any praise report(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reflection for the p.m.: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX O

### TABLE 1.3 OUTLINE OF TOPICS

Weekly Outline for Study	Topic for Discussion	Time and Day for Meeting
<b>Week 1:</b> Pray and Recruit Chapter 8 Doug Fields pp 141-2; 148-9 Hebrews 11:1-40	Faith and Accountability  Great Faith	Tuesday 6:00-6:30 pm  Or  Saturday 6:00-6:30 pm
<b>Week 2:</b> Exodus 18:13-26 Chapter 9 Doug Fields p 157 Acts 16:1-2 John 3:16 / Acts 11:26	Discipleship in the OT  Discipleship in the NT Jesus and Christianity	Tuesday 6:00-6:30 pm  Or  Saturday 6:00-6:30 pm
<b>Week 3:</b> 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 Hebrews 10:25	Love Church / Community	Tuesday 6:00-6:30 pm Or Saturday 6:00-6:30 pm
<b>Week 4:</b> Psalm 1:1-6 / Matthew 6:5-13 Chapter 9 Doug Fields 160	Spiritual Disciplines	Tuesday 6:00-6:30 pm Or Saturday 6:00-6:30 pm

## APPENDIX P

### CUSTOMIZED GROWTH PLAN TO ASSIST PARTICIPANTS

**(USE THIS TO CHART YOUR PROGRESS, CHANGE VERSES, AS LED)**

**WEEK ONE:** Focus only on A.M. Prayer and any encounter with the Lord.

**WEEK TWO:** Add Scripture(s) reading to the spiritual growth agenda plan.

**WEEK THREE:** Add Meditation time to the spiritual growth agenda plan.

**WEEK FOUR:** Add P.M. Prayer time to the spiritual growth agenda plan.

**WEEK FIVE/NEW MONTH:**

**Incorporate Journaling to the spiritual growth plan  
(God's Agenda Is Your Agenda)**

**Examples below:**

**WEEK ONE:**

FOCUS	MORE	ON	JESUS	FOCUS	MORE	ON	DISCIPLESHIP
Spiritual Activity	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A.M. Prayer	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	8-8:30a
Scripture(s)							
Meditation							
Journal Entry							
P.M. Prayer							
God's Hand in Prayer, Meditation or Scripture(s)	God's presence felt	Felt God's love during prayer	Was led to pray for all churches	Prayer was heartfelt praying for the lost	Wept tears of joy during prayer	Led to pray for family	Encouraged during prayer



**WEEK TWO:**

FOCUS	MORE	ON	JESUS	FOCUS	MORE	ON	DISCIPLESHIP
Spiritual Activity	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A.M. Prayer	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	8-8:30a
Scripture(s)	John Ch. 1	Acts Ch. 2	Mark Ch. 5	Gen. Ch. 8	Isaiah Ch. 51	Psalms Ch. 119	Ex. Ch. 3 & Matt Ch. 28
Meditation							
Journal Entry							
P.M. Prayer							
God's Hand in Prayer, Meditation or Scripture(s)	God's presence felt	Felt God's love for me during prayer	Was led to pray for all churches	Prayer was heartfelt praying for the lost	Wept tears of joy during prayer	Led to pray for family	Encouraged during prayer

**WEEK THREE:**

FOCUS	MORE	ON	JESUS	FOCUS	MORE	ON	DISCIPLESHIP
Spiritual Activity	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A.M. Prayer	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	8-8:30a
Scripture(s)	John Ch. 1	Acts Ch. 2	Mark Ch. 5	Genesis Ch. 8	Isaiah Ch. 51	Psalms Ch. 119	Ex. Ch. 3 & Matt. Ch. 28
Meditation	15"	20"	30"	30"	20"	25"	30"
Journal Entry							
P.M. Prayer							
God's Hand in Prayer, Meditation or	God's presence felt	Felt God's love for me during prayer	Was led to pray for all churches	Prayer was heartfelt praying for the lost	Wept tears of joy during prayer	Led to pray for family	Encouraged during prayer

Scripture(s)							
--------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

**WEEK FOUR:**

<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>MORE</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>JESUS</b>	<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>MORE</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>DISCIPLESHIP</b>
<b>Spiritual Activity</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
A.M. Prayer	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	8-8:30a
Scripture(s)	John Ch. 1	Acts Ch. 2	Mark Ch. 5	Genesis Ch. 8	Isaiah Ch. 51	Psalm Ch. 119	Ex. Ch. 3 & Matt. Ch. 28
Meditation	15"	20"	30"	30"	20"	25"	30"
Journal Entry							
P.M. Prayer	9:9:15p	9:9:15p	9:9:15p	9:9:15p	9:9:15p	9:9:15p	9:9:15p
God's Hand in Prayer, Meditation or Scripture(s)	God's presence felt	Felt God's love for me during prayer	Was led to pray for all churches	Prayer was heartfelt praying for the lost	Wept tears of joy during prayer	Led to pray for family	Encouraged during prayer

**After consistency, the spiritual regimen should resemble something similar to the completed example below.**

<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>MORE</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>JESUS</b>	<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>MORE</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>DISCIPLESHIP</b>
<b>Spiritual Activity</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
A.M. Prayer	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	6-6:30a	8-8:30a
Scripture(s)	John Ch. 1	Acts Ch. 2	Mark Ch. 5	Gen. Ch. 8	Isaiah Ch. 51	Psalm Ch. 119	Ex. Ch. 3 & Matt Ch. 28
Meditation	15'	20"	30"	30"	25"	20"	25"
Journal Entry	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
P.M.	10-	9-9:15p	9-9:15p	9-9:15p	9-9:15p	10-10:15p	10-10:15p

Prayer	10:15p						
God's Hand in Prayer, Meditation or Scripture(s)	God's presence felt	Encouraged through Scripture reading	Blessed during meditation	Prayer was heartfelt praying for the lost	Wept tears of joy during prayer	Meditation on Psalm 119 reflection on who God is	Encouraged during prayer and Bible verses

**Reflection Notes:** It was encouraging to keep on track doing each weekly spiritual discipline. It is the desire to continue seeking the Lord for His help to continue faithfully with this pattern, unless, of course, He changes the direction of our time together.

**Prayer:** Every morning, get up early enough to pray for family, friends, lost souls, the world, and however else the Holy Spirit leads.

**Scriptures:** Every day, read the Bible.

**Meditation:** Try to meditate five minutes or more after reading the Bible for wisdom, strength, guidance, and encouragement.

**Journaling:** Make daily journal entries as a spiritual discipline, looking for the hand of God, tracking the hand of God, answers to prayer, and spiritual growth progress.

**Goals:** Every three months, see growth in prayer life, reading the Bible, track progress in overall spiritual growth, i.e., (sic) weak areas strengthened and substantial area(s) maintained. Also, to read the entire Bible at least once yearly.

### Areas of Weakness:

Discipleship. To work on this area:

1. Study for one month about discipleship.
2. In month two, make an effort to witness at least once monthly on the job.
3. In month three, go out in the neighborhood and witness.

Month four and after that, the plan is to go out monthly and witness in the community and area parks as led by the Holy Spirit.

### Areas of Strengths:

Loving, continue to keep this strength up, and to recognizing there is always room to improve for any behavior.

**Progress:** To monitor progress consistently and either get a mentor or an accountability partner to assist in continuity for spiritual growth.<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>134</sup> Wanda Belvin, "Personal Spiritual Growth Plan" *Customized Growth Plan*. (Paper presented for prior Liberty University class, unpublished, Bradenton, Florida, May 05, 2021).

## APPENDIX Q

### RECRUITMENT: VERBAL SCRIPT (PHONE OR IN PERSON)

Hello [Potential Participant],

As a graduate student in the School of John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate. My study aims to discover what happened to MUTS' youth to disengage and stop attending their services. The research will encourage, nurture, and mentor MUTS' children to be empowered to serve the Lord on their spiritual formation journey. If you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I invite you to join my study.

Participants' criteria are they must be a member of Ministry Under The Sky or not affiliated with another ministry. Participants must be 18 years of age or older or have signed consent from their parents. If willing, participants will sign a consent form(s) and participate in weekly meetings for one month. All participants will be encouraged to start a spiritual journal for the research. It should take approximately thirty minutes for each weekly session. Reading and signing consent forms should take about five to ten minutes. Participation will be completely anonymous. Real names will only appear if the participant desires their first name.

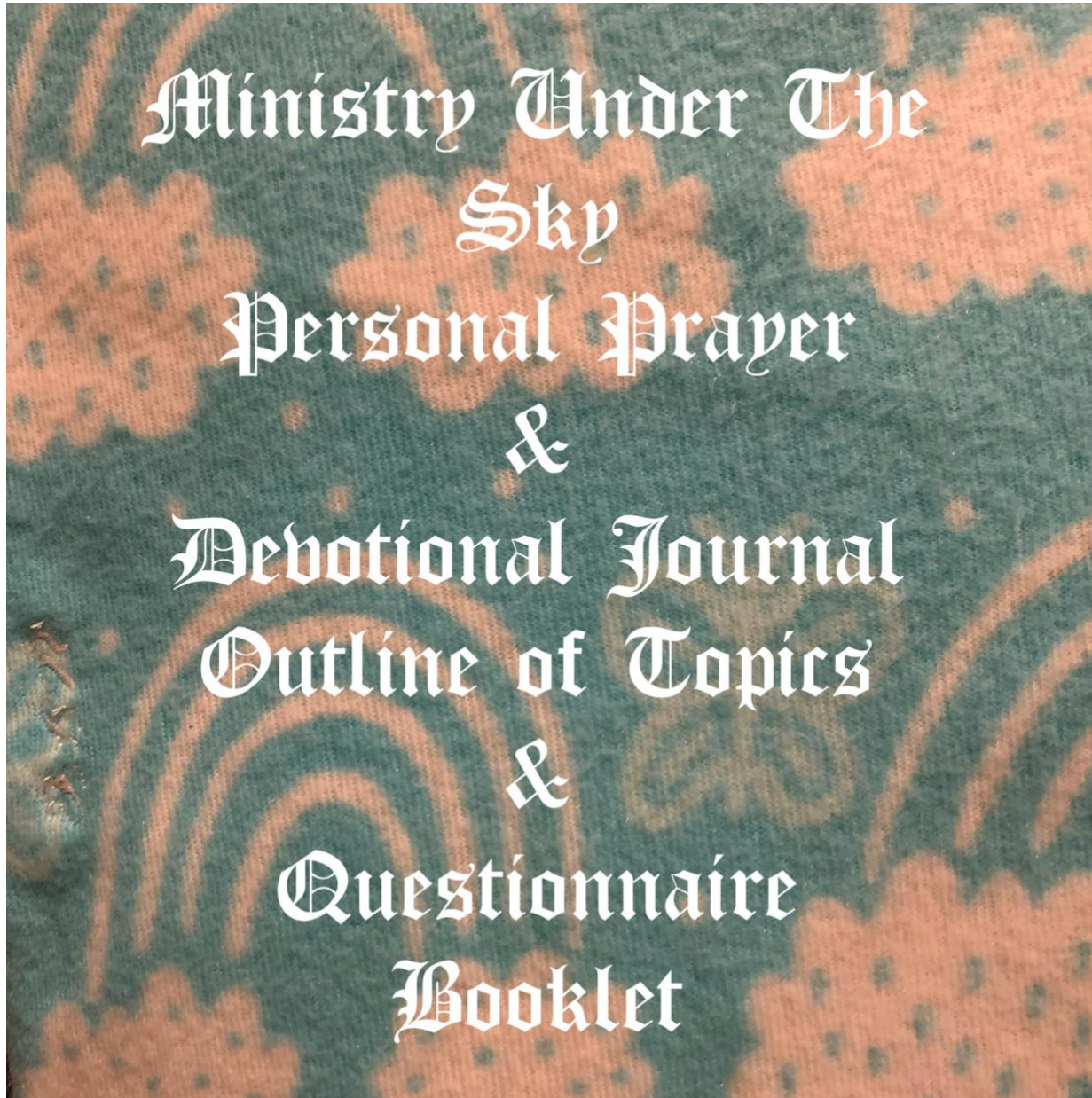
Would you like to participate? Would you allow your child(ren) to participate? [Yes] Great, would you mind completing a questionnaire and returning it to the researcher? Can we set up a time to meet should you need further clarification?. [No] I understand. Thank you for your time.

Participants will receive consent forms as the first page of the questionnaire at the initial meeting. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Because participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you prefer to do so. After you have read the consent form, please inform the researcher, and doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to participate in the study.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

## APPENDIX R

## MINISTRY UNDER THE SKY PERSONAL PRAYER JOURNAL (FRONT COVER)



## APPENDIX S

## MINISTRY UNDER THE SKY PERSONAL PRAYER JOURNAL (BACK COVER)



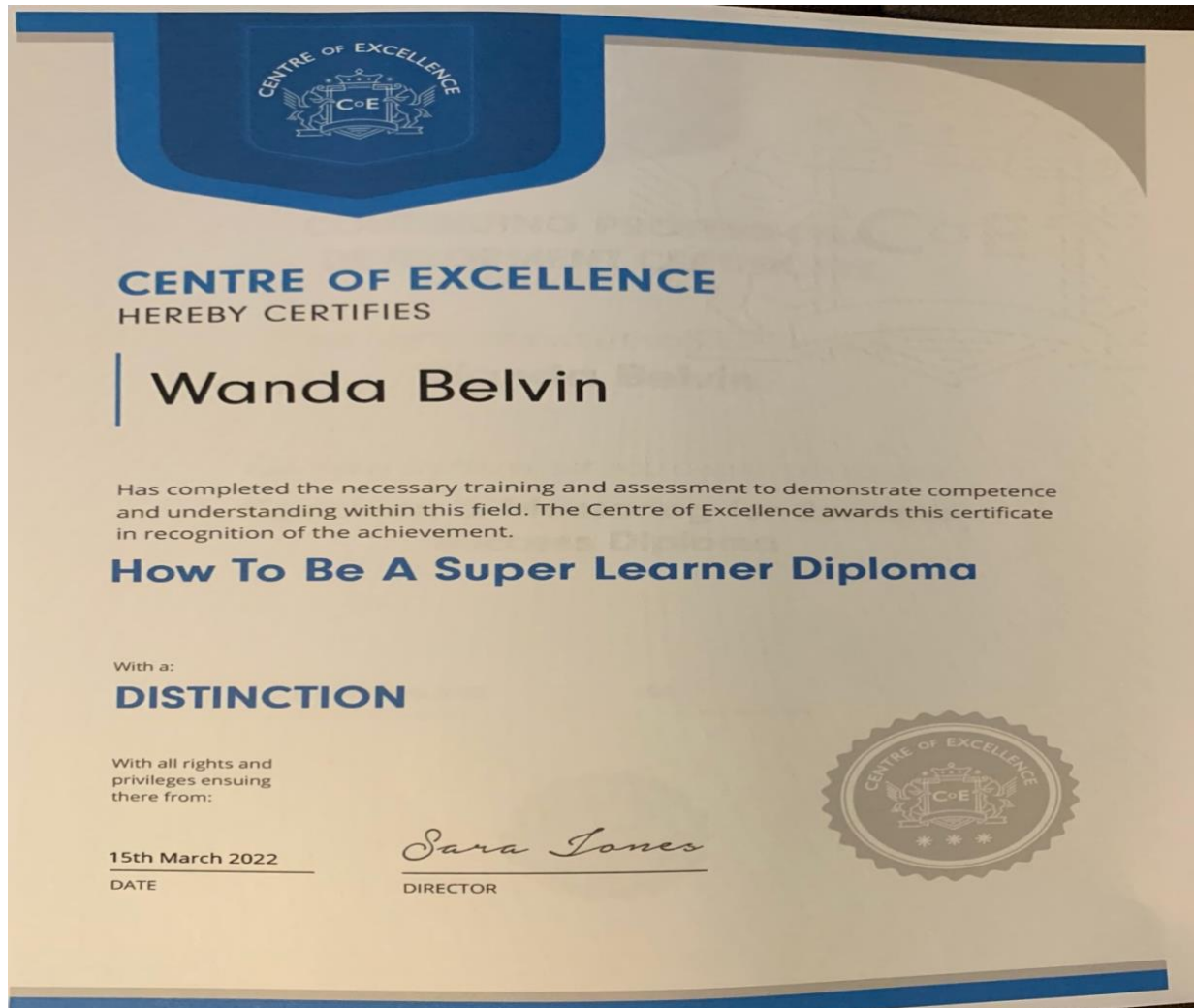
**APPENDIX T**

**COACHING & MENTORING FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS DIPLOMA PARTICIPATION**





**APPENDIX U**  
**COACHING & MENTORING FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS DIPLOMA**  
**CERTIFICATION**



**IRB APPROVAL LETTER****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY****INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

December 10, 2021

Wanda Belvin  
Joe Easterling

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY21-22-439 The Decline of Youth at Ministry Under The Sky

Dear Wanda Belvin and Joe Easterling,

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

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

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