

Proposal

Title - Phenomenology of Spiritual/Faith Growth among College Students at a Christian University

Program of Study – Psychology

Presentation Type – PowerPoint

Mentors and Mentor Email - Dr. Elizabeth Sites (esites@liberty.edu), Dr. Marilyn Gadowski (mlgadoms@liberty.edu)

Student names and emails – Hannah Seelen (hseelen@liberty.edu), Tram Nguyen (thguyen@liberty.edu)

Category – Applied.

Abstract: Spiritual and faith development is an important aspect in college students attending a private Christian university. Some researchers have found that mission trips, community service activities, or life struggles have impacted the spiritual practices of students. While the literature on spiritual and faith development continues to expand, there appears to be a gap regarding the definition and the experiences that contribute to its development. The current phenomenological study will investigate the understanding and the lived experiences of young adults through conducting semi-structured interviews with them. Through purposive sampling, researchers will choose eight junior or senior participants, each from a different major. Each participant will engage in a one-on-one semi-structured qualitative interview where the data will be collected, recorded, and transcribed. Individual answers will be coded for concurrent themes, phrases, and experiences that reflect spiritual and faith development that has occurred. Though each participant will be different in terms of involvement and areas of study, it is expected that there will be many recurring themes among participants. The study benefits society because we are expanding upon the knowledge and importance of faith and spirituality. This may encourage people to be more aware of and explore their own faith and spirituality.

Christian worldview integration: The researchers desired to use a phenomenological method to understand faith and spirituality because they are relevant and vital to the Christian

community. Faith and spirituality are often mentioned inside and outside of the Church, but there is a lack of support for the definitions of those terms and what contributes to their development. Many of the current research studies even contradict each other. Since faith and spirituality are an important aspect of the researchers' lives, they desire to contribute to the gap in the literature regarding those subjects. While they will try to remain unbiased, the researchers still possess a Christian worldview through which they perceive the world.

Christians are called to be ambassadors for Christ, which should be displayed in the excellence of their work. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, and not for human masters" (Colossians 3:23, NIV). Thus the findings will display the research honestly and carefully. The researchers fulfill this calling by performing their study diligently and ethically. Confidentiality of the participants will be carefully maintained in the interviews.

Faith and spirituality are common topics in the culture at large, though there are not many studies about these concepts in the literature. Therefore, by studying deeply about faith and spirituality through qualitative study, these researchers are contributing additional information to fill the gaps in the literature. The experiences of the participants may help Christians to evaluate their own faith and to find effective ways for them to grow spiritually. The study can also spread more awareness of Christianity to nonbelievers. Overall, the audience would be able to learn how the participants understand faith and spirituality and possible factors that affect the growth of faith and spirituality.