

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**A Training Program for Adult Mentors Working with Teenagers to Enhance Their  
Spiritual Health and Church Life**

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

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**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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A major problem facing the church is that a significant number of teenagers leave after high school. The researcher addressed the problem of teenagers leaving Taylorsville Church of God after high school by training adult members to mentor the church's teenagers. In the program, seven adult mentors, which included six females and one male, and six teen mentees, which included four females and two males, participated. The training program included the following topics: mentor spiritual health, servanthood, church life, active listening, parents, empathy, compassion, spiritual health of teenagers, and current teen issues. Through a series of interviews with the adult mentors and teen mentees, the researcher identified several themes that continued to present themselves. The interviewees indicated that a teenager's spiritual health, parents, relationships, which included connections and role models, and competing forces impacted their commitment to the church. By implementing a mentor training program, adult mentors intentionally interacted with teenagers to enhance their connection to the church. Ministers and members of other churches will be able to follow this study to improve their teenagers' commitment to the church, which will ideally promote the teens' spiritual health. *Keywords:* Mentoring, Spiritual Health, Connection, Church life, Teenagers, Parents

## DEDICATION

Above all, I dedicate this research project to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I thank Him for all His many blessings and without them I could accomplish nothing. Also, I thank my wife, Deanna, for her love, support and encouragement. In addition to my wife, I thank my children, Emma and Malachi, for their love and support and for bringing Deanna and me such joy. I thank my parents, Paul and Janice, who have transitioned to their heavenly home. They gave me unconditional love, support and care through the years. Also, I am grateful for my father-in-law and mother-in-law, Larry and Earle Dean, for their encouragement as well. Finally, I dedicate this research to the adult mentors and teen mentees who participated in the mentoring program at Taylorsville Church of God. I greatly appreciate your contribution to the church and the Kingdom of Christ.

## Contents

<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Ministry Context</b> .....	1
<b>Problem Presented</b> .....	11
<b>Purpose Statement</b> .....	12
<b>Basic Assumptions</b> .....	13
<b>Definitions</b> .....	14
<b>Limitations</b> .....	17
<b>Delimitations</b> .....	18
<b>Thesis Statement</b> .....	19
<b>CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	22
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	22
Parents: Role, Responsibilities, and Involvement.....	23
Disciple-Making and Discipleship.....	26
Spiritual Health.....	28
Mentoring.....	33
Connection and Belonging.....	42
Love.....	46
Empathy.....	48
Conclusion.....	50
<b>Theological Foundations</b> .....	51
Mentorship in the Old Testament.....	52
Mentorship in the New Testament.....	57
<b>Theoretical Foundations</b> .....	65
Church-wide Mentoring: Growing Young.....	65
Church-wide Mentoring: Adoptive Church.....	66
Church-wide Mentoring: Leadership Mentoring for Teens.....	67
Traditional Mentoring.....	68
Small-Group Mentoring.....	68
Natural Mentoring.....	70
Peer Mentoring.....	71
Conclusion.....	72
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY</b> .....	73
<b>Intervention Design</b> .....	73
Conclusion.....	80
<b>Implementation of Intervention Design</b> .....	80
Program Approval and Adult Recruitment.....	81
Teen Recruitment.....	81
Adult Mentor Pre-Training Interviews.....	81
Mentor Training.....	82

Mentor and Mentee Meetings.....	82
Adult Mentor Post-Training Interviews.....	82
Teen Mentee Interviews.....	83
Determine Themes.....	83
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Theme 1: Spiritual Health.....</b>	<b>85</b>
Spiritual Health: Teenagers' View.....	90
<b>Theme 2: Parents.....</b>	<b>91</b>
Parents: Teenagers' View.....	99
<b>Theme 3: Relationships.....</b>	<b>100</b>
Connections.....	100
Connections: Teenagers' View.....	105
Role Models.....	106
Role Models: Teenagers' View.....	118
<b>Theme 4: Competing Forces.....</b>	<b>119</b>
Competing Forces: Teenagers' View.....	124
<b>Summary of Results.....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Research Implications.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Research Applications.....</b>	<b>129</b>
Additional Mentor Training.....	129
Parental Involvement.....	130
Conclusion.....	132
<b>Research Limitations.....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Further Research.....</b>	<b>133</b>
Parental Training.....	133
Small Group Mentoring.....	135
Male Mentor Recruitment.....	136
Conclusion.....	139
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>147</b>
Appendix A: IRB Approval.....	147
Appendix B: Permission Request.....	148
Appendix C: Permission Response.....	149
Appendix D: Adult Recruitment: Verbal Script (In Person).....	150
Appendix E: Mentor Application .....	151
Appendix F: Adult Mentor Consent .....	153
Appendix G: Initial Mentor Interview (Pre-Training).....	156
Appendix H: Mentor Training - Lesson 1.....	158

Appendix I: Mentor Training – Lesson 2.....	161
Appendix J: Mentor Training – Lesson 3.....	162
Appendix K: Mentor Training – Lesson 4.....	164
Appendix L: Mentor Training – Lesson 5.....	166
Appendix M: Second Mentor Interview (Post-Training).....	169
Appendix N: Participant Journals .....	170
Appendix O: Teen Recruitment: Verbal Script (In Person).....	171
Appendix P: Parental Consent Form.....	172
Appendix Q: Child Assent.....	175
Appendix R: Teen Mentee Interview.....	176
Appendix S: Teaching Resources for Mentors.....	178
Appendix T: Sample Sunday School and Mid-Week Lessons.....	180
Appendix U: Final Mentor Interview.....	183



## Abbreviations

DMIN      *Doctor of Ministry*

LUSOD     *Liberty University School of Divinity*

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The issue of teenagers remaining and being involved in church life after high school is vital to the church's future. As more teenagers leave the church after high school, churches must prayerfully seek intervention plans to reverse the trend. Churches must focus on prioritizing young people to integrate them into all areas of ministry. Congregations should employ various means to connect young people to their faith communities. Taylorsville Church of God will focus on teenagers and emerging adults to enhance their connection to the church. The researcher expects the spiritual health of teenagers and emerging adults to improve as they connect more with the church.

### Ministry Context

Taylorsville Church of God is a multigenerational church with a rich history of ministry. The church strives to bring the generations together in a unified body. The church will focus on each generation and not neglect any group. Chap Clark, former professor at Fuller Theological Seminary and author of *Adoptive Church*, stated "In adoptive youth ministry, it is helping each and every young person find their place as a faithful follower of Jesus Christ and live as a specifically called agent in the mission of God alongside the family of believers."<sup>1</sup> The church's primary goal is to glorify God and reach people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The congregation has numerous rituals that are important to its ministry. Some practices are communion, water baptism, foot washing, anointing prayer cloths during prayer times, and testimonials. Chris E.W. Green stresses that Pentecostals are part of the larger, united church, but that they express their spirituality in a unique way, personally and communally. As Green discusses that Pentecostals express their spirituality in personal ways that may be unique to an

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<sup>1</sup> Chap Clark, *Adoptive Church: Creating an Environment Where Emerging Generations Belong* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 19.

individual, but they also express their spirituality in a communal fashion. As they express themselves communally, they join together in times of praise and worship as a church family. Pentecostals also express themselves communally by testifying publicly about their faith and recognizing God for His blessings. Another example of communal expression is communion, which Pentecostals celebrate as all Christians do. Green points out that Pentecostals are not Catholics or Anglicans, which means the practice is administered in a different way.<sup>2</sup> Catholics, and many Anglicans, believe that in communion, the body and blood of Christ are actually present in the sacrament. Catholics believe that in communion the physical substance of bread and wine are removed and replaced with another substance of Christ's body and blood. Many Anglicans hold a similar view. They believe that after consecration of the bread and wine in communion, the elements experience an internal change that yields elements of greater value.<sup>3</sup> Pentecostals simply believe that communion is a memorial ordinance that commemorates the sacrifice of Christ. However, Pentecostals, like all other Christians, are celebrating communion to remember the sacrifice of the Lord for humanity.<sup>4</sup>

The church also reserves time to recognize young people at various stages of their development. When children reach the age of thirteen, the church recognizes them during a morning worship service for advancing into the youth ministry. Then the young person is honored when they graduate from high school, college, graduate school, etc. The practice of recognizing young people at different stages will incorporate the mentoring program. Teen

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<sup>2</sup> Chris E.W. Green, "Then Their Eyes Were Opened: Pentecostal Reflections on the Church's Scripture and the Lord's Supper," *Pentecostal Ecclesiology* (2016): 205, accessed May 19, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Brian Douglas, "Transubstantiation: Rethinking by Anglicans?" *New Blackfriars* 93, no. 1046 (2012): 443, accessed October 23, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Green, "Then Their Eyes Were Opened," 205.

mentees will be recognized at their entry into the mentoring program. When they finish the program, they will once again be recognized for their accomplishment.

Taylorsville Church of God is a close, family-like congregation. Members value fellowship and community that create bonds that hold them together. Sunday School classes, Bible studies, and worship services are valued as times for members and attendees to gather. These times together are for praise and worship and time for members of the church family to encourage one another. Church leaders actively look for other times that the church can join. The church schedules these times for enhancement as its members grow together as a family. Phil Newton, the senior pastor at South Woods Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, and author of *The Mentoring Church*, stresses the need for these church family relationships to grow and strengthen. He states, “Relationships offer a natural framework for accountability in spiritual walk and gospel ministry.”<sup>5</sup> These church family relationships are crucial to promote accountability as the members grow together.

Music ministry, which includes congregational singing, choir singing, and special singing, is vital to the church's life. The church utilizes hymnals, praise and worship choruses, contemporary and traditional music. By the church providing variety in the music, each generation can enjoy their style and learn from others. The church's music ministry employs several instruments, including, a piano, organ, guitars, drums, and a trumpet. The congregants, in the choir or the congregation, often clap their hands and/or raise their hands as they sing along.

The church presents Vacation Bible School each summer for toddlers to adults. Classes, group activities, games, inflatables, and an ice cream social aid in building community among the ages. The church conducts an assembly in the sanctuary at the beginning of each session.

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<sup>5</sup> Phil A. Newton, *The Mentoring Church: How Pastors and Congregations Cultivate Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2017), 37.

Leaders lead students in pledges to the Christian, American flags, and the Bible in these assemblies. Next, the ministry leaders will lead in playing games, singing, skits, and short lessons. After the gathering, group leaders will lead young people in age-specific groups to various stations for the remainder of the night. The groups will go to crafts, snacks, games, and a Bible study station. Ministry leaders schedule a final night of water games, inflatables, ice cream, and an offering competition.

The church celebrates homecoming during a Sunday morning worship service in the fall. This service is a time for former members, friends of the church, and community members to come together for worship. Typically, the church invites a guest speaker to minister in the service. Following the service, a meal is served in the fellowship hall, creating time for all the attendees to socialize.

The church leaders schedule various activities to celebrate Christ's birth together during the Christmas season. Church members and attendees participate in Christmas caroling. The carolers go to the homes of shut-ins and other elderly members. Also, carolers visit two different nursing facilities to sing and visit with the residents. After caroling, members and attendees gather for a meal at a local restaurant. The church provides fruit and candy bags to everyone who attends the church on the Sunday before Christmas. The church has continued this tradition for over seventy years. On Saturday morning, before the church gives out treat bags to the congregation, members and attendees participate in community outreach at two apartment complexes beside the church. Participants hand out treat bags and other gifts to the residents. Also, they give any children in the apartment complexes toys and candy. The church's children participate in a Christmas program, and the teenagers perform a drama. Typically, the choir has a cantata on a Sunday evening before Christmas. The congregation gathers for a candlelight

service on the Sunday or Wednesday night before Christmas. Members and attendees read Scripture passages and sing carols. Next, they celebrate communion together. Then, each person lights a candle, and small children use battery-operated candles. Everyone is allowed to say something they are thankful for as they light their candles, or they can ignite their candles without saying anything. After participants have lit their candles, the church sings a final hymn, and the pastor concludes the service in prayer.

On Easter Sunday, the church gathers on the front lawn around the cross to celebrate Christ's resurrection for a sunrise service. This service includes singing hymns and a short sermon. The church continues in celebrating the resurrection in a morning worship service, which consists of singing, communion, and a sermon.

One recognizes the church by the Church of God logo, consisting of a cross and a flame. It centers around the cross, which reminds the church of its salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The fire beside the cross reminds the church of the Pentecostal power available to believers through the working of the Holy Spirit. A large saltshaker represents the church's youth ministry because they are called SALT, which reminds the young people of their calling as presented in Matthew 5:13 to be salt in a sinful world. Another symbol is a construction sign which represents the children's ministry. The children's ministry is called Construction Zone Kids, which reminds the children to allow God to continue working in their lives to become the people He wants them to be as presented in Philippians 1:6.

Each week, Taylorsville Church of God has congregational singing, choir singing, a solo or group song, and the message follows. The church meets for special prayer each week. Also, children and teenagers meet for Sunday School and mid-week classes every week. Monthly,

members gather for a family and friends' night. During this time together, members may share a meal, play games, watch a movie, or attend an event.

A member of this congregation must have made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. The church requires a personal relationship with Christ for church membership. Ryan M. McGraw, Academic Dean and Morton H. Smith Professor of Systematic Theology at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and Ryan Speck, Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Columbia, Missouri, discussed the necessity of church membership. They emphasized that the church is both invisible and visible. In the visible, earthly church, members are identified by their profession of faith in Christ and their obedience to Him. In the invisible, heavenly church, only God knows the heart of everyone. God alone knows if one has been born of the Spirit or not.<sup>6</sup> When joining the church, the pastor asks individuals if they agree with the Church of God Declaration of Faith, which is the denomination's doctrinal statement. After awarding these individuals with membership, the church expects them to be faithful in attendance and financially support the church. Members are encouraged to become involved in and support the church's various ministries.

Young people are taught about the necessity of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They are trained to be disciples of Christ and the doctrinal beliefs of the church. Kara Powell, Executive Director of the Fuller Youth Institute (FYI), professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, Fuller's Chief of Leadership Formation, and author of *Growing Young* and *Growing With*, and Steven Argue, associate professor of Youth, Family, and Culture at Fuller Theological Seminary, and author of *18 Plus* and *Growing With*, stated, "Churches remain faithing greenhouses for

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<sup>6</sup> Ryan M. McGraw, and Ryan Speck, *Is Church Membership Biblical?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), 6.

teenagers where intergenerational relationships are cultivated, conversations about God are sparked, and faith development is extended into their real lives.”<sup>7</sup> The researcher hopes that Taylorsville Church of God will be a faithing greenhouse for teenagers. As greenhouses are used to grow plants, the church should grow people, including teenagers. The older generations in the church will work together to encourage, strengthen, and educate the younger generations. The church will nurture young people as they mature in their Christian faith.

Taylorsville Church of God is a single congregation and is not part of a multiple-site congregation. The church is a member of the Church of God Foothills District in western North Carolina. The district is composed of thirteen churches and has an overseeing pastor. The overseer coordinates district activities, with the advice of the other district pastors, throughout the year, and each church is encouraged to be involved. In conjunction with a youth committee, a district youth coordinator plans and executes activities for the district’s children, teenagers, and emerging adults. Foothills District is a member of the Western North Carolina Church of God region<sup>8</sup>, part of the Church of God International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee.<sup>9</sup>

Taylorsville Church of God is a small, Pentecostal congregation located in rural Taylorsville, North Carolina. Taylorsville, situated in the foothills of western North Carolina, has a population of 2,361 and is located in Alexander County, which has a population of 37,497.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kara Powell, and Steven Argue, *Growing With: Every Parent’s Guide to Helping Teenagers and Young Adults Thrive in Their Faith, Family, and Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019), 170.

<sup>8</sup> Western North Carolina Church of God, last modified 2021, accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.wnccog.org>.

<sup>9</sup> Church of God. “A Brief History of the Church of God.” Last modified 2020. Accessed August 29, 2021. <https://churchofgod.org/about/a-brief-history-of-the-church-of-god>.

<sup>10</sup> “Statistics,” Town of Taylorsville, last modified 2021, accessed Aug. 22, 2021, <https://www.taylorsvillenc.com/statistics.htm>.



Taylorsville's population is 90.8 % white, 5.9 % black, 4.8% Hispanic or Latino, 1.7% biracial, 1% Asian, 0.5% American Indian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.<sup>11</sup>

The church has 120 members consisting of 77 females and 43 males. The average Sunday morning attendance for January 2020 to July 2021 is 80. Currently, the church averages ten elementary-age children, and six middle and high school students, which represent twelve families.. Also, the church averages four infants and toddlers, which represent four families.

The church was founded in 1926 by six charter members from two families. In the church's 96-year history, 32 pastors have led the church. The original location for the church was in Taylorsville's Highland neighborhood from 1926 until 1956. In 1956, the congregation built a new building on Main Avenue, where the church currently gathers for worship services. The church built a fellowship hall in 1996. The church uses this building for meals and other social gatherings. The church has used the building as a Sunday School class but currently uses it as the meeting place for children's church, called the Construction Zone.

The researcher of this project is the lead pastor of Taylorsville Church of God. Along with serving as pastor of this small congregation, he and his wife lead in the children's ministry. The researcher also regularly meets with the teenage class. He strives to promote a multigenerational ministry at the church where each generation is concerned for and cares for the other ages.

The church's middle school and high school groups are involved in various age-oriented activities each year. As mentioned above, they participate in functions in the Foothills district with young people from other churches. Secondly, as stated earlier, these age groups attend classes during Vacation Bible School each summer. Another event that the young people are

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<sup>11</sup> "Quick Facts," United States Census Bureau, last modified July 1, 2019, accessed Aug. 22, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/alexandercountynorthcarolina>.

involved in is the Church of God Smoky Mountains Winterfest. The Church of God International Offices sponsors Winterfest. It brings together middle and high school students from around the country for a weekend of worship and activities to build their relationships with each other. The Western North Carolina Church of God hosts youth camps at their state campground in Whittier, North Carolina, during the summer. One week of camp is for middle school students, and the other week is for high school students. Youth leaders conduct a shorter camp for elementary-age students. Camp organizers fill each day with worship services, devotions, team-building activities, electives designed to fit the various interests of the diverse young people, concessions, and free time. The church's young people are encouraged to attend the Western North Carolina Church of God Firefall in the fall. Firefall is a weekend event and is an extension of summer youth camps. Firefall consists of similar activities as youth camp, such as worship services and devotions. However, at Firefall, students are placed in smaller groups to receive more individual discipleship instruction. In addition to these annual events, the church provides one-day activities and weekend retreats throughout the year. The church intends for these events to aid the students' spiritual growth and encourage relationship building among the group members. The teenagers in the mentoring program are attending worship services more regularly. Also, most of the teenagers are often praying in the altars.

The middle and high school students meet weekly for Sunday School and mid-week classes. The church utilizes these times for discipleship training. Youth leaders and teachers instruct young people in God's Word and address issues pertinent to them from a biblical point of view. The youth pastor and other youth teachers prepare their own teaching materials for Sunday School and mid-week classes. These materials address the various books of the Bible and topics that directly affect teenagers. These youth leaders deliver short lectures and provide

time for discussion and sharing. The teens do various projects that relate to the material studied. The young people are also encouraged to become involved in outreach activities. These events give them opportunities to be active in ministering to the needs of others. They are encouraged to attend weekly worship, prayer, and revival services. The church intentionally includes middle and high school students in these church-wide events in various ways.

Taylorsville Church of God has a youth fund used to support the functions of their children's and youth ministries. Members regularly contribute to this fund. Occasionally, the young people need to have fundraisers to help support their activities. The church is supportive of their ministries to young people because they realize the importance of encouraging them in their faith in any way possible. A large percentage of the membership willingly assists young people in various areas. Two volunteers serve as teachers in Construction Zone Kids on a rotating schedule. The church has a volunteer youth pastor who commits a lot of time preparing and ministering to middle and high school students. In addition to a youth pastor, the church has several youth ministry volunteers. This volunteer team assists by chaperoning on trips and other activities. Some of the volunteers occasionally teach. Other volunteers support young people in other areas, such as driving the van, remodeling the youth room, sending encouragement cards to the young people, etc. The church is committed to providing for the spiritual needs of its children, teenagers, and emerging adults. Church leaders will walk beside the youth as they grow in their faith. They will be assisted in their advancement and encouraged to become independent in taking responsibility for their own spiritual maturity. The church will encourage the youth to become more involved in the church's various ministries. The goal is for the young people to take leadership roles in these areas of the church.

## **Problem Presented**

The problem this project will address is that teenagers at Taylorsville Church of God are leaving the church after high school. Most teenagers are not continuing in church life after high school, possibly for several reasons. A small number of teens remain in the church; however, most are leaving, with a few occasionally attending. Likely, the spiritual health of these young people is impacting their commitment to the church community.

As teenagers leave the church, they are losing the support structure of the church community because they are abandoning that needed structure in their lives. In the church, teenagers are in an environment conducive to placing one's faith in Christ and beginning a lifelong journey of faith. The church encourages and nurtures young people as they grow in the Lord. As young people leave the church, the entire body is affected. When young people are absent, a part of the family is not present. They are not there to contribute to the life of the church. The church misses a vital component when teenagers and emerging adults neglect to bring their energy and excitement to the congregation.

Another problem with teenagers leaving Taylorsville Church of God after high school is the negative impact on the overall spiritual health of the church. The church has a committed core group of middle-aged and older adults, but as young people leave, the church will suffer. It will suffer because it has lost an important part of the body. With teenagers leaving the church, it will lose its vitality in the present and in its future. The different generations need each other to strengthen the church family. Ideally, the various age groups encourage one another. If the trend of teenagers leaving the church after high school continues, then the church's future will be unstable. This problem is negatively affecting everyone involved. As stated above, the problem is teenagers at Taylorsville Church of God are leaving the church after high school. Most of the

teenagers are leaving the church and not attending elsewhere. It is likely that a variety of issues are contributing to teens leaving the church. Some of the teenagers do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ, and others are not fully committed to being part of the church. Other teens may leave because they do not agree with the church's teachings and some may not like the church's style of worship.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry study is to train adult mentors to work with teenagers, sixth grade through twelfth grade, at the Taylorsville Church of God to encourage them to continue in church life. The church will encourage these mentors to be intentional about their spiritual growth. Also, the church leadership will continue training these mentors to equip them as they spend time nurturing their teen mentees. The church will also give encouragement gifts to these mentors at various times during the year to show appreciation and reenergize them to continue their work. The church will employ a mentoring approach where adults are partnered with teens to foster healthy relationships. Mentors will not replace parents or guardians but will support them and stay in regular contact with them. These relationships will help adult mentors to understand the needs of teenagers. At the same time, teens will have a non-family adult in the church with whom they may connect. Mentors and mentees will meet one-on-one to discuss the teen's concerns, and discuss faith topics. These meetings will be informal. Occasionally, all the mentors and mentees will meet in a group setting. In these meetings, they will work together to complete a church project or participate in an activity that will strengthen relationships and the church.

The researcher will train adult mentors to work alongside teenagers in the church as they go through these pivotal years. Mentors will meet with their teen mentees at least once a month

for eight months of the year. During the months that mentors and mentees do not meet, mentors will intentionally contact their mentees. They can call, text, or send a card. It is important to let the teenagers know that they have another non-family adult that cares and is there for them. They will strive to develop trust with the teens, so open communication channels between the mentor and mentee can exist. Mentors will create space for teenagers to come to faith in Christ and encourage them in their spiritual growth. Through this church mentorship approach, the goal is for teenagers to commit to following Christ and continue being a vital part of the church's life.

Taylorville Church of God will train adults who are faithful followers of Jesus Christ. These adults will recognize the importance of a successful mentoring program to a young person's spiritual health and the church's vitality. Another factor is that teenagers must see the importance of this program. They must commit to working with their mentors in building crucial relationships. Hopefully, as mentors understand the gravity of this program, they will take ownership and strive for positive results.

### **Basic Assumptions**

The researcher will base this action research project on several assumptions. Two assumptions are that the project will encourage teenagers to continue in church life after high school, and as they continue in the church, their spiritual health will improve. The researcher hopes that teenagers will become faithful members of the church and remain committed as adults. Hopefully, they will be active in the church's ministry in some capacity. Also, they will be prayerful and students of God's Word. Ideally, these teenagers will be evangelistic and share God's Word with others so they may choose to follow Christ. Furthermore, the teens will be devoted to making disciples that are committed to the Christian faith. One assumes that adults will volunteer as mentors and that teenagers will volunteer to serve as mentees. Also, the

researcher assumes that the church will support a mentorship program. One assumes that adult mentors will complete their training to be intentional about promoting church connection and enhancing the spiritual development of teen mentees. Also, the researcher assumes that potential adult mentors will give honest answers to a selection questionnaire. Since one expects these adults to be truthful, they could feel the pressure to provide answers that make them look favorable. The researcher assumes that as adult mentors pair with teen mentees, their relationships will grow respect and trust. Therefore, one assumes that these healthy relationships will facilitate teenagers becoming more engaged and connected to the church.

### **Definitions**

The *Church of God* is a Christian, Pentecostal denomination based in Cleveland, Tennessee. The movement was founded on August 19, 1886, in the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee with eight members. The denomination has more than seven million members in 178 nations and territories.<sup>12</sup>

*Discipleship* is participating in the faith community through worship, spiritual formation, and fulfilling Christ's mission. The work of discipleship must occur within the church community as the church trains participants to actively participate in the church's life.<sup>13</sup> Effective discipleship focuses on one's relationships with others in their group. If a mentor is going to lead someone to follow Jesus, they need a strong relationship with them. After a good relationship is formed, a mentor must imitate Christ so that a mentee can follow behind them and become a

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<sup>12</sup> "A Brief History of the Church of God," Church of God, last modified 2020, accessed Aug. 29, 2021, <https://churchofgod.org/about/a-brief-history-of-the-church-of-god>.

<sup>13</sup> Mark E. Powell, John Mark Hicks, and Greg McKinzie, *Discipleship in Community: A Theological Vision for the Future* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2020), 3.

faithful Christ follower.<sup>14</sup> Larry Osborne, author of *Sticky Church*, states, “if you want to disciple people, the best thing to do is not to separate out all the newbies. It’s to get them into a situation where they can rub shoulders with longtime Christians and benefit from life-on-life modeling and mentoring from those who’ve learned what it means to live out their faith on a day-to-day basis.”<sup>15</sup> Adult mentors in this research project will disciple teens and assist them in active learning in the church's life. One cannot conduct discipleship isolated from the overall church program.

*Evangelism* is to communicate good news. The greatest news is that Jesus willingly died for the sins of humanity so that all people could come to God through Him. In addition to His death, the greatest news is that Jesus Christ is alive today and able to save. Evangelism means that people must proclaim this good news.<sup>16</sup> Evangelism and discipleship depend on each other. Evangelism leads to spiritual conversion, which comes before discipleship. However, discipleship leads to a believer growing in the faith until they participate in evangelism to see people placing their faith in Christ.<sup>17</sup> In this research project, adult mentors will determine if their mentee has become a Christian. If a mentee has not been spiritually converted to the Christian faith, the mentor will share the message about salvation that is available through Jesus Christ.

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<sup>14</sup> Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, *How to Disciple Well: A Discipleship Guide for the Everyday Leader* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2021), 67.

<sup>15</sup> Larry W. Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 55.

<sup>16</sup> Dave Earley, and David Wheeler, *Evangelism Is: How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 52-53.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



*Emerging Adult* is a term used for individuals that have finished adolescence and are entering the young adult stage of life. An arbitrary age range for emerging adulthood is 18-29. The United States recognizes individuals as adults at the age of 18. Many emerging adults can provide for themselves and have a stable lifestyle by age 29.<sup>18</sup>

A *mentor* teaches and shares information and skills with another individual (mentee). Mentors help aid in developing an area of their mentee's life. Mentors rely on conversations and feedback to foster healthy relationships with their mentees. A mentor/mentee relationship is known as mentorship.<sup>19</sup> Ideally, mentors and mentees should meet as often as possible. In reality, they could meet weekly, bimonthly, or monthly. Regi Campbell states, "Mentoring is modeling." He stresses that mentors must be authentic in living their faith. Campbell uses the example of prayer and says that his mentees need to listen to him pray so that they can learn.<sup>20</sup> Rik Nemanick discusses the cycle of mentors following the same model as their mentors. He states, "They see an example of a mentor who plays a very active role in driving the partnership and they are imitating that behavior."<sup>21</sup> Mentors must set an example for individuals to follow and imitate.

A *mentee* is the other member of a mentorship relationship. Mentees learn from the more

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<sup>18</sup> Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Emerging Adulthood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Ofelia A. Olivera, "Mentoring Definition - The Mentor Within," in *Interdisciplinary Mentoring in Science: Strategies for Success*, (Waltham, MA: Elsevier Inc., 2014), 1, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1016/B978-0-12-415962-4.00010-2>.

<sup>20</sup> Regi Campbell, *Mentor Like Jesus: His Radical Approach to Building the Church* (Atlanta: RM Press, 2016), 96.

<sup>21</sup> Rik Nemanick, *The Mentor's Way: Eight Rules for Bringing Out the Best in Others* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 18.

experienced mentor about knowledge, skills, or information.<sup>22</sup> Mentees must have healthy and supportive relationships with their mentors to be successful.<sup>23</sup>

*Spiritual health* is examining and understanding the values, ethics, and beliefs that guide one's life. This health directs a person's pursuit of their purpose. Spiritual health connects one's physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being.<sup>24</sup> An individual's spiritual health can be determined by their engagement in spiritual disciplines. A key indicator of good spiritual health is one regularly reading God's Word. If a person neglects God's Word, then they will have poor spiritual health.<sup>25</sup> In this research project, the spiritual health of teenagers is one focus. The teenagers in this study range from 13 to 18 years of age. These young people are in the sixth through twelfth grades.

### **Limitations**

This action research project has several limitations that could impact its outcome. These limitations are issues that are out of the researcher's control. The first limitation is whether a potential adult mentor will accept the role. They must be willing to commit to serving in this mentorship program for a specific period. If an adult commits to serving, it is out of the researcher's control to get them to complete the program. Another limitation with mentors is unexpected issues that may arise in their life. The mentors may continue in their mentoring role,

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Hudson, "Forming the Mentor-Mentee Relationship," *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* 24, no. 1 (March 2016): 30, accessed Aug. 29, 2021. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1080/13611267.2016.1163637>.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>24</sup> "Spiritual Health Resources," Chapman University, last modified 2020, accessed Nov. 12, 2021, <https://www.chapman.edu/health-and-wellness/spiritual-health.aspx>.

<sup>25</sup> Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 94.

but circumstances may interfere with their commitments to the program; however, they do not leave their position.

Another limitation to this research project is the teenagers' commitment to participating as mentees. The teens may or may not be interested in the program. Also, if a young person commits to participating in the mentor/mentee program, they may leave before the end of the commitment. A limitation with teenagers is their attendance at the mentoring sessions. It is out of the researcher's control if they attend or do not attend sessions with their mentors.

### **Delimitations**

Several delimitations in this action research project are within the researcher's control. The researcher can adjust these flexible areas during the project. The first delimitation is the qualifications that the researcher sets for adult mentors. Adult mentors must be at least 18 years of age, committed followers of Jesus Christ, and be members of Taylorsville Church of God. Adults will answer a series of questions to gauge their spiritual development stage. Also, individuals will be subject to background checks to determine if any issues could prevent them from working with teenagers. The church will use *Protect My Ministry*<sup>26</sup> for this service. Only individuals who meet the requirements will be permitted to serve as mentors. Some adults in the church are not in a place to serve as mentors, and the researcher will exclude them from the mentorship list.

A second delimitation is the age range of the young people that will be mentees. The age range for mentees will be between sixth grade and graduation from high school, which is approximately ages 12-18. Teenagers must attend Taylorsville Church of God to be mentees.

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<sup>26</sup> "Background checks," Protect My Ministry, last modified 2021, accessed Sept. 30, 2021, [www.protectmyministry.com/background-checks](http://www.protectmyministry.com/background-checks).

A third delimitation is that the researcher will conduct this project at Taylorsville Church of God. The research is limited to this small congregation, and the researcher will exclude all other churches from the study. Also, a fourth delimitation is the time, day of the week, and duration of the training sessions. The researcher plans to conduct the training sessions at 6 PM on Tuesdays or Thursdays, and the sessions will last for one hour.

### **Thesis Statement**

If Taylorsville Church of God trains adult mentors to work with teenagers, the church will be aware of the problem, and they will be more likely to be intentional about connecting teenagers to the church. The problem with teenagers leaving church life is that it is detrimental to their lives, because they lose the support structure that encourages them to know Christ and grow in their faith. Also, teens leaving the church have a significant negative impact on the entire church body, which will cause repercussions for years to come. The church body will suffer because it will lose the energy and excitement that come with the younger generations. If the church loses its teenagers, then it will suffer for years because it will lack a new generation to assume the various ministry and leadership opportunities. Also, the church will lack the younger generations that will have the commitment and passion to continue the church's mission in its community. A healthy church needs to have all generations represented and they should be valued as part of the church family. As the church trains and equips adult mentors, they will hopefully form healthy connections with teenagers to encourage and support these young people. In these relationships, the researcher expects the spiritual health of teenagers to improve, as well as, their maturity in Christ. As adult mentors connect with the church's teens, ideally they will choose to continue church life after high school.

The church will entrust mentors with a great responsibility to assist teenagers in their spiritual development, which will enhance their commitment to the church. These adult mentors will work with parents to improve the spiritual health of the church's teenagers. Mentors will encourage spiritual training at home to aid in the teenagers' spiritual maturity daily. Parents will support their teenagers' commitment to the church as regular instruction at home continues. The researcher will encourage parents to spend time in family devotions with their child on a daily basis. These family times can be as simple as reading a Bible verse or small passage and discussing it, followed by praying together. If devotions cannot be conducted on a daily basis because of busy schedules, then parents should have devotions at least four days a week. Therefore, parents must be involved for the mentorship program to reach its full potential. On the other hand, if parents are not interested in being involved, but permit these meetings, then the mentors will do all that is possible with the church's assistance to encourage these teenagers.

An adult mentorship program that works with teenagers to enhance their spiritual health and motivates them to remain active in church life will be a significant focal point of the church. Taylorsville Church of God will support this ministry to impact middle and high school students' faith as they move toward graduation. The church will also support this ministry to strengthen the teens' future faith after high school. The church will encourage and pray for the young adults after high school. It will intentionally reach out to them to assist in their spiritual maturation. Young adults will be encouraged to stay involved in discipleship training and other activities that will connect them to the church. As a result of improved teen spiritual health, the young people will be committed to congregational life, supporting the entire church.

The researcher seeks to design a program to create an environment where healthy relationships among mentors and mentees can flourish. Hopefully, these relationships will

promote spiritual growth in both adults and teenagers. In these positive interactions, the adult mentors will make meaningful contributions to the teenagers' lives and the church's health. Also, in these positive interactions, the teenagers will be encouraged and strengthened in every part of their lives, which will positively impact the church.

Mentors and mentees will develop relationships that will guide the mentees' lives. One expects mentors to be good role models for the mentees to follow. The mentors will be a positive source of guidance and counsel to their mentees. Ideally, the mentors and mentees will develop solid and healthy relationships for many years to come. As a result of these relationships, teenagers will be committed to the church and contribute to the church's life. The researcher hopes that teenage mentees will be active in the church's ministry as they become leaders and ministers. Hopefully, as these teenagers grow older, they will see the importance of forming mentoring relationships with the younger generations to promote their connection to the church and enhance their spiritual health.

## **CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

In developing this DMIN research project, the researcher will analyze previous scholarly research. Also, the researcher will construct a literature review to determine various themes that are common in the selected sources. Furthermore, the researcher will look for gaps in the literature in recent studies. The investigation of this relevant literature will direct the current research.

### **Literature Review**

This literature review will analyze various sources about teenagers' spiritual health and its possible influence on young people remaining committed to church life. The researcher will address the role and responsibilities of parents to emphasize their primary importance in a young person's spiritual development. Also, one will highlight two groups of teenagers, teens with faith in Christ and teens without faith in Christ. In the spiritual formation of teenagers, adults must focus on disciple-making. Parents, church leaders, and adult mentors must commit equal time to evangelize and disciple teenagers in disciple-making. Evangelism and discipleship are both parts of disciple-making. Several of these sources focus on various measures, such as mentoring to improve spiritual health, promote connection or belonging, deepen love, and develop empathy. The researcher will analyze these sources to detect any correlation between improved spiritual health in teenagers and their continuing church life. The themes that the investigator will address are as follows: spiritual health, mentoring, connection or belonging, love, and empathy. The researcher will address these five themes to reveal the main areas of previous research.

## Parents: Role, Responsibilities, and Involvement

Parents are the primary teachers and change agents in their children's lives.<sup>27</sup> The Old and New Testaments call for parents to be the primary faith educators of their children. Scripture commands parents to teach and train their children in the ways of the Lord.<sup>28</sup> They are the first disciplers as they raise their children in the Christian faith. It is also the responsibility of parents to help their children learn self-discipline, personal responsibility, how to be a contributing member of society, and other Christian principles that promote spiritual formation. The late Lou Selzer, the former pastor of the Christian Trinity Assembly of God in Eastpointe, MI, wrote that parents and guardians occupy the leading roles in the spiritual training of their children, and other adults assume secondary roles in this process.<sup>29</sup> This researcher agrees with Selzer that parents are the primary disciple-makers in their children's lives; however, like Selzer, this research project will focus on equipping adult mentors to influence young people's lives positively.

Children form connections to their parents in every part of their lives. Parents are training their children with words and actions. Jim Burns states, "Excitement for God and His Word is caught, not just taught. Children see, children do. If our teenagers watch us cut corners and compromise integrity repeatedly, why wouldn't they do the same? If our teens watch us pursuing our own faith development with authenticity, they will most likely want to follow in our footsteps."<sup>30</sup> It is not possible to diminish their influence on their child's life. Terry Linhart,

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<sup>27</sup> William Jeynes, ed., *The Wiley Handbook of Christianity and Education* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2018), 168.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>30</sup> Jim Burns, *Understanding Your Teen: Shaping Their Character Facing Their Realities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 47.



Executive Director of Bethel University's Extension Studies, emphasizes that church youth ministries should realize this connection and seek to utilize it in ministering to young people.<sup>31</sup> This action research project aims to implement a church mentoring program that will partner parents and adult mentors in training young people in alignment with Linhart. Churches must realize that parents are the most important people in their child's spiritual development. Kara Powell stresses that ministry leaders care for young people and parents at the same time.<sup>32</sup> The researcher concurs with Powell, and the church will endorse ways to support the role of parents in their child's life.

A problem in the modern church is the unintended consequences of dividing families into various age groups within the church. Many parents have relinquished their roles as primary disciple-makers of their children and depend on children's and student ministries to fulfill this role.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, churches have adopted secular approaches, such as school-based mentoring programs. In these programs, organizers leave parents out of their children's spiritual training and entrust other adults with this responsibility. Julia Pryce, Social Work department professor at Loyola University Chicago, and her colleagues write about one of these programs where adult mentors meet with students and their peers at lunch, but parents are absent from this approach.<sup>34</sup> The project researcher at Taylorsville Church of God seeks to implement a

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<sup>31</sup> Terry Linhart, *Teaching the Next Generations: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 136.

<sup>32</sup> Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: Six Essentials to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 203.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Cannister, *Teenagers Matter: Making Student Ministry a Priority in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 180-181.

<sup>34</sup> Julia Pryce, Samantha Giovannetti, Renee Spencer, L. Christian Elledge, Grace Gowdy, Marisa L. Whitley, and Timothy A. Cavell, "Mentoring in the Social Context: Mentors' Experiences with Mentees' Peers in a Site-Based Program," *Children and Youth Services Review* 56, (2015): 185.

mentoring program that includes adult mentors and teenagers and incorporates parents as they support their children in their development. In a study conducted by Lorraine Munoz and Marcela Raffaelli, they studied 13 out-of-school programs with a diverse group of teenagers. The researchers investigated parental involvement with their children in these programs. They considered off-site and on-site involvement. In off-site involvement, parents offer support and encouragement to their teens. On the other hand, on-site involvement means that parents are more actively involved in the activities of the program. According to the study, teenagers focused on off-site involvement where their parents offered them encouragement. However, parents focused on on-site involvement where they were actively involved with their children in the program. The researchers concluded that regardless of the type of involvement, both teens and parents realized the importance of parental involvement.<sup>35</sup> The researcher at Taylorsville Church of God understands the need for parental involvement to strengthen their teen's spiritual development.

Chap Clark urges church and youth ministry leaders to recognize the importance of parents in their child's life. The church's ministries must support and encourage parents as they serve as the best resource for the needs of their children.<sup>36</sup> This researcher will instruct mentors to regularly communicate with parents to assist them in ministering to their children. One must train parents and equip them to work together with the church to lead their children in forming relationships within the church family.<sup>37</sup> The church will utilize training methods for parents, as Clark suggests, to help with the mentor/mentee relationships. Studies show that in churches

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<sup>35</sup> Lorraine Munoz, and Marcela Raffaelli, "Parental Involvement in their Adolescents' Organized Youth Programs: Perspectives from Parent-Adolescent Dyads," *Applied Developmental Science* 26, no. 1 (2022): 54, accessed August 23, 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 102.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

where parent and child relationships are being encouraged and strengthened, youth ministry is healthier and young people grow in deeper faith.<sup>38</sup> The researcher agrees that the church must work to enhance a child's relationship with their parents and not create ways to separate them. Clark believes that the church should act as siblings, not as mentors and mentees, and encourage each other as they grow to support these relationships.<sup>39</sup> In other words, Clark believes that the church must come alongside young people and parents as they grow closer together. Also, as the church comes alongside these families, the opportunity for spiritual maturation will be enhanced. This research project does not oppose an adoptive church approach. Still, it will be intentional about forming mentor/mentee relationships that can strengthen parent/child relationships and other relationships in the church family.

#### Disciple-Making and Discipleship with Teenagers

Teenagers in the church are at different places in their spiritual development. Some teens do not have faith in Christ, but others have faith at varying levels. Parents, youth ministry leaders, church leaders, mentors, and other adults must address where each young person is on their faith journey. They must be prepared to practice disciple-making or evangelism and discipleship, meeting the young person on their level.

Jesus Christ is the model for disciple-making. He intentionally evangelized and discipled people as He lived among them in the community. He taught and had meaningful conversations amid relationships.<sup>40</sup> Parents, church leaders, mentors, and other adults need to follow Christ's example as they emphasize evangelism and discipleship.

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<sup>38</sup> Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 65.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>40</sup> Linhart, *Teaching the Next Generations*, 16.

Churches must focus on discipleship but not neglect evangelism. Kenneth A. Moser, Canadian professor of YM at BC Coll and Sem, , and Malan Nel, South African professor of PT at U of P, , stress the need for training young people in the faith. They write that leaders should instruct young people on the church’s practices and spiritual disciplines. As leaders train young people, their spiritual health will most likely improve. In this training, the church will strive to make the key features of the church clear for teenagers. As this process proceeds, it could also be effective in evangelizing youth.<sup>41</sup> Nel writes that evangelism and discipleship are two parts that form the entirety of a successful youth ministry.

Cannister points out another critical point: churches should disciple teenagers with or without Christian parents.<sup>42</sup> Parents, church leaders, mentors, and other adults must equally focus on disciple-making and discipleship. If a teenager does not have faith in Christ, then discipling them will be misplaced. On the other hand, Thomas E. Bergler, professor of Ministry and Missions at Huntington University, emphasizes that some evangelistic efforts to young people focus on entertaining the unchurched to keep them interested.<sup>43</sup> Kenda Creasy Dean, Mary D. Synnott Professor of Youth, Church, and Culture at Princeton Theological Seminary, calls modern youth ministry “diner theology” because it does not cost one much, but it satisfies for a while.<sup>44</sup> This research project aligns with Berger and Dean evangelistic efforts that are “relevant” and entertaining may attract young people but fail to disciple them in the faith.

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<sup>41</sup> Kenneth A. Moser, and Malan Nel, “The Connection Between Youth Ministry’s Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches,” *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 40, no. 1 (2019): 6-7, accessed April 5, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.2020>.

<sup>42</sup> Cannister, *Teenagers Matter*, 181.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas E. Bergler, *The juvenilization of American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 220.

<sup>44</sup> Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10.

However, in contrast, this youth ministry and mentoring program realize there is a place for entertainment, food, and other activities, but not at the expense of evangelism and discipleship. This researcher concurs with Moser and Nel that a balance must be maintained between evangelism and discipleship for any youth ministry to be effective. Adult mentors will first address their mentees' faith in the mentoring program. One must determine whether the teenager is a committed Christian or not. If a young person has not committed to Christ, the mentor will focus on the most effective evangelistic approach for that teen. After a teenager has experienced salvation, the mentor will address becoming a disciple of Christ.

The key to training teenagers in the faith is receiving and believing the Gospel message. Receiving and believing are required to begin a disciplined, Christian life.<sup>45</sup> One must receive salvation through evangelism to start the journey of a disciple. Once someone believes or trusts in Christ, they will hopefully grow in the discipleship process. As a disciple matures spiritually, they learn to be more obedient to God's Word.<sup>46</sup>

### Spiritual Health

The spiritual health of teenagers must be a top priority for the church. Parents, church leaders, and church members should intentionally assist young people as they grow in Christ to improve spiritual health. The church's goal for their teens is for them to become committed disciples of Christ who are making new disciples. Nathan Chiroma argues that "Spiritual formation for young people is challenging because they live in an era of choices that give rise to a whole new set of challenges and opportunities."<sup>47</sup> Chap Clark is the most influential writer

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<sup>45</sup> Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 49.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>47</sup> Nathan H. Chiroma, "The Role of Mentoring in Adolescents' Spiritual Formation," *Journal of Youth and Theology* 14, no. 1 (2015): 72-73, accessed February 17, 2022.

about teens' spiritual health. He discusses the adoptive church concept where all members adopt one another. Members nurture one another and help incorporate young people into the church family. Clark writes about the church being a family of siblings and not various mentor/mentee relationships.<sup>48</sup> In this action research project, the church will intentionally establish a ministry that connects adult mentors with teenage mentees. The church will support an adoptive church approach with all generations supporting one another and striving to connect with each teen individually. The adoptive church is a beneficial model; however, some young people may not receive enough individual attention. Clark does address the advantage of having more chaperones in a youth ministry, with five adults for each student.<sup>49</sup> A more significant number of volunteers would be ideal; however, the church must have a large membership willing to serve. The church in this research project is a smaller congregation and does not have many adults to utilize in its mentorship program. In this research project, one adult mentor may have to work with more than one teenager.

Clark writes about the spiritually healthy church that adopts young people into a family-like environment where they are encouraged and nurtured as they grow in Christ.<sup>50</sup> Darrell Bock, Executive Director of Cultural Engagement and professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, reinforces Clark's support for an adoptive church to surround and support young people. He stresses that no one can mature spiritually in isolation.<sup>51</sup> Klaus Issler, professor

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<sup>48</sup> Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 138.

<sup>49</sup> Chap Clark, and Kara Powell, *Deep Ministry in a Shallow World: Not-So-Secret Findings about Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 149.

<sup>50</sup> Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 84.

<sup>51</sup> Paul Pettit, ed., *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal Academic, 2008), 103.

of Christian Education and Theology at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, discusses practicing spiritual formation practices among fellow believers as God supplies the needed resources.<sup>52</sup> Encouragement and nurture are vital for spiritual growth; however, ministry leaders must equip teens to follow God's Word and Christ's example.<sup>53</sup> Jeff Iorg highlights that scriptural instruction is required for spiritual formation and good spiritual health. He refers to Romans 12:2, where Paul writes about a spiritual transformation and not conforming to the world. Iorg states, "This type of transformation, a renewed mind producing new choices based on an ingrained biblical worldview, should be a church's goal for every member."<sup>54</sup> Teenagers and people of all ages must have God's Word to be spiritually transformed. As God's Word is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit does the work of transformation in a person's life. Ivan Satyavrata writes, "The church thus comprises the people of God who share a common experience of renewal and transformation by the Spirit."<sup>55</sup> Regarding the Holy Spirit, he continues, "The Holy Spirit's presence within the people of God makes them holy, gives them identity as the holy people of God and effects their moral transformation expressed in ethical righteousness, so they begin to live as the people of God."<sup>56</sup> Once young people have been transformed by the Holy Spirit through God's Word, the church must train young people to live as disciples of Christ, or they will be more likely to leave the church's life.

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<sup>52</sup> Klaus Issler, *Living Into The Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 35.

<sup>53</sup> Kate Harmon Siberine, and Lisa Kimball, "Confirming Mentorship: Mutual Experiences of Incarnation," *Theology Today* 76, no. 1 (2019): 42, accessed April 8, 2021.

<sup>54</sup> Jeff Iorg, *The Case for Antioch: A Biblical Model for a Transformational Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 6.

<sup>55</sup> Ivan M. Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit: Lord and Life-Giver* (Carlisle: Langham Creative Projects, 2012), 105.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

Keith Webb, a certified professional coach, and director of Creative Results Management, an affiliate of Church Resource Ministries, and author of *The COACH Model*, proposes that mentors or other adults ask probing questions. These adults should answer these questions to reflect on their lives to determine their next steps. Webb asserts that these adults who are in relationships with young people should give direction and assist them in discovering what being spiritual looks like in one's life.<sup>57</sup> As caring adults provide guidance, young people should continue the path to spiritual maturity.

Spiritual maturity markers should be evident in the lives of teenagers. The literature reveals a variety of features presented by a variety of authors. Ben Trueblood, Director of Student Ministry for LifeWay Christian Resources, says that students will become evangelistic, which comes through being taught, but they must also catch this desire. Evangelism is a marker of teen spiritual maturity.<sup>58</sup> James Francis, Doctor of Education, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and licensed professional counselor, expands the markers. He states, "Activities such as answered prayer, ownership of faith, sharing one's testimony (life story), and a greater reliance on the Holy Spirit in daily life are evidence of personal spiritual formation."<sup>59</sup>

John Ortberg, former pastor of Menlo Church in Menlo Park, California, and author of *The Me I Want to Be*, expresses another marker that should be present in the life of one who is growing spiritually. When a teen is spiritually growing, they will move from feeling obligated to

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<sup>57</sup> Keith E. Webb, *The COACH Model: For Christian Leaders, Powerful Leadership Skills for Solving Problems, Reaching Goals, and Developing Others* (New York: Morgan James Publishing, 2019), 85.

<sup>58</sup> Ben Trueblood, *Student Ministry That Matters: 3 Elements of a Healthy Student Ministry* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 26.

<sup>59</sup> James E. Francis, "Integrating Resilience, Reciprocating Social Relationships, and Christian Formation," *Religious Education* 114, no. 4 (2019): 508, accessed April 4, 2021.



do what God requires to wanting to do what He expects.<sup>60</sup> Finally, Geoffrey Brailey, a social researcher with McCrindle Research and Youth and Discipleship Pastor at C3 Church Rouse Hill, Sydney, Australia, and Stephen Parker, Academic Coursework Manager at the Australian College of Ministries, propose when teen spiritual maturity is visible. A young person's spiritual maturity becomes visible when they become more Christlike in all areas of their lives and their character.<sup>61</sup> David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group and author, and Aly Hawkins, author of several books and articles, emphasized using markers to measure a teenager's spiritual health. The common problem with one judging a teenager's spiritual growth by attending church is yielding inaccurate results. A church cannot determine spiritual growth in their youth simply by their attendance. Teenagers attending church and building relationships does not mean that they are being disciplined.<sup>62</sup> These authors present different markers indicating spiritual growth, but attending church is not a spiritual growth marker. The researcher in this project will encourage teenagers to attend church because they cannot grow isolated from the church. However, the researcher will intentionally promote discipleship in this mentoring program to support the mentees' spiritual growth. Hopefully, one will be able to observe spiritual growth markers in the teen participants.

Issues arise that can interfere with spiritual development. Like other age groups, many teenagers focus on other aspects instead of following Christ's teachings. As a result, many

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<sup>60</sup> John Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 80.

<sup>61</sup> Geoffrey Samuel Brailey, and Stephen Douglas Parker, "The Identity Imperative: Mentoring as a Tool for Christian Young Adult Identity Formation," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 25, no. 2 (2020): 112, accessed April 7, 2021. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1080/1364436X.2020.1819775>.

<sup>62</sup> David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 89.

teenagers leave the Lord Jesus out of the Christian faith. Unfortunately, teenagers face alternatives to biblical faith, such as focusing on relationships and good deeds without being transformed by Christ.<sup>63</sup> The church and its youth ministry must be attentive to teens' spiritual formation through biblical training and training in the spiritual disciplines. Phil Newton points out the danger of not properly training young people in the faith. If the church does not prepare young people, then they may be gifted but not prepared for work in Christ's kingdom.<sup>64</sup> In their book, Jeannine Mitchell and Nancy Lindgren discussed training young people to think on the right things. They state, "Our thoughts matter. What we think about directly impacts our emotions and decisions. This is why it is so important to pay attention to what we spend our time thinking about. Truth is reality. Truth is what is consistent with God's character."<sup>65</sup> The church must be aware of these obstacles to teen spiritual growth and help teens navigate life through these complex challenges.

### Mentoring

Mentoring is an avenue to enhance the spiritual health of teenagers. Brailey and Parker state, "spiritual formation is the main objective in mentoring. This process leads to a new identity in Christ for the mentee."<sup>66</sup> The researcher agrees with Brailey and Parker that the relationship between a mentor and mentee can be the crucial interaction that promotes a young person's spiritual growth. Mentorship programs can take several forms, but each has a common goal of accompanying a young person along their spiritual journey. Both mentors and mentees will learn

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<sup>63</sup> Kara Powell et al., *Growing Young*, 135.

<sup>64</sup> Newton, *The Mentoring Church*, 20.

<sup>65</sup> Jeannine Mitchell, and Nancy Lindgren, *Together Walk with Me: A Teen Mentoring Guide for Mentors and Mentees* (Denver, CO: MORE Mentoring, 2021), 35.

<sup>66</sup> Brailey, and Parker, "The Identity Imperative," 119.

spiritual principles together, which will help them to become aware of the Christian faith. As they become more aware of the faith, it will help them avoid moving in the wrong direction away from God.<sup>67</sup> Deseree Newkirk and Bruce S. Cooper wrote, “Mentoring was vital to one’s growth and development. Mentors were able to help mentees to see things in themselves that they could not see on their own.”<sup>68</sup> Mike Severe agrees with Newkirk and Cooper. He writes, “Teens can learn aspects of the Christian faith and identity factors, but mentors will help young people develop these in a more lasting way. These teenagers will be able to see God more active in their lives.”<sup>69</sup> Ann Rolfe states, “The mentor’s role is to facilitate a conversation that enables the mentee to choose and implement a course of action. A mentor may provide information, share their experience or express an opinion. However, it is always the mentee that decides, acts and produces outcomes.”<sup>70</sup> In this research project at Taylorsville Church of God, the researcher will promote mentors and mentees growing together as Newton does. As Newton writes about both participants growing in their faith, the researcher agrees that both sides of the mentoring relationship should be maturing in their faith. William Jaynes, professor of Education at California State University, Long Beach, CA and Senior Fellow at the Witherspoon Institute in Princeton, NJ, points out that mentors and mentees must be intimately involved with the local church. Their relationship becomes the centerpiece of Jesus Christ’s work of redemption and

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<sup>67</sup> Janet Thompson, *Mentoring for All Seasons: Sharing Life Experiences and God’s Faithfulness* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2017), 45.

<sup>68</sup> Deseree Newkirk, and Bruce S. Cooper, “Leadership: Mentoring Impact on Beliefs and Practices of Female Ministers,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 22, no. 3 (2013): 337, accessed April 6, 2022.

<sup>69</sup> Mike Severe, “Exploring Adolescent Faith Articulation Among At-Risk Urban Youth,” *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 2 (2020): 230, accessed July 4, 2022.

<sup>70</sup> Ann Rolfe, *Mentoring: Mindset, Skills and Tools*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Hastings, NE: Mentoring Works, 2021), 21.

restoration.<sup>71</sup> As Jeynes stresses the importance of the local church for mentoring, the researcher will also highlight the need for connection to the local church. This project will not be conducted outside the local church ministry but will be a vital part or .

Jeynes discusses the primary importance of parents in the spiritual development of teenagers. Parents are the primary teachers of the Christian faith and change agents in their children's lives. It is also the responsibility of parents to help their children learn self-discipline, personal responsibility, how to be a contributing member of society, and other Christian principles that promote spiritual formation.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to a young person's parents, other adults play vital roles in helping them grow in Christ. Adults such as mentors and coaches build relationships with young people that support their spiritual formation and give them fulfilling lives.<sup>73</sup> S. Kent Butler et al. conducted research on mentoring African American men and determining its effect on postsecondary education and graduate school. These researchers determined that mentoring is crucial to African American men succeeding in their educational experience. However, they stressed the need for others to assist in the mentoring interactions. They wrote about the importance of educators, families, community agencies and businesses in enhancing the mentoring relationship which supported one's educational success.<sup>74</sup> Another study that focused on educational attainment, Lance D. Erickson and James W. Phillips addressed the topic of mentoring religious teenagers. These

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<sup>71</sup> Newton, *The Mentoring Church*, 117.

<sup>72</sup> Jeynes, *The Wiley Handbook of Christianity and Education*, 168.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> S. Kent Butler, Marcheta P. Evans, Michael Brooks, Cyrus R. Williams, and Deryl F. Bailey, "Mentoring African American Men During Their Postsecondary and Graduate School Experiences: Implications for the Counseling Profession," *Journal of Counseling and Development* 91, no. 4 (2013): 425, accessed August 23, 2022.

researchers determined that mentoring religious youth promotes greater educational advancement compared to not being involved in mentorship. Young people were more likely to graduate high school on time and enroll in college with religious mentors.<sup>75</sup> Nathan H. Chiroma and Anita Louisa Cloete conducted a study on mentoring with seminary students. Seminary mentors formed intentional relationships that assisted in the mentee's personal development. Mentors modeled spiritual disciplines and held mentees accountable, which enhanced the students' spiritual formation.<sup>76</sup>

Kara Powell, Executive Director of the Fuller Youth Institute (FYI), professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, Fuller's Chief of Leadership Formation, and author of *Growing Young*, writes about one form of mentoring. This mentoring is where adult leaders partner with fifth-grade students. These leaders remain with the students throughout high school.<sup>77</sup> Even though researchers conducted this program in a school, ministry leaders can implement it in a church youth ministry setting.

Another mentoring program places teenagers in small groups where more than one adult mentors them. Ben Trueblood points out that these small groups are vital to growing healthy relationships with young people as they grow spiritually.<sup>78</sup> Kathleen Tangenburg also writes about small group mentoring for youth in several congregations. The congregations conducted small group mentoring to build relationships. However, they utilized one-on-one mentoring to

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<sup>75</sup> Lance D. Erickson, and James W. Phillips, "The Effect of Religious-Based Mentoring on Educational Attainment: More Than Just a Spiritual High?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, no. 3 (2012): 583, accessed April 5, 2022.

<sup>76</sup> Nathan H. Chiroma, and Anita Louisa Cloete, "Mentoring as a Supportive Pedagogy in Theological Training," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 71, no. 3 (2015): 4, accessed March 8, 2022.

<sup>77</sup> Powell et al., *Growing Young*, 71.

<sup>78</sup> Trueblood, *Student Ministry that Matters*, 89.

teach faith-related topics.<sup>79</sup> Jason Lanker, the pastor of New Heights Church in Siloam Springs, AR, and professor of Christian Ministry and Formation at John Brown University, proposes a mentoring model based on the Apostle Paul's letter to Titus. He calls this type of mentoring natural mentoring. In this approach, non-parental adults that naturally have relationships with teenagers in the church begin to build stronger relationships. Non-parental adults and teenagers with similar interests will spend time together around these interests.

A different mentoring style was utilized by Edward Campolongo, which was intentional peer mentoring in a Christian school. In this program, older high school students served as mentors instead of adults. They served as mentors in small groups with two or three middle school students for each high school student mentor. They met once a week where they discussed various topics, such as, relationships, accountability, and discipleship. This program shows an increase in community involvement among participating teenagers. Campolongo points out that this program is voluntary for students where mentors are chosen by staff or peers.<sup>80</sup> Intentional peer mentoring could be utilized in a church setting where older teenagers mentor younger teenagers.

Steve Mullen discusses a type of mentoring called electronic mentoring (e-mentoring). He focuses on college or university mentors and students. E-mentoring does not confine the mentors or students to a particular location and does not require in-person meetings. Mullen states, "Mentoring can occur at any place and time." He continues, "With an increasing reliance on technology for personal and professional connectivity, there is a burgeoning utilization of

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<sup>79</sup> Kathleen Tangenburg, "Congregational Mentoring and Discipleship: Implications for Social Work Practice," *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work* 31, no. 3 (2012): 299, accessed November 20, 2021.

<sup>80</sup> Edward D. Campolongo, "Intentional Peer-Mentoring Programs in Christian Schools: An Exploratory Study," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 18, no. 1 (2009): 72, accessed August 24, 2022.

electronic mentoring (e-mentoring) in the mentor/protégè relationship.”<sup>81</sup> Mullen writes about e-mentoring in a college setting, but it could be used in a church setting. If a church employed e-mentoring, the mentors and mentees could continue to meet virtually if in-person meetings were not possible. The mentoring interactions may not be ideal, but are preferred to allowing the meetings to terminate. The mentor and mentee relationships could continue to grow virtually.

The church must find ways to allow these adults and teens, or older teens and younger teens, to have more significant interactions.<sup>82</sup> Renèe Spencer writes about a mentoring program where the teenagers choose their mentors called Youth Initiated Mentoring (YIM). Many of these young people selected extended family members and friends. Most of the mentees chose mentors that they had known for a while.<sup>83</sup> The mentees believe that their established relationships aided in the program's success over an extended time.<sup>84</sup> Sarah E. O. Schwartz discussed the YIM approach in a separate study. In this study, the researchers reported that relationships lasted longer when the mentee chose their mentor. Also, the relationships continued longer when the mentor and mentee were of the same race.<sup>85</sup> A researcher’s approach is most effective depending on the context. The program that Powell discussed partnering fifth graders with adult mentors is a helpful approach to build relationships and provide support for these

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<sup>81</sup> Steve Mullen, “An Integrative Model for E-Mentoring Christian Education Students,” *Christian Education Journal* 9, no. 2 (2012): 388, accessed October 26, 2022.

<sup>82</sup> Jason Lanker, “The Family of Faith: The Place of Natural Mentoring in the Church’s Christian Formation of Adolescents,” *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (2010): 274-275, accessed September 4, 2021.

<sup>83</sup> Renèe Spencer, Toni Tugenburg, Mia Ocean, Sarah E.O. Schwartz, and Jean E. Rhodes, “Somebody Who Was on My Side: A Qualitative Examination of Youth Initiated Mentoring,” *Youth & Society* 48, no. 3 (2016): 411, accessed September 4, 2021.

<sup>84</sup> Renèe Spencer et al., “Somebody Who Was on My Side,” 413.

<sup>85</sup> Sarah E.O. Schwartz, Jean E. Rhodes, Renèe Spencer, and Jean B. Grossman, “Youth Initiated Mentoring: Investigating a New Approach to Working with Vulnerable Adolescents,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 52, (2013): 167, accessed August 20, 2022.

students as they proceed toward graduation. An issue that may arise is whether a mentor will commit to this length of time and if the students will still be available. Ben Trueblood writes about a mentoring program that could benefit building and strengthening a group of young people and enhancing their relationship with their mentor. However, this mentorship style is not ideal for promoting spiritual growth in teenagers. The YIM approach could present problems with young people choosing their mentors. If the mentee initially is too familiar with their mentor, they may not grow because they are too comfortable. Lanker's natural mentoring could have the same familiarity problem as the YIM approach. This researcher plans to employ a mentoring approach like the one Kara Powell presents. The researcher will assign adult mentors to teens in the sixth grade, not fifth grade. Ideally, in the future, the mentor will follow the teen throughout high school. Initially, the researcher will ask mentors and mentees to commit to a year for their meetings.

Regardless of the mentoring style, Paul Wilcox writes that intentional mentoring must direct mentees to an action plan. He states, "I would never want to imply that there is a formula to growth through mentoring. It is essentially about relationship and journey and it can't be reduced to an  $a+b=c$  mentality." Wilcox believes that mentors should set goals and targets for their mentees. An intentional mentor must ask questions that will point one's mentee toward a desired course of action. He writes, "It might grow out of a simple question, such as, 'In light of our discussions today what are you actually going to go away and do?'"<sup>86</sup> Mentors cannot expect to follow certain steps and then observe growth in their mentees. They must build relationships

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<sup>86</sup> Paul Wilcox, *Intentional Mentoring: Empowering a Generation One Person at a Time* (Watford, Herts: Instant Apostle, 2018), 99.



that will promote growth in their mentees. In the midst of these relationships, mentors should intentionally encourage and guide their mentees to be active in their own growth.

Chap Clark writes about a different way of mentoring young people. This approach involves the entire church instead of an individual or a group and is called adoptive youth ministry. In adoptive ministry, adults serve as adoptive mentors that nurture and empower young people.<sup>87</sup> In the adoptive youth ministry, the entire church is encouraged to work together to care for teens, which is different from other approaches. Mark Cannister, Chair of the Department of Biblical Studies and Christian Ministries and professor of Christian Ministries, Gordon College, agrees with the adoptive approach for young people and emphasizes the need for discipleship. The church cannot stop seeing people converted to the Christian faith but must reach out and mentor teenagers through the discipleship process.<sup>88</sup> Keith Webb stresses that mentors must be intentional about placing young people in a place where they are in control of their own faith decisions. They must be able to reflect on ideas while making decisions and then act.<sup>89</sup> Mentoring must help young people reach a place where they identify with their faith and not simply accept someone else's faith.

Bryan Dwyer, founding pastor at Alpine Church in Utah, discusses what biblical mentoring is and the reason it is important. He pointed out that biblical mentoring is personally aiding a person in their pursuit of God. Dwyer stresses that every Christian should serve as a mentor. Pastor Dwyer says that he personally mentors several people on a weekly basis. These meetings last thirty minutes to one hour each. He emphasized that every Christian should help

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<sup>87</sup> Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 70.

<sup>88</sup> Cannister, *Teenagers Matter*, 40.

<sup>89</sup> Webb, *The COACH Model*, 25.

others pursue God. Mentoring centers around simple conversations focused on God's Word. Dwyer states that each mentoring relationship should include three phases, which are, trusting Jesus, living to honor God, and they mature by helping others. He believes that biblical mentoring is following the command of God because it is making disciples that will mature and then make disciples. The researcher of this project agrees with Pastor Dwyer that the goal of mentoring teenagers in church is to make disciples. The goal is not only to make disciples, but make disciples that will make other disciples.<sup>90</sup>

Mentoring depends on having good mentors who will adequately care for their mentees. Gordon MacDonald, Pastor Emeritus of Grace Chapel, Lexington, MA, and Chair of World Relief, stresses the need for churches to train their middle-aged members to serve as mentors.<sup>91</sup> Like MacDonald, Kate Harmon Siberine, Rector of Grace Episcopal Church in East Concord and Missioner of Franklin, Diocese of New Hampshire, and Lisa Kimball, Associate Dean of Lifelong Learning and the James Maxwell Professor Chair of Lifelong Christian Formation at Virginia Theological Seminary, focus on intergenerational mentoring of teenagers. As mentors from different age groups work with young people, they strive to earn the trust of these youth. These mentors from the older generations should serve as models for young people to follow in the Christian life.<sup>92</sup> Tim McKnight, Associate Professor of Youth Ministry and Missions and Director of Global Center for Youth Ministry, stresses that adult leaders should minister to young people and not simply depend on a gifted youth pastor. These adult leaders will minister,

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<sup>90</sup> Bryan Dwyer, "Mentor Training 1: What is Biblical Mentoring (and Who Should Do It)?", 2015, PursueGOD, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1bqoMjCNEw>.

<sup>91</sup> Gordon MacDonald, "Reflections on Mentoring and Multi-Generational Ministry," *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 10, no. 1 (2016): 26, accessed April 15, 2021.

<sup>92</sup> Siberine, and Kimball, "Confirming Mentorship," 40.

using their spiritual gifts, to young people to encourage their spiritual growth.<sup>93</sup> Many churches focus on simplifying the Gospel for youth members without challenging them to mature in their faith. These churches support this approach by equipping adult leaders as mentors to walk with young people on a journey through life.<sup>94</sup> These adult mentors can assist young people in their spiritual growth because they will be able to devote more time to individual teenagers than one youth pastor could by leading an entire group. The researcher plans to equip adult leaders of varying ages to serve as mentors. These adult mentors will complement the youth pastor's work in discipling teenagers.

### Connection and Belonging

The church is a “household” or “building” built on Jesus Christ as the foundation stone.<sup>95</sup> Teenagers must have a sense of belonging to the household of God. Tim McKnight emphasizes the crucial need for the church to teach teenagers the truth of God's Word. Youth ministries can teach Scripture, but the church body is vital for a young person to mature in the faith.<sup>96</sup> McKnight illustrates the necessity of the church, as adult members lead teenagers in their spiritual maturation. Chap Clark, a proponent of adoptive youth ministry, sees adult mentors as bridges connecting Christian adults to young people. Christian adult mentors form connections with teenagers, which helps these mentors to foster teen connections to Christ and the church.

Brailey and Parker support a similar approach to the adoptive youth ministry. In this approach, a community of believers surrounds teenagers. In this community, believers strengthen

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<sup>93</sup> Tim McKnight, *Engaging Generation Z: Raising the Bar for Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2021), 88.

<sup>94</sup> Siberine, and Kimball, “Confirming Mentorship,” 95.

<sup>95</sup> Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 65.

<sup>96</sup> McKnight, *Engaging Generation Z*, 96.

family units and support non-family mentors to build support around young people as they spiritually develop.<sup>97</sup> A mentoring community with mentors and teenagers is a “network of belonging.” These communities are areas that make space for teenagers to grow spiritually.<sup>98</sup> In this action research project, adult mentors will work with teenagers to assist their spiritual growth. This relationship will help teens become more connected to the church. Church leaders, including children’s and youth leaders and ones from other ministries, will intentionally find ways to encourage young people by enhancing their sense of belonging. These leaders will identify avenues for teens to be active in a ministry. The church will urge other members to support teenagers in their faith and encourage them to become integral members of the church family. Parents will also be encouraged and surrounded by a loving church to help them grow as they care for their children. Teenagers will not be left isolated to spiritually mature but will have the entire church behind them as they grow, and their mentors will focus on their relationships with them.

Young people need to belong to a group. The church must set a goal for young people to feel welcome and belong. Kara Powell states, “belonging depends on the number of life-giving relationships and their quality.”<sup>99</sup> Siberine and Kimball agree with Powell that relationships give a sense of belonging to young people. In these relationships, mentoring assists young people as they mature and take ownership of their faith.<sup>100</sup> Megan Brown, Associate Professor of Christian Ministries at the University of Northwestern, Saint Paul, writes about the warmth and care that

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<sup>97</sup> Brailey, and Parker, “The Identity Imperative,” 115-116.

<sup>98</sup> Dean K. Thompson, and D. Cameron Murchison, eds., *Mentoring: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 192.

<sup>99</sup> Powell et al., *Growing Young*, 95.

<sup>100</sup> Siberine, and Kimball, “Confirming Mentorship,” 45.

congregation members showed to teenagers. Young people credit these warm relationships for their connection to the church's life.<sup>101</sup> Phil Newton also emphasizes that a teen's community life reveals their strengths and weaknesses in the spiritual maturation process. In these relationships, a young person's spiritual maturity is determined to be genuine or not.<sup>102</sup> John Ortberg reinforces the need for relationships. He stresses that all people need healthy relationships to live a fulfilled life and flourish.<sup>103</sup> If teenagers are going to thrive in their lives, particularly spiritually, they must have healthy relationships and not live in isolation. Ben Trueblood addresses the spiritual growth of young people within relationships. He proposes that teenagers connect to a small group, such as Sunday School, life groups, etc., to aid in their spiritual development.<sup>104</sup> The church needs to provide various ways for young people to form connections in the community that will open doors to making a faith commitment and aid in their spiritual formation.

Within the church, teenagers must be encouraged by the older generations and realize that they occupy an important place in the church family. Moser and Nel point to a problem in many churches regarding the older generations helping young people find their place in the family. Some churches build youth ministries, which are more like a school-based system than a church, separate from the other generations. This segregation minimizes life-giving interactions among the generations.<sup>105</sup> The church should be more careful about following Christ's model than a

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<sup>101</sup> Megan G. Brown, "Relationships Matter: The Impact of Relationships upon Emerging Adult Retention," *Christian Education Journal* 13, no. 1 (2016): 16, accessed April 10, 2021.

<sup>102</sup> Newton, *The Mentoring Church*, 20.

<sup>103</sup> Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 186.

<sup>104</sup> Trueblood, *Student Ministry that Matters*, 86.

<sup>105</sup> Moser, and Nel, "The Connection Between Youth Ministry's Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches," 6.

secular approach. In Christ's body, the various ages must interact and live together in a community. The researcher supports the belief held by Moser and Nel that many youth ministries have failed to produce young people who remain in the church long-term. Many of these ministries focus on evangelism for unchurched youth but neglect discipleship for church youth. Moser and Nel advocate strengthening young people by promoting Christian practices, such as prayer, Bible study, etc., in the youth group. If young people are maturing in these practices, they are more prepared as they enter adult ministry and form better connections with the older generations.<sup>106</sup> The researcher agrees with Moser and Nel's assessment, but they did not promote the use of mentoring relationships. They simply recommended utilizing Christian practices in the youth group setting. The researcher plans to promote Christian practices as adult mentors meet in one-on-one interactions with teen mentees. As mentors and mentees interact, the teens' spiritual health will ideally enhance.

Terry Linhart, Executive Director of Extension Studies at Bethel University, deals with the process of young people becoming people of faith. As teenagers mature in the faith community, they become committed to the Christian faith and develop a sense of belonging as they contribute to the community. They grow in the faith through Bible study, prayer, and other faith practices.<sup>107</sup> Linhart discusses growing in one's faith. He states, "learning how to be close to Jesus, be honest with ourselves and others, live in authentic community with others, and develop gracious ways in our relationships require a high level of discipline and regular moments

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<sup>106</sup> Moser, and Nel, "The Connection Between Youth Ministry's Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches," 7.

<sup>107</sup> Linhart, *Teaching the Next Generations*, 86.

of fresh perspective.”<sup>108</sup> Teenagers take their place in the active ministry of the church and are not simply passive receivers of the faith.

### Love

Love is the ultimate attribute needed in ministering to teenagers and any other age group. Parents, church leaders, mentors, and other adults must exhibit love in word and action to be effective in evangelizing and discipling young people. Moser and Nel discuss John 13:35 and the Lord’s emphasis on love. They highlight the identity of Christ’s disciples and their mission. As believers identify with Christ, they must express love in their mission in the world.<sup>109</sup> The church must realize that love is the foundation and core of Christ’s message. Therefore, love must be the foundation and center of the church’s ministry, which drives everything it does.<sup>110</sup>

Mentors must assume a modeling role with teenagers. They must model a servant’s heart and love for their young mentees, which will hopefully develop service and love in them.<sup>111</sup> Powell et al. agree with Newton’s mentor modeling principle. They focus on the role of the pastor as they model the Christian faith in a warm relationship with the church members of all generations. As the pastor creates a friendly, welcoming environment, teenagers will feel the love and the invitation to be a part of the church family.<sup>112</sup> Megan Brown’s studies also support the impact of pastoral leadership on teenagers’ formation. She states, “pastoral impact included

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<sup>108</sup> Terry Linhart, *The Self-Aware Leader: Discovering Your Blind Spots to Reach Your Ministry Potential* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2017), 44.

<sup>109</sup> Moser, and Nel, “The Connection Between Youth Ministry’s Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches,” 7.

<sup>110</sup> Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 14.

<sup>111</sup> Newton, *The Mentoring Church*, 28.

<sup>112</sup> Powell et al., *Growing Young*, 65.

the church's unconditional love, lack of judgment, and willingness to forgive.”<sup>113</sup> Pastors and church leaders must promote a place where teenagers can thrive in their spiritual life. Siberine and Kimball’s research support the same form of modeling because they write about intergenerational mentoring relationships that foster greater love. These mentor/mentee relationships create room for love to grow, which will result in transformation for both people.<sup>114</sup> William Jeynes addresses the need for mentors to model love and personal integrity before their mentees. They must be careful to show respect and honesty to their mentees, or the modeling will not be effective.<sup>115</sup>

A primary goal is to show love to young people, which will promote their spiritual growth as they grow in love. Ortberg stresses the central importance of love when he writes, “love releases life in that child that would otherwise remain dormant and unsummoned.”<sup>116</sup> Bill Miller emphasizes the necessity of love in the spiritual formation of all people, including teenagers. As teens spiritually mature, they must learn to love others, even those individuals who are challenging to love.<sup>117</sup> Terry Linhart agrees with Miller that as adults share love and grace with others, they serve as examples and help in the spiritual transformation of students.<sup>118</sup>

Robert Karen, associate clinical professor at the Derner Institute of Advanced Psychology Studies at Adelphi University, writes about the need for a loving attachment. Karen says, “a child

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<sup>113</sup> Brown, “Relationships Matter,” 14.

<sup>114</sup> Siberine, and Kimball, “Confirming Mentorship,” 47.

<sup>115</sup> Jeynes, *The Wiley Handbook of Christianity and Education*, 177.

<sup>116</sup> Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 184.

<sup>117</sup> Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 164.

<sup>118</sup> Linhart, *Teaching the Next Generations*, 45-46.



needs to be lovingly attached to a reliable parental figure and that this need is a primary motivating force in human life.”<sup>119</sup> A study by Meredith Hope et al. with African American and Black Caribbean teenagers indicated that a significant number of the teens participated in church support networks. The study revealed that a higher number of these adolescents felt love from congregation members. They believed that church members expressed interest in them and listened to their concerns.<sup>120</sup> Young people learn to love by having a healthy attachment to a parent or a parental figure. If a teenager does not have a loving parent, other Christian adults must assume this role to nurture them. Other adults, such as mentors or youth leaders, should express love to a young person appropriately to assist in their spiritual development.

### Empathy

Powell defines empathy as “feeling with young people.”<sup>121</sup> Ultimately, adult leaders must seek to understand young people, including how they think and what is behind their actions. As adults begin to empathize with teenagers, they will comprehend their many needs.<sup>122</sup> Moser and Nel expand on Powell’s writings as they point out the need for the church to empathize with teenagers outside the church but not to neglect understanding teens in the church.<sup>123</sup> Church

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<sup>119</sup> Robert Karen, *Becoming Attached: First Relationships and How They Shape Our Capacity to Love* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 441.

<sup>120</sup> Meredith O. Hope, Robert J. Taylor, Ann W. Nguyen, and Linda M. Chatters, “Church Support Among African American and Black Caribbean Adolescents,” *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 28, no. 11 (2019): 3046, accessed August 22, 2022.

<sup>121</sup> Powell et al., *Growing Young*, 91.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>123</sup> Moser, and Nel, “The Connection Between Youth Ministry’s Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches,” 7.

leaders and other adults must continue to spiritually develop as they grow in humility, mercy, and empathy. They must learn to lead with others, including teenagers, in mind.<sup>124</sup>

When adults empathize with teenagers, they listen to them with grace and not judgment. Adults, such as parents, ministry leaders, mentors, or any other adult, must respond to the needs of young people with empathy if they want to keep an open connection with them.<sup>125</sup> When adults show empathy for teenagers, they foster spiritual growth in young people. In line with Linhart, Megan Brown proposes making space in the ministries for older teenagers and emerging adults to display empathy. In this space, young people can openly discuss their questions and struggles without being shamed and judged.<sup>126</sup> Chap Clark discusses what adults must do to show they care for young people and have made them a priority. He states, “seek to empathize with them, meaning we sit on the steps of their world, making sure that they know that we are interested in what their life is like.”<sup>127</sup>

James Francis writes about the formation of empathy through interactions with others. One cannot become empathetic in isolation but with family, friends, peers, mentors, and others.<sup>128</sup> Gordon MacDonald supports the belief that empathy develops in the community. He highlights that as empathy grows, one becomes aware of areas where they were once blind.<sup>129</sup> One must not allow blind spots to hinder their understanding of young people. Individuals must

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<sup>124</sup> Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 161.

<sup>125</sup> Linhart, *Teaching the Next Generations*, 134.

<sup>126</sup> Brown, “Relationships Matter,” 20.

<sup>127</sup> Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 40.

<sup>128</sup> Francis, “Integrating Resilience, Reciprocating Social Relationships, and Christian Formation,” 501.

<sup>129</sup> MacDonald, “Reflections on Mentoring and Multi-Generational Ministry,” 21.

be intentional about becoming empathetic through interacting with various people to help them minister better to teens.

Along with developing empathy for young people, ministry leaders should help build empathy for parents. Mark Cannister writes about the church's call to encourage parents as they raise and minister to their children. Amid this encouragement, ministry leaders express empathy and support for parents in their crucial work.<sup>130</sup> Church and youth ministry leaders should seek to understand the needs of parents as they nurture their children. Also, these leaders should help parents understand their vital role in being the primary disciple-maker in their child's life. As empathy grows for parents, the church and its leaders will encourage and support young people on their life's journey. Youth leaders and parents must teach young people to develop empathy. As teenagers become empathetic, they will actively pursue acts of love for the less fortunate and the hurting. Ministry leaders should emphasize serving others as a vital part of discipleship for young people.<sup>131</sup> One of the researcher's goals is to assist in growing empathetic teenagers through their interactions with empathetic mentors.

### Conclusion

The various sources that the researcher studied address the spiritual health of teenagers. The literature review highlights the effects of spiritual health on church retention in teens. Different themes appeared in the literature that revealed avenues for fostering spiritual health in teenagers and the needed components for a young person to be spiritually healthy. This review reveals a need for more information on the role and responsibilities of parents in the spiritual formation of their children. After completing this literature review, the research supports the

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<sup>130</sup> Cannister, *Teenagers Matter*, 186.

<sup>131</sup> Kinnaman, and Hawkins, *You Lost Me*, 130.

need for partnering of adults and teenagers. The sources express the advantage of the older generations intentionally evangelizing and discipling young people. Therefore, an adult mentoring program that connects caring adults with teenagers will enhance teens' spiritual health and promote them to continue in church life.

### **Theological Foundations**

Scripture contains mentorship examples where faithful men and women model their faith before others whose faith is less developed. As presented in God's Word, mentors were not perfect people, but they trusted in God as they overcame obstacles. The key to becoming a mentor is having a relationship with God and growing in that relationship while being an example to one's mentee.<sup>132</sup> The psalmist wrote in Psalm 71:18 (NKJV), "Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come." This psalmist had a mentor's heart because of the desire to share the knowledge of God with the next generation. They prayed that God would give them the power to proclaim that no other god compares to Israel's God to the next generation.<sup>133</sup> Biblical mentors were committed to advancing their mentees' faith and growth in the Lord. A mentor should feel compelled to speak of God's greatness to members of the younger generations to aid in their spiritual growth.

In this section, the researcher provides mentoring examples from Scripture. These mentors are a sampling of individuals in the Old and New Testaments. The researcher gives these examples to create a foundation for a mentoring program for teenagers in the local church.

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<sup>132</sup> F.E. Freeks, "Old Testament Figures as Possible Current "Mentors": Exploratory Pastoral-Theological Reflections," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 30, no. 2 (2016): 246, accessed Sept. 5, 2021.

<sup>133</sup> Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Vol. 20, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 216.

## Mentorship in the Old Testament

A key Scripture passage that supports mentorship is Deuteronomy 6: 4-9. In this passage, God commands parents to teach His commands to their children. They must talk about the Lord and His commands at all times of the day. It is vital to instruct the next generation in God's Word, so they will not forget it. Israelites were to think of the commandments and live by them as an expression of love for God. God expected parents to train their children to know the commandments, which would allow them to gain knowledge and grow in love with the Lord. Parents were to repeat these commands continually. God's commands permeated every conversation in the home.<sup>134</sup>

Proverbs 22:6 gives the command to train a child in the direction they should go. The writer stresses that if parents train their children, they will not depart from their training. The writer is urging parents to train their children early in life, and as they grow older, they will build on their faith. As they build on their faith, they will continue to go in the right direction.<sup>135</sup> A parent must lead their child well to help them travel the right path. On the other hand, poor parenting points young people in the wrong direction. Other factors are at work in a child's maturation process, which is more complex than simply parenting. One of these factors is the people in the young person's life.<sup>136</sup> Those individuals can be good or bad, which will impact a child's life. Mentors can occupy a place in a young person's life and influence the direction they will go. Mentors can play an essential role in assisting parents in raising their children in the

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<sup>134</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1976), 170.

<sup>135</sup> Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, & Song of Songs*, Vol.14, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 188.

<sup>136</sup> Edward M. Curtis, *Interpreting The Wisdom Books: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2017), 96.

faith. These mentors will help reinforce Christian principles that a young person has learned. The young person may go away from the faith as they grow older, but that individual will not be able to escape these vital lessons from their parents and reiterated by one's mentor.

In Deuteronomy 6: 4-9, Moses is instructing the Israelites to strengthen the next generation so they will move forward in living in God's covenant. He is the leader, elder, and father of Israel, but he also adopted the role of a mentor for Israel. Moses functions as a model for Israel as he instructs them on their future course.<sup>137</sup>

One of the best Old Testament examples of a mentorship relationship is between Moses and Joshua. Joshua became Moses' assistant, and he learned from Moses as he followed him. In Exodus 24:13, God called Moses to climb Mount Sinai to confirm the covenant with Israel, he took Joshua with him, signifying his preparation to succeed Moses in the future. Later, shortly before Moses' death, he publicly reminded Israel of Joshua's position as his successor. After Moses' public announcement, God called Moses and Joshua to appear before Him at the Tabernacle to commission Joshua for the work ahead.<sup>138</sup> If Joshua had been unfaithful, God would have chosen another leader. In Numbers 27:18, God commanded Moses to have Joshua stand before Eleazar, the priest, and the entire nation for consecration to lead Israel. Moses suggested that God appoint his successor in verse 17, and God chose Joshua. As Moses laid his hands on Joshua, which is a sign of conferring authority, he obeyed God's command and indicated to Joshua that he trusted him with this new authority.<sup>139</sup> Moses had mentored Joshua

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<sup>137</sup> Rickie D. Moore, *The Spirit of the Old Testament* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 73.

<sup>138</sup> Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 371.

<sup>139</sup> Pekka Pitkanen, *A Commentary of Numbers: Narrative, Ritual and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2017), 174.

through the wilderness, but he shows that he is confident that Joshua will submit to God's leading as he leads Israel.

Another mentoring example is Naomi and Ruth. This relationship represents a close, committed mentoring relationship. Ruth married Naomi's son in the land of Moab, but Naomi's husband and sons died in that country. As Naomi returned home to Judah, she told her daughters-in-law to return home. One daughter-in-law, Orpah, returned home, but Ruth refused to leave her mother-in-law. In Ruth 1:16b-17a, Ruth stated, "...For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and I will be buried." Ruth took an oath to express her intense loyalty to Naomi. She stressed that only death would separate them and be buried in the same place. Ruth was committing her entire life to Naomi as she emphatically vowed.<sup>140</sup> Naomi mentored Ruth by instructing her on securing her future with Boaz, who was the "kinsman redeemer" of their family. Naomi's counsel was for Ruth to end her mourning period and return to living a normal life, which would include her marrying again.<sup>141</sup> Ruth was a committed mentee as she followed Naomi because she adhered to her mother-in-law's instructions. Naomi, the mentor, taught her mentee, Ruth, in Israel's customs. As Ruth followed Naomi's teachings, she became a blessed woman who was an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The prophet Samuel served as an excellent mentor to both Saul and David. These two relationships have two completely different outcomes. One mentee does not follow the counsel of his mentor, while the other faithfully listens to the mentor's guidance. Before Samuel mentored David, God chose him to anoint and mentor Saul. The prophet anointed Saul to be the

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<sup>140</sup> Frederic Bush, *Ruth-Esther*, Vol. 9, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 83.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

first king of Israel. Samuel took time to instruct Saul in the ways of the Lord and on God's expectations for him. After Samuel sent Saul's servant on ahead of them, I Samuel 9:27 says, "But you stand here awhile, that I may announce to you the word of God." Samuel was speaking for God, and his pronouncement was symbolic of the power that Saul was receiving. He was being entrusted with a great responsibility to lead Israel.<sup>142</sup> Samuel was taking the role of mentor in instructing his mentee, Saul, how he should lead his people. Saul started out taking Samuel's advice, and his reign seemed promising. However, Saul abandoned Samuel's counsel, which led to his downfall as God rejected him as king.

Later, as Saul pursued David out of jealousy, David escaped and sought refuge with Samuel. I Samuel 19:18 states, "So David fled and escaped, went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed at Naioth." David did not return to his home out of fear of being betrayed. Instead, he went to Samuel for safety. The prophet encouraged David in this challenging time. He also offered empathy because Samuel had also been in danger of Saul's wrath. Samuel was the prophet whom God chose to reveal His plan for David to become king of Israel. Samuel had offered spiritual encouragement when he anointed him to be king and would provide the necessary encouragement for David to not give up on his God-appointed purpose.<sup>143</sup> When David was young, he was teachable and open to the direction of his mentor. David's teachable spirit led him to become the great king of Israel.

Another Old Testament example of mentorship is Elijah and Elisha. Elijah was a prophet of God who had performed many miracles as he stood against idolatry in Israel. God chose

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<sup>142</sup> Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Vol. 7, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 1996), 130.

<sup>143</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 210.



Elisha to be Elijah's successor in continuing his prophetic work. After God dramatically took Elijah away, Elisha was left to follow the example of Elijah. I Kings 19:19 gives the account of Elisha's calling. Elijah placed his mantle over Elisha, indicating that he would succeed Elijah. Placing the mantle over Elisha symbolizes a transfer of prophetic power from Elijah to Elisha.<sup>144</sup> This act shows the commitment to this relationship that will direct Elisha (mentee) in the right direction for his future. In Elisha's first miracle in 2 Kings 2:13-14, he took Elijah's mantle and imitated Elijah by striking the Jordan River for it to part. Following Elijah's example, the Lord performed the same miracle for Elisha by parting the water for him to cross. When Elijah went to heaven, Elisha called to him with the name, "my father." Elisha showed the closeness of his relationship with Elijah. After Elijah was gone, Elisha assumed the role of his mentor and became the father to the prophets.<sup>145</sup> The Elijah/Elisha relationship, which was healthy and robust, stresses the importance of a mentor as an example that a mentee can follow and not go astray.

Isaiah the prophet is another example of an Old Testament mentor. The first half of the book of Isaiah contains the prophecies about God's judgment on Judah. God would judge Judah because of their rebellion against His Law. According to Isaiah 6, when God appears to Isaiah, he stands in awe of God's splendor, and then he is cleansed of any impurities. After hearing the council of heaven discussing who to send, Isaiah eagerly volunteers for God to send him to proclaim the truth.<sup>146</sup> In proclaiming God's Word, Isaiah's mission is to turn Israel toward God. In chapter 40, the tone of the book changes as God gives Isaiah comforting words to speak.

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<sup>144</sup> Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, Vol. 8, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 21y.

<sup>145</sup> Moore, *The Spirit of the Old Testament*, 75.

<sup>146</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 186.

Isaiah's call is to be a mentor to the next generation to raise a "holy seed."<sup>147</sup> Isaiah's role as a mentor is evident in the call throughout his book for the next generations to take up the call to follow God and His commands.<sup>148</sup> As a mentor, Isaiah's work was to give direction to the younger generations so they could be in the right relationship with God.

### Mentorship in the New Testament

The New Testament contains many mentorship examples that lay a foundation for mentoring today. The most excellent example in Scripture is the Lord Jesus Christ. Other mentoring examples are Peter, Barnabas, Paul, John, Aquila, and Priscilla.

The Lord Jesus Christ sets the standard for mentorship since He is the only perfect model. He came to earth and chose twelve men to mentor. These men followed Christ and learned from Him the ways of the faith. He trained them so that they would know how to lead and make disciples to advance Christ's Kingdom after He was gone.

The Lord Jesus mentored His disciples in taking care of their spiritual health. He stressed the importance of finding a place to be alone and meet with God in prayer. Mark 1:35 states, "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." Jesus had a busy schedule, but He always took time to commune with His Father. Christ knew that His mission was not simply His alone, but He followed the leading of God the Father. Jesus was devoted entirely to fulfilling the will of His Father.<sup>149</sup> Christ wanted His disciples to spend time with God to receive strength as they ministered to others. Christ's example reminded them that they could not carry out their God-

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<sup>147</sup> Moore, *The Spirit of the Old Testament*, 82.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>149</sup> Darrell Bock, *Mark* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 133.

appointed mission in their power. He also taught His disciples the proper way to pray so they would not follow the pagan prayer model. One of the Lord's disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray. In Luke 11:1-4, He proceeded to instruct them properly to pray to God the Father. One must persist in prayer to develop a strong relationship with God. The Lord encouraged His disciples to pray because God would hear them and because He cared for them. They were not to pray as a meaningless exercise but to the gracious God concerned for their needs. The Lord modeled the need to persist in prayer in good and bad times for them.<sup>150</sup>

In Matthew 6:7, Christ Jesus also warned His disciples not simply to make repetitions and use many words like the pagans. Pagans believed God heard them when they used many words. God hears one's simple, sincere prayers without any specific number of words. When one prays, God already knows their needs. The purpose of prayer is to express trust in God, which flows from a relationship with Him. The Lord taught His disciples that they should not pray to transmit information to God because He knows everything. Christ's message stressed that one must not pray to get something from God, but it is an act of trust in the All-powerful God.<sup>151</sup> Also, Christ emphasized the location of prayer. Hypocrites want everyone to hear their prayers to appear spiritually superior. However, in Matthew 6:5-6, the Lord told His disciples to go to a secret place and close the door behind them. They were to meet with God privately without anyone seeing or hearing them. Christ taught them that prayer is a unique practice to commune with God and not receive people's praise. Matthew 6:16-18 tells how the Lord told His disciples

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<sup>150</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, Vol. 24, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 323.

<sup>151</sup> R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 241.

to give in secret and fast without anyone knowing. Jesus, the Perfect Mentor, instructed His mentees on the way to please God and live the life He desired for them.

Christ Jesus modeled a lifestyle and set of radically different values from the world's values. The Lord looked on all people with love and compassion, regardless of who they were. One example is His love for children, as presented in Matthew 19: 13-15. In this passage, parents brought their children to Jesus for Him to bless them, but His disciples were displeased, and they rebuked the parents. However, Jesus rebuked His disciples and told them to let the children come to Him. The disciples followed Jesus as their mentor, and they needed to learn more from Him about the Kingdom of Heaven's values. As the Lord rebuked the disciples, He reminded them that His Kingdom belongs to those like children, those who seem unimportant, the dependent, and the vulnerable. As Jesus' mentees, they must learn that all people are vital to the Lord.<sup>152</sup> This passage emphasizes how the mentor/mentee relationship should help mentees grow to see the value of everyone and seek to encourage the less fortunate.

Other instances reveal the compassion and unconditional love of Jesus Christ, such as touching the leper and offering a new life to the Samaritan woman at the well. Matthew 8:2-3 recounts the leper who came to Jesus to plead for his healing touch. Lepers were outcasts from society because of their health condition, and no one was allowed to touch them. However, Jesus went against societal norms by reaching out and touching the leper. His healing touch cleansed the man of his disease. Jesus, as the supreme Mentor, modeled for His disciples the attitude one should have toward the suffering and downcast of society. The Lord Jesus displays His unique healing power that was beyond human comprehension. However, He also was willing to

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<sup>152</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 727.

confront society's taboos to show compassion to a person in need.<sup>153</sup> Christ confronted another societal taboo, which was Jewish and Samaritan segregation. In first-century Israel, Jews were not to have any interactions with Samaritans. One day Jesus went to a well in Samaria where a Samaritan woman regularly came to draw water. The Lord initiated a conversation with her by asking for water. The woman responded in John 4:9, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." The Lord informed her that she should have asked Him, and He would have given her living water. Christ Jesus, the Bridegroom, offers a Samaritan the same gift as He offers to a Jew. He gives life to the faithless to drink and live. Christ extends His eternal love to people far away from living in covenant with God.<sup>154</sup> Christ Jesus is living a life of perfect love before His disciples. He is mentoring them by showing them that no group of people is unimportant to Him. Christ emphasized that His disciples should not overlook or discard anyone, but they should give love and compassion. Christ's mentees learned how to go against society's rules to display love for all people, regardless of their standing.

In John 13:12-17, Jesus taught His disciples about servanthood as He washed their feet. The act of washing their feet showed that He was humbling Himself down to take the role of a servant to serve others. The Lord commanded His disciples to follow His example and humble themselves to become servants. As Jesus performed the act of foot washing, He modeled an attitude of humility as the supreme Mentor. Therefore, His disciples or His mentees could not

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<sup>153</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 306.

<sup>154</sup> John F. McHugh, *John 1-4: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, International Critical Commentary: (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 278.

disregard the example that Christ had set forth.<sup>155</sup> Christ Jesus mentored His disciples as He emphasized “self-giving servanthood” as the standard for His followers.<sup>156</sup>

The risen Lord Jesus gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 to His disciples to expand the Kingdom. As their Mentor, He commanded them to “make disciples” of all nations. They were to follow Christ’s example and proclaim the salvation message. However, He commanded them to go further and raise disciples. Christ stressed the need for the world to hear the Gospel and make disciples.<sup>157</sup> Once again, as mentees, the disciples should pattern their lives after their Mentor, Christ Jesus, to make disciples from men and women of the world.

A disciple and mentee of Jesus Christ was Peter, who became a great church leader. Peter followed Jesus throughout His earthly ministry. He observed the Lord, heard Him teach, and learned the Lord’s values.

Peter became a mentor to other leaders in the early church. In I Peter 5:1-5, Peter exhorts the church elders to willingly care for the congregations and not seek to gain something from them. He told them to care for the congregation because they wanted to serve the Lord. Also, they must not be harsh and overbearing in their leadership. Peter writes that these elders should lead by their good example. Peter is expressing to his mentees that he understands them in the challenges they face. The Apostle Peter takes the place of the role model for church elders. Then, he encourages these elders to assume the role model status for the rest of the church.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, Vol 25B, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 86.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>157</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1115.

<sup>158</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *I Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 271.

Another example of a New Testament mentor is Barnabas. In Acts 11:22-26, Barnabas is sent to Antioch to encourage the new believers there. Then, he went to Tarsus to find Saul and bring him to Antioch to encourage the church. Barnabas went to Antioch to mentor the believers in the Christian faith; however, he intentionally searched for Saul, later the Apostle Paul, to become his mentor. Barnabas's intentional mentorship was likely pivotal in launching Saul's ministry, which impacted the entire world down through the centuries. The church needs more people like Barnabas, whose name means "son of encouragement." To be like Barnabas means that one seeks to bring out the best in everyone without seeking attention for oneself.<sup>159</sup> This quality is needed in mentors as they help mentees be their best.

Barnabas's role as a mentor is evident in his relationship with John Mark. In Acts 15:36-40, Paul and Barnabas agreed to return to all the churches they visited on their first missionary journey. Barnabas wanted to take Mark, but he had abandoned the first trip and returned home. Paul strongly disagreed with Barnabas about taking Mark, so they separated and went separate ways. Paul took Silas, and Barnabas took John Mark. Barnabas was an encouraging mentor to Mark when others, including Paul, had lost their faith and confidence in him. Barnabas believed in his mentee, Mark, and saw that God would continue to use him. Mark reconciled to Paul because Barnabas did not forsake him as his mentee.<sup>160</sup> According to 2 Timothy 4: 11, Mark became helpful to Paul in the ministry.

The Apostle Paul serves as an excellent model of a mentor. His instructions to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 11:1 are for them to follow his example as mentees would follow a

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<sup>159</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, Vol. 26, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 272.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

mentor. Paul was a mentor who followed Christ and lived by His example. Paul was a mentor to numerous people during his ministry, but Timothy had a special relationship with him.

In I Timothy 1:2, Paul refers to Timothy as his true son. Later, in I Timothy 1:18, 19, Paul calls Timothy his son again. He proceeds to command him to have a clear conscience and faith so he can fight a good fight in a war of faith. These verses reveal a close relationship between Paul and Timothy. As the spiritual father, Paul leads his spiritual son, Timothy, to care for the church and live committed to the Christian faith.<sup>161</sup> Ideally, a mentor/mentee relationship will be strong enough that the connection will impress the mentee to follow the mentor's direction.

Another mentoring relationship that Paul had was with Titus. In Titus 1:4, Paul addresses the letter to Titus and calls him a true son of their common faith. He expresses his trust in Titus because he left him in Crete. According to Titus 1:5, Paul trusted Titus to be responsible for setting everything in order and appointing elders in Crete's cities. Titus is called Paul's "genuine child" who shares the same faith in Christ. Since they share the same faith, Titus serves to defend the Gospel because of his relationship with Paul, and Paul has appointed him to lead.<sup>162</sup> Paul urged Titus, in Titus 2:6-8, to set an example that others may follow in their lives, as he encouraged Titus to become a mentor. Paul mentored Titus in the faith, which led him to lead others to serve in the church.

Paul mentored Aquila and Priscilla, a Jewish couple expelled from Rome after Emperor Claudius ordered all Jews to leave the city. According to Acts 18:1-3, they were tentmakers like Paul, so they lived together as they worked and ministered. Acts 18:18 says that Paul took Aquila

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<sup>161</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 356.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.



and Priscilla with him to travel from Corinth to Antioch. This couple observed Paul defending the faith against those who tried to hinder the Gospel from being preached. Later, Aquila and Priscilla assumed the roles of mentors when they met a preacher named Apollos. Apollos preached about the Lord eloquently, but he did not have the whole truth. According to Acts 18:24-26, Apollos was only aware of the baptism of John, so Aquila and Priscilla took him aside and taught him. They instructed Apollos more accurately in the way of God. The deficiency in his witness for Christ concerned the couple, so they offered him needed instruction. Most likely, they explained the way of Christ to him in their home and not in front of other people. Both Aquila and Priscilla assumed equal roles in teaching Apollos about the truth.<sup>163</sup> Aquila and Priscilla became mentors like Paul as they wanted their mentees to learn more about Christ to live the Christian life and teach others about the faith.

Another New Testament mentor is John the Apostle. He was one of the disciples of Jesus Christ known as “the one that Jesus loved.” He was the last living apostle that had followed Jesus. He was the revered elder of the early church. He addressed individuals he had apparently mentored in the faith in his epistles. John referred to his children of the faith in 3 John 4, which states, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” This verse follows verse 3, which points out that Gaius was walking in the truth. John rejoiced that Gaius was living a Christian life. The elder apostle had encouraged Gaius and his other “children” in the past to live for the Lord. It gave John joy to know that Gaius lived a life that supported his confession of faith.<sup>164</sup> John, as the mentor, was elated to know that Gaius, his mentee, was living in the truth of Christ.

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<sup>163</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, 397.

<sup>164</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 368.

The Bible is rich with mentors who served as models for others in the faith. Old and New Testament men and women mentored people to advance the Kingdom of God. As mentees followed these mentors, they grew spiritually. These biblical mentors serve as role models for people of all times to follow.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Researchers have extensively studied mentoring in various contexts. Mentoring occurs across all age groups, genders, faiths, professions, etcetera. The goal of mentoring is for a more experienced mentor to teach and train a less experienced mentee to improve in any given area. A mentor serves as an example for the mentee to emulate.

#### **Church-wide Mentoring: Growing Young**

Kara Powell discussed a church-wide approach to ministering to young people. In this approach, the church creates a genuine warmth where youth feel welcome and a part of the church.<sup>165</sup> In *Growing Young*, this model encourages ministry leaders to intentionally connect with teenagers and emerging adults by handing “them keys as they’re ready.”<sup>166</sup> In this model, adults must be genuine in caring for young people and willingly entrust them with leadership opportunities. Adults should learn teens' and emerging adults' names, interests, and concerns in these relationships.<sup>167</sup> Powell points out an example of the mentoring program where fifth-graders partner with leaders. The students are in a group with similar students, such as clustering by residency. Throughout high school, students remain with their mentors, creating long-term relationships.<sup>168</sup> This researcher in the current study seeks to employ some of the aspects

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<sup>165</sup> Powell et al., *Growing Young*, 165.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

presented in Powell's study. The church must understand the need for relational warmth to create stronger, healthier relationships. It is also vital for a mentor to be assigned to a young mentee from middle school throughout high school, even though this project will not follow these relationships through graduation. A project that follows these mentor/mentee relationships through high school is a topic for future study. If a more robust connection forms in these mentoring relationships, these teenagers will possibly form a tighter connection to the church. Since this approach is church-wide, parents will be encouraged to get involved. This research project will seek to incorporate parents in the mentoring relationships to support both mentor and mentee.

#### Church-wide Mentoring: Adoptive Church

Chap Clark advocates for another church-wide mentorship approach called an adoptive church. Children, teenagers, and emerging adults are accepted as integral parts of the church family in an adoptive church. The church encourages young people to take active roles in the church as it focuses on the older and younger generations.<sup>169</sup> The church must embrace it and effectively train its members to integrate all ages into the ministry in this approach. The goal is for young people to feel accepted into the body with love and care. However, adults are not to simply "adopt" young people by giving them instructions and orders to follow. Adults and young people will form relationships where both sides contribute to the growth and success of these relationships. Clark suggests that five adults mentor one young person and develop friendships like a relationship with an older sibling.<sup>170</sup> The approach presented in *Adoptive Church* is advantageous for highlighting the need for all ages to join together and mutually support one

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<sup>169</sup> Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 21.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

another as a loving family. In this research project, the researcher desires to have an adoptive mindset in the church where everyone is pulling together to nurture and include the younger generations. The suggestion to assign five adults to each young person is excellent; however, it may not provide the personal trust that develops in a one-on-one mentoring relationship. It is good to have other adults that intentionally interact with each young person, but one adult should seek to build a closer bond than the others. Also, the church in this project is small and does not have enough adults to assign five mentors to one teenager.

#### Church-wide Mentoring: Leadership Mentoring for Teens

Phil Newton in *The Mentoring Church* deals with mentoring new church leaders. Even though this approach applies to new leaders, it can also apply to teenagers and emerging adults. This approach focuses on mentors and the entire church working together to prepare leaders for Kingdom service. Mentors are crucial to walk beside mentees to provide counsel and give direction. However, Newton stresses that mentors are not isolated and solely responsible for the mentee's development. The congregation comes along beside the mentors to support their efforts and provide encouragement for them.<sup>171</sup> This researcher will implement a mentoring program that connects adult mentors with teenage mentees. Ideally, these relationships will grow deeper and become a source of encouragement to both parties. However, teenagers will not be isolated from the church's ministry. Other church leaders and members will assist the mentor and mentee in any needed area. The church must be committed to seeing each young person mentored adequately to advance their faith.

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<sup>171</sup> Newton, *The Mentoring Church*, 26.

## Traditional Mentoring

Researchers have employed the traditional, one-on-one mentoring model to help children and teenagers overcome certain risks in their lives. The adult/young person pairs have been the standard for years, but the majority no longer yield the desired results. Belle Liang, Professor of Counseling Psychology, Lynch School of Education, Boston College, proposes that the modest success rate is due to researchers disregarding various contributing factors. Some of these factors include one's family and environment.<sup>172</sup> Mentors must not simply focus on risk factors, but they should get to know their mentees and learn their strengths. A mentoring relationship will be more successful if a mentor looks for the positive aspects of a mentee's life.<sup>173</sup> As a mentor highlights a mentee's positive traits, they must also address the negative aspects. While this study is based on psychology, it also applies to mentoring teenagers in a church setting. Adult mentors in this researcher's study will search for positive qualities and not intentionally look for the negative ones. Another issue is that the mentor and mentee cannot operate in isolation without considering contributing factors. In this research project, parents will be integral to the success of any mentor/mentee relationship. Parents must be aware of the progress of the mentorship interactions. The researcher will emphasize the need for parents, guardians, or grandparents to fully address the contributing factors that impact a young person's life.

## Small-Group Mentoring

Small-group mentorship is another model. Unlike the traditional, one-on-one model, this approach typically consists of a mentor who mentors more than one mentee or could be several

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<sup>172</sup> Belle Liang, Renée Spencer, Jennifer West, and Nancy Rappaport, "Expanding the reach of youth mentoring: Partnering with youth for personal growth and social change," *Journal of Adolescence* 36, no. 2 (2013): 257, accessed September 8, 2021.

<sup>173</sup> Liang et al., "Expanding the reach of youth mentoring," 258.

mentors with their mentees. Ben Trueblood wrote about developing the most beneficial small groups for youth. Student leaders must create opportunities for students to address theological issues. Also, these small groups should be places to deal with struggles and sins in a young person's life. Leaders should also stress accountability among teenagers in the group.<sup>174</sup> Aisha Griffith, Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Illinois Chicago, et al. reported a study where a group of mentors and early adolescent girl mentees met weekly in a school setting. The pairs would meet in the group, and these encounters improved the one-on-one meetings.<sup>175</sup> The group meeting provided consistency for the relationship and aided in opening the lines of communication in the mentor/mentee relationship. However, group mentoring meetings were detrimental if one relationship member was not committed and was repeatedly absent from the gatherings.<sup>176</sup> Griffith et al. implemented this approach in a school, but a researcher could utilize it in a church setting. This researcher sees the benefit of these group meetings in creating relational warmth and open communication. However, there is a risk in these meetings simply becoming a social gathering without supporting growth in the young mentee. Group meetings are not conducive to holding mentees accountable as one-on-one mentoring relationships. Groups can utilize these meetings, but intentional one-on-one mentoring must continue. The researcher plans to use small group meetings, but one-on-one mentoring will be preferred to develop teenagers spiritually.

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<sup>174</sup> Trueblood, *Student Ministry that Matters*, 94.

<sup>175</sup> Aisha N. Griffith, Theresa N. Melton, and Nancy L. Deutsch, "How group experiences influence mentor-mentee relational development in a combined group and one-on-one mentoring program for early adolescent girls," *Applied Developmental Science* 25, no. 2 (2021): 156, accessed September 10, 2021.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

## Natural Mentoring

Natural mentoring is another mentoring model that could be more difficult to study in a short period. Matthew Hagler wrote about natural mentoring, which requires a network of individuals and not simply a one-on-one mentoring approach. These mentoring relationships occur naturally without any planning and programming. Hagler wrote about multiple mentoring relationships, examined at various points.<sup>177</sup> Ideally, one should conduct longitudinal studies on these natural mentoring relationships to determine their effectiveness. Hagler's research comes from a psychological viewpoint and focuses on natural mentoring's effects on educational success in disadvantaged students. Another example of a natural mentoring approach is the STEP UP Mentoring program. In this program, two mentors are assigned to a maximum of eleven teen mentees. These teenagers are involved in the juvenile justice system. The mentors meet with possibly one, two, or three teenagers at a time. In these interactions, relationships are not forced on the teenagers, but are allowed to develop naturally.<sup>178</sup> This study focused on natural mentoring in the juvenile justice system. However, one could conduct natural mentoring studies in a church setting. A researcher could examine multiple relationships that naturally develop between mentors and mentees in the church to determine their effectiveness in the investigated area. If researchers conducted this study, it would be most beneficial in a longitudinal study over several years. The researcher conducting this action research project supports natural mentoring and the possible benefits of such a study. However, the researcher will intentionally pair adult

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<sup>177</sup> Matthew Hagler, "Processes of Natural Mentoring that promote underrepresented students' educational attainment," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 62, no. 1-2 (2018): 159, accessed December 10, 2021.

<sup>178</sup> Natalie D. Cawood, and Jessica M. Wood, "Group Mentoring: The Experience of Adolescent Mentees on Probation," *Social Work with Groups* 37, no.3 (2014): 223-224, accessed August 20, 2022.

mentors with teen mentees instead of allowing them to develop naturally. Ideally, these relationships will grow healthy and solid over time.

### Peer Mentoring

A different form of group mentoring is peer mentoring. One defines peer mentoring as a group of individuals mentoring each other in the same age group. In peer group mentoring, the group assists each member in specific areas of their life. Group members must build trust with each other if they voluntarily open up to others.<sup>179</sup> Also, group members must act as mentors and have experience addressing specific areas of one's life. Also, members should be trustworthy and not disclose sensitive information about other members. Finally, group members should care about the needs of other members and assist in their growth.<sup>180</sup> Peer group mentoring can be conducted in the teen years and be beneficial; however, it could cause some problems in young people. If the group consists of teenagers, they could encourage one another and form a support group, which would help everyone. The problems can arise if the group breaks into smaller cliques and excludes some members. Other issues could arise with the teenage mentors not having the experience to mentor other teens properly. This researcher believes it is more advantageous to have an adult mentor leading the group to give direction. Adults will have more experience with many issues and can assist the teen group members. However, a teen mentor may better address some problems, but it is still helpful to have an adult mentor present. In this research project, a small peer group will not be employed as a mentoring model.

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<sup>179</sup> Henry Cloud, and John Townsend, *Making Small Groups Work: What Every Small Group Leader Needs to Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 79.

<sup>180</sup> Cloud and Townsend, *Making Small Groups Work*, 78.



## Conclusion

In conclusion, various mentoring models are helpful, but their effectiveness depends on a specific context. Churches can employ a church-wide mentoring approach that involves all members supporting the younger generations in their growth. Various models can be implemented, such as one-on-one, small group, or peer mentoring. In this research project, the entire congregation will be encouraged to support the spiritual development of children, teenagers, and emerging adults, whether these adults are directly involved in a mentoring relationship. This researcher will seek to incorporate small group interactions with various mentors and mentees but will ideally promote one-on-one mentoring relationships. The various adult mentors and teen mentees will meet for a meal, an activity, and fellowship time. After this time together, each mentor will meet with their mentee in a one-on-one interaction. They will share in a Bible-based devotion and discussion. During this time, the teen mentees will be able to discuss any issues or concerns from their lives, as well as, positive, celebratory events.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

The researcher will present the following intervention design for Taylorsville Church of God, including training adult mentors to partner with teenagers in the church. The researcher will address the problem that teenagers are leaving the church after high school. After following this intervention design, the researcher expects that teenagers will continue in church life and improve their spiritual health. This intervention's additional, immediate, positive outcome is for teenagers to actively participate in the church's ministry before completing high school.

### **Intervention Design**

The researcher designed various steps for the intervention that will address teenagers leaving church after high school. Steps one to sixteen proceed from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to identifying recurring themes.

- Following IRB approval (Appendix A), the researcher will initiate an intervention plan for Taylorsville Church of God by informing the church council and the church of the problem which is that teenagers are leaving the church after high school. The researcher will highlight losing teens' effect on the church and its future. After being informed, the researcher will invite the church to be in prayer for the intervention plan. Church members will be encouraged to commit to daily prayer to resolve this problem. The researcher will read a permission request form to the church council after informing the church of the project (Appendix B). The church council will sign a permission form following their approval of this research project (Appendix C).

- The next step in the plan is to identify adult men and women willing to serve as mentors. The researcher will read a recruitment letter (Appendix D). This letter lists the responsibilities of participants that agree to help. The researcher will provide a questionnaire for interested adults to apply (Appendix E). The questionnaire will ask questions that gauge an adult's commitment to spiritual disciplines in their personal lives and their church involvement. The researcher will remind the potential mentors to be truthful in their responses to each question. One's personal spiritual life will be challenging to evaluate. The researcher expects the applicant to be honest in their responses. However, one's church involvement will be easier to evaluate. The researcher can verify an individual's church records, such as attendance, giving, and past service in various church ministries. The applicants must demonstrate faithfulness to Christ in all areas of life to be eligible to serve as mentors.
- The researcher will notify qualified individuals selected to serve in this ministry. They must submit to a background check using *Protect My Ministry*<sup>181</sup> to ensure that no past offenses will interfere with their service. Also, these mentor trainees must complete a consent form (Appendix F). One will ask selected adults to commit to a one-year term as mentors. However, the researcher will remind the mentors that the program is voluntary, and they can leave at any time.
- Once adult mentors are selected, the researcher will set a time to meet with these mentor trainees. The researcher will discuss the responsibilities and duties expected of each mentor. The researcher will interview potential mentors (Appendix G) to

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<sup>181</sup> "Background checks," Protect My Ministry, last modified 2021, accessed Sept. 30, 2021, [www.protectmyministry.com/background-checks](http://www.protectmyministry.com/background-checks).

determine their perception of the problem and the planned intervention before training begins. One will use open-ended questions in the interviews. The researcher will use grand tour, guided tour, and opinion questions that Tim Sensing, director of Academic Services and professor of Homiletics at the Graduate School of Theology, Abilene Christian College, explained.<sup>182</sup> The interviews will be video recorded or audio recorded. Then, the researcher will transcribe the interviews and determine themes that appear. Also, the researcher will remind these individuals of the importance of this program and that they should not take it lightly. If a potential mentor is unsure about serving, the investigator will remind them that they can leave the program at any time.

- Following the initial meeting with the mentors, the researcher will schedule training sessions to prepare them to work with the church's teenagers. Training sessions will be conducted weekly on Tuesdays or Thursdays at 6 PM in the fellowship hall. Sessions will last for one hour. If a mentoring trainee cannot attend a session, then a virtual option will be available on Zoom. If a trainee is unable to attend in-person or virtually, they will be able to view the recorded session before the next session.
- The researcher will begin the training sessions with Scripture and prayer before focusing on other material. As the researcher presents the material, mentoring trainees will be encouraged to participate in discussions initiated in the sessions. The researcher will focus on the mentoring trainees' spiritual health in the first session. The researcher will exhort the mentors to not neglect their spiritual health by setting aside times of prayer, Bible study, devotion, and writing their reflections in a prayer

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<sup>182</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach for Doctor of Ministry Projects* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 86-88.

journal (Appendix H). The researcher will address various topics. The researcher will present the following topics: servanthood and church life (Appendix I), active listening, trust, and parents (Appendix J), empathy, compassion, spiritual health of teenagers, and support for teens to minister in the church (Appendix K), and current issues facing teenagers (Appendix L). Trainees will be encouraged to read *Mentoring the Next Generation*<sup>183</sup> by Dr. R. Peter Mason to prepare for each session. This reading will help prepare these adults for working with teenage mentees. The researcher will train mentoring trainees about mentoring basics and inform them about teenagers' issues (Appendices H-L). The investigator will give the trainees resources to help in their mentoring interactions and will conduct five training sessions over a period of five weeks.

- After the training sessions, the researcher will conduct a second interview with the mentors (Appendix M). The researcher will conduct these interviews to determine how the mentors perceived the training. The mentors will indicate how the training could help teenagers and to also offer suggestions for improving the training program.
- Mentors will use participant journals to record their observations, thoughts, and useful notes (Appendix N). The mentors will include high and low points in the mentoring process, without including personal identifying information about the teen mentees. The journals are intended to aid the mentors in improving their interactions with their mentees.

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<sup>183</sup> R. Peter Mason, and Dino Pedrone, *Mentoring the Next Generation: Making a Lasting Difference* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2012).

- Following the training sessions, the researcher will schedule a parent meeting. The researcher will invite parents of fifth through twelfth graders to attend. A young person must be in the sixth grade to participate, but the researcher will invite fifth-grade parents to prepare them before the following year. The researcher will read a teen recruitment letter to parents and teenagers (Appendix O). The researcher will remind parents of the problem of teenagers leaving the church after high school and encourage them to allow their children to participate in the mentoring program. The researcher will present an overview of the mentoring program to the parents to make them aware of what to expect and the time commitment. The researcher will also encourage parents to be active in the mentorship relationship between their child and their mentor. The researcher will stress the need for parental involvement with the mentors, and mentors should communicate with their mentees' parents at least every month. Also, mentors will be open about the progress or lack of progress in the mentorship encounters.
- If parents agree to allow their teenager to be involved, then the parents will be asked to complete a parental consent form giving their permission (Appendix P). After obtaining parental consent, the researcher will ask for teen assent (Appendix Q). If teenagers give their assent, then the mentoring program can proceed.
- After parental consent, teen assent, and mentoring begins, the researcher will interview teenagers to determine their reasons for participating or not participating in the program and assess their perception of the problem (Appendix R). If a parent consents but a teenager chooses not to participate in the program, then they will be asked to be interviewed. However, the teen is free to decline the interview.

- Adult mentors and teen mentees will meet for one hour on the first and third Tuesday or Thursday nights of each month at 6 PM. The meetings will take place in the fellowship hall. Mentors and mentees will not be alone in the building, but another approved adult will be present; other adults will not interfere with the meetings. These meetings will be in-person but can be conducted over Zoom if needed. Also, if Tuesday or Thursday does not work for someone on a particular week, they can schedule another time to meet. If one schedules another time, mentors must have another adult present.
- Mentors and mentees will meet informally to get to know each other because these interactions were not previously occurring on a personal level regularly in the church. In these meetings, mentors will discover the mentee's interests and give them opportunities to discuss those interests. In addition to their interests, they will discuss concerns and issues that the teen mentees are experiencing. One objective of this intervention is that adult mentors and teen mentees will form strong, healthy relationships. Mentors will not function as counselors, so that they will inform teenagers and their parents of this information. There will be more formal meetings scheduled for specific weeks. The mentor will discuss faith issues in a more structured setting in these meetings. First, mentors will discover if their mentees have been saved by placing their faith in Jesus Christ. Mentors will reinforce the material that the mentees learned in children's and youth ministries. Mentors will ensure that teenagers know and understand the basics of the Christian faith as found in Scripture. The researcher will provide Bible study material in these sessions (Appendix S).

Ideally, the mentoring sessions will complement the material that is taught in Sunday School and mid-week services (Appendix T).

- Then, mentors will encourage mentees to grow in their faith and become the people that God wants them to be. These mentor/mentee meetings will continue throughout the year, except for June, July, August, and December. If a mentor or mentee misses a session or during the summer months or December, the mentor will be encouraged to somehow reach out to their mentee. Mentors should have contact with mentees at least twice a month during June, July, August, and December. These contact points can be a simple text, message, call, or card. In addition to the one-on-one meetings, mentors and mentees will gather as a group twice a year. The group will meet to participate in various activities, which will enhance relationship building between adults and teenagers and strengthen relationships among teenagers.
- Following the first month with teen mentees, the researcher will interview the mentors. One will conduct the interviews to gather their perceptions about the process (Appendix U). These interviews will be video-recorded or audio recorded and saved on a password-protected external drive. The researcher will ask the mentors to be open about their views on the progress achieved in this short period. The researcher will ask mentors to give their goals for their teen mentees in the coming year. Also, mentors will offer any advice on needed changes in the program.
- Additionally, the researcher will utilize a reflective journal. The researcher will use this journal to monitor the program's progress. As the researcher utilizes this journal, one will detect any necessary modifications. This journal will assist the researcher in



staying objective without imposing one's biases and gauging the effectiveness of the materials.

- After conducting the interviews, the researcher will transcribe them. Once the interviews are transcribed, the researcher will analyze them to identify themes that have appeared. The researcher will indicate themes that frequently occurred in the transcripts.

### Conclusion

The researcher will give voice to the participants by using adult mentor and teen mentee interviews and mentor participant journals. The researcher will listen to their perceptions and views without influencing their responses. Since adult mentors and teen mentees are directly affected by teenagers leaving the church, their answers should be highly valued. Both the adult mentors and the teen mentees are part of the church family. For example, if a family loses one of its members, then the family will be impacted to some degree. The church family is the same as any other family, because it will be missing a vital component if teenagers leave the church after high school. Ernest Stringer, author, and lecturer at Curtin University in Perth, Australia, proposes that action research gives silent research subjects a voice not provided in other forms of academic research.<sup>184</sup>

### Implementation of the Intervention Design

The researcher implemented the sixteen steps of the intervention design. Each step progressed from IRB approval through the mentor training, mentor and mentee meetings, interviews and identifying themes in the interview transcripts.

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<sup>184</sup> Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2013), 212.

## Program Approval and Adult Recruitment

Once IRB approval (Appendix A) was given, the researcher presented the mentoring program for teenagers to the church. The researcher met with the church council to explain the purpose and plan for the program (Appendix B). The council voted to permit the program to proceed, and the council chair signed a permission form (Appendix C). Following council approval, the researcher presented the program to the congregation and announced an interest meeting for adults to serve as mentors (Appendix D). At the adult mentor interest meeting, ten adults attended. The researcher presented the program and the expectations for each participant. Potential participants received an application (Appendix E) to determine their eligibility to serve. Also, they received a background check approval form from *Protect My Ministry*. The researcher gave one week for the potential participants to decide about serving in this program. Seven adults agreed to participate, and three adults declined to participate. The researcher provided the seven adults with an adult consent form (Appendix F) to be completed before proceeding.

## Teen Recruitment

The researcher scheduled a teen recruitment meeting following the adult mentor recruitment meeting. At the meeting, nine teenagers and their parents attended. The researcher read the teen recruitment letter (Appendix N), explained the program, and answered questions related to the program. The researcher provided parental consent forms (Appendix O) and teen assent forms (Appendix P) to families that were interested in the program. Of the nine teenagers, six teenagers and their families agreed to participate.

## Adult Mentor Pre-Training Interviews

The researcher scheduled interviews with each of the adult mentors. The researcher allotted an hour for each interview and interviewed all seven mentors. In addition to these

interviews, the researcher interviewed one of the two adults who declined to participate. During these interviews, the researcher asked the mentors a series of questions (Appendix G), and they were video recorded. The researcher saved the videos to a password-protected external drive. The researcher transcribed the interviews.

### Mentor Training

Mentors attended training events to prepare them for their sessions with their teen mentees. The researcher conducted five meetings and discussed various teen-related topics. Also, in these meetings, the researcher presented ideas for the sessions with the teenagers and provided models for these sessions (Appendices H-L). The researcher conducted these meetings on five Tuesday nights during January and February at 6 PM in the fellowship hall. The researcher instructed the mentors on various topics and provided basic biblical training in relation to these topics. In these sessions, mentors were taught the scriptural command to train the next generation in the faith. Also, the researcher explained the use of mentoring in Scripture with the Lord Jesus mentoring His disciples as the prime example.

### Mentor and Mentee Meetings

Adult mentors and teen mentees met on five Tuesdays in March, April, and May. These meetings were conducted at 6 PM and lasted for one hour each. Mentors and mentees shared a meal and participated in a group activity. Following the group activity, the mentors and mentees met with each other without the group.

### Adult Mentor Post-Training Interviews

The researcher scheduled interviews with each of the adult mentors after the training sessions (Appendix M). After the mentors and mentees met for one month, the researcher conducted the final adult mentor interview (Appendix U). The researcher allotted one hour for

each interview and interviewed all seven mentors. During these interviews, the researcher asked the mentors a series of questions, and they were video recorded. The researcher saved the videos to a password-protected external drive. The researcher transcribed the interviews.

#### Teen Mentee Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews with the teen mentees. An hour was allotted for each interview and all six mentees were interviewed. During these interviews, the researcher asked the mentees a series of questions (Appendix R), and they were video recorded. The researcher saved the videos to a password-protected external drive. The researcher transcribed the interviews.

#### Determine Themes

The researcher searched for recurring themes in the interview transcripts. To determine the validity of the research, the researcher performed data triangulation. Tim Sensing supports data triangulation as he stated, “Three analytical frames of reference will emerge from your triangulating the data, namely, the insider’s, outsider’s, and yours.”<sup>185</sup> The researcher detected various themes from the interviews, which were given by the mentor and mentee insiders. Then, this data was presented to faculty member outsiders for their review. These themes will be presented in the next chapter.

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<sup>185</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 197.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This research was compiled using interviews. The project was to train adult mentors to work with teenagers at Taylorsville Church of God to address the problem of teens leaving the church after high school. Results were analyzed and synthesized based on the adult mentors' and teenagers' replies to the interviews. In this action research project, adult church members volunteered to serve as mentors to work with teenagers in the church. After recruitment, seven adults consented to participate in the program. The mentors consisted of six females and one male. Three mentors are between 35 and 49 years of age. The other four mentors are between 50 and 76 years of age. The researcher used pseudonyms in place of the mentors' real names. Before training, the researcher interviewed the adult participants and one adult that declined to participate. These adults participated in a mentor training program before being assigned to a teen mentee. The researcher conducted a second interview with the adult participants following the training. Adult mentors met with the teenagers for one-hour sessions. After one month of mentor and mentee meetings, the researcher interviewed the adult mentors for the final interview. After recruiting the adult mentors, the researcher recruited teenagers for the program. Following recruitment, six teenagers agreed to participate. The mentees consisted of four teen females and two teen males. Three teenagers were 13, one was 14, one was 15, and one was 17. In this project, the researcher used pseudonyms for the mentees' real names. The researcher conducted a single interview with each teenager. The researcher conducted interviews to determine the possible reasons teenagers leave Taylorsville Church of God after high school. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher looked for recurring themes. The following themes were evident: Spiritual Health, Parents, Relationships, and Competing Forces. Relationships were divided into Connections and Role Models.

## **Theme 1: Spiritual Health**

An individual's spiritual health is vital for a teenager to remain in church after high school. One's faith in Christ contributes to their commitment to the local church. Stories from participant interviews support that the younger the age of salvation, the greater the commitment to the church.

One adult mentor named Mary is 63 years old and has attended Taylorsville Church of God her entire life. She said that she was saved at the age of 12. Mary stated, "I was sitting with my friends during a Sunday morning service, but regardless of the peer pressure, I went to the altar and surrendered my life to Christ." Mary expressed that her life was never the same after her salvation experience. This experience made a difference in her life from that moment forward.

A second mentor, Caroline, is a 68-year-old female raised by her parents who served as pastors. She was saved at the age of five and has been part of a church throughout her lifetime. She credits this experience with her lifelong growth in Christ and her commitment to the church.

When Kelly, who is now 38 years old, was twelve years old, she was saved at a Vacation Bible School service. In her teen years, she went away from the Lord and began to live an unfaithful life. However, her childhood experience made a lasting impact on her life that would later aid in her commitment to Christ. When Kelly married her husband Aaron at 21, she said that he "brought her back around," and she rededicated her life to the Lord.

A mentor named Sarah, who is 76 years old, told about her salvation experience at the age of eleven. As a young girl, she had always heard that the blood of Jesus saves a person and gives them eternal life. When she was eleven years old, she surrendered her life to the Lord at a spring revival at her church. Sarah remembered how excited she was to have a relationship with

her Lord and Savior. After she was saved, she felt such peace each night when she went to bed. She stated, “it was like the presence of the Lord when I would lay down at night would come so strong, and I couldn’t wait to go to bed.” Sarah began her journey with the Lord Jesus and has continued to walk with Him for over sixty years.

Another mentor spoke about the need for a salvation experience at a young age. Christina is 48 years old and said that she was saved at the age of 10. She admitted that she had not always acted the way a Christian should, but her early commitment to Christ helped her get back where she needed to be.

An adult member named Tom, who declined to participate in the mentoring program, was raised in Taylorsville Church of God. Tom stated, “I was brought up and taught the ways of salvation, what’s right and what’s wrong.” During his teen years, he began to lose interest in the church. However, during this time he said, “I knew I was doing wrong the whole time. You can’t get away from the way you were brought up.”

After several years away from the church, Tom made a commitment to Christ. His wife, Susan was attending another church and she got saved. He said her pastor came by one day to visit him. Tom said, “I believe the Lord was in it because I was under heavy conviction.” Pastor Stanley Darden expressed “he was led by the Lord” and Tom said, “he wanted to pray with me there at the house but I wouldn’t surrender.” A few weeks after this visit, Tom returned to Taylorsville Church of God. On a Sunday in June 1976, he stated, “I went to the altar and I confessed every sin I knew to confess in my old dirty life.” Tom was 25 years old and he said, “I’ll never forget where it was at.” After 45 years, he expressed, “I’ve had no desire, had no desire since He saved me to ever go back. I never had the desire to go back.”

Tom lamented of his personal belief that “young people are losing the reverence, the fear of God. They see Him as a loving God, merciful, graceful and we should.” However, he stressed that young people must know that “God is a God of judgment and wrath and I believe we have lost some of that.” Tom emphasized that young people need to learn this fact about the Lord God early in life. He believes that this knowledge will promote a teen’s spiritual health and their commitment to the church.

Bill is the only male to serve as a mentor in this program. He attended church throughout his life but sporadically attended after he was an adult. However, Bill, who is now 75 years old, surrendered his life to Christ at 54. He knew there was a genuine change in his life after his conversion. Bill has continued to be active in the church since his salvation experience.

Another mentor named Lauren had a different experience than the other mentors. Lauren, a 37-year-old female, had an experience that she believed was salvation. She was at youth camp when she was fourteen or fifteen years old. The camp evangelist prayed with her to be saved, and she was elated about this experience. However, when Lauren got home, “she returned to her rebellious friends” and did not continue in her surface relationship.

Lauren’s genuine salvation experience occurred about 18 years later in a drug house. She lived in a drug house with several other people and was separated from her family and church family. The Lord began to work in her life, and she found a Bible in the house. Lauren started reading this Bible, because as she said, “The Holy Spirit took over and gave me a desire to read the Word.” As she read the Bible, she was still using drugs and living in the drug house. She continued to read God’s Word for about a year, and then she prayed to give her heart to Christ while surrounded by drugs. Shortly after her salvation, she left the drug house and went to jail



but continued to pray and read the Bible. Lauren said, “something changed in me, and I haven’t been the same since.”

Today, Lauren is an active member of the church and is involved in the church’s leadership. She was away from the church for many years in a sinful lifestyle, but she credits the prayers of her Christian family and church family for the miracle in her life. Even in a drug house far away from God, the Lord worked in her life and used the foundation that she received as a child in the church to bring her to a relationship with Christ. Lauren, as a church leader, exhorts young people to “filter everything through the Word.” She believes that teenagers must filter all they see, hear, and do. As they filter everything through God’s Word, they will learn how to live a life according to God’s Word. Lauren stressed for teens to “always choose what His Word says over what your peers are saying.” Also, she said, “just always put Jesus first and His Word and apply that to your life.”

Mary believed that her childhood salvation experience influenced her connection to the church. Following her conversion, she was discipled in the faith. She theorized that some young people had a salvation experience, but parents and the church failed to properly disciple them. In her opinion, many of these young people left the church because they lacked discipleship. Mary advised young people to “never get enough of the Lord, keep seeking Him for His guidance in your life.” Caroline agrees that a possible reason for teenagers leaving the church is because they do not have depth in their relationship with Christ. Some young people develop a surface relationship, but they fail to grow and lose faith.

Sarah pointed out the need to address a teenager’s spiritual health first. She emphasized how vital God’s Word is in one’s life. She states, “One thing that I have discovered is that God will speak to you through the Word, it’s not just the written Word of God, which is His Word,

but He will quicken that Word to you on a personal basis when you need it.” Referring to her mentee, Sarah expressed, “that I hoped she could develop that.” One must allow God’s Word to speak into their lives concerning the needs they face daily.

The researcher conducted mentor training sessions to prepare the adult mentors to interact with their teen mentees more effectively. Referring to the training, Kelly stated she was reminded of the “importance in being prayed up and studied up to prepare for the devotions each week.” She wanted to be prepared to assist her mentee in their spiritual growth.

Sarah expressed the most important information she received from the training was, “the importance of communicating to the teen love and acceptance, while at the same time holding forth a godly lifestyle as important.” She continued, “the training refreshed me in the Biblical principles and helped to sharpen me.”

According to Mary, the mentor training program will enhance the teenagers’ spiritual health. She stated, “I think it’s helped me grow spiritually because the emphasis that we should always pray and always read our Bibles but I think it has caused me to do that more because I don’t want to just say words to my mentee to just be saying them. I want to live the life that is important to show that example to them.” Mary believes that the mentoring experience will help teenagers, but also can promote the spiritual health of the adult mentors. Another mentor Lauren agreed with Mary. Referring to the mentoring program, Lauren stated, “I think it will help them to build their lives on God’s foundation.”

Caroline spoke hopefully about the mentoring program. She stated, “so for today, I’m hoping it will encourage teenagers to stay in church. I’m hoping it will encourage them to have a more personal relationship with Christ than when they first came into the program.”

Regarding the mentoring program, Christina stressed, “I think it will be even more beneficial because we will have more to participate. It will be a boost for the whole church because they can see how much our teenagers have grown spiritually, not necessarily numerically.”

Referring to the mentoring program, Kelly believes that “it will help them grow closer to the Lord which is always a good thing.” She also could see the program “impacting more people for the Lord in general.” Kelly stated, “hopefully they’ll grow in the Lord and do what He’s asking them to do. Hopefully, it will spark a stirring in the young people which will hopefully spill over to the adults as well.”

#### Spiritual Health: Teenagers’ View

One teenager named Charlotte expressed the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. She believes that teenagers may leave the church because “it becomes monotonous if they don’t have a real relationship with God.” To Charlotte, one’s relationship with God and their spiritual health is the key to remaining connected to the church.

A teenager in the mentoring program named Alex expressed his expectations about participating. He stated that being a mentee would “help me get closer to God.” If Alex grows closer to God, then he will hopefully become more connected to the church.

Another teenager, Chloe, wanted to participate in the mentoring program because she stated, “I would like to get closer to Him as much as I can.” She continued, “I feel like God wanted me to be closer to Him.” Chloe testified that she is a follower of Jesus Christ and she said, “I feel like singing and talking about Him and reading His Word even when I’m not in church.” She hopes to enhance her faith as she progresses through the mentoring program.

The only other male teenager, Michael agreed with Alex and Chloe about the reason he joined the mentoring program. Michael participated “because it will help you get closer to God.” He wants a deeper relationship with the Lord as he works with his mentor throughout the program.

In the short time period since the program began, the researcher has observed some indicators that the teenagers’ spiritual health has improved. The teenagers in the mentoring program are attending services more regularly. Also, the majority of the teens are attending the weekly prayer service. Other possible indicators include a teenager joining the choir, one started singing solos, and another has opened the worship service with Scripture reading. Another indicator that the young people are improving in their spiritual health is that most of them are regularly coming to the altar for prayer. These indicators are hopeful signs that the teens’ spiritual health has improved, but one cannot be completely sure by judging from these results. However, the researcher has noticed improvements that could indicate a promising future for the church.

## **Theme 2: Parents**

A second theme that has appeared in the interviews is the influence of one’s parents. An individual’s parents play a crucial role in whether their children continue in church after high school.

Bill spoke of his father's influence on his faith and commitment to the church. He was not saved as a child or teenager, but church attendance was mandatory in his father’s house. His father taught him the importance of having a church family, even though he did not make a faith commitment for many years. As an adult, Bill was not faithful to the church, but he never forgot his father's lessons. At 54 years old, Bill gave his heart to the Lord Jesus in May 2000 on his

father's birthday. He said that his father told him, "That was the greatest birthday gift he could ever receive." His father was relieved that his training culminated in Bill being saved after many years. Bill's father died in October 2000, knowing that his son was a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

Bill's father's past included making and selling alcohol to the mountain community he lived in. However, the Lord changed his life, and he used his experiences to train Bill to live right. One lesson he taught Bill was to never lie. He encouraged him to tell the truth no matter how difficult and painful it may be. Before Bill's salvation, he raised his two children with the principles that his father taught him. He warned his children to never lie to him but always speak the truth. He also emphasized the importance of church attendance, even before he was saved. He and his wife prioritized having their children in church, which he learned from his father.

Bill's mother was not a Christian until about ten years before her death. As Bill was growing up, she preferred to spend time with her friends knitting and crocheting. Even though she was not a Christian, his mother mentored him to live right. On one occasion when Bill was about eight or nine years old, he and his friends were playing in his yard when an African-American man passed by. Bill made a derogatory statement about the man, but he did not realize his mother heard him. He said, "My mom called out all three names and I knew I was in trouble." She continued, "Billy Ray, you know I did not bring you up to do that." Then, Bill's mother stated, "You walk down there and you apologize to that man and you better say it loud enough that I can hear it up here." Bill went to the man and apologized to him. He said, "I had to practically scream because there was about four houses in between." Bill's mother did not give him any further discipline and she said, "I think that taught you more than anything else." She taught him that all people have value and should be treated with respect.

Bill lived in a broken home and had struggles with his stepparents. He described his stepmother as self-righteous and that she was always judgmental. Her critical attitude hindered their relationship from developing into a healthy one. Bill's stepfather never became a good parental figure because of his abusive behavior. He told about when his stepfather hit his mother and his sister. He explained that this incident was the final blow to an already poor relationship, and it triggered a quick response. As Bill watched his mother and sister being assaulted, he could not take it anymore. He hit his stepfather, which led to Bill having to leave home. These negative experiences with his stepparents have left scars in Bill's life that have affected him through the years. An abusive stepfather and a hypocritical stepmother did not encourage Bill to serve the Lord and be committed to a local church.

In Bill's journey to accepting Christ Jesus as Savior and living for him, he believes that his father's influence had the most significant impact. His father's love, faithfulness, and appropriate discipline made a difference in his life. Bill's father laid a foundation that he could rely on when he became an adult and throughout his life.

Bill discussed his granddaughter, Angie and her absence from the church. He said, "you know Ray wasn't interested in going to church." Ray is Bill's son and Angie's father. Ray is a single father who shared joint custody of Angie when she was growing up. Bill continued "The only time that she went was when June and I brought her. I think after she got 15 or 16, she said that's not for me." Bill and his wife June helped raise Angie. When possible, they took Angie to their church with them until she decided to no longer attend.

Regarding parents, Caroline proposes that teenagers leave the church mainly because their parents do not comprehend the importance of church attendance. She has attended church throughout her life, and she adamantly believes that her parents are responsible for her longevity

as a church member. Caroline was raised in a strict, disciplined home. She could not participate in many activities that her peers participated in. However, she counts her upbringing as a positive experience because it gave her “a foundation to build upon that was solid.”

Sarah and her husband, Daniel, were both raised in loving homes. Their parents provided for them and were always there. She admitted that she was sheltered from many things going on in the world. Her life centered around the family farm where she was raised. Sarah admitted that her family did not have much according to the world’s standard, but they believed in spending time together. Her parents realized the importance of cooking a meal and “sitting down together in a relaxed atmosphere.” Sarah said her parents taught her how vital it was to be together, talk, and listen to one another. She believes that many young people are simply “missing that home, family atmosphere more than anything else.” Sarah continued, “Unfortunately, many young people and their parents are constantly going from one place to another, not allowing for deepening these crucial relationships.” She lamented that too many young people are being raised without stability and security in their homes. She asserts that “kids growing up, teenagers especially need security.”

A crucial part of a stable and secure Christian home is regular church attendance. Sarah’s parents attended a Southern Baptist church when she was a child. Her parents took her and her siblings to church every week. Church attendance became a regular part of Sarah’s early years.

Parents broadly impact a young person’s spiritual health and relationship with Christ. Kelly said it is vital whether one’s parents have a relationship with the Lord. Young people can detect if their parents have an authentic connection or are artificial. It is crucial that parents have genuine faith in the Lord for their children to have a healthy relationship with Christ. Parents assist their children by laying a foundation of beliefs. According to Kelly, young people with a

“firm foundation will help them maneuver this world.” Without a firm foundation, young people may search for answers from sources contrary to the Christian faith. Kelly asserts that “parents must provide a stable home life and prioritize building a foundation for their children to grow spiritually.”

Christina agrees with Kelly that parents play a pivotal role in their child’s commitment to the church and spiritual health. Christina expressed that parents must attend church when their children are young to build a foundation in the faith. She said if they do not participate with their children, then “they are going to see the church is not important to their parents and it’s not going to be important to them either.” One cannot underestimate the influence that a parent has on their child. They are in church for a small amount of time and school for more extended periods, but one or both parents typically see them each day. Naturally, a child will imitate the behavior and adopt the values of their parents. Christina lamented that “if parents are unfaithful to the church, their children will most likely be even less committed.”

Christina spoke fondly of her parents’ influence in her life. They gave her a positive upbringing that affects every area of her life beneficially. They provided for her and took care of her needs. Her parents were always there to offer advice and pray for her about any issue. She stated that her parents created a “calming presence” that aided in her physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual growth in the home.

Ultimately, Christina credits her parents with her lifelong commitment to church life. She was taught that “church is very important as a young child. It’s not something that is optional.” When Christina was a young adult, she remembered Hebrews 10:25 from her childhood and believed it was necessary to obey as an adult. This scripture commands that believers do not forsake assembling as the body of Christ. She saw the need to be together with other believers



and asserts that “we’re stronger together.” She also contends that if one strays “away from the pack, you are more open to trouble.” Every Christian needs their faith community to support and encourage them. Christina’s parents made church attendance and involvement a priority during her childhood and teen years. Therefore, she makes church life a priority for her and her family as an adult. She believes if one makes it an integral part of one’s life, then they will “look forward to it” and “not be something you dread doing.”

Tom also gave credit to his parents for having him in church and a result of him “being in church I knew right from wrong.” His mother was a homemaker and his father was a truck driver. They both made sure that Tom and his siblings stayed in church when they were young. His mother was regularly in the church, but he stated his father “was at church regular when he was in off the truck” and “especially in his latter years.” His parents’ influence shaped Tom’s view of the church and its importance. He stated, “I was raised in a Christian home. There’s no doubt or I wouldn’t be in church now.”

Regarding the importance of parents and their child’s commitment to Christ and the church, he said, “I think it begins in the home. People blame the church, but it’s in the home.” He continued, “If the parents aren’t faithful the young ones won’t be faithful. It starts there.” Tom lamented, “If they don’t care to miss church then the kids are going to follow right along.”

One having godly parents is vital in the spiritual development of a young person. Lauren spoke about the difficulties that come with parenting teenagers at this time. She believes that the age gap creates communication issues that make it challenging to know what to say to her teenage daughters. Lauren finds it easier to talk to other people’s children than her own. With all the challenges, she believes that young people need their parents to “love them, teach them the truth, and be compassionate towards them.” She acknowledges the important place that her

mother had in her coming to faith in Christ after years of rebellion. Referring to her mother, Lauren stated, “she’s a faithful, Spirit-filled woman of God. She doesn’t just read her Bible but she lives it, she applies it. Who you see here at church is who we see at home. She don’t change for anybody.” Every young person needs parents that will hold this place in their lives.

After the mentor training, Sarah remembered her father and his Christ-like qualities. She said, “Thinking about my daddy, Daddy was a true friend and neighbor. If anybody needed help in the community they knew they could come to him and get it.” Sarah expressed, “I would like to be someone where people knew if I really needed help I could go to her and she would help me. I think that would be important to a teenager.” She desires to be a person that her teen mentee could comfortably approach if she needed any help.

Following the mentor training, Bill believed it was good for the teenagers and the adult mentors. However, he stated, “maybe we should start a mentoring class for parents.” Bill believes that a mentoring program for parents will help them realize their importance in training their children in the faith and connecting them to the church.

Kelly realized after the training the importance of “a parents’ class or group that gets together. They could share about what the Bible says about rearing children and different things like that.” She continued, “you could spend time discussing the Bible, discussing specifically on that topic and then letting them go back and apply it to their lives.”

During the mentor training, the researcher highlighted the importance of parents in the spiritual training of their children. Sarah expressed the need for “speaking the truth, but speaking it in love.” Referring to teenagers, she stated, “they perceive it as you are giving me information, you are telling me how it ought to be but they don’t sense the love connection.” Sarah pointed

out the need for parents to show love to their children without simply giving information and rules.

Caroline lamented a fact that was highlighted in the mentoring program. She said, “I guess one thing that I wish I had known was how many young people statistically we lose. It’s not just our church but the church as a whole. It all goes back to the parenting. We are missing the parenting component. We can’t make parents be perfect.” Her observation is that parents play a key role in their children leaving church when they are older.

After discussing the perceived problem, Caroline recommended a possible avenue for assisting parents in training their children. She said, “we need, I don’t know if it is so much mentoring, but we need parenting classes or something for these parents.” She continued, “we need to have spiritual training for parents, not just spiritual training, they need to know how to be parents. They need to get the mentality I’m not their friend but I am their parent and I am the boss. That’s not popular today. We need to do a class on how to be a godly parent.”

Christina agreed with Caroline about the need to train parents. She stated, “Parents need to be trained. That would be beneficial for everybody but again if they are not going to come they need to be committed to get there. It seems like some parents are committed to everything but church.” She also emphasized that “providing things like the mentoring program and providing classes” for teenagers will assist parents in training their children. She stressed the importance of “making students and children a priority in the church. The sad side of that is if the parents don’t get them there then the church can do all these great things but if nobody is there then it won’t have any effect.”

Regarding the mentor training, Christina stated, “I am thankful for the time that was poured into the mentors. It helped remind me of how vital our youth are, and how important it is

to develop relationships with them. Parents must be committed to bringing them to sessions, especially in today's world, where there are so many distractions. However, we can do our part to encourage parents and students." Christina recognized the need to assist parents to promote their teens in a church mentoring relationship. The church cannot overemphasize the importance of parents in connecting teenagers to the church.

#### Parents: Teenagers' View

In Charlotte's view, many teenagers leave the church because their parents are no longer requiring them to go as when they were growing up. She said, "I think a lot is they are forced to go to church their whole lives by their parents, and when that's done being held over their head, they just stop."

Charlotte credited her family with guiding her in the Christian faith. She stated, "my whole family, because they've always been there for me." Charlotte's grandparents became her adopted parents and then her mother began to follow Christ when Charlotte was 13 years old. Her grandparents and mother played vital roles in training Charlotte to serve the Lord and His church. She participated in the mentoring program because she said, "Mom said you need to do this." Charlotte respected her mother's opinion enough to see the need to be mentored.

Chloe stressed the importance of her parents in her maturation process. Regarding the most important influences in her life, she identified that "the top people are my parents." She stated, "They always put me on the right road when I feel I should be on a different one. They definitely love and care for me. Even some times I don't like them, they still care." Chloe emphasized how vital her parents were in her life. She said, "They are definitely the people I would go to if I needed advice."

Regarding teenagers leaving the church after high school, Michael stated that it was “probably because a lot of their parents don’t come.” He continued, “Parents can say well I’ll miss this one and when they get old enough to make their own decisions then they’ll do what they did and not come.” Michael has been in church throughout his life and he said that his “dad and mom are the reason for his connection to the church.”

### **Theme 3: Relationships**

The researcher recognized that relationships continued to recur in the interviews. After analyzing the transcripts, the researcher determined that the relationships fit into two different categories, which are connections and role models.

#### **Connections**

A subtheme of connections was detected within the larger theme of relationships. The interviewees identified various individuals in the church or in areas outside the church that influenced their connection to the church. They did not necessarily develop close relationships with them, but their presence encouraged them and promoted their commitment to the local church. Following the training, Sarah stated, “the mentoring program is about making a connection.” Like Sarah, other mentors and mentees expressed that forming these connections are essential to continuing in church life.

Mary feels that a lack of involvement for young people in church life causes them to leave as they grow older. As she grew up in the church, she said that children were “put in the background and didn’t become involved in the church.” In her opinion, the church did not prioritize engaging children and teenagers in the past. As a result of not engaging young people, they did not connect to the church. Mary believes that teenagers building relationships with other people, of all ages, in the church is the key to them continuing in church life. Chap Clark stresses

the need that older generations should “intentionally empower the young to feel like they are important members of the church family” and find ways to celebrate each one.<sup>186</sup> Mary stresses that young people need from their church “spiritual support number one, to feel and know that the church loves them, a church that lifts them up in prayer.” She states that the church should focus on “keeping them involved in church and making them feel like they are a part of it.”

Lauren agrees with Mary that teens forming relationships with church people are vital to being connected to the church. She felt isolated from the church as a teenager because there were no other teenagers except for her cousin. No one in the church intentionally reached out to her during these crucial years to build a relationship. Lauren pointed out what she needed from her church during her teen years. She needed, “love, support, guidance with my walk with Christ and to just be encouraged because there is so much in this world that pulls us down.” Teenagers still need this from their church because, “it seems like a lot of teenagers deal with depression and things of that nature. It’s good to uplift them and encourage them.” Tom pointed to the time that Pastor Stanley Darden reached out to him. Pastor Darden was willing to connect with Tom to introduce him to Christ and encourage him to start a journey with the Lord.

Caroline attested to the importance of building relationships with others in the church. From her experience growing up as a pastor’s child, she realized the need for being connected to someone in the church. Without these connections, she would have felt like she did not belong to the church family. For teenagers in years past and the present, members of various generations need to build relationships. Adults and teenagers should have relationships where trust is developed. In these relationships, young people can confide in their adult mentors.

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<sup>186</sup> Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 42.

One can have difficulty forming relationships with younger generations if there is an apparent disconnect. Sarah believes there is a “disconnect between adults and teens” in the church. She continued, “I don’t always know what to say or how to connect or how to communicate.” When adults and teenagers feel disconnected, they will often not overcome this obstacle to form healthy, strong relationships.

Bill did not speak of relationships in the church encouraging him to remain in the church. During Bill’s childhood and teen years, he developed numerous relationships with individuals in his community; however, none were church members. Some of these people may have attended another church, but some did not attend any church. Referring to these individuals, he said, “hardly any of them went to church, but they knew right from wrong.” Bill said that they looked out for him and encouraged him in many areas as he matured.

Furthermore, Bill discussed the need for teenagers to form connections in the church and that he viewed the mentoring program as useful in achieving that goal. He lamented, “well I think it’s something we might have started a little while ago, because just look at the kids that have been here and have no desire.” Bill continued, “I just feel like if maybe that if churches, not just our church, but churches as a whole, would have started something like this a few years ago teenagers wouldn’t be out there strung out on drugs and stuff.” He referred to his granddaughter and said “Angie is one of the people I’m thinking about.”

Sarah believes that teenagers need “social gatherings, opportunities for them to get together with other teens.” However, she wondered “if kids today consider those things as important as we did.” On the other hand, she understands that “with teenagers, their peers are so important.” Sarah recognizes the difference in the priorities of the generations, but she asserts that spending more time with other teenagers in church will be beneficial.

Regarding the mentoring program, Mary stated, “I think it gives them a support system especially during their teen years when they are going through a lot of changes and facing a lot of obstacles.” She continued, “I think the sharing in the meetings has brought us closer together. I have felt a closeness not only to the mentees but to the other mentors. I think it’s just been good to get together.” The mentor training along with the mentor and mentee meetings have promoted a closeness between the different generations.

Lauren expressed her view of the mentoring program after the training. She stated, “I think it will help bridge the generation gap. That’s so important because it’s hard to relate to those who aren’t in your age bracket. You know every season of life is so different.” Lauren continued “You know the things that kids deal with even though we’ve been through it. The times change so much. It’s different for them and it’s hard for us to understand, and then vice versa. They haven’t lived the years that you know the elders have. You know they have that wisdom.” She said, “We just want to kind of bridge that and to help and for us to tap into our own level of wisdom. Because I think every generation has something to offer.” Lauren believes that the mentoring program will bring the various generations in the church together. She stated, “I think it will help them to get that personal connection to the church.”

Following the training and meeting with her mentee, Kelly shared her views of the potential impact of mentoring. She said, “it will grow our church, by having young people grow up and our church will keep going. Hopefully, we’ll have some good people to work in the church, good leaders, good mentors for their children, if they have children.”

Kelly also elaborated on information that she found helpful from the training. She shared, “When I was young, I didn’t have the best knowledge on how to choose friends. Being a good friend, I did pretty well with, but about choosing the right friends to be with I was not.” Kelly



stated, “It’s okay to not have many friends. I think that society thinks you should have friends bubbling from everywhere. I think that was one thing I was missing when I was growing up.”

Following the training, Sarah stated, “the mentoring program is about making a connection.” She said, “there’s always been some sort of barrier between generations. I think it helps to break down that generation barrier.” Then she continued, “I think any time relationships are strengthened, the church is strengthened. If relationships are strengthened, then families are strengthened. If families are strengthened, then the church is strengthened. I think it is bound to help in just that.”

After the mentor training, Christina stressed what she believes teenagers need from their church. She stated, “they need love, to know that they care about you and they are kind and loving.” She continued, “They are not condescending or judgmental, but are supportive and want you to succeed. You feel like you are part of the body. You’re not a lesser.”

Christina concluded about the mentoring program that “the best part is about relationships.” She said, “when you are just seeing these kids in church on Sundays and some of them don’t come every Sunday. There’s very little time to build relationships.” Christina went on to say, “Having a time just for them it lets them know how important they are. You’ve set aside a time to build a relationship with them.” She emphasized, “They know they are cared about and they are being heard without the mentor just talking. It makes them feel important and needed and valued.” Christina reported that “I think it has been extremely helpful and they can have a time to talk and be heard by adults and not just their friends or their teacher. It helps in the building of relationships for the future.”

In addition to helping teenagers build relationships, Christina stated, “It was a good time for fellowship for the mentors. It was a good time of relationship building with them. You don’t

have time in a service especially coming out of COVID.” In her opinion, she believes the mentoring program promotes relationships among the adult mentors and the teen mentees.

Following the training and meeting with the teen mentees, Caroline expressed that “for future generations I hope we can start it even earlier in their lives, not even have to wait until they are teenagers.” She realized the need to involve teenagers in the mentoring program earlier in life. Caroline proposed starting young people in the mentoring program as early as eight years old. In addition to starting mentoring earlier, Caroline said, “I wish our church as a denomination would have started mentoring programs as part of every church’s routine.” She believes that mentoring teenagers should be a priority in the Church of God on a national and international level.

Caroline stated, “I’m interested in seeing if the kids in the program if they stay in church when they get out of school. It’s going to take us a few years to see that for some of them. I am hopeful that we will see an increase in young people staying in the church through a program like this.” She continued, “I’m hoping it’s making a difference in some of their lives, well all of their lives, so they will stay in church and stay involved.”

Regarding the training sessions, Lauren realized “how important it is to make connections with the younger generations. It helped me to learn the best ways to bridge the gap between myself and my mentee.” Lauren understood the need to be intentional about connecting with teenagers.

#### Connections: Teenagers’ View

Regarding the mentoring program, Alex asserts that “it would be a good help for me and I get to see my friends and stuff.” He assumes that the mentoring program will help him to become more connected to the church. Also, he believes that this program will aid in developing

deeper friendships with other teenagers at church. As these friendships grow, they will be more connected to the church family. Alex stated after his first mentoring meeting that “he wanted to join the choir.” The following Sunday, Alex became the youngest male member of the choir.

Another teenager, Olivia wanted to join the mentoring program for different reasons than Alex. Olivia stated that she wanted to participate “because there’s a lot of bad stuff going on right now, with Ukraine, Russia and all that stuff.” She believes that this time together will be a comfort and encouragement to her.

Isabella expressed her views on the reason teenagers leave church after high school. She stated, “they don’t have a lot of people in the church that they can relate to, because not a lot of teenagers go to our church. If they don’t have a lot of people to be there with them then they might not want to go.” Her desire is to have more teenagers attending the church and that she will have more in common with those young people. Isabella and the other teen mentees appeared to connect with their mentors and with other mentors in the group. They consistently attended the meetings and participated in activities and discussions. Also, the teenagers in the program have improved in their church attendance and participation in church functions.

### Role Models

A subtheme within the theme of relationships is role models. Good role models can benefit a young person’s life, while a bad role model can have a detrimental effect. Role models are those individuals that young people can look to as ones to emulate. In order to become a good role model for a young person, an individual needs to develop a relationship and invest in the young person’s life to some extent.

Lauren emphasized the need for good role models in the lives of teenagers. Young people need role models to spend time with them and build healthy relationships. She spoke of when she

taught an elementary-age girls' class at church, and she observed as the girls became more open to her as the class proceeded. Lauren built relationships with these girls in the class that made them more comfortable in talking to her and the class. In creating these mentoring relationships, she believes that one must "let them have the floor and talk" and avoid being the only one talking. Lauren believes that a mentor should intentionally engage a young person in conversation. As a role model, one will show teenagers that their opinions and views are essential.

As Lauren grew up in the church, the ministry of Rick and Sharon Eller influenced her. Rick was the music minister and Sharon taught the children's and teen classes. Referring to Rick, Lauren said "he got me singing in the choir and he pushed me to do that. I remember him working with me, him and Sharon would work with me out in the fellowship hall with solos and different things." She remembered how "they took the time out of church to work with me one-on-one." In addition to encouraging Lauren to use her musical talents, Sharon urged Lauren to minister in other areas. In children's church, Lauren said, "we did puppets and they let me do the puppets." She stated, "I remember her letting me pick out the puppet and they went and bought me this puppet." Sharon taught the "Wednesday night teen class and even though it was only me and Chad, my cousin, she was faithful to be here to do that with us." However, Lauren lamented that "after they left we lost that." She said when the Eller's left the church no one took their place to minister to young people. She continued, "It seems like after they left we lost that and that's when I kind of sailed ship and my mind went other places." Lauren stressed the importance of having people who will "take that time out of church service and pour into kids."

A role model played an essential part in Bill's maturation process. When he was a child, his next-door neighbor was a woman in her eighties, and she was affectionately called Grandma

Spargo. When Bill was a young boy, he tried smoking cigarettes in his backyard. However, Grandma Spargo saw him, walked up behind him, and “grabbed him by his ear.” She invited Bill to her house and introduced him to books about westerns, along with *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Grandma Spargo told him that if he did not smoke again, he could come to her house and read any of these books. Bill said that she made a great impact on his life. He never smoked again, and he fell in love with western novels. After his mother and stepfather moved away to another state, Bill would come to stay with his father during his weeks with him. During his time with his father, he always stayed at Grandma Spargo’s house for one night. As an adult, he continued to visit her until she passed away. Grandma Spargo was an important mentor and role model in Bill’s life.

Bill also mentioned individuals in the church that are his role models. One person was a man named Lester who served as Bill’s Sunday School teacher for 25 or 30 years. Referring to Lester, Bill said, “His favorite phrase was you’re a good man.” Lester was always an “inspiration and a role model to me.” Another individual that influenced him was named Jack. Bill observed how Jack “lived his life and he has been an inspiration to me.” He stated, “I remember after I got saved in West Virginia that I came home and told Jack now you can truly call me Brother Bill.” Bill looked up to these two men and aspired to be more like them.

Mary had a positive experience with a mentor when she was a teenager. Her mentor was her Sunday School teacher, and her name was Louise. Mary was impressed by Louise’s passion for teaching the Bible, which instilled a desire in her to learn more. Mary spoke of another role model that she had in the church in her teen years named Joyce. Joyce was “very Christ-like, you could see that evident in her life. You saw a genuine Christ-like example.” She went on to say about Joyce, “she was real, she was trustworthy, a person of integrity, a person that you would

want to be like.” Due to Louise and Joyce’s influence, Mary wants to be a role model for young people, encouraging them to have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Mary stressed the importance of leading by example and not simply by words. As one leads by example, a mentor must display a concern for their mentee. One way to show concern is by listening to them. A mentor should practice active listening so that two-way communication is allowed. Mentees must be permitted to express their views and not simply listen to their mentors’ views. Mary added what she believed a good mentor should be like. She said they are “people who are willing and people who are willing to sacrifice that time. As a mentor, you need to be enthused about it, you know that it’s not a drudgery.”

Tom defined what he thought a good role model and mentor should be. Speaking about a role model, “one you can pattern your life after, I know you pattern your life after Christ, but you follow them as they follow Christ.” During his early years at the church, Tom referred to two men who were good role models. One man was George Wilson and he was Tom’s uncle and the Sunday School superintendent. George died when Tom was a teenager, but he made a great impact on his life. He said, “I knew he was a man of prayer and fasting.” He remembered when he was young that he “would go to visit his boys at his house on Sundays. I’d spend time with his son Jay on Sundays until we came back for church on Sunday night.” On these visits to George’s house, George “wouldn’t eat dinner, he’d be out in the barn praying for the church services.” Another male member that Tom admired was Clyde Hill. He served as the church treasurer and was always faithful. Tom was impressed by Clyde’s “faithfulness to God’s house.” He expressed that “those two stand out mostly.” Both of these men were models for Tom to follow.

Following George Wilson and Clyde Hill's example, Tom has been a role model for others through the years since he came to faith in Christ. He stated that "he hoped he had a good positive effect on some of those folks I worked around." He continued by referring to one coworker who was "especially hardened against religion." Tom said he "didn't personally lead him to the Lord but I worked with him for years and we would always talk Scripture." He said "it surprised me that he became a deacon in the church." Tom did not take credit for this man coming to Christ but hoped that his life had made a positive impact.

Caroline also had positive experiences with mentors. When she was in the fourth through sixth grades, she had a Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Carter. She said Mrs. Carter had a great impact on her life. This teacher inspired Caroline to be a better Christian. Another mentor named Regina taught Caroline to play the piano. She stated, "if you can't give God your best, then don't give him anything." These relationships with her mentors helped to encourage Caroline to grow in Christ. She said that both women were genuine and sincere. They lived by their values, which made them excellent role models for her to emulate.

Using her experiences with her mentors, Caroline proposed "functions that are needed as one builds a meaningful relationship with a teenager." She said that "she does much better when there is someone to hold her accountable." A critical component of a mentoring relationship is accountability. A mentor must hold their mentee accountable, which will aid in the young person's growth as they fulfill their commitments. Caroline continued, "once accountability has been established, a mentor should assist their teen mentee in setting goals. A mentor needs to work with their mentee to meet the goals and then celebrate when a milestone is reached."

Another critical aspect of a mentoring relationship is a mentor passing truth down to the next generation through their mentee. Caroline emphasized that "a mentor needs to make sure

that truth is communicated and passed down to the next generation.” In this way, a mentor occupies the place of a role model in a teenager’s life.

Kelly eluded to the qualities that make a good mentor. A mentor must be a godly role model that other people can follow. To be a good mentor, one must be trustworthy, attentive, offer godly advice, and be willing to pray for one’s mentee. She spoke about an excellent mentor from her life named Ellen. When Kelly was first married, she and her mother had significant relationship problems. Since Kelly and her mother did not have a strong relationship, she developed a strong bond with Ellen. Kelly emphasized how crucial it was that Ellen came into her life at the right time. Kelly stated that “Ellen helped her with a wide variety of issues in her life, from cooking to marriage questions.” Above all, Kelly continued, “Ellen has walked with her on her spiritual journey and offered godly counsel.” Ellen’s influence has aided Kelly in growing in Christ and her desire to serve in His church. Currently, Kelly teaches in the church’s children’s ministry.

Kelly also pointed out another mentor in her life. Her other mentor, named Christina, is serving as a mentor in the church’s mentoring program. She spoke about qualities that Christina had that made her a good mentor. Christina is “faithful to the Lord and dedicated to His work. She is honest and she has a boldness.” Kelly admitted to struggling with boldness. She said, “I have a hard time standing up and being bold when I need to be.” Regarding Christina, Kelly continued to say, “the boldness is something that I admire.” Another quality that Christina possesses is perseverance. One example of Christina’s perseverance is when there was a death in the church and she was in charge of taking a meal to the family. She stated, “she was going to take that food in the van, but her head hurt so bad” and “she was doing it in spite of all that.”



Kelly continued to say, “I have seen Christina push through on days that she didn’t really feel like it and days that have been really bad for her.”

Kelly’s role models, Ellen and Christina, both display non-judgmental love and encouragement in the Lord. She hopes to follow these women as examples. Both of these women are “not babes in the Lord, but mature in the Lord.” It is vital that a mentor is mature in Christ as one works with a teen mentee. Also, one should have patience to work with teenagers, like these two women. Kelly stated, “some people don’t have the patience for teens or it’s been a long time since they were a teen so they lack a little understanding. People that are willing and have a passion would be great.”

Adults in the church must intentionally invite teenagers into their lives. Sarah emphasized the need for mentoring relationships where “one opens up and allows a young person into their life to observe how one can trust God with the little things.” She referenced two mentors from her life who made a drastic impact on her. Sarah is a member of the Christian organization Aglow International, and these two mentors within this organization gave her godly counsel for many years. She first attended an Aglow meeting in 1967, but it was ten years later when these mentoring relationships began to develop. The two Aglow mentors worked with Sarah to prepare her for leadership within the organization.

These two females were pivotal in making Sarah, the person she is today. She applauded their honesty and acceptance. She said, “if she made mistakes, they accepted her but helped her get everything straight, and their attitude toward her did not change.” One mentor, Grace, was genuine and let Sarah see when she made mistakes and accepted responsibility for them. Grace was “good to constantly encourage and constantly point out areas to grow” and where she believed that Sarah could serve well. Grace was “always calling us up to a higher place.” Grace

served as regional director of Aglow, and she lived in another state, but the second mentor was local and mentored Sarah regularly. This second mentor, Martha, played a vital role in walking beside Sarah through some challenging days.

Sarah experienced a devastating divorce. Her husband deserted her for another woman, leaving her and their 16-month-old son behind. Sarah admitted at this time in her life; she was a “wreck.” Martha met with her on a one-on-one basis, and she said that Martha was “instrumental in me being able to forgive and be completely healed of hurt.” Referring to Martha, Sarah stated, “I knew I could trust her to love me still and to tell me the truth.” Martha and Grace were there for Sarah when she needed them the most, and they continue to be sources of encouragement throughout her life.

These relationships led Sarah to a Bible study, where she met another mentor named Roger. In this Bible study, Roger also helped Sarah to grow in her knowledge of Scripture and her walk with the Lord. Through Roger’s influence, she learned to wait on the Lord and just rest in His presence. He helped her to learn to depend on the Lord more in the midst of her troubles.

Sarah asserts that one can mentor others naturally in one’s daily walk. However, she expressed that she has always wanted to “pass on what’s been given to her.” Sarah stated, “she would like to be the one that a young person can trust to give wise advice when they need it.”

A mentor should be wise and loving to guide and help a young person. Christina believes that a mentor should be “older than you because they have more life experience.” As an adult mentor has more life experience than a young person, they will likely have more knowledge to instruct them. One who accepts the role of mentor in the church should be more spiritually mature than the young mentee to encourage them in their growth. Christina also points out the necessary components in a healthy relationship between a mentor and mentee. First, the mentor

must seek to “build a relationship with the young person.” Before a relationship can develop, one must earn trust with another individual. One’s mentor needs to be someone a teen mentee can talk to in confidence. As the relationship grows, a mentee will know they can depend on their mentor. A mentor will give wise counsel and pray for their mentee. It is the primary function of a Christian mentor working with a teen mentee to “help them as a person to grow spiritually.”

Christina discussed a church member who displayed the qualities of a good role model. She stated, “Ellen Hill is a good role model. She’s a prayer warrior. She knows that God is a God of impossibilities. She knows that with Him all things are possible.” Christina continued describing Ellen, “she has lived through some difficult situations with her husband being an unbeliever because when she married him he was an unbeliever and she was too. She has been through some very traumatic events in her life in dealing with him and the death of her son.” Christina said, “ she has not wavered in her faith. She is a very strong and grounded prayer warrior.” As Christina described Ellen, she expressed her aspiration to be like her as a role model for young people.

Following Ellen’s model, Christina stressed what she viewed as a good mentor. She stated that they should be “faithful to the church in paying their tithes and to their attendance of being present at services. You don’t want someone who is wishy-washy and that’s not grounded in the faith. You need someone who has been grounded and tested in the faith. If they are not faithful to the church, then they will not be faithful to a mentoring group.”

After the mentor training, Christina offered advice for teenagers in the church. She stated, “It’s very important to hang around with the people that you want to be like, like that are godly.” Then she said, “You become like those that you hang around with. So if you hang around with

ungodly people eventually that's going to have an effect on you and take you to places that you don't want to go."

Caroline expressed the qualities she believes a mentor should possess. She stated, "The qualities are consistency and faithfulness and being genuine, not hypocritical." Caroline continued to stress what a mentor should be like. She said, "They are faithful, consistent and they live what they talk about."

Following the mentor training, Sarah realized the importance of easily starting conversations with a young person. She said, "some people have a knack to get into a conversation with other people. You know Daniel (Sarah's husband) has it." Sarah lamented that she "never thought that I had that." She finds it difficult to start a conversation with a young person or a person of any age. She continued, "once I know somebody, then I can, I think that would be important." Sarah needs longer to develop a relationship before feeling comfortable conversing with a teenager. After the training, she does not feel the same pressure, but was encouraged to allow the conversation to progress naturally without placing demanding expectations on herself. Sarah states, "I think it is important to put yourself on another person's level so they feel comfortable telling you about themselves without them even knowing it." She understands that she simply needs to take time to share and listen to her teen mentee without being controlled by any preconceived ideas.

After the mentor training, Mary expressed that she learned that it is important to assist teenagers in setting goals. She stated, "I think it's important to set a goal, have certain benchmarks, do follow-up, and get feedback from them." Also from the training, she pointed out, "listening is very important." One should listen intentionally to young people. Another important

factor is celebrating a young person's accomplishments. Mary said, "reinforce their accomplishments to give them that self-confidence that they need."

Mary continued to discuss the impact of the mentor training sessions. Referring to the training she said, "it helped her to see the importance of investing your time in our teens." Also, she stated, "it helped prepare us before meeting with them."

Lauren pointed out the information from the training that she considered most beneficial. She expressed that "understanding that listening is just as important as talking. I could have used that lesson a long time ago." Lauren discovered how vital it is to listen to young people instead of only talking. It is crucial to have open channels of communication. Overall, Lauren expressed her view of the mentor training when she stated, "it also helped me to be fully prepared in becoming a mentor."

After the training, Kelly expressed her opinion on how the mentoring experience will affect a young person's relationships. She said, "It gives them a good example with the mentors to follow after instead of a worldly one. It gives them a good relationship with the mentor that has the same beliefs." She continued, "They may not have a friend with those same beliefs but in the mentor they have that person that believes the same as them which could draw them closer together."

Sarah lamented that "at 76 years of age, I'm really out of touch with what's going on in their lives. I try to listen." She said, "we took our granddaughter Dana out to lunch for her birthday and her mom had happened to have gotten her a couple of DVDs on Spiderman. She talked the whole time we were together because it was about Spiderman. I realized if we can ever touch base with what they are interested in, that will make a difference." Sarah realized the

importance of finding common ground with her granddaughter, which is vital when dealing with young people.

After meeting with her mentee, Sarah detected a connection forming. Sarah said, “her mentee said will you please pray for me?” Sarah asked, “Is there something in particular?” Her mentee responded, “no, I just don’t feel well.” Sarah stated, “I think that teenagers are more open to our love than we think. Although, maybe we are old fuddy duddies to them, but at the same time they are more interested in our interest in them than they let on.”

During the mentoring training and after meeting with her mentee, Sarah proposed a future program to promote young people connecting to the church. She said that “Daniel and I talked about having the mentoring families over to their house.” Sarah continued, “we can do something simple.” She and her husband Daniel recommended calling the program “Bridge the Gap.” She wants to implement this program to deepen the relationships among the mentors and mentees.

Apart from the adult mentor and teen mentee meetings, Christina stated, “I really liked the sessions with the adults. I would have liked more meetings but you were being respectful of their time. I think those sessions were really valuable and good for not just the mentees but for the mentors as well.”

Christina also expressed that “the mentor training reminded me of the importance of fellowship and community. It felt good to be supported, encouraged, and affirmed by the pastor and other mentors in the group.” She continued, “the training helped me gain depth, clarity, and direction as I talked with my mentee. It made the mentee meetings much easier by bringing focus to them.”

Caroline referred to a crucial point that she received from the mentor training. She stated, "one thing I took away from the mentor training was the urgency of having a program like this. The training helped me in meeting with my teen mentee by providing a structured content and outline to guide through each session."

#### Role Models: Teenagers' View

Alex described what he viewed as a good mentor. He stated, "I think a teacher that you could look up to that would help you in every situation." Also, a mentor will be "kind, knowing, and helpful." According to Alex, role models will possess these qualities. He spoke about several people in his life that possess many of these qualities that have made an impact on him. His grandmothers, Ruth and Stella, his step-father named Dennis, and his friend Micah have all been influential in his life.

Chloe said that mentors should "lead young people into what God wants them to do." She continued to illustrate how a mentor can be a good role model for teenagers. One must "have courage to do all this and they have to have full attention on it." A mentor should be courageous and focused on their mentee's needs. Also, mentors must have "love for mentees." Regarding mentors working with teen mentees, Chloe believes "it can be frustrating to talk to them because we are from two different centuries. We can try to understand each other, even things are tougher today than they were back then." Then she said that mentors "need a good heart from the Lord." They need the Lord's help to serve as mentors that will be a role model for a teen mentee.

Referring to mentors, Olivia stated, "they should have patience, all the fruits of the Spirit, patience is one of them, probably someone with Christian characteristics that acts like Christ." She also said, "they need to be a teacher, maybe someone who knows a lot." Olivia mentioned her grandmother as the person who mentored her and was her role model. Her grandmother

Dora, who died in June, 2018, was a constant presence in Olivia's life. She taught her daily and set an example for Olivia to follow.

Charlotte believes that a mentor is "someone who helps you out and gives you advice. Probably someone who is older, with more wisdom or experience. Someone to help you on the right path." She continued that "you should have a relationship with your mentor if they are your mentor. I mean you could like be buddies or something. Someone who is nice and caring. Someone that is not going to judge you." Charlotte stated that her mentor "Christina and her youth pastor Abigail have been role models for her. She said, "they give me good advice."

Isabella defines a mentor as "somebody who guides you and helps you do stuff. And someone you can talk to." She continued that they should be "caring, a good listener, somebody that has wisdom, and a friend, like friendly." Isabella contends that these qualities are needed for an individual to be a good role model for teenagers.

Michael identified his role models and mentors as his "dad and mom, all my grandparents and his sister Abigail." He believes that an effective mentor is "somebody that is older, that helps you with stuff, teaches you about stuff and all that." Michael expressed "they should be easy to talk to, and they should be patient and nice."

#### **Theme 4: Competing Forces**

The interviewees highlighted another theme that affects teenagers remaining in church after high school: competing forces. Teenagers are influenced and distracted by various factors that compete with their commitment to the local church. According to Wesley Black, Professor of Youth Ministry, Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, he stated, "non-attenders allowed other activities and attractions to take their time."<sup>187</sup> Black stressed that many young

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<sup>187</sup> Wesley Black, "Stopping the Dropouts: Guiding adolescents toward a lasting faith following high school graduation," *Christian Education Journal* 5, no. 1 (2008): 40, accessed March 14, 2022.



adults have permitted these activities and attractions to weaken their commitment to church life and led them to drop out of church.

Lauren believes that secular influences impact young people continuing in church life. Individuals are under tremendous pressure to conform to prevailing societal views in their teen years. She stated that there is “just a curiosity of what else is out there.” Young people are often tempted to try new things. Lauren said she was influenced by secular music. She added that music might not affect other people, but it impacted her. In high school, she did not have any Christian friends, and they were listening to secular music, so she followed along. As Lauren tried new avenues that the world provided, she looked at church as boring and irrelevant. Ultimately, worldly influences prevailed in her life for many years, and she rebelled against the faith of her parents. Lauren stated, “I’ve learned now that I’m older that it’s okay to stand out. God made us all different for a reason. Especially as a Christian woman, we are called to be sanctified and called out from the world.” To live a sanctified life, she emphasized the need to surround oneself with good, godly friends. Lauren continued, “Make sure you have a group of friends that their lives align with the Word of God. That way there won’t be no peer pressure to do things outside of His Word.”

Tom had an experience that was similar to Lauren’s. Although Tom was raised in church, he stated that everything changed when “I got my driver’s license and began to miss church some.” He “quit school and went to work. In the workplace I met some fellows I was working with that were heavy into drinking and that’s where I was introduced to alcohol, I had one that sold drugs back then we called dope pills and a little marijuana. He was a pretty big dealer, so I worked among that for years.” Tom confessed that he “lived on it for nearly 10 years,” referring

to alcohol. Once Tom was married, he was surrounded by alcohol in his new family. He stated, “my daddy-in-law and them was heavy into alcohol and that didn’t help none.” Tom’s life was negatively affected at work and in his family and these influences continued to weigh him down. He reached a low point when he “sat in a jail cell on Easter morning watching people going to church.” These influences pulled Tom away from the church for many years and caused him to spiral downward. However, Tom said “I was heavy under conviction just like the Scripture says He was convincing me that I needed a Savior and He was convicting my soul.”

Today, Tom stressed that young people possibly leave the church because “there is so much out there that is drawing young people that keeps their minds probably more on some of this stuff than it is on church and the things of God.” He said, “I just know in my case it was the allurements of getting out in the world.” According to Tom, the problem with teenagers leaving the church continues to be that there is “too much to distract them.”

Bill discussed his struggle with peer pressure as he was growing up. He tried to avoid hearing, “you know you’re chicken if you don’t do this.” One example that Bill provided was “we got off the bus one day. This guy said you go in there and load your pockets up with lunch cakes and stuff. So I did and the store manager, Henry Anderson, caught me.” He continued, “he and my dad were good friends and he took me back to his office. He talked to me like I was a man. He said if I have to tell your dad it is going to hurt. He said I’ll tell you what I’ll do. He said if you’ll promise not to do this any more, I won’t tell your dad.” Bill’s peers were having a bad influence on him and leading him down the wrong path. After his experience with Henry Anderson, Bill said “I didn’t want to be labeled as a thief and something like that.”

In Bill’s view, teenagers believe that the world has more to offer than the church. The world provides enticing options such as “drinking, music and movies and things like that.” He

also pointed out the effect that secular influences have on teenagers. They are overly stimulated by the numerous factors and messages that continually bombard them. Bill believes that these factors cause them to be “wide open” and “you can’t get them to eat on time, can’t get them to take their baths, or go to bed.” The competing forces affecting teenagers today are causing many of them not to live disciplined lives with proper boundaries.

In one interview, Mary mentioned the prevalence of technology that commands a young person’s attention. She talked about the easy access to information through the internet on their cell phones, which most teens always have in their possession. Mary lamented that young people today are “much more knowledgeable than what I think they should be.” She believes that their exposure to technology has bombarded them with information beyond their years. Mary stated, “when she was a teenager in the 1970s, a young person did not have unlimited access to all sorts of information.” Andy Crouch laments the adverse effects that technological over-exposure has on children and teenagers. He stated, “We watch as the inevitable intensity of teenager relationships is raised to near-toxic levels by a sleep-depriving, round-the-clock deluge of messages. We feel helpless to prevent them from over-exposure, far too early, to the most violent and intimate facts of life.”<sup>188</sup>

Currently Mary is in her sixties and has changed her view of another temptation that can attract young and old people alike. She has shifted in her view of materialism. Mary stated, “the older I get the less value material things have. I realize how least important they are.” She continued, “That has really hit home to me lately. Since all that has happened, we work all our lives to get these things and then get my age and you realize your time on earth is short at best.”

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<sup>188</sup> Andy Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 25-26.

Mary lamented that you “spend all your life working for a house and what does it really mean?” She spent years working to acquire material possessions such as her dream house, but recently her husband was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and he is currently living in a memory care facility. Mary emphasized that material things are unimportant in the larger view of life and that one’s relationship with Christ should be first. She added that “if there’s anyone or anything in your life that would hinder your relationship from serving the Lord, get rid of them, get rid of those relationships or that thing that’s hindering you.”

Another issue contributing to young people leaving the church after high school is shame from one’s past. If a young person has become involved in a sinful practice, they may feel shame for their actions. Sarah stated, “I think the enemy always brings shame and makes you want to back off and not come back.”

Unfortunately, a church can negatively impact a young person’s life. Kelly pointed out that if the church teaches a doctrine but does not live according to it, it can harm a young person’s faith development. Hypocrisy is detrimental because it interferes with youth observing and following godly role models. Kelly states, “they have seen the gossiping and backbiting and the world that has got into the church,” and these experiences have caused many of them to leave the church.

Christina agreed that bad church experiences could cause young people to leave after high school. She said, “children see bad things happen in church, and when they grow up, they don’t want to be a part of that.” When one’s family and friends are hurt in the church, they have no desire to be part of it. These painful experiences have caused many young people to leave the church and never return. Christina also added that some individuals might use these hurtful

experiences as an excuse not to attend church. Regardless of whether it is hurt or an excuse, many young people are choosing to leave the church to avoid the risk of a distressful situation.

Sarah said, “you know when I was growing up, your home was your base, that and your church.” She continued, “You didn’t expect all the outside influence but now they have so much outside influence that we don’t really have clues about.” Sarah expressed, “I wish we had a teenager that could say, okay this is what is going on in our lives today, beware.”

Mary referred to the mentor training sessions and the forces that are competing for a teenager’s time and attention. She stated, “it helped me broaden my views.” Mary acquired a greater understanding of what teenagers’ face in the world today.

#### Competing Forces: Teenagers’ View

Alex discussed his opinion on why teenagers leave church after high school. He said, “they’re busy a lot and don’t have time to attend church.” In addition to young people not having enough time, Alex stated, many teenagers “think other things are more important than this.” Many teenagers believe that there are better things to do than going to church.

Chloe believes that teenagers are leaving the church after high school because “the devil is getting hold of them.” Also, many of “their close friends and family are influencing them.” They are influencing them to go in a different direction than directed by God. Many young people are “not listening to God about getting back on the right path, but instead want to do something completely different.”

Another teenager, Olivia, agrees with Alex and Chloe about the influences that are encouraging teenagers to leave the church after high school. She proposes the primary reason is that “they’ve been around it for so long, they want to try something different.” Olivia also

believes that “they’ve been influenced by other people their age.” To Olivia, it could be a combination of these two factors that move young people away from the church.

### **Summary of Results**

The researcher addressed the problem of teenagers leaving the church after high school by training adult members to mentor the church’s teenagers. Through a series of interviews with the adult mentors and teen mentees, the researcher identified several themes that continued to present themselves. The interviewees indicated that a teenager’s spiritual health, parents, relationships, which included connections and role models, and competing forces impacted their commitment to Taylorsville Church of God. By implementing a mentor training program, adult mentors intentionally interacted with teenagers to enhance their connection to the church.

Caroline stated, “It’s probably not feasible but I think it would be great if we met more than we are.” However, she admitted, “there’s just too many things to do. I think the kids have enjoyed it and the mentors have enjoyed it.” Caroline’s sentiments were repeated by the other mentors. The mentor training followed by the meetings with mentors and mentees appeared to be beneficial for everyone involved. Mentors became aware of the need to intentionally reach out to the church’s teenagers. Hopefully, these times together promoted relationship-building among the different generations. With the building of relationships, one would hope that young people will become more connected to the church and that their spiritual health will improve. The time that adult mentors and teen mentees spent together should have made a positive effect on the teenagers. It would be beneficial if more time could be designated for them to meet. The researcher asserts that the longer these adults and teens meet, then the teens will become more connected and feel like they are part of the church. Also, as the mentors and mentees discuss

scripture and its application, then the teens' spiritual health will most likely be enhanced. The key to these interactions is to have more time together and to make that time meaningful.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The research project entails trained adult mentors working with teenagers to build solid and healthy relationships to connect with the church. The problem is that teenagers are leaving the church after high school, and this intervention is expected to encourage teenagers to continue in church life. As the research progressed, possible next steps emerged that will build on this project. The next step is to continue with the mentoring program over a longer period. A second step is increasing parental involvement in the mentoring relationship to make them become more integral members. A future research area is training parents to operate as mentors for their children. Another future study is employing a small group mentoring approach with teenagers and young adults. A possible third area is addressing male recruitment issues.

### Research Implications

In this action research project, seven adults were trained who later served as mentors. Also, six teen mentees participated in the mentoring program. Mentors and mentees entered these partnerships to build relationships that would enhance growth and connection to the church.

The researcher trained adult mentors to meet with teenagers to promote their spiritual health and encourage them to remain in the church. However, parents were also encouraged to be involved in the process. One must remember that parents are the primary disciple-makers of their children. Lou Selzer emphasized the importance of Christian parents in the lives of teenagers. The influence of godly parents can overcome other detrimental influences in a young person's life.<sup>189</sup> In the current project, adult mentors were enlisted to support parents and teenagers in the

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<sup>189</sup> Jeynes, *The Wiley Handbook of Christianity and Education*, 168.



teen's spiritual maturation. Selzer points out that church mentors can serve as parental surrogates who promote a teen's spiritual growth.<sup>190</sup>

In the mentoring program, mentors emphasized disciple-making for teenagers in the church. The researcher and the mentors wanted more than a simple decision to follow Christ without any growth as a disciple. Malan Nel lamented the problem of teenagers having superficial connections to Christ Jesus and the church. He stated that these connections were not lasting because they weakened and dissolved over time.<sup>191</sup> Nel also stressed the need for relationships in growing disciples. One cannot depend on programs to implement discipleship among young people.<sup>192</sup> Nel stressed that faith decisions from evangelism should result in young people committing to lives of discipleship.<sup>193</sup> In this research project, the researcher sought to develop relationships among adult mentors and teen mentees. Ideally, relationships will grow over time which will enhance a teenager's advancement in the faith. Malan Nel wrote that "we learn by walking with the other," which means that young people will learn more by having a adult accompany them.<sup>194</sup> From the beginning of the mentoring program, the researcher of this action research project has emphasized the focus on relationships and not on another church program.

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<sup>190</sup> Jeynes, *The Wiley Handbook of Christianity and Education*, 168.

<sup>191</sup> Malan Nel, "Imagine-making disciples in youth ministry...that will make disciples," *HTS Theological Studies* 71, no. 3 (2015): 1, accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

## **Research Applications**

As the research progressed, the researcher identified various applications that could be implemented. These applications could aid in continuing the mentor program and promoting these relationships with teenagers.

### *Additional Mentor Training*

To continue with the mentoring program, the researcher will conduct further training for adult mentors. Ideally, adult mentors and teen mentees will continue to meet as their relationships grow. As other young people enter their teen years, they will be paired with an adult mentor. The adult mentor and new teen mentee will begin to spend time together. The church will intentionally position adult mentors and teen mentees to form connections. In the future, these connections will hopefully encourage teenagers' commitment to the church and enhance their spiritual health.

In the future, the researcher will meet with the mentors once every two months to discuss the progress in the mentor/mentee meetings. If a mentor has any concerns, they will discuss them with the researcher at this time. However, mentors can reach out to the researcher if the need arises. The researcher will train two to three volunteers to assist in training and meeting with mentors. These volunteers will serve in this training capacity if the researcher can no longer serve. In the mentor meetings, mentors will be assisted with resources to aid their interactions with their teen mentees. The first year of additional training could focus on various topics such as modeling, goal setting, problem-solving, and self-care. The researcher will hold two meetings in February, April, September, and November. Also, the researcher will conduct private meetings with mentors if they request them.

As additional training continues, mentor and mentee meetings will also continue for four months a year. The mentors and mentees will meet twice a month for the months of January, March, May, and October. A mentor will meet with their mentee eight times a year, but also intentionally connect with them during non-meeting months. Ideally, each mentor and teen mentee will stay together from sixth through twelfth grade. If a mentor or mentee cannot continue for this length of time, then the researcher will assign a new mentee or mentor, respectively. These extended interactions are intended to promote healthy relationships and to connect young people to the church.

### Parental Involvement

The next step in the program will be to utilize a mentoring triad which consists of an adult mentor, teen mentee, and a parent. In the current study, the researcher encouraged communication with the teens' parents to keep them involved in the process. However, it would be beneficial to have the parents involved on a deeper level. Parents will be invited to attend some mentoring sessions. The researcher planned an event during the program that included the teenagers' parents. This event was simply designed as an opportunity to spend time together. The mentors, mentees and parents shared a meal, played games, and enjoyed conversations. More of these events will be conducted, but also other times will be designated for the three parties to discuss relevant topics and scripture. The researcher believes that one should be intentional about including parents as more active players instead of being on the periphery.

Antoinette M. Basualdo-Delmonico, professor of Social Work and Sociology, Boston University, School of Social Work, and Renee Spencer, professor of Human Behavior, Boston University, School of Social Work, wrote about the crucial place that parents hold in mentoring relationships. Their study focused on community-based mentoring programs, not church-based

programs, and the influence that parents had on the success of the mentor and mentee interactions. The researchers recognized that parents are vital to a mentoring relationship because they can allow or deny their child the opportunity to participate. However, initially parents were simply viewed as providers of background information, but they did not have much impact on the mentoring relationship. As the study progressed, mentors and community agencies became aware of the parents' importance in the program's success. They noted that uninvolved parents hindered the mentor and mentee relationships. If mentors were intentional about reaching out to their mentees, then they could mitigate the negative impact of an uninvolved parent. On the other hand, the researchers discussed overly involved parents. These parents attempted to take control of the mentoring interactions by inserting their own plans.<sup>195</sup>

In these community-based programs, mentors are typically trained to work with their mentees and are instructed on possible interferences from the parents.<sup>196</sup> The researchers determined that parents varied in their perception of the part they should play in these relationships. Some parents wanted to be peripherally involved, but others wanted to develop a close relationship with the mentor.<sup>197</sup> In their study, Basualdo-Delmonico and Spencer found a need for improved, individualized training that would promote parental involvement. They stressed the importance of involving parents and not simply relying on a mentor and mentee relationship.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Antoinette M. Basualdo-Delmonico, and Renee Spencer, "A parent's place: Parents', mentors' and program staff members' expectations for and experiences of parental involvement in community-based youth mentoring relationships," *Children and Youth Services Review* 61, (2016): 9, accessed March 14, 2022.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

A possible next step for the church is for the researcher to tailor a mentoring program to an individual young person. The researcher should look at the context of each teenager to see their needs and determine ways to better involve the young person's parents. The researcher must evaluate how involved a parent may or may not be and proceed from that point. If a parent is not involved in the program, then a mentor will need to compensate for this deficit. On the other hand, if a parent is overly involved and attempts to completely control the interactions, then a mentor must discover ways to keep the relationship moving forward without excluding the parent, while still involving the parent. However, if a parent is involved, then the mentor, mentee, and parent will work together to build a strong, healthy relationship for the young person's benefit.

### Conclusion

A planning meeting was conducted that addressed the future of the mentoring program and ways to involve teenagers to a greater extent. In the planning meeting, each teen mentee volunteered for a ministry position in the church. The teenagers assumed these responsibilities to form connections to the church family and use their gifts for the Lord. These new responsibilities will encourage teens to take ownership of the church's ministries. Also, mentors and mentees plan to meet on a monthly basis for a fellowship night. On this night, mentees' parents will be invited to attend. This fellowship night will consist of food, games, and conversation. The teenagers requested to make videos where they share their thoughts about the mentoring program. These testimonies will provide other young people with a view of the mentoring program and encourage them to participate. They will also inform the church of the program's progress.

## **Research Limitations**

A limitation in this research was mentor participation. After the initial information meeting, nine adults expressed interest in serving as mentors. However, two adults decided not to participate, which left seven adults to serve. A mentor participation limitation that arose was the lack of male participants. Female adults more readily accepted the mentoring responsibility than the church's male adults.

A second research limitation was teen mentee participation. At the teen recruitment meeting, nine teenagers attended. Three of the teens declined to participate, which left only six teens to continue. Also, one mentee that participated had schedule conflicts that interfered with the mentor and mentee meetings. Fortunately, the mentor and mentee were able to meet at a different time.

## **Further Research**

During this project, the researcher identified areas of future research. The areas of future research are parental training, small group mentoring, and male mentor recruitment. All of these areas could enhance the mentoring program. Each one highlighted questions and concerns that could merit future study. The researcher proposes that these future research topics would improve teens' connection to the church.

### **Parental Training**

A future possible study is to train parents to mentor their children in the faith. Parents will be intentional about teaching their children. Wesley Black emphasized the need for youth ministries to devote more time on discipleship for parents to be greater role models for their children.<sup>199</sup> Black found that parents who attend church during their child's teen years are more

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<sup>199</sup> Black, "Stopping the dropouts," 40-41.

likely for their child to attend church after high school. Another finding is that young adults who come from a broken home or a single-parent home leave church after high school at a higher rate. Black also emphasized that families should sit down together with their children. During these times, they should talk about life and spiritual issues to help navigate their maturation process. Parents and families that take time with their children tend to have adult children that continue to attend church.<sup>200</sup> The researcher will train parents to spend more time with their children and be intentional about discussing important issues that are facing them. The researcher should have individual plans to train parents, whether they are two parent homes, blended families, or single parents.

A study performed by Gabe Veas, Assistant Professor of Mentoring and Community Transformation, Ashland University, and Karina Veas, Affiliate Professor of Leadership, Kilns College, focused on training parents to become mentors. The researchers utilized the servant leadership philosophy, which highlights the role of the ancient shepherd caring for one's sheep. They compared this shepherd's philosophy to parents serving as shepherding mentors to their children.<sup>201</sup> As Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd because He watched over His followers, the researchers stressed that parents watch over and protect their children.<sup>202</sup> Veas and Veas pointed out that typical mentoring programs are one-on-one dyads where the mentee meets with an adult mentor who is not a family member. They propose that biblically mentoring young people is to disciple them in the faith, which is ideally conducted in the home and not in another

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<sup>200</sup> Black, "Stopping the dropouts," 41.

<sup>201</sup> Gabe Veas, and Karina Veas, "Parents as Mentors: Addressing Contemporary Childrearing through a Servant Leadership Philosophy and the Application of Mentorship Mottos," *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 3 (2018): 394, accessed March 15, 2022.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

setting. The home provides for better connections and deeper relationships.<sup>203</sup> The researchers emphasized the need for parents to model attitudes and behavior for their children and not simply teach them principles. They proposed that parents teach integrity, lifestyle, education, and recognition as key points for a young person's growth.<sup>204</sup> As part of this training, parents must learn how to recognize various areas of their child's life. They should celebrate areas where they have grown and highlight areas where they need to grow.<sup>205</sup> Veas and Veas encourage parents as primary caregivers and their children to work and learn together as they navigate the maturation process.<sup>206</sup>

The researcher and the church should stress the need for parents to accept the role of mentor for their children. As the primary caregiver, and disciple-maker of their children, they hold a unique place for reaching them. Church ministries and leaders must equip parents to intentionally mentor their children by teaching them Scripture and faith principles. Also, parents need to adopt the role of a model to live out their faith for their children to follow.

#### Small Group Mentoring

Another possible study is training mentors to work with small groups of teenagers or young adults. In these small groups, mentors will serve as moderators and consultants for the group. The mentor will not serve as a teacher who simply lectures the group. They will ask questions, actively listen, and assist in directing the conversation by keeping it on the topic.

Mentors will function as they do in one-on-one mentoring but will hopefully have more input with more individuals present. In a small group setting, the mentor will not have as much

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<sup>203</sup> Veas and Veas, "Parents as Mentors," 399.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 401.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 403-404.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 404.



pressure to provide information and counsel as they would in one-on-one mentoring. Also, a single mentee will have less pressure in the meetings because they will not be the only one speaking to the mentor. However, a negative aspect could be that a mentee does not speak or holds back because of the other group members.

Regi Campbell has directed one-on-one and group mentoring throughout his ministry. He asserts that group mentoring is more beneficial than the one-on-one approach. Campbell writes about group mentoring when he says it is the “secret sauce of intentional mentoring.” He continues to stress that group mentoring catalyzes individual relationships and aids in developing trust.<sup>207</sup> Another advantage that Campbell points out is that group mentoring is more intentional. He writes that one-on-one mentoring tends to deal mostly with pressing issues, which inhibits real growth.<sup>208</sup> As mentors and mentees address pressing crises, they cannot focus on deeper issues in one’s life. Individuals in group mentoring can address topics where each person can learn from each other.

In group mentoring, mentors can create space for teenagers or young adults to grow as they build relationships with the mentor and other mentees. It could be helpful for teenagers to have more individuals to encourage them, which would give them a larger pool of possible mentors in their life.

### Male Mentor Recruitment

A third possible study is recruiting male church members to participate in the mentoring program. In the current study, the researcher was able to recruit only one male member out of

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<sup>207</sup> Regi Campbell, *Mentor Like Jesus: His Radical Approach to Building the Church* (Atlanta, GA: RM Press, 2016), 45.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

seven members who served as mentors. The six female mentors more readily volunteered to serve in this ministry.

In one study conducted by Adair T. Lummis, the researcher studied male church involvement in the Episcopal Church. The research team found that the Episcopal Church has more programs, activities, and social events for women than men. Many of the surveyed men expressed that they have difficulty in making friends in the church, so they are not interested in attending or participating in church functions.<sup>209</sup> The researchers proposed that men may need different programs and also be encouraged to try these programs.<sup>210</sup> As the church considers forming new programs and ministries that appeal to men, the researchers encouraged the church to implement programs that will meet particular needs. They discovered that men are more likely to participate in an activity that assists people that have a specific need.<sup>211</sup>

Another study by Joris Kregting et al focused on the larger percentage of females participating in church compared to males in the Netherlands. In this study, the researchers concluded Dutch women are more attracted to church involvement because of their strength in love and compassion. They pointed out that many major religions focus on love and compassion, which are areas where males are not as dominant. The researchers also highlighted the fact that females engage in informal care at higher rates than males. Referring to informal care, one is involved in caring for a person in need or someone suffering from an illness. The church is a

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<sup>209</sup> Adair T. Lummis, "A Research Note: Real Men and Church Participation," *Review of Religious Research* 45, no. 4 (2004): 411, accessed March 22, 2022.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 408.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 411.

place where caring for others is vital, and typically females express care more than males.<sup>212</sup> They concluded that since males are not as strong in these areas, then males will not be as attracted to the church. Kregting et al also discovered a large increase in the gender gap regarding one's belief in God and frequency in prayer. However, the gender gap related to church attendance was not as large. The researchers deduced that married or cohabiting men and women often attend church together, regardless of one's commitment to the faith.<sup>213</sup> Therefore, even if men are attending the church their commitment to its ministries may be weak.

David Murrow, author of *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, explained that women more readily volunteer to serve in various ministries in the church. Typically, most men do not participate in church ministries, such as teaching, prayer, or other volunteer work.<sup>214</sup> He also observed that the gender gap in churches is more pronounced in smaller churches. Regardless of the church's size, women tend to outnumber men in attendance and membership. The gender gap in churches of all sizes has been an issue for at least a century in Europe.<sup>215</sup> Murrow highlights the fact that women are more likely to share their faith with another person. Also, women volunteer to serve as spiritual mentors at higher percentages.<sup>216</sup>

Taylorville Church of God has a membership of 121 members. Of the 121 members, 75 are women and 46 are men. The researcher of this project recognizes the gender gap in membership and weekly attendance. During this project, the researcher observed the gender

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<sup>212</sup> Joris Kregting, Peer Scheepers, Paul Vermeer, and Chris Hermans, "Why Dutch women are still more religious than Dutch men: Explaining the persistent religious gender gap in the Netherlands using a multifactorial approach," *Review of Religious Research* 61, no. 2 (2019): 84, accessed March 23, 2022.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>214</sup> David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 12.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

difference in the adults who volunteered to serve as mentors. In the future, the researcher must find new ways to present the need for male mentors to assist teen males in the maturation process.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to train adult mentors to work with teenagers, sixth grade through twelfth grade, at the Taylorsville Church of God to encourage them to continue in church life. Each of the above steps to continue the program and the future studies could be designed to enhance the teen mentoring program. The researcher proposes that providing additional training for mentors, and intentionally involving parents at a higher level would promote teen church commitment and spiritual health. Also, the researcher proposes that training parents as mentors, implementing small groups, and recruiting more male mentors would enhance teen church commitment.

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## APPENDIX A: IRB Approval

November 19, 2021

Mark Albertino

Darren Hercyk

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY21-22-435 A Training Program for Adult Mentors  
Working with Teenagers to Enhance Their Spiritual Health and Church Life

Dear Mark Albertino and Darren Hercyk,

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

## APPENDIX B: Permission Request

November 19, 2021

Church Council



Dear Council Member,

As a graduate student in the Doctor of Ministry Program in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my research project is *A Training Program for Adult Mentors Working with Teenagers to Enhance Their Spiritual Health and Church Life* and the purpose of my research is to train adult mentors to work with teenagers at Taylorsville Church of God to hopefully prevent teenagers from leaving the church after high school.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at Taylorsville Church of God and recruit church members as participants in my research.

Participants will be asked to complete the attached questionnaires and an interview. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please complete the permission letter document that is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Mark D. Albertino  
Pastor, Taylorsville Church of God

**APPENDIX C: Permission Response**

November 21, 2021

[REDACTED]

Dear Mark Albertino:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled *A Training Program for Adult Mentors Working with Teenagers to Enhance Their Spiritual Health and Church Life*, we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at Taylorsville Church of God and access our membership list and invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

We will provide our membership list to Mark Albertino, and Mark Albertino may use the list to contact our members to invite them to participate in his research study.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

## **APPENDIX D: Adult Recruitment: Verbal Script (In Person)**

Hello Potential Participant,

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my research is to train adult mentors to work with teenagers at Taylorsville Church of God to hopefully prevent teenagers from leaving the church after high school, and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, born-again Christians, faithful church members (supporting the church's programs, consistent attendance and financially supporting the church). Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in three interviews. The first interview will be conducted before mentor training begins. The second interview will be conducted after the eight-week training is completed. The third interview will be conducted at the end of two months of mentoring sessions with one's teen mentee. Each interview will last approximately one hour. Interviews will be videotaped, audio recorded or the interviewer will record notes about the interview. The participant will choose from the three options. Participants will be asked to participate in eight weeks of mentor training. These sessions will last approximately one hour. The participants will be asked to meet with their teen mentees two times for eight months. Meetings will not be scheduled in the months of June, July, August or December. Adult mentors and teen mentees will meet for approximately for one hour in each session. Adult participants will be asked to commit to one year in the program. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Would you like to participate? If yes, Great, could you complete this questionnaire which will serve as an application to serve? If no, I understand. Thank you for your time.

A consent document will be given to you at your first interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of your first interview. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

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

## APPENDIX E: Mentor Application

1. Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No
2. Are you faithfully serving Christ by following God's Word?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No
3. Do you read the Bible and pray daily?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No
4. Are you a member of Taylorsville Church of God?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No
5. Do you faithfully attend Taylorsville Church of God? (3 out of 4 Sundays per month)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No
6. Do you faithfully support Taylorsville Church of God with your tithes and offerings?  
(at least monthly & a record can be checked)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No
7. Do you affirm that you believe and base your life on God's Word?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No
8. Do you affirm your support for the teachings and statement of faith of the Church of God  
(Cleveland, TN)?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No



9. Do you currently serve in any ministry role in the church?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

10. If you answered no to any question, please feel free to explain.

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## APPENDIX F: ADULT MENTOR CONSENT

### **Title of the Project: A Training Program for Adult Mentors Working with Teenagers to Enhance Their Spiritual Health and Church Life**

**Principal Investigator:** Mark Albertino, Pastor, Taylorsville Church of God

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

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 21 years of age and have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Participants must be members or regular attendees of Taylorsville Church of God. Participants must base their lives on God's Word, have a healthy devotional life, and adhere to the statement of faith for the Church of God (Cleveland, TN). 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 study aims to train adult mentors to work with teenagers at the Taylorsville Church of God to prevent teenagers from leaving the church after high school. The study also seeks to improve the teens' spiritual health.

#### **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. If you are selected to serve, you will complete a mentor questionnaire (pre-training) before the training begins.
2. Mentor training will be conducted once a week for one hour and completed in eight weeks.
3. At the end of the eight-week training, participants will complete a second questionnaire (post-training). This questionnaire will gauge the effectiveness of the training in preparing the mentors.
4. After two months of meetings with teen mentees, the researcher will conduct a short interview to gauge the progress up to this point. This interview will be video-recorded.
5. The researcher will ask the participant to commit to serving for at least one year. However, if the participant must leave the program before completing one year, they are free to leave. Ideally, a mentor will remain with the same teen mentee from 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

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

The direct benefits participants should expect from taking part in this study are building healthy relationships with the church's teenagers.

Benefits to society include forming intergenerational connections and strengthening the local church.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal.

The researcher is a mandatory reporter of child abuse, neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm oneself or others. Also, mentors are potentially mandatory reporters as well.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

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

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- The researcher will store data on a password-locked computer and may use it in future presentations. The researcher will keep any paper documents locked in a file cabinet. After three years, the researcher will delete all electronic records and destroy all paper records.
- The researcher will record and transcribe the interviews. The researcher will store the recorded interviews on a password-locked computer for three years and then erase them. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

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

The researcher will not compensate participants for participating in this study.

### **Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?**

The researcher serves as the lead pastor at Taylorsville Church of God. The researcher will keep this study confidential, so only the researcher will access participants' responses. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on their decision to participate or not participate in this study.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Taylorsville Church of God. If you

decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the 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 Mark D. Albertino. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] and/or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Darren Hercyk, at [REDACTED].

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., [REDACTED], Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [REDACTED].

*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**

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and you can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the Mark D. Albertino 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 video-record/photograph me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Subject Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature & Date

**APPENDIX G: Initial Mentor Interview (Pre-Training)**

1. Share your personal salvation experience?

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2. What are the possible causes for teenagers at Taylorsville Church of God leaving the church after high school?

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3. Define the term “mentor” in your own words.

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4. Can you share a positive or negative mentoring experience from the past? What do you think the factors were for the outcome? How do you think we should use this experience in the program?

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5. What are your goals for the mentoring relationship?

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6. What made you stay in the church after high school?

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## APPENDIX H: Mentor Training - Lesson 1

Objective: Mentors will focus on maintaining and/or improving their spiritual health.

### Learning Activities

1. Scripture and Prayer
2. Prayer Activity: Prayer Pie (Philippians 4:6)
  - a. P – list praise reports
  - b. I – list intercessory prayers
  - c. E – list everything else
3. Google Slide Presentation: Mentor Spiritual Health
  - a. Definition
    - i. Spiritual health covers one’s personal beliefs and values. This concept includes purpose with a sense of balance and peace.
    - ii. Spiritual health includes searching for the purpose of human existence. Also, one’s appreciation for life and the natural forces in creation.<sup>217</sup>
    - iii. The primary key to one’s spiritual health is one’s relationship with God. Good spiritual health depends on one’s personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
  - b. Prayer
    - i. Setting time in one’s schedule and designating a place for prayer
      1. Mentors should select a time of day for prayer. Write down the time of day to meet with God each day. Commit to this time and do not change unless an urgent need arises.
      2. Designate a place for prayer. Write down this place to meet with God in prayer. Find a place that has the least interruptions.
    - ii. Praying for one’s mentee
      1. Pray with one’s mentee during the meetings together.
      2. Ask one’s mentee about prayer requests and write them down.
      3. Pray for one’s mentee each day during the set prayer time.
  - c. Bible Study
    - i. Setting time in one’s schedule and designating a place for Bible reading and study
      1. Mentors should select a time of day for Bible study. Write down the time of day to meet with God in study. Commit to this time and do not change unless an urgent need arises.
      2. Designate a place for Bible study. Write down this place to meet with God in study. Find a place that has the least

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<sup>217</sup> Augusta University, “Spiritual wellness,” accessed November 1, 2021, <https://www.augusta.edu/jagslivewell/spiritual-wellness>.

3. interruptions. Most likely, this place will be the same as the place for prayer.
  - ii. Navigate through the Bible: Old/New Testaments and Psalms/Proverbs  
Pick an Old and New Testament book to begin reading. Also, read a chapter in Psalms and Proverbs.
- d. Devotions (mentors will be encouraged to select devotional material to supplement one's Bible study) (A few possible options are listed below)
  - i. *New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional* by Paul David Tripp
  - ii. *Restoration Year: A 365-Day Devotional* by John Eldredge
  - iii. *Fighting Words Devotional: 100 Days of Speaking Truth into the Darkness* by Ellie Holcomb
  - iv. *Truth for Life: 365 Daily Devotions* Alistair Begg
- e. Scripture and Prayer journal (journals will be provided to record Scripture verses, prayer requests, and thoughts for personal use and is not the same as a participant journal)
  - i. Mentors will be encouraged to record verses and passages that speak to them. Also, they should include their own thoughts about these scriptures.
  - ii. Mentors will be encouraged to record prayer requests, answered prayers and praise reports.
4. Review
  - a. Why is setting a time for prayer important?
  - b. How can a Scripture/Prayer journal help?
5. Get to Know You Game! (Beach ball questions)
6. Mentoring Questions (Read Scripture & Pray with Mentee)
  - a. What are your interests?
  - b. What is your favorite subject in school?
  - c. Is there anything that you would like to do in church?
7. Teen Mentee Goals
  - a. What are your life goals?
    - i. Long-term goals (career, etc.)
    - ii. Short-term goals (something you want to do or change)
  - b. What are your spiritual goals?
    - i. Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?
    - ii. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, what are your plans?
8. Sticky Note: Ask mentors for a comment or question about the training
9. Prayer

## Materials

1. Prayer Pie sheets
2. Scripture and Prayer journals
3. Post-It Notes



#### 4. Beach ball

## APPENDIX I: Mentor Training – Lesson 2

Objective: Mentors will understand the need to be a servant and the necessity of an active church life.

### Learning Activities

1. Scripture and Prayer
2. Object Lesson: Servanthood  
Serving tables: Selflessness, Compassion, Empathy, Humility, Authenticity, and Honesty (waiter tray serving these qualities)
3. Google Slide Presentation: Servanthood
  - a. What is a servant?
    - i. One that serves others.
    - ii. Performs duties, helps
  - b. Christ's example of servanthood
    - i. Matthew 20:28
    - ii. Mark 10:43-45
    - iii. John 13:4-17
  - c. How is servanthood manifested in Christ's Kingdom
    - i. Putting others ahead of oneself
    - ii. Showing love
  - d. Servanthood in mentorship
4. Activity: Servant's towel  
Each mentor will be given a hand towel. They will discuss ways to develop a servant's heart. Possible ways to show service to one's mentee and to others.
5. Google Slide Presentation: Church Life
  - a. Biblical definition of the church (ekklesia: "called out ones" & assembly)
  - b. Purpose of the church
  - c. Commitment to church
  - d. Responsibilities as a church member
6. Discussion Teams: Church Member Privileges and Responsibilities
7. Review
  - a. Why should a mentor be a servant?
  - b. Give three reasons that church is important.
8. Two Truths and A Lie Game
9. Bible Study: Salvation
10. Prayer

### Materials

1. Hand towels
2. Hand-held crosses (one for each mentor and have enough for each mentee to have one)
3. Notecards
4. Puzzles (Salvation)

## APPENDIX J: Mentor Training – Lesson 3

Objective: Mentors will learn about and practice active listening. They will also understand the importance of trust in a relationship. Mentors will know tools to use to foster good communication with parents.

### Learning Activities

1. Scripture and Prayer
2. Object Lesson: Active Listening
3. Google Slide Presentation: Active Listening
  - a. Definition

Active listening is listening intentionally to understand and not to simply respond. In active listening, one is not simply hearing, but is carefully listening and processing the content.<sup>218</sup>
  - b. Becoming an active listener
    - i. Intentionally pay attention to the speaker
    - ii. Wait to respond until an appropriate time
    - iii. Provide feedback to the speaker indicating that the listener understands
  - c. What message it conveys?
    - i. Listener values the speaker
    - ii. Concerned about the content
    - iii. Desire to assist in achieving favorable outcome
4. Activity: Active Listening Role Play
5. Google Slide Presentation: Trust
  - a. Definition

A belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest, effective, etc.<sup>219</sup>
  - b. Foundation of relationships
    - i. Trust is the rock that a relationship is built on
    - ii. A violation of trust undermines the foundation
  - c. Its place in mentorship
    - i. Mentor/mentee must trust each other
    - ii. Building trust through spending time together
6. Discussion: How can I build trust with teens?
7. Review
  - a. How can you improve your active listening skills?
  - b. Give a couple of ways that trust can be broken.
8. Google Slide Presentation: Parents

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<sup>218</sup> Clemson University, “Active listening is key to good communication,” accessed November 3, 2021, <http://pearce.caah.clemson.edu/active-listening-is-key-to-good-communication/>.

<sup>219</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “trust,” accessed November 3, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trust>.

- a. Parents as key influencer in a young person's life
    - i. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – Teach your child at all times about the Lord
    - ii. Proverbs 22:6 – Train up a child in the way he or she should go
    - iii. Primary disciple makers of their children
    - iv. Most important role models
  - b. Building trust with parents
  - c. Building open communication with parents using tools
    - i. Active listening: intentionally listen and understand parents' needs
    - ii. Intentionally reaching out: show concern by making time for parents
    - iii. Clear and concise statements or questions: Offer clear communication
    - iv. Encouraging messages: offer encouragement to the teen's parents
    - v. Respond to parents in a timely manner: show respect by responding
  - d. Keeping parents involved
    - i. Remind them of their key role
    - ii. Keep open channels of communication
    - iii. Invite them to be involved in the process
  - e. Dealing with uninvolved parents
    - i. Continue to reach out
    - ii. Show respect to parents and teens
    - iii. Pray for parents and teens
9. Discussion: Ways to get parents involved in the mentoring relationship
10. Review
- a. Why should parents be viewed as key players in mentorship?
  - b. Give one communication tool to use with a teen's parents.
11. Game: Man, Gorilla, Gun
12. Bible Study: Holiness
13. Prayer

## APPENDIX K: Mentor Training – Lesson 4

Objective: Mentors will learn to empathize with their teen mentees. Also, they will understand the importance of showing compassion. Mentors will learn ways to enhance their teen mentees' spiritual health.

### Learning Activities

1. Scripture and Prayer
2. Object Lesson: Empathy
3. Google Slide Presentation: Empathy
  - a. Definition  
Empathy is gaining an understanding of another person by placing yourself in his or her place. One experiences another person's experiences without actually going through it.<sup>220</sup>
  - b. Christ's empathy for people
    - i. Hebrews 4:15 – Jesus knew the weakness of humans as they were tempted
    - ii. John 11:33-35 – Jesus wept with those mourning Lazarus' death
  - c. Empathy in mentors
    - i. Practice putting yourself in the place of the mentee
    - ii. Intentionally take time to focus on the mentee's needs
    - iii. Maintain a non-judgmental tone
4. Google Slide Presentation: Compassion
  - a. Definition  
Compassion is a feeling of wanting to help someone who is sick, hungry, in trouble, etc.<sup>221</sup>
  - b. Christ's compassion for people
    - i. Matthew 9:36 – Jesus saw the crowds and was moved with compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd
    - ii. Matthew 20:34 – Jesus was moved with compassion on the blind men and gave them their sight
    - iii. Matthew 8:1-3 – Jesus compassionately touched the leper and healed him
  - c. Compassion in mentors
    - i. Mentors should try to help their mentees with their needs
    - ii. Pray for your mentee
    - iii. Offer direction by relating your own experiences
5. Activity: Being empathetic and compassionate
6. Review
  - a. What is the difference between empathy and compassion?
  - b. How can a mentor develop empathy and compassion?

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<sup>220</sup> Lesley University, "The psychology of emotional and cognitive empathy," accessed November 4, 2021, <https://lesley.edu/article/the-psychology-of-emotional-and-cognitive-empathy>.

<sup>221</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "compassion," accessed November 4, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion>.

7. Google Slide Presentation: Spiritual Health of Teenagers
  - a. Constructing a daily schedule that reserves time for prayer and Bible study
  - b. Accountability about spiritual practices
    - i. Bible
    - ii. Prayer
    - iii. Church attendance
  - c. Prayer journals
    - i. Record Scripture verses and thoughts on the passage
    - ii. Record prayer requests and answered prayers
8. Discussion: Ideas for helping teens address their spiritual health
9. Review
  - a. Why is accountability good for the mentor and the mentee?
  - b. What does Proverbs 22:6 mean in your own words?
10. Google. Slide Presentation: Recognizing opportunities for teenagers to minister
  - a. Encouraging teens to serve
    - i. Pointing out a teen's strengths
    - ii. Find tangible ways to encourage
  - b. Giving teens a special place in the church
    - i. Finding ways to recognize teens for their contribution
    - ii. Involve them in vital ways regularly
11. Aluminum Foil Activity: What are your gifts?
12. Group Discussions: Ideas of ways to get teens involved in the church
13. Review
  - a. How can you encourage teenagers to be involved in the church?
  - b. Give ways to make teenagers feel like a vital part of the church.
14. Game: Who Am I?
15. Bible Study: Holy Spirit Baptism
16. Prayer

#### Materials

Aluminum foil

## APPENDIX L: Mentor Training – Lesson 5

Objective: Mentors will learn about current issues that are facing teenagers. They will seek to find ways to address these issues.

### Learning Activities

1. Scripture and Prayer
2. Google Slide Presentation: Current Teenage Issues
  - a. Pressures of teen life
    - i. School
      1. Classes, teachers, and grades
      2. Finding their place at school
    - ii. Future: Education and career
      1. College and job applications, resumes, and interviews
      2. Stress about finding the right path and making a living
    - iii. Relationships: friends and dating
      1. Finding the right friends at school
      2. Healthy dating relationships
      3. Friends and dates that improve a teen and not harm them
  - b. Rejection
    - i. Being comfortable with one's self-image
      1. Do not be obsessed with one's looks, personality or any other area of life
      2. Do not change to fit in with a group
      3. Respect yourself
    - ii. Find a support group of friends
      1. Find friends that will accept you without change
      2. Be a faithful friend to others
  - c. Loneliness
    - i. Finding healthy relationships with family and friends
      1. Do not isolate from family or friends
      2. Spend quality time together
    - ii. Support people: adult and teen
      1. Remind teens that they are not alone
      2. Need someone to reach out to them
  - d. Peer pressure
    - i. Developing self-confidence
      1. Be comfortable with yourself
      2. Do not let anyone else define you
    - ii. Courage to stand against pressure
      1. Be strong even if you lose friends
      2. Pledge to yourself and others that you will not yield to pressure to do something that you do not believe in

- iii. Celebrate being different
      1. It is fine to be different from the crowd
      2. Christian teens are to be different (do not blend in with those who are living sinful lives)
  - e. Social media
    - i. Excessive use
      1. Limits should be set
      2. Refrain from use at the table or at other conversation times
      3. Do not engage at bedtime
    - ii. Inappropriate use
      1. Be on guard for inappropriate sites
      2. Have someone check your history to hold you accountable
  - f. Personal appearance/image
    - i. Pressure to look a certain way
      1. Reject the culture's opinion of how a teen should present himself or herself
      2. Teach teens how to properly present themselves in a respectable manner
    - ii. Body shaming
      1. Be careful to not put someone down because of their appearance
      2. Encourage and help a teen with his or her appearance in a loving way
  - g. Unhealthy habits
    - i. Alcohol/drugs/tobacco/vaping
      1. Emphasize the dangers
      2. Encourage them to abstain from these habits
      3. Do these habits help and improve their Christian witness?
    - ii. Premarital sex
      1. Emphasize the dangers
      2. Encourage them to abstain from premarital sex and pornography
      3. Have someone to hold them accountable (check their online history)
      4. Make sure they know the truth about abortion
      5. What does pornography do to a person's mind
      6. Reject the promotion of the hook-up culture and glorifying premarital sex
      7. Real love
    - iii. Other reckless behaviors: Discussion
  - h. Family issues
    - i. Marriage and Divorce
      1. Stress the importance of marriage
      2. Commitment for life that requires work
      3. Sacrifice for your spouse



- ii. Blended families
  - iii. Single parent homes
  - iv. Strained relationships
    - 1. Open channels of communication
    - 2. Never stop trying to reach one's teen
- i. Suicide
  - i. Talk to one's teen
  - ii. Remind them that you are there and care
  - iii. Find professional help if the need arises
- 3. Activity: Mentoring tools for confronting teen issues
- 4. Review
  - a. How can a mentor help a teen with feelings of rejection?
  - b. How can a mentor help a teen with social media use?
- 5. Game: Clumps (Example of rejection)
- 6. Bible Study: Friendships
- 7. Prayer

**APPENDIX M: Second Mentor Interview (Post-Training)**

1. What is something that you considered important, but have discovered that it is not so important?

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2. What is your favorite Scripture verse? Why?

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3. Describe your daily devotional life? (ex. Scripture reading, study, prayer, other Christian books, etc.)

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4. Think of an individual that you consider a good role model. What are this individual's qualities that you consider admirable?

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5. Knowing what you know now about mentoring, how do we identify and train mentors in the future?

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## **APPENDIX N: Participant Journals**

- Mentors will use participant journals to record observations about their interactions with their mentees without using one's name.
- Mentors will record information after each mentoring session.
- Also, mentors will record any contact that they have with their mentee's parents without using their names.
- The researcher will use these journals to observe the progression of the mentoring relationships and interactions.
- The researcher will give each mentor a participant journal during the eight-week training.

## **APPENDIX O: Teen Recruitment: Verbal Script (In Person)**

Hello Potential Teen Participant,

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my research is to train adult mentors to work with teenagers at Taylorsville Church of God to hopefully prevent teenagers from leaving the church after high school, and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be in 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades and attend Taylorsville Church of God. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an interview before the mentoring program begins. The interviews will be videotaped, audio recorded, or the interviewer will record the notes from the interviews. The participant will be allowed to choose from the three options. The participants will meet with their mentors twice a month for eight months. Mentoring sessions will not be conducted in June, July, August or December. It should take approximately 30 minutes to complete the interview and the mentoring sessions will last for one hour. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of the study, but the information will remain confidential.

Would you allow your child to participate? If yes, Great, can we set up a time for an interview? If no, I understand. Thank you for your time.

A consent document will be given to you at the time of your child's interview. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

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

## APPENDIX P: PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

**Title of the Project: A Training Program for Adult Mentors Working with Teenagers to Enhance Their Spiritual Health and Church Life**

**Principal Investigator:** Mark Albertino, Pastor, Taylorsville Church of God

### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

Your child: \_\_\_\_\_ is invited to participate in a research study. Participants must be 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Any student who attends Taylorsville Church of God in these grades is eligible to participate. 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 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 train adult mentors to work with teenagers at the Taylorsville Church of God to hopefully prevent teenagers from leaving the church after high school. The study aims to also improve the teens' spiritual health.

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

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

1. Students will be asked to complete a questionnaire (pre-meeting) before mentoring begins. The questions will deal with their church and spiritual life.
2. Students will meet with their assigned mentor twice a month for eight months for one hour. Mentoring sessions will not be held in June, July, August, or December. These meetings will be informal and are aimed at forming connections between the adult mentor and the teen mentee.
3. After meeting for two months, the students will be asked to complete a second questionnaire (post-meeting). This questionnaire is expected to gauge the progress of the mentoring experience.
4. Students are asked to commit to one year in the mentoring program. However, if the student cannot complete the year, then they will be free to leave the program. Ideally, students will remain with the same mentor from 6<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

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

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are developing a healthy relationship with an adult mentor. This adult will be a source of encouragement to the student.

Benefits to society include forming intergenerational connections and strengthening the local church.

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

The risks involved in this study are minimal.

The researcher is a mandatory reporter of child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others. Also, mentors are potentially mandatory reporters as well.

**How will personal information be protected?**

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

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. Any paper documents will be kept locked in a file cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and paper records will be destroyed.

**How will participants be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**What conflicts of interest exist in this study?**

The researcher serves as the lead pastor at Taylorsville Church of God. To limit potential or perceived conflicts the study will be anonymous, so the researcher will not know who participated. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to allow your child to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on her or his decision to allow his or her child participate in this study.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect your or his/her current or future relations with Liberty University or Taylorsville Church of God. If you decide to allow your child to participate, he or she is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

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

If you choose to withdraw your child from the study or your child chooses to withdraw, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw him/her or should your child choose to withdraw, data collected from your child will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.



**APPENDIX Q: Child Assent**

**Child Assent to Participate in a Research Study**

***What is the name of the study and who is doing the study?***

The name of the study is A Training Program for Adult Mentors Working with Teenagers to Enhance Their Spiritual Health and Church Life, and the person doing the study is Mark D. Albertino.

***Why is Mark D. Albertino doing this study?***

Mark D. Albertino wants to know if training adult mentors to work with the church’s teenagers will encourage them to continue in church life and hopefully enhance their spiritual health.

***Why am I being asked to be in this study?***

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a teenager between 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

***If I decide to be in the study, what will happen and how long will it take?***

If you decide to be in this study, you will meet with your mentor for 16 sessions in one year, and each session will last for one hour.

***Do I have to be in this study?***

No, you do not have to be in this study. If you want to be in this study, then tell the researcher. If you don’t want to, it’s OK to say no. The researcher will not be angry. You can say yes now and change your mind later. It’s up to you.

***What if I have a question?***

You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can talk to the researcher. If you do not understand something, please ask the researcher to explain it to you again.

Signing your name below means that you want to be in the study.

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Signature of Child

Date

Mark D. Albertino

Dr. Darren Hercyk

Liberty University Institutional Review Board  
1971 University Blvd, Lynchburg, VA 24515



**APPENDIX R: TEEN MENTEE INTERVIEW**

1. Why are teenagers leaving the church after high school?

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2. Why did you decide to join or not to join the mentoring program?

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3. How would you define the term “mentor”?

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4. What are some qualities that you think a mentor should possess?

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5. In your life, who has been a positive mentor?

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## APPENDIX S: Teaching Resources for Mentors

### Devotions from the Mentoring Program

Greear, J.D. “4 Important Things You Need to Know About Salvation.” Crosswalk. April 17, 2017. Accessed January 24, 2022. <https://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/christian-trends/4-important-things-you-need-to-know-about-salvation.html>.

Sala, Harold J. “What is Holiness?” Guidelines. February 8, 2018. Accessed January 24, 2022. <https://www.guidelines.org/devotional/what-is-holiness/>.

Hill, Tim. “Holy Fire (Baptism in the Holy Spirit).” Evangel Magazine. April 20, 2017. Accessed February 6, 2022. <https://www.evangelmagazine.com/2017/04/holy-fire/>.

Ferris, Jaquelle Crowe. “How to Help Your Teenager Choose Friends.” The Gospel Coalition. March 2, 2017. Accessed February 13, 2022. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-to-help-your-teenager-choose-friends/>.

Tautges, Paul. “Six Reasons to Be a Faithful Member of a Local Church.” Counseling One Another. September 19, 2011. Accessed February 27, 2022. <https://counselingoneanother.com/2011/09/19/6-reasons-to-be-a-faithful-member-of-a-local-church/>.

### Future Mentoring Material

- YouVersion Bible App  
Plans: Teen Devotionals  
\*\*This app has a variety of short free devotionals that mentors and mentees can discuss
- Lifeway has Bible study and devotional material  
Lifeway.com  
Several sources, but not an exhaustive list, are listed below:
  - *Upstream* (Four session Bible study for teens – teaching about living a Christ-centered life in a self-centered world)
  - *Why Are We Here?* (Four session Bible study for teens – teaching about the unique purpose of every teenager)
  - *Alive and Free* (Four session Bible study for teens – journey through the Book of James)
- Church of God (Cleveland, TN) Statement of Faith Study Material is available at  
Pathway Press  
Pathwaybookstore.com

- *Declaration of Faith: Discipleship Study Course* by Randy L. Ballard (leader's and student guides)
- *Exploring the Declaration of Faith* by French L. Arrington

## APPENDIX T: Sample Sunday School and Mid-Week Lessons

### *Lesson 1: Future Plans* (by Earle Dean Christian)

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the PLANS I have for you, plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a FUTURE and a HOPE.”

#### 1. GOD MADE YOU FOR A PURPOSE

God made you and knows every second of your life – past, present, and future.

Psalm 139:14-16

#### 2. TASKS GOD HAS FOR YOU

God has specific tasks for you and cared about what you do.

Ephesians 2:10

#### 3. GOD GIVEN GIFTS

God has given you a unique set of gifts.

John 15:1-16

#### 4. DEBBIE/DONNIE DOER

These are people of action. They know what they like to do, what they are good at doing, and they do it over and over again.

#### 5. JIMMY/JOAN JOINER

These are people who love new experiences. They look at what other people are doing and choose what and how to help with those experiences and opportunities.

#### 6. CHRIS/CHLOE CONSISTENT

These are people who dream big. They enjoy thinking about new opportunities and things they have never experienced before.

## 7. QUESTIONS

Which person do you most identify with?

What are some of your interest?

What are some of your gifts and talents?

How can you use your interests and gifts/talents in a future career path?

How can you use your interest and gifts/talents to better serve God?

### ***Lesson 2: Amazing Love*** (by Earle Dean Christian)

#### 1. God's Love for Us

God's love for us is sacrificial (John 3:16).

God's love for us is faithful (Isaiah 54:10).

God's love for us is everlasting (I Chronicles 16:34).

God's love for us has made us His sons/daughters (I John 3:1).

God's love for us is unconditional (Psalm 136:26).

## 2. Our Love for Others

Our love for others is from God (I John 4:7-8).

Our love for others is an action (I John 3:18).

Our love for others is required if we love God (I John 4:20,21).

Our love for others is a commandment (John 15:12-13).

Our love for others is how the world knows that we are a Christian (John 13:34-35).

Our love for others includes even our enemies (Matthew 5:44-45).

## 3. How to Show God's Love

Showing God's Love (I Corinthians 13:4-8).

Show God's love by a simple act.

Show God's love by making it a habit.

Make a difference in a sin-filled world by showing the love of God.

*\*Play Act of Kindness Bingo Game*

**APPENDIX U: Final Mentor Interview**  
**(After 1 Month Mentoring)**

1. How do you see the mentoring program helping teenagers today and in the future?

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2. What is one thing from the training that you wish you knew years ago?

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3. How do you see the mentoring program helping the church?

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4. How can the church assist parents in spiritually training their children?

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5. What are some ways you could recommend to improve the mentoring experience?

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