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Preserving Hope Through Youth Attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church

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by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT
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The biblical perspective of training up a child in the way to go provides the foundation for mentoring to influence youth success. This thesis project applies a needs analysis to fulfill the effort to preserve hope through youth attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church. No secular or spiritual mentorship program exists for African American male youth in Chester, Georgia. This qualitative study used surveys to query the beliefs of African American youth, church leaders, and parents about the need for a mentorship program. Findings from analyses of survey data from almost thirty participants implied the need for a community-based mentorship program for African American male youth. Participants volunteered to participate in six project meetings. These meetings discussed low church attendance among African American male adolescents due to the lack of mentoring. The mentor and mentee were trained and paired based on commonalities. Data collected through mentorship meetings, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, will be used to develop a permanent community-based mentorship program inclusive to all youth. This thesis project proposes grooming African American male youth based on the discipleship principles found in Scripture, also evident in African American culture, to mentor men. Church as a community leader should work diligently with church leaders, parents, and African American male youth to reignite the flame of ancestry hope. The spiritual light of God gives endurance to those who accept His Great Commission. The mentorship program's mission is to restore hope through Jesus Christ's everlasting hope.

Keywords: African American youth, community-based, discipleship, hope, mentorship

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DMIN   *Doctor of Ministry*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

As the world evolves, so does the lifestyle of youth from generation to generation. From a spiritual standpoint, there is visible proof that the lack of engagement with African-American male youth results in missed opportunities to share the gospel of God. In certain church situations, the needs of African American youths require commitment due to ineffective tactics for spiritual growth and an absence of application conveying faith and spiritual doctrine in their everyday lives.

The lack of engagement adversely impacts the church. Thus causing a low youth church attendance rate. But there is also an opportunity presented, and church leaders and adults within the community must analyze the problem by partnering with the youth. Church leaders and adults must work collectively to foster youth into future church and community leaders. Every Sunday, African-American male youths are not in attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church in Chester, Georgia. Much work must be done to build rural African-American male youth's hope in eternal things. This work must be evaluated from the following perspectives: the township's composition, the parents, the church members, and the African-American male youth.

Ministry Context

The history of New Canaan Baptist Church lends itself to the research. New Canaan Baptist church was established after the Civil War ended in 1865. It was established on hope for the present and the future. Hope began when President Abraham Lincoln drew up a decision on

September 22, 1862, and issued an executive order. President Lincoln declared enslaved people in the defying Confederate states lawfully free. The Emancipation Proclamation ushered brighter days in freedom and strength within the African-American community. On the night of December 31, 1862, African Americans, enslaved and free, gathered and patiently waited. Since the declaration would go into effect at midnight, they waited to celebrate the new year and anticipated news that the Emancipation Proclamation had taken effect. This occasion was known as Watch Night, which marks when African Americans across the country watched and waited for the news of freedom and hope. Today, Watch Night is an annual New Year's Eve tradition that embraces the memory of servitude and sovereignty, expressions of faithfulness, and a celebration of community and strength.[1] This tradition seems to initiate an endeavor to expand existing hope and community strength from one year to the next. This annual gathering starts the new year by celebrating God's gift of life and everlasting hope.

With momentum from the connotation of Watch Night, the founders of New Canaan Baptist Church took the community leadership role. They stepped out in faith for more freedom upon the release of the new law, the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. Out of traditional African society, this extraordinarily diverse mixture of rituals, religious beliefs, and methods, the African American people evolved. African Americans redesigned churches in their ancestry style to fulfill their specific spiritual and pragmatic desires. Enslaved Africans were involuntarily shipped to North America with nothing, some without clothing on their backs. But after the laws changed, a degree of freedom was gained. Instead of building shipping vessels of horror, they

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[1] "The Historical Legacy of Watch Night," National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian, accessed February 7, 2023, https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/historical-legacy-watch-night.

created their vessel of nurturing, something that offered liberation and hope, the church.[2] Through the church, adults invested hope in the young generation by mentoring them.

New Canaan Baptist Church is the researcher's home church. The researcher has attended this church from early childhood until the present time. This church is situated in the small rural town of Chester, Georgia. Chester, Georgia, is in Dodge County. The town of Chester comprises a total population of 727 people within the city limits. This count does not include the Dodge State Prison, which is within the city limits. The breakdown by race in 2020 was 412 (56.67%) African Americans and 255 (35.08%) Whites.[3]

The African-American community is rooted in the lifestyles and cultures that drive some congregants to travel miles to attend their hometown church. Plus, those attending church would like to see an increase in African-American male youth attendance. Like the researcher, most New Canaan Baptist Church members were born and raised in Chester, Georgia, and still have families and property within this small rural town. In addition, some church members live in the surrounding counties, such as Laurens and Bleckley. The cultural values are lasting within Chester, Georgia's African-American attitude and the surrounding localities.

The community struggles without leaders who are focused on youth activities. The population of the town of Chester, Georgia, reveals a significant presence of African Americans. Currently, the township of Chester's leadership has no African-American leadership and seems to struggle with understanding the mindset of African-American male youth. New Canaan Baptist Church has a perspective for community outreach and mission. The church's motto is "A

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[2] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2021), 16.

[3] "Explore Census Data," United States Census Bureau, last modified July 7, 2022, accessed October 25, 2022, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table.html.

Church that promotes community spiritual growth." New Canaan Baptist Church has continued to work with the community to produce leadership to sponsor the African-American community. The Great Commission of Jesus Christ is New Canaan Baptist Church's priority. The main objective of the church is to contribute to the growth of the gospel of Jesus Christ within the community and work outward into the vicinities to increase awareness of God and increase church attendance of rural African-American male youth.

Beliefs and ideas on the importance of attending church are essential in the lives of each congregant. Each year at New Canaan Baptist Church, there is a Founder's Day Celebration. This program is constructed on the history and ancestry of the church and community. During the program, an elderly congregant takes center stage and proudly talks about the old ways to include pride in a strong community that once worked to solve problems. During those days, it was embraced when community elders were committed to helping the neighborhood children. The African tribal heritage was once strong, and progress was made within the African-American community. Like all of God's people, the African tribal culture sustained the hardship of a treacherous journey from their motherland to a strange land. Their faith and trust in God have aided in holding on to their hope for a better life. The effort to promote hope correlates with progress in life with the mindset that things anticipated bring about potential blessings. Much hope and spiritual therapy could come through partaking in the authentic and compassionate Christian community, but only when there is a correlation with the community in a responsive and investing manner.[4]

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[4] James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 184.

New Canaan Baptist Church remains proud of its African heritage and philosophy. Compared to church history and the church's present situation, there seems to be a shift in the generations that led to missed opportunities to mentor the youth mindset to persevere with hope through adults and the church. So, the lack of African-American male youth in the church starts at home. New Canaan Baptist Church plays a role in this matter. Parents should rely on their parents and other elders in the community for historical value in life. Historically, African Americans depended on one another to prosper through difficult situations such as slavery and unfair treatment. The problematic situations led many to have faith in God and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit as the spiritual guardian.

The ancestors of New Canaan Baptist Church demonstrated a genuine attitude toward mentoring hope. The researcher's great-grandmother sang old gospel songs when she was distressed. Her ability to overcome challenging situations was a lesson learned from her youth. To fortify the truthfulness of God, there was shouting of joy in churches, fields, and homes, which served as a foundation of love and care for youth to witness. The return of love and care to the African American male youth at close range is needed to recover church attendance. At some point, one may ask if the younger generation was overlooked regarding spiritual coddling and spiritual nurturing. New Canaan Baptist Church spiritual leaders and families must insert themselves strategically in the community and into the lives of African-American male youth. Through a calculated approach to youth spiritual growth, the church must dedicate time and resources to entice youth and develop them as potential spiritual and secular leaders. Due to New Canaan Baptist Church's modest attendance of African-American male youth, the church leadership has visually recognized the researcher's involvement in developing a youth mentorship program.

When reiterating who New Canaan Baptist Church is, hope runs deeply along the historical trails of ancestors' faith. New Canaan Baptist Church is known for offering optimism to the African-American community. Before the days of public school desegregation in Georgia, New Canaan Baptist Church was the central location for community gatherings. African-American youths from Chester, Georgia, and the surrounding area played on the church grounds. The only African-American school in Chester, Georgia, was located across the road from New Canaan Baptist Church. The researcher recalls seeing the old wooden building. The building had no playground or outdoor toilet, and the church grounds were used to interact with community youths when they came to the church grounds to use the outdoor toilet or to play. New Canaan Baptist Church offered hope during those days to relieve the stressful situation of the community. The foundation for hope still exists at New Canaan Baptist Church, but there are minimal plans to reinforce interaction with community youth. The youth would gather on the church grounds as a traditional tendency driven down by ancestors. From experience, the researcher recalls the church's openness to helping those less fortunate. In the past, the church offered a spiritual mentorship, which helped shape some youth to have a good relationship with Jesus Christ.

Today, the approach of New Canaan Baptist Church has changed from the older days and is coming up short on spiritual mentorship. Somewhere along the historical lines, the church began to inadvertently exclude one of the main components for continual growth, the African-American male youth. The exclusion of African-American male youth from the church will not result in balanced growth within the church. In the first chapter of Genesis, God said, "Let us make man in our image" (Gen 1:26, New King James Version). The African-American church should constantly be in the business of producing educated leaders to become spiritual and

liberated men. Evangelizing and fostering African-American male youth could be an opportunity to prepare them to face challenges as African-American male youth. Youth decline in church attendance may stem from turning their back on God because they may not have proper fostering to make decent secular and spiritual decisions. Therefore, knowledge is critical to growth and could be the primary driver motivating African-American male youth to return to faith in God.

The nature of modern African American male youth must be encompassed to mobilize their good energy to drive positive lifestyle changes, which may lead to secular opportunities to flourish in their life span. The following quote is an adage used in some African-American churches at the end of sermons. This invitation to discipleship reverberates in the researcher's mind, "the doors of the church are open." This quote must be factually incorporated within the lifestyle of church leadership and congregants. There must be a mass exit out of New Canaan Baptist Church into the town of Chester, Georgia, and into the African-American vicinity, where the workers for God almighty will exist to assist. The offering of assistance must be presented to the youth at no material cost. Actual doers of the work of God must be readily available at a specific time and place to mentor youth in various ways.

God intends the Christian life to be a joyful experience, made more so by the unity believers experience in the community. For leaders of the church and community, there is a necessity to share the spiritual inheritance, which is eternal life with God. The need for positive African-American male leaders in the community correlates with the importance of a mentorship program in the town of Chester, Georgia. The presence of New Canaan Baptist Church as God's servant to spread goodness in the community envisions a lifestyle to capture African American male youth's mental and physical awareness. This spiritual leadership presence in the community

opens another door to a heavenly inheritance and holds true to New Canaan Baptist Church's philosophy of living hope.

Hope in the Word of God conveys a promising future; youth are the future.[5] Furthermore, Peter utilized the term inheritance to illustrate an affiliation with God through Jesus Christ. Inheritance emphasizes the believer's perpetual home in heaven, and inheritance is alive and well-preserved today. The obstacles the church experiences cannot undermine the certainty of the future inheritance.[6] Free African Americans' hope sprang to life after the release of the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. This effort for hope must be constant within the community by expanding the spiritual wisdom of the African-American male youth. The offer of mentorship to each youth keeps hope alive and guides them to their portion of the spiritual inheritance, eternal life with God. Furthermore, a glance at the African-American community and church serves as a great reminder that now is the time to mentor youth from a spiritual and secular perspective. In Ephesians 6:4, Apostle Paul argues that leaders such as fathers should prevent themselves from provoking their children to anger but raise them with proper coaching and admonition of the Lord.

Problem Presented

New Canaan Baptist Church faces a dilemma regarding communicating the gospel with youth. This is evident based on the church attendance record over the last ten to fifteen years. The number of young males attending each Sunday amounted to three. This issue seems to be the least desired topic in church meetings. The focus on money outweighs the importance of young

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[5] David Walls and Max Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, vol.11, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 7.

[6] Ibid., 8.

males attending church. Rural African-American adults seem astonished that they have clouded their minds with other matters and failed to hold on to the tradition of training the youth. The Great Commission demanded by Jesus Christ appears to be eroding and diminishing from the ministries of the African-American churches. The old-fashioned perception of the church in the African-American neighborhood has shifted from an outward focus to an inward viewpoint of Christian ministry. If this dilemma continues without intervention, the opportunity to mentor spirituality in the male youth presently and within the next generation will be missed. The problem is that New Canaan Baptist Church in Chester, Georgia, has low attendance among African-American male adolescents due to the lack of mentoring.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to improve church attendance by instituting a community mentorship program for rural African-American male adolescents. The goal of this research project is driven by the need for a strategy that directs African-American male youth to make better choices. A structured effort to positively manage the lives of youth would offer them much more than worldly and materialistic things.

A challenge has raised its ugly head and must be mitigated to keep pace with modern times. Chester Williams adds some truth to the challenge in his following allegation. "But, despite the black church's historic splendor and tireless rescue operations for the wounded and weary, it has undergone hapless transformations."[7] The constant changes in society demand persistent vigilance within the church, especially concerning the rural African-American male youth. This research project will notify spiritual leaders and parents of the ongoing problem of

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[7] Chester Williams, *Last Call for the African-American Church: The Death of Global Missions* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2015), 33.

rural African-American male youth not attending church. In the researcher's experience as a deacon in New Canaan Baptist Church, there was very little concern about African-American male youth attendance. This mindset encourages the researcher to approach the issue of male youth church attendance at ground zero, the neighborhood.

The groundwork for sharing God with African-American male youth should start with re-engaging with an approach of the Great Commission. James Emery White confirms, "The church's mission, given by Jesus himself, is to reach out to a deeply fallen world and call it back to God."[8] Therefore, a mentoring program positioned among needy youth will be convenient for the community. A building apart from the church will be obtained to mentor youth. This building will symbolize a positive figure which will foster spiritual growth, care, and servitude. The following will be accomplished to fulfill the purpose of this research project, which relates to adding more African-American male youth to church. Starting with youths who are willing and able to make changes in their lives, the mentorship program will offer professional and spiritual-minded big brothers to partner with youths. Conversations with youth regarding their life needs will be completed, and a coordinated plan of attack will be constructed to assist each youth in maturing in worldly and godly aspects. Since African American male youth are absent from church, there is no full awareness of exactly how they honestly feel about God.

Children are unique and have numerous theories in terms of spiritual understanding. Some youths lack anything that seems like personal faith, although others have fervent devotion. There should be a particular interest in mentoring youth as an individual. It could amount to a mistake to attempt to group them all together. The ultimate concern may be that youth will enter

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[8] James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 52.

some horrific defiant phase and deny the faith. That concern is usually unsubstantiated, for most youths tend to stay religious.[9] Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross advise, "Many children and teenagers who consider themselves religious have failed to grasp the central concept of God's grace."[10] Based on both authors' speculation, there is a need for spiritually mentoring and grooming youth to realize the full benefits of knowing and accepting God.

A mentorship program for African-American male youth will offer structured support for the mind, body, and soul, keeping the philosophy of working through God. The old African legacy of having hope and spreading hope from within the New Canaan Baptist Church seems to have faded as time evolved. White advises, "If the natural flow of the church is to skew order, the leadership of the church must invest a disproportionate amount of energy and intentionality in order to maintain a vibrant population of young adults."[11] It is now time to ignite the candle of hope as a beacon that leads the African-American male youth back to church.

Basic Assumptions

This research is based on several assumptions to keep in mind during the review of this thesis project. One assumption is that responses from candidates are truthful and assessments are not persuasive in any way to change the thought pattern of those participating. Another assumption is that most New Canaan Baptist Church members openly accept the younger generation's inclusiveness in church growth. There is an assumption that some congregants will feel that youth are in church to take over church service altogether, or they may weaken the church's historical and spiritual significance. The average rural church in the area of New Canaan

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[9] Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross, *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 34.

[10] Ibid., 41.

[11] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 104.

Baptist Church is assumed to have a membership of 65 to 150 members. Furthermore, there is an assumption that the majority of the congregants and potential participants reside outside the city limits of Chester, Georgia. There is an assumption that this thesis project will assist New Canaan Baptist Church in increasing the attendance of African-American male youth and possibly increasing the number of female youths.

Definitions

This thesis project is centered on mentorship to mitigate the absence of African-American male youth at New Canaan Baptist Church. Crucial terminology utilized within this project will emphasize consequences to ensure an understanding of concerns associated with non-church attendance. The terms will support creating a gateway to mitigate the male youth attendance problem at New Canaan Baptist Church. Key terms utilized in this project encompass Generation Z, spiritual maturity, two-way communication, and spiritual leadership.

Generation Z. For this project, Generation Z will be defined as youth born between 1995 and 2012. This generation of Americans has an age range of nine to 27 years old and is occasionally described as iGeneration to signify the internet generation. "Members of Generation Z seem to be taking their time with the rites of passage formerly associated with middle adolescence."[12] Some youths from this generation desire to actively partake in their faith community's intergenerational religious services and devotion experiences. Also, Generation Z youth want to be leaders and church members.[13]

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[12] Thomas E. Bergler, "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity," *Christian Education Journal* 17, no 1(2020): 82.

[13] Elizabeth M. Dowling, W. George Scarlett, and Dr George Scarlett, eds. *Encyclopedia of Religious and Spiritual Development* (Thousand Oaks CA: SAGE Publications, Incorporated, 2005), 69.

My Brother's Keeper. This project focuses on My Brother's Keeper to guide African-American male youth. My Brother's Keeper includes a commitment to support and improve the lives of young men of color. The church can assume this role by providing mentorship services to youth in the community.[14] John Powell and Maya Rockeymoore state, "In naming this initiative "My Brother's Keeper," perhaps the White House is not just asking whether we can help boys of color but asking: can we really care to help them? Can we come to see them as family, worthy of nurturing, respect, and regard?"[15] This project works to respond with a positive answer to those questions and apply the "My Brother's Keeper" perspective.

M-Fayes Spiritual Mentorship Program. This research project aims to substantiate the need for a mentorship program for African-American youth. M-Fayes Spiritual Mentorship Program is a bookmark, and the name will be used upon completion of research to advance the development of a formal mentorship program in Chester, Georgia.

Religiosity. For this thesis project, religiosity can be compatible with spirituality. Religiosity is the proper, institutional, and obvious manifestation of the sacred. Manifestation could involve a conviction in God, attending worship services, and acquiring a good prayer and spiritual reflection ritual.[16]

Spiritual leaders. For this thesis project, spiritual leaders are defined as those with leadership positions and responsibilities within the church. New Canaan Baptist Church is structured with the following leadership entities: the pastor, chairman of the deacon board,

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[14] Kendra H. Barber, "Whither Shall We Go? The Past and Present of Black Churches and the Sphere," *Religions* 6 no.1 (2015): 251.

[15] John A. Powell and Maya Rockeymoore, "Obama's Plan to Aid Black Men and Boys Will be a Boon to Other Groups, Too," *Chronicle of Philanthropy* 26, no. 15 (2014): 31.

[16] LeConté J. Dill, "Wearing My Spiritual Jacket: The Role of Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism among African American Youth," *Health Education & Behavior* 44, no. 5 (2017): 696.

Two-way communication. New Canaan Baptist Church leaders, parents, and the community must be prepared to use two-way communication to the maximum. The endeavor to guide African American male youth to the church comes with having keen ears for hearing the opinion of youth. Plus, verbal communication must be shared with youth to include their views. For this thesis project, two-way communication is an equal balance of listening and verbal actions. Meaningful transmission of information is essential when seeking resolutions. Therefore, principles of good communication are crucial elements for all leadership.[22]

Village-minded. New Canaan Baptist Church seeks to return to its African heritage of a village mindset. In the past, it took a village or neighborhood to raise a child. African-American churches and communities must overlap each other, eventually encircle youth to protect them, and strategically surround them with caring grownups, support groups, and organizations dedicated to their well-being.[23]

Watch Night. A church service deep-rooted in African-American religious customs and based on celebrating hope. During the first Watch Night, enslaved African Americans assembled, watched, and waited for the news of freedom. At midnight on December 31, 1862, the Emancipation Proclamation became lawful. As they gathered, there were prayers, worship, singing, and dancing to celebrate freedom, which came at the break of midnight. At most African-American churches, Watch Night is still observed every year on December 31st. The event is usually commemorated by celebrations of fellowship and worship service, followed by a cultural meal on New Year's Day. This meal may consist of collard greens, representing the

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[22] Richard R. Osmer and Katherine M. Douglass, *Cultivating Teen Faith: Insights from the Confirmation Project* (Chicago, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2018), 101.

[23] Sandra L. Barnes and Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Empowering Black Youth of Promise: Education and Socialization in the Village-Minded Black Church* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 4.

promise of prosperity, and black-eyed peas with rice and salt pork, believed to bring good fortune to those who ate it.[24]

Limitations

The limitations are related to the total time allotted to complete the thesis project and the gathering of essential data to substantiate the mitigation plan. The usage of the township of Chester, Georgia, and its African-American neighborhood may limit the amount of data to build a solid case. Parents and grandparents of the New Canaan Baptist Church place limitations on the dependability of candidates, and these are supportive components of the reliability of the thesis project.

Surveys and analyses may contribute to biased responses. Biased responses occur when the participant replies to a survey in a way they believe the researcher requires them to respond. Anonymity is the key to assisting in diminishing biased responses. Achieving truthful feedback will be critical for the authenticity of this research.

There are limitations the researcher will face among the church and the community. Most New Canaan Baptist church leaders agree that male youth congregants must continue the church tradition of hope for tomorrow. However, there are church members who live outside the city limits that will be included in the research. The scope of the thesis project may create a deduction in information gained to substantiate the intervention of a mentoring program. Upon completion of this thesis project, another project will extend the radius beyond the vicinity of Chester, Georgia, to include the entire area of Dodge County, Georgia. This thesis project focused on young African- American males and may not benefit any other demographics.

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[24] "The Historical Legacy of Watch Night."

Delimitations

Delimitations such as self-imposed restrictions on only African American male youth may result in the specific outcome of data for the thesis project. In addition, the age group of eight to eighteen applies to the research and may directly affect the study. The research focuses on Chester, Georgia, and a five-mile radius of New Canaan Baptist Church may yield decent results.

The subsequent delimitation is the researcher's compassion to drive attendance change in New Canaan Baptist Church. Concentrating on participation from African-American community involvement, parental commitment, and mentoring may not be a sufficient scope. Resolving the complete problem of why African American male youth do not attend New Canaan Baptist Church cannot be determined in this study aimed at mentoring. Ongoing studies should be implemented to gain more information on all youth attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church.

Plus, there is a delimitation related to the current youth program within New Canaan Baptist Church that may not correlate with the purpose of the thesis project since the current youth program includes female youth. Undoubtedly, there will be pushback at the thought of any change that disrupts what was done in the past. From the researcher's experience as a long-time member of New Canaan Baptist Church, there is a struggle to get over the old saying, "That's the way we have always done it."

Thesis Statement

The wisdom of Solomon recommends, "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6, NKJV). The world presents numerous forms of learning that do not correlate with the will of God. Therefore, if African-American

male youth do not learn about God's goodness from church leaders, parents, and mentors, they will learn to be callous from someone else. It is the responsibility of adults to train youth in the way of the Lord with the hope of mitigating the world's wicked ways. The use of a mentoring program for rural African-American male youth should be designed to bring meaning to mercy, teach them their duty to God, and set them good examples of a holy life. New Canaan Baptist Church has been a body of hope since 1865. This hope that flowed down through African ancestors is still alive and available to everyone from God through the church, which is the body of Jesus Christ. If the M-Fayes Spiritual Mentorship program is developed for rural African-American males, then there will be growth in church attendance.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explores literature concerning the hesitancy associated with African-American youth's constancy to attend the African-American church. The literature review consists of five key sections. In the first section, the literature review breaks down the challenges faced by African-American youth, parents, and church leaders working to increase spiritual awareness in the youth. In the second section, the literature review will evaluate the African-American church leadership role and its responsibility to understand the need for the spiritual development of youth in the church. In addition, this section's literature review will focus on the level of leadership put forward by parents and other adults who should enable the spiritual growth of youth at home, in the community, and in the church. Just as youth are encouraged to advance in the worldly aspects of life, they should be encouraged to include spiritual elements within their daily walk of life. This encouragement should be the duty of the parent, church leadership, and other mentors. The third section of the literature review expands on the documented reactions of African-American male youth and church attendance. Also, in section three, a review of literature, spirituality is dissected to generate an atmosphere in the church and community where young people feel recognized and welcomed. Within the fourth section, a review of literature about modern culture contributes to the decline of youth church attendance. Also, the fourth section underscores the goodness of a village-minded community, shaping the village's youth with Christlikeness and not fragmenting from current fads. The fifth section of the literature review expands on divine support in every aspect as an illustration that stimulates spiritual growth and support of the rural African-American male youth.

The following section introduces the theological foundation, which describes support for the Word of God as African-American male youth are groomed. Taking on the biblical mindset

of a brother's keeper aligns with how African-American ancestors cared for others. This mindset can be used today to guide African-American male youth back to church and away from troubling lifestyles. Also, an offer to develop relationships with God and adults is essential. There must be a willingness to help youth in need of guidance. Youths are watching adults. Therefore, the action of a good man is needed to help African-American youth find their way. There should always be a focus on God's goodness, which shall be shared with others to help them realize that there is more to life. It is the youth's authority to know Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ proclaimed there should be no hesitation in leading youth to the Word of God.

The last section of this chapter brings the theoretical foundation of this research project. Dr. Samuel White, III expresses his opinion on the community aspect of grooming the youth with a brother's keeper attitude. Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk's theoretical approach is included as a source to gain a better angle to cope with issues that hinder family unity. Lastly, to understand the spiritual perspective of African-American male youth lives, Almeda M. Wright's theoretical approach will be used to fortify the theoretical foundation of this research project.

Literature Review

The absence of African-American male youth in the church has become a significant issue at New Canaan Baptist Church. A resolution is needed to fulfill Jesus Christ's command to spread the gospel. The literature review will cover subjects that may influence the attendance of African-American male youth. Also, this review hinges on mentoring youth to increase the kingdom of God.

Challenges that Drive the Wedge

Discovering the significant drivers behind the absence of youth in African-American churches could help understand the causes of distraction. The literature demonstrates barriers hampering youth church attendance. When addressing youth spiritually, the church competes with numerous world influences. Paul Cannings pens *African American Church Leadership: Principles for Effective Ministry and Community Leadership,* enlightening the reality that youth struggle daily with the massive adverse pressures of music, movies, television, the internet, and counterfeit friendships.

[1] Work to mitigate youth's daily struggles should be led by those who yearn to see others prosper. To be a leader for African American male youth, Cannings directs the thought process in the direction of making oneself accessible as a leader with a vision to empower others. The challenge is first to change one's mindset and then execute as a transformational character to inspire the family and community.

David L. DuBois and Michael Karcher state, "As a society, we must do a better job of talking about the positive attributes of young people. We believe that we must talk to our youth about what they should and can become, not only about what they must avoid being."[2] Work must be constant as adults must implement a beneficial and encouraging adult-youth relationship. Richard J. Pitts advises, "The most important source of religious socialization is family. Youth raised in religious families are more likely to be religious than those raised in nonreligious families."[3]

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[1] Paul Cannings, *African American Church Leadership: Principles for Effective Ministry and Community Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013), 197.

[2] David L. DuBois and Michael Karcher, eds. *Handbook of Youth Mentoring* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2013), 19.

[3] Richard J. Petts, "Parental Religiosity, Religious Homogamy, and Young Children's Well-Being," *Sociology of Religion* 72, no.4 (Winter 2011), 1.

Many youths may need to be more concerned with the spiritual significance of life. Samuel White, III offers a fresh perspective in *My Brother's Keeper: Church Ministry for Young African American Males*. He implies that youth are conditioned and incapable of thinking for themselves, and perhaps youth have lost their ingenuity and distinct philosophy.[4] The approach of White's *My Brother's Keeper* extends opportunities to develop a relationship with African-American male youth to add creativity and knowledge to a mismanaged life. A challenge presents itself to African American youth males once they have been improperly mentored. Improper grooming involves infusing failure into the personality of youths, which would promote brainwashing and not thinking for themselves. This condition is detrimental to some youths and leads to a broken spirit in others.[5] The article "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity," authored by Thomas E. Bergler, demands a philosophy designed to structure an attitude of service and ministry into the lives of youth, essentially making a difference in the world.[6]

In today's society, the straightforward attempt to communicate may impede youth's life. In his article, Bergler emphasizes the problematical usage of cell phones and excessive use of social media as lifestyles get in the path of loving God and genuinely caring for others.[7] Identifying challenges related to African American youth's lack of attending church will promote understanding as spiritual leaders and parents work to increase youth attendance in church. When considering a mentorship program, work for youth attendance must come with an awareness of the challenges commonly faced by African-American male youth. Yet some challenges may be self-induced by youth, and others may be part of society and everyday life. One's view of the

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[4] Samuel White III, *My Brother's Keeper: Church Ministry for Young African American Males* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2014), 7.

[5] Samuel White III, *My Brother's Keeper,* 7.

[6] Bergler, "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity," 86.

[7] Ibid., 89.

world may cause challenges based on experiences, needs, feelings, culture, family background, and values.[8] These causes could be resolved with a good mentorship program led by compassionate leaders.

Mentoring as an approach to lead youth to church is unknown at New Canaan Baptist Church and the community. The introduction of mentoring to the church and community is essential. Church leaders, parents, and youth must be lectured repeatedly until spiritual mentoring is understood. Then, there will be gradual buy-in as the lecturing continues. Reinforcing the meaning, purpose, and benefits of mentoring must also be persistent. In the literature review of *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring: A Multiple Perspectives Approach*, editors Tammy D. Allen and Lillian T. Eby revealed the definition of mentoring. "Youth mentoring is characterized by a personal relationship in which a caring individual provides consistent companionship, support, and guidance aimed at developing the competence and character of a child or adolescent."[9] Lecturing can promote a worldly and godly purpose of youth mentoring.

The biggest challenge to church attendance is sometimes within plain sight. It is the objective of New Canaan Baptist Church to remain within the borders of the Holy Bible. It is the version of the Holy Bible that gets the attention of the older congregants. Some senior church members desire the King James Version of the Bible. In the book *Reviving the Black Church*: *A Call to Reclaim A Sacred Institution,* Thabiti Anyabwile underscores that emancipated African Americans obtained the skill to read and directed their awareness to the content of the Bible. In this case, Anyabwile does not mention the version of the Bible, but it is possible it was the King

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[8] Samuel White III, *My Brother's Keeper*, 152.

[9] Tammy D. Allen and Eby, Lillian T. Eby, eds, *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring: A Multiple Perspectives Approach* (Newark, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 23.

James Version. They studied hard to understand the Bible's subjects as a method of religious and societal awareness and encouragement. Their discovery of the Bible spawned elevated self-esteem and evangelical belief in Scripture.[10] This approach should offer diverse versions of the Bible, which can be used to simplify the Scripture for African-American male youth.

The literature review of Naomi Schaefer Riley's book, *Got Religion?: How Churches, Mosques, and Synagogues Can Bring Young People Back*, directs consideration to approaches designed to attract youth to church activities. Based on Riley's opinion, the contribution of simple translations of the Bible may create a change in reaction and hopefully drive clearer spiritual understanding for youth. Nevertheless, the influence of modern technology and everyday activities on young people's lives has been devastating in many instances. So, an exertion to redirect the eyes and minds of youth away from handheld mobile devices to the Word of God, the Bible, will take relentless work. African American Church leaders have gradually returned to the archaic African heritage in an effort to outline what is spiritually appropriate to youth in the community and church. A vernacular approach should be proposed to be attractive to African-American male youth. Today's prosperity gospel, with its assurance of unlimited prosperity for those who believe, will always appeal to some. However, spiritual leaders should consider not making the success of spiritual richness dependent on the fantasies of the economy. With a diverse theological route that offers less immediate fulfillment, the importance of spiritual provision may positively appeal to the youthful generation. As the black community cultivates into a more educated and economically sound society, the inclusiveness of youth must offer less

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[10] Thabiti Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church: A Call to Reclaim A Sacred Institution* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 18.

artificial faith and more spiritual wisdom, which leads to becoming pillars in the community similar to some of their renowned ancestors.[11]

In the following statement, Riley advises spiritual leaders on what situation requires change. "The problem of young, unattached adults wandering away from the religious reservation is hardly unique to our era. And while our current time seems to have brought with it a variety of different challenges in this regard, it has not brought too many new solutions."[12] In honesty, there is a perception in which youth are linked to electronics and disconnected from the church. Church leaders must lead for change and work to connect youth with church membership.[13]

<div align="center">Leaders Must Lead for Change</div>

African-American male youth are seeking leaders in their lives, and they may need to go about this task in a different way. Therefore, immediate leaders such as parents, mentors, and church leaders must lead by example. In *Spiritual Leadership for Church Officers: A Handbook*, Joan S. Gray offers sound advice for spiritual leaders and their leadership authority. Gray recommends, "This deeper kind of authority flows from the character and actions of the individual leader and the collected leadership. It must be inspired in and granted by those who are followers. People give leaders authority based on those leaders' characteristics and actions."[14] Leading with authority builds trust in followers. A great example of this type of leadership is Jesus Christ. His disciples used this type of leadership to guide others to the glory

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[11] Naomi Schaefer Riley, *Got Religion? : How Churches, Mosques, and Synagogues Can Bring Young People Back* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2014), 121.

[12] Ibid., 139.

[13] Anne Streaty Wimberly, "Words from the Soul: Black Youth Speak out and Demand Response," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 48 (Fall 2019): 2.

[14] Joan S. Grey, *Spiritual Leadership for Church Officers: A Handbook* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2009), 19.

of Jesus Christ. Authority comes with the influence to change lives, limitations, and

circumstances. This is generally what it means when we think of effective leadership.[15]

Influential leaders' work behaviors significantly influence the philosophy of the church and

community. This same philosophy may be directed toward mentoring youth for Jesus Christ.

Being a leader does not imply one has succeeded and is now exempted from difficult labor.

Leaders set the tempo.[16]

Regarding the church, ownership is on the pastor and his leadership team to extend

avenues for change. In *Empowering Black Youth of Promise: Education and Socialization in the*

Village-Minded Black Church, Sandra L. Barnes and Anne Streaty Wimberly offer some avenues

of approach to focus on. Barnes and Wimberly advise, "Charismatic pastors are essential to the

success of youth programming. Pastors often establish the congregational tone for possible youth

efforts."[17] The review of the literature from Leonard Burgest's doctoral research work

"Addressing the Inactivity of Youth and Young Adults In the Church Environment" highlights

the seriousness of parent involvement in the divine achievement of many young people in

diverse black communities. Any approach to hashing out a pathway to the youth church

attendance problem is a difficult battle. This struggle may result from the numerous distractions

that now demand the attention of countless youths because of the laxity of the parents.[18]

The effort to gain youth attention may be due to the lack of determination from adults. In

the literature review of the book *Simple Student Ministry: A Clear Progress for Strategic Youth*

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[15] Hwa Yung, *Leadership or Servanthood?: Walking in the Steps of Jesus* (Carlisle, Cumbria, CA: Langham Publishing, 2021), 32.

[16] Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: The Interactive Study* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 79.

[17] Barnes and Wimberly, *Empowering Black Youth*, 129.

[18] Leonard Burgest, "Addressing the Inactivity of Youth and Young Adults in the Church Environment" Doctoral Dissertations and Projects. Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022. Scholar Crossing (3678), 28-29.

Discipleship, Eric Geiger and Jeff Borton suggest creating space for youth relationships is essential to youth discipleship. Youths need interactions with divine adults. Youth are faced with little constancy in this world, and they need to be confronted with the reliability of Christ through adults who honor Jesus and them.[19] The benefit of a reliable Jesus Christ would be that it would serve as a fitted beacon of hope free from worldly changes. David F. Ford advises, "The ongoing presence of Jesus Christ is the resurrection of Jesus. This 'God-sized event' means, besides much else, that the crucified and resurrected Jesus is now present as God is present loving, trustworthy, free, invisible, and sharing the Holy Spirit."[20]

In the article "Black Youth Speak Out: An Urgent Call for Hope-Bearing Response," Anne Streaty Wimberly advises, "An urgent need exists for pastoral caregiving responses to today's black youth, especially those disconnected from the church. This need is underscored by the serious issues they face daily, their desire for the Church's responsibility, and their candid suggestions for ways to help."[21] Literature within Elder E.Q Truss's thesis project, "The Decline of Church Attendance in Black American: A Biblical Mandate for Black Males to Godly Leadership," supports efforts to employ black leaders as the lead character in mentoring African American male youth back into the Church. Church leaders facilitated by the pastor should have spiritual and foundational plans to offer the African American youth males and train them in the beliefs of a Christ-centered life.[22] Programs to retain young males must be tailored to capture

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[19] Eric Geiger and Jeff Borton, *Simple Student Ministry: A Clear Process for Strategic Youth Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 20.

[20] David F. Ford, "The Gospel of John and Contemporary Society: Three Major Theological Contributions." *Religions* 14, no. 11 (2023): 6.

[21] Anne Streaty Wimberly, "Black Youth Speak Out: An Urgent Call for Hope-Bearing Response," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 26, no. 2 (July 2016): 117.

[22] Elder E.Q. Truss, "The Decline of Church Attendance in Black America: A Biblical Mandate for Black Males to Godly Leadership," Doctoral Dissertations and Projects. Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018. Scholar Crossing (1667), 3.

their attention to shape and direct their minds, bodies, and souls for spiritual and worldly success. Literature from Fred P. Edie's article, "A Liturgical Re-Imaging of Rural Church Youth Ministry," illustrates the importance of rural congregations' duties to closely nurture youth ministry as essential to tackling youth's need for understanding of the church. This emphasis may be even more critical when no male youth is in attendance.[23] Also, when parents and spiritual leaders begin to work together to resolve youth church attendance issues, everyone should approach with an open mind and a willingness to listen to feedback from youth. The nature of gaining input from African-American male youth relates to open doors and an open heart with the desire to receive the youth's message. The voices of the youths are crying out. Fred P. Edie consents that restricted access to pastors, other spiritual leaders, and community leaders may not favor African-American male youth recruitment and retention.[24]

Availability within the community is an example Jesus Christ set for leaders. This invites opportunities to serve by subjecting oneself to youth and parents in the community. In the literature review of the book, the author shares that the most essential key to discipleship relates to leaders making time to be servant leaders.

This unfavorable situation regarding access to spiritual leaders must be improved. In the literature review of the book *Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence*, authors Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey articulate an excellent example to change the approach to reaching African-American male youth. They proposed a question about continuous change and provided a simple answer in the following statement. "What is

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[23] Edie, "A Liturgical Re-Imaging," 72.

[24] Ibid., 64.

world-changing ministry? It is anchored in mentoring and multiplying disciples."[25] This dynamic process commences working within the current generation of youth, but it has the potential to stimulate beyond a few and eventually touch many in the world. God will cause what is His to grow. Therefore, an endless endeavor to be like Jesus, who trained a handful of Jewish men so He could reach into the entire world.[26] This continuous endeavor must come with action and discipline. Donald S. Whitney adds, "Godliness is the result of a disciplined spiritual life. But at the heart of a disciplined spiritual life is the Discipline of time."[27] If we are growing to be like Jesus, we must discipline ourselves like Jesus. Youths are watching adults, and adults' actions may cause adverse youth actions.

<div align="center">Reaction African American Youth and Church Attendance</div>

Feedback from the youth is the best data to use when attempting to resolve a problem within their generation. The literature review demands two-way communication between adults and youth. Sharing tangible experiences about God could be an excellent icebreaker to create a relaxed environment. Richard R. Osmer and Katherine M. Douglass, in *Cultivating Teen Faith: Insights from the Confirmation Project,* direct the reader's thought process to begin constructing an environment for male youth to realize they are accepted, they can discover their place in society and the role they play in God's evolving of life's theater.[28] African-American male youth are confronted with peer demands to belong to something bigger than usual. The youth's honesty and admission of their desire assist in resolving the lack of church attendance. The youths are

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[25] Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 120.

[26] Ibid., 119-120.

[27] Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 131.

[28] Osmer and Douglass, *Cultivating Teen Faith*, 67.

speaking out in the community. Their actions may not be what adults would call acceptable. Their reactions are sometimes crimes against one another. This adverse action could be a cry for help. There is a backlog of work to do to get ahead of the dilemma of missing African-American male youth in the church. The article "Youth Discipleship Framework for Church Revitalization," authored by Temaris Loran Moore, advocates creating modest learning techniques to understand the life of modern youth. This action would support youth ministries frequently confronted with how to educate evolving generations successfully.[29]

A review of literature authored by Almeda M. Wright in her book *The Spiritual Life of Young African Americans* highlights a listener's desire to stimulate growth within black youth of the current society. Her message to the readers is an unmistakable wake-up call to parents and other adults. Ownership of communication begins at the adult level. Irrespective of how adults speculate about this generation of black youths, they reside in a world where indifference, anxiety, and even morality are not the only choices. In its place, young people react in their own ways. Wright continues within her book to add light to the philosophy of youth and their mentality to deal with the current struggle with interaction with adults. African American male youth want to be heard and seek the wrong attention to reflect their being. The demand for attention held by African-American male youth seems to go undetected compared to the African-American historical strategies and efforts to educate youth with a listening ear and a village mindset. Wright emphasizes the positive consequences of listening, which is a suitable method for paying attention to youth. Furthermore, the author reveals that attention is essential to better speculate young people's actions. It is also necessary to assist troubled adult relationships with

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[29] Temaris Loran Moore, "Youth Discipleship Framework for Church Revitalization," Doctoral Dissertations and Projects. Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022. Scholars Crossing (3552), 48.

youth, supervising them away from hazards in approaches that energize youth to draw upon positive resources.[30]

Spiritual leaders and parents must be focused on extending encouragement to youth while mentoring them to develop spiritually. A literature review of the following article authored by Adia S. Gooden and Susan D McMahon, "Thriving Among African American Adolescents: Religiosity, Religious Support, and Communalism," will serve as a starting point. Gooden and McMahon extend standards from research to accommodate parents' and spiritual leaders' readiness to mentor youth. Educating adults and leaders in the churches about the prosperous indicators and circumstances that lead to flourishing may assist them in building more efficient programs and simplified work with youth.[31] Honest interaction with rural African-American male youth based on their culture-generated feelings about the church is essential as spiritual leaders seek solutions that appeal to them. In the article by Diane J. Chandler, "African American Spirituality: Through Another Lens," when listening to African American male youth express their opinions of the church, there should be harmony to the body of Christ by memorializing African American Christian faith rituals and lived encounters.[32] Life through the eyes of each youth will never be the same. Temaris Loran Moore's thesis project, "Youth Discipleship Framework for Church Revitalization," stemmed thoughts to apply when contemplating mentoring African American male youth. The sacred target of spiritual leaders involves alertness to model and enhance younger church members in the art of practiced

[30] Almeda M. Wright, *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 154.

[31] Adia S. Gooden and Susan D McMahon, "Thriving Among African-American Adolescents: Religiosity, Religious Support, and Communalism," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 57, no. 1-2 (March 2016): 126.

[32] Diane J. Chandler, "African American Spirituality: Through Another Lens," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 161.

devotion.[33] As a listener of the pleas for attention from African American male youth, parents and spiritual leaders should use a divine foundation to train youth as a common denominator in spiritual growth. One subject matter to consider when mentoring for change in rural African-American male youth is culture.

The literature review of Michael Langford's article, "Spirit-Driven Discipleship: A Pneumatology of Youth Ministry," gives meaning to the task of church leaders. Using the Holy Spirit, church leaders must develop a relationship with youth. Then, spiritually teach and guide youth to make healthy choices. The inclination that youth are spiritually capable based on their knowledge of the religion could be a mistake. Some never had this knowledge, and others may have fragments of it. Countering the cultural message requires promoting a conception of God as the Holy Spirit, which could help youth grasp the hope accessible through God. The main objective is to help youth know a God whose authority can defeat their trials and tribulations.[34]

Langford declares, "Perhaps the most direct way to participate in the movement of God's Spirit is to become immersed in the faith community. The same spirit that animated Jesus two thousand years ago continues to animate the Body of Christ. It is by fulfilling our relationship with others that we apprehend our relationship with the divine."[35] The steps to fulfill our relationship with others require unconditional which might seem impossible. The literature review of *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character*, authored by Klaus Issler, shares that barriers to more profound love and intimacy can be mitigated. By opening up

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[33] Moore, "Youth Discipleship Framework," 40.

[34] Michael D. Langford, "Spirit-Driven Discipleship A Pneumatology of Youth Ministry," *Theology Today* 71, no. 3 (2014): 330.

[35] Ibid, 335.

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to a more significant flow of love, we eliminate worldview, enable accessibility to love, and gain the competence to give love. [36]

Mentoring African American male youth develops an opportunity to be good listeners of youth, and as a bonus, mentoring generates a doer's mentality. A literature review of *Gospelize Your Youth Ministry: A Spicy "New" Philosophy of Ministry (That's 2,000 Years Old)*, authored by Greg Stier, directs spiritual leadership to remain engaged in the facilitation of spiritually grooming youth in the church. When examining actions in the church highlighted concerning African American male youth and church attendance, the unfamiliar word "gospelize" may be an excellent example to help mitigate this significant issue. Stier recommends, "To gospelize your ministry is to build a context in which the good news of Jesus is moving both deeply into the souls of your teenagers and outwardly through your teenagers to others. When you make the gospel central to everything you are doing, you are gospelizing your ministry."[37]

The spiritual sense to promote the Great Commission must be a tireless effort to gospelize youth starting at a young age. This work lies in the way of all-inclusive spiritual growth for every spiritual leader in many churches. The mindset must be to fight the good fight of faith. In 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul simplifies his apostolic determination as a servant of God. Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin make it more apparent as they insinuate, "The fight and the race were over, but the victory still abides. Paul had kept the faith, and it remains unshaken."[38] Paul's faithful endeavor as a doer set the stage as a proven approach that could be applied as a

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[36] Klaus Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 79.

[37] Greg Stier, *Gospelize Your Youth Ministry: A Spicy "New" Philosophy of Ministry (That's 2,000 Years Old)* (Arvada, CO: AD2S Publishing, 2015), loc. 264, Kindle.

[38] Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 248.

perpetual forward action in guiding African-American male youth back to the church congregation. The current situation presented in New Canann Baptist Church promotes an understanding that with undesirable actions, there must be positive actions. It must be bookmarked with the minds and hearts of spiritual leaders to fight the good fight of faith. Paul was not commenting about having done his best in the challenge but was declaring that he has been working on the highest task of them all, the ministry to spread the gospel of God.[39] To fight the good fight, Reginald Blount declares, "The Church must engage in legitimate sectarian hermeneutic-critical, reflective discourse behind the wall to assist Black Youth in shaping a healthy and whole identity."[40]

<p align="center">African American Culture: A Cure or Curse?</p>

Modern society brought about changes associated with African-American culture. The caring historical African American culture could be at risk of eradication. In the book *Generation Z: A Century in the Making,* Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace record the probabilities of youth. "Expect to see those in Generation Z seeking out opportunities to connect their religion and their desire for social change and looking closely at how their places of worship offer opportunities to do so."[41] Adults may be challenged when seeking an understanding of modern society. African-American male youths have a different mindset focused on things that make them look good in the eyes of men. This mindset may present an opportunity for spiritual leaders and parents to grab their attention. Chester Williams, the author

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[39] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 248.

[40] Reginald Blount, "Toward Whole-Making: The Power of Voice in the Faith Formation of Black Youth," *Journal of Youth and Theology* 10, no.1-2 (2011): 47.

[41] Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, *Generation Z: A Century in the Making* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 179.

of *Last Call for the African-American Church: The Death of Global Missions,* brings up the following point of view for investigation. The African American male youth are being religiously and ethically unattended, and this situation has gone undetected.[42] In the article by Robert Joseph Taylor, Linda M. Chatters, and R. K. Brown, "African American Religious Participation," the authors elaborate that people with the right fit must be in place to mentor African American male youth. This union of male youth and leaders must consist of social networks within the church and community that may be established around personalities who share general traits.[43] Also, there must be a spiritual network to support male youth. In the article "The Spiritual Network of Contemplative Outreach Limited," Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler speaks highly of the advantages of a spiritual network. She implied that an individual could find it hard to advance in Christ. Individuals are essential and uniquely contribute to pursuing a close relationship with Christ.[44]

The desired African-American culture correlates with the concept of abundant life. Many parents want their youth to have a better life than theirs. But with the generational gap and technology, there is a reasonable battle to capture and direct the life of male youth. There are many distractions in the daily walk of an African-American male youth. The African-American male youth is born into a culture filled with troubles. So, as male youth mature, they struggle with the alternative image of life that does not start with aggression. Ashley B. Barr and Leslie Gordon Simons caution, "The transaction to manhood for African-American male youth can be a challenge. For instance, African-American male youth are more likely than any other racial and

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[42] Williams, *Last Call for the African-American Church*, 91.

[43] Robert Joseph Taylor, Linda M. Chatters, and R. K. Brown, "African American Religious Participation," *Review of Religious Research* 56, no. 4 (December 2014): 533.

[44] Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler, "The Spiritual Network of Contemplative Outreach Limited," *Sewanee Theological Review* 43, no.3 (2000): 319.

ethnic group to be disconnected from the social institutions of school, work, and military, or involved in the juvenile justice system."[45] The absence of compassionate and spiritual leadership leaves a void in the minds of youth, and they need to realize how to embrace life more abundantly. God is the determining factor within the concept of abundant life, which can sometimes leave youths struggling to make the right judgments.[46]

With civilization come choices: live life in Jesus Christ or on worldly principles, but take heed. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. Jesus Christ comes that there may be life, and life will be abundant" (John 10:10, NKJV). This philosophy should be extended to African-American male youth. In the book by Jerome Frierson, *Keep Quiet, Black Boy: A Leadership Guide to Mentoring Millennials*, the author shares his opinion that God will always offer supportive relationships. Furthermore, the author mentions the Bible's illustration of the vertical relationship that God yearnings to have with humanity.[47]

African-American Culture is not a curse with Jesus Christ as the cure. African-American "communities that seek to embody a transformative Christ must accept that we will fail to do so perfectly, even as we try. To achieve true liberation, we need checks and balances for our endeavors, engagement with our oppressors, and sometimes even opposition from them when we go astray."[48]

Divine Support Generates Actions

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[45] Ashley B. Barr, Leslie Gordon Simons, Ronald L. Simons, Steven R. H. Beach, and Robert A. Philibert. "Sharing the Burden of the Transition to Adulthood: African American Young Adults' Transition Challenges and their Mothers' Health Risk," *American Sociological Review* 83, no. 1 (2018): 145.

[46] Wright, *The Spiritual Lives of Young*, 201.

[47] Jerome Frierson, *Keep Quiet, Black Boy: A Leadership Guide to Mentoring Millennials* (N.p.: Jerome Frierson, 2022), 37.

[48] Darryl M. Trimiew, "Jesus Changes Things: A Critical Evaluation of Christ and Culture from an African American Perspective," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no. 1 (Spr2002): 164.

Parents should teach spirituality as support. In their article, "Parent as Mentors: Addressing Contemporary Childrearing through a Servant Leadership Philosophy and the Application of Mentorship Mottos," Gabe and Karina Veas declare, "When parents choose to develop deep relationships with their children and those in the community, together, they can traverse the challenges of life together."[49] This article shares approaches to how parents can successfully work as mentors in the home and community. These actions generate support for youth as they grow up.[50]

The knowledge of the power of God must be shared with African-American male youth. As efforts are made to increase rural African-American male youth church attendance, God must be the common denominator that narrows the generational gap. God's power should be used to facilitate spiritual growth in African-American male youth. The creation of common ground can be established by divine support. Divine support means using the full range of the power of God to guide others to everlasting salvation. In an article by LeConté J. Dill, "Wearing My Spiritual Jacket: The Role of Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism among African American Youth," the author shares his opinion of spirituality. Spirituality is essential in mentoring youth in this disturbing society. As mentors work to shape male youths, the two should mutually agree on a partnership. Dill emphasizes how traumatic times are mitigated by traditional African Americans' prayer and other spiritual coping activities, such as dependence on God for help, strength, and spiritual guidance.[51] Therefore, intertwining the goodness of God while mentoring

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[49] Gabe Veas and Karina Veas, "Parent as Mentors: Addressing Contemporary Childrearing through a Servant Leadership Philosophy and the Application of Mentorship Mottos," *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 15, no. 3, (2018): 394.

[50] Ibid.

[51] LeConté J. Dill, "Wearing My Spiritual Jacket," 697.

rural African-American male youth displays a spiritual illustration of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Christlikeness should be the basis of every conversation with African-American male youth seeking change and pursuing religious information. A literature review of an article from Bernadette Sánchez, Noelle M Hurd, Enrique W Neblett, and Danielle Vaclavik, "Mentoring for Black Male Youth: A Systematic Review of the Research," educates researchers that black male youth have a distinctive collection of experiences in contemporary civilization (e.g., greater susceptibility to unnecessary persecution by law enforcement) and, subsequently, may require that mentoring programs account for these incidents and make unambiguous attempts to be culturally receptive.[52] In the literature review of Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk's book, *Handing Down the Faith: How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation*. The author alludes, "Religion provides crucial help for navigating life's journey successfully, including moral guidance, emotional support, and a secure home base."[53] The article by LeConté J. Dill, "Wearing My Spiritual Jacket: The Role of Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism among African American Youth," proposes sound judgments to build upon when mentoring African American male youth on church attendance and other worldly activities. Mentors must be in harmony with and advocate youth's spiritual progress by the commitment to spiritually coping with them and providing faith talk armed with action to emerge as positive health behaviors for young people.[54]

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[52] Bernadette Sánchez, Noelle M. Hurd, Enrique W. Neblett, and Danielle Vaclavik, "Mentoring for Black Male Youth: A Systematic Review of the Research," *Adolescent Research Review* 3, no. 3 (2018): 259-260.

[53] Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith: How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 12.

[54] LeConté J. Dill, "Wearing My Spiritual Jacket," 701.

A literature review of Mimi L. Larson's article "The Child in Our Midst: The Shifting Trends in Ministry with Children and Families over the Past Forty Years." Larson advises, "The church is in need of a new posture as they work with children, one that engages children not just as recipients of our faith, but also one that empowers them to influence the faith community around them."[55] Larson's research proposes that one reason why youth abandon the church is due to the absence of connection relating to their involvement in the church and their religious perspective.[56] Larson's research revealed a delicate platform for all churches and their leaders to discover approaches to engage with youth's church participation. God demands that His gospel be communicated to all generations throughout the world. Larson's research endorses embracing youth and integrating them as partakers within the faith community.

Furthermore, Larson characterized a control measure for her process, which includes continual assessment and enhancements in coaching and learning practices to ensure an integral partnership between youth, family, and church. Sustaining an inclusive perception could facilitate beneficial insight into spreading the gospel to youth.[57] Many things are possible through belief in God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Optimistically, these practices would somehow generate an environment that welcomes youth to become participating members of the church and the community.

God is the primary source of influence when mentoring rural African-American male youth. God's power grants satisfaction to mentors that they are never alone in their endeavors to coach youth back to church. In the book by Jerome Frierson, *Keep Quiet, Black Boy: A*

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[55] Mimi L. Larson, "The Child in Our Midst: The Shifting Trends in Ministry with Children and Families over the Past Forty Years," *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 3 (December 2020): 442.

[56] Ibid., 441.

[57] Ibid., 445.

Leadership Guide to Mentoring Millennials, the author addresses the advantages associated with the natural power of God. Mentoring with a doctrine of God's divine power, leaders convey God as everlasting and all-powerful. God has unrestricted abilities, while humanity is limited in their abilities.[58] The fact surrounding God's eternal control over all things should be integrated into influencing the rural African-American male youth to attend church. In pursuance of the integration of God's power, sharing Jesus Christ would put youth in the loop of spiritual knowledge. In the article "Spiritual Care as the Foundation for a Child's Religious Education," Joyce E. Bellous conveys her thoughts and advises, "In the spiritual care offered to children, the relationship is central to healthy development. Helping children reflect on the worldview they have been forming through life experiences."[59] Spiritual care correlates well with spiritual development through mentoring for African-American male youth. It should be the cornerstone of mentors' determination to develop a religious culture on the foundation of spiritual support.

Theological Foundations

The theological foundation communicates a relationship with Jesus Christ. God is available for everyone, and through Jesus Christ, everyone can seek this spiritual relationship. As time evolves, there are renewed efforts for a liturgical formula of praises to God involving all servants on deck to ensure that everyone can obtain the glory of God through His everlasting Word. By the time African American male youth reach adulthood, some mimic the spiritual mindset of their parents.[60] The invitation to the Word of God is an opportunity that may be

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[58] Frierson, *Keep Quiet, Black Boy*, 107.

[59] Joyce E. Bellous, "Spiritual Care as the Foundation for a Child's Religious Education," *Religions* 12, no.11 (2021): 11.

[60] Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross, *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 36.

overlooked by African-American male youth. The nature of extending the Word to African-American male youth is an effort that will take 100 percent effort from God's servant who believes in the power of God.

The principle of mentoring transcends time and dates back to the Bible days. Jacob Dunlow proclaims that the shaping of spiritual formation is mentoring. This practice develops through the pages of Scripture. Mentoring is a biblical practice. In their work to build God's kingdom, Moses and Joshua, Ruth and Naomi, and Paul and Timothy showed brotherly love through mentorship as the way of life in Bible eras.[61]

Brother's Keeper

The analogy of caring for God's children could be associated with being a brother's keeper. African-American ancestry traits fall into the line of shaping and directing brothers and sisters. This means experiences of African life from the homeland ought to be utilized in American life. The path to regaining hope is rooted within the DNA of African Americans. God has ordered the steps of His people to keep a sense of hope alive. There is no assurance that all people from Africa are considered good men and women from the human perspective. But God sees the good in those who want to live by His goodness. As a result, the steps to hope that God gave people from the beginning of life are the exact steps that can be offered to youth. The route to salvation and hope is accessible but must be offered to the African-American male youth. The Lord demands that Christians present themselves as good stewards and work to enhance the goodness of life. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way.

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[61] Jacob Dunlow, "Perceptions of Spiritual Formation among Nontraditional Seminary Students," *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry: Family-Based Youth Ministry 20 Years Later* 4, no. 2 (2014): 74.

Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand" (Ps 37:23-24, NKJV).

The Lord orders the steps of a good man, and God blesses such a man. This Scripture holds respect and is put to work as servants gladly position themselves to help youths. The world is a road map with many crossroads. Through God's guidance, all people, including youth, discover salvation. Youths are watching grownups. There is a preference for a good man's life to exhibit a godly doer mentality. This mentality involves sharing methods, providing instructions, and preserving the future of rural community Christianity through the African-American male youth.[62]

John shares a message in 1 John 3:11-12 that contains good guidelines for applying "My Brother's Keeper." He expresses the foundation of faith in God. God is love, and love was here from the beginning. Therefore, we must love one another. John uses Cain's actions to highlight a bad example of brotherly love. Cain's hate is the opposite of love. James B. De Young confirms, "John implies that Christians must be actively righteous. The specific form of doing rightly is obeying the command to love. Love shows that the believer obeys God."[63] "My Brother's Keeper" must stay in step with this type of love.

Psalm 37:23-24, allegorically, indicates safety and strength; a step is related to one's way of life, often represented as a path or road. Therefore, the Lord is the one who brings about stability in the life of believers. Adults must create a bridge to the road of salvation by introducing the Word of God to youth. This Scripture highlights a course of life as ordered by

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[62] John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, vol. 3, The Baptist Commentary Series (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1810), 683.

[63] James B. DeYoung, "*1-3 John,* vol. 3, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 1183.

God and emphasizes overcoming failures. The added solution to circumvent failure is Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus Christ who will order the steps of youths through the work of His servants. The hope in the African American culture is still alive, but for it to last throughout generations, this ancestry hope needs to be extended to African American male youth. The Lord directs mankind in the manner they should go and safeguards individuals who please Him. They will not remain broken or lost if they fall because the Lord will help them.

God's ideal family should symbolize compelling brotherly love. According to Martin H. Manser, a family is "a unit ordained by God for the comfort and protection of its members. It is usually a group of relatives, but the people of God are also seen as a family."[64] Many African Americans have strong ties with immediate family members: uncles, aunts, and cousins. Moreover, family-like members in the community are close but not biologically linked. But they can become a significant player in displaying brotherly love. This network of people structures a diverse support network essential to cope with complicated problems. Religion and belief are strengths within the African-American family.[65] This signals a revealing version of family and traditional patterns across generations performed with analogous beliefs, which reduces the feeling of separation between the youth and the family.[66]

The reduction of separation between youth and adults can be lessened. In Romans 12:10, Paul urged believers to be dedicated to one another in brotherly love. Discipleship of youth must include people putting themselves at God's disposal and the disposal of one another.[67] This

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[64] Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

[65] Shalonda Kelly, Pacita Maynigo, Kiara Wesley, and Jennifer Durham, "African American Communities and Family Systems: Relevance and Challenges," *Couple and Family Psychology* 2, no. 4 (2013): 267.

[66] Kelly, Maynigo, Wesley, and Durham, "African American Communities," 274.

[67] Royce Gordon Gruenler, *Romans,* vol. 3, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 951.

effort of closeness brings to mind Psalm 133:1, when David said, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity." Also, Paul's version of "My Brother's Keeper defines loving acts of service to others that express sincere love and joy.[68] These acts invite love for one another just as God's love is for everyone.

During this research project, "brother's keeper" relates to a guardian's mentality that watches and guides people. The solution to the lack of African American male youth attending church can be considered brothers' keepers. This love offering of continued hope in the lives of African Americans must be aimed at the continuous building up of the kingdom of God. The ancestors' hope in the midst of tribulations can be extended to youth in need of guidance and may be used by youth as an option to face the realities of this disturbed society. Therefore, brotherly love can be the token of the family, church, and community. "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb 13:1, NKJV). Philip H. Hacking, in *Opening Up Hebrews*, echoes Hebrews 13:1, which says that brotherly love leads to generosity. This is important in the world of youth when they need to find welcoming spiritual and worldly guidance. Regardless of youth's challenges, experienced brothers and sisters should be willing to stand alongside them. This creates a setting to exercise guidance and care for young brothers to share the love of Jesus Christ.[69]

In the pursuit of sharing spiritual hope, the mitigation of African American male youth difficulties in current society can be met with the brother's keeper mentality. A significant component of this pursuit relates to exposing the youth to the fundamentals of spiritual development. Jim Wilhoit and Evan B. Howard suggests, "Christians have given attention to

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[68] Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier, *Romans*, vol. 6, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 374.

[69] Philip H. Hacking, *Opening up Hebrews*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 90.

spiritual formation throughout the entire history of the Christian Church. In the book of Acts, we see people formed through worship, service, prayer, mentoring, conflicts, and teaching and preaching. This formation enabled them to be bold witnesses for Christ in a hostile environment."[70]

In developing a blueprint for a good spiritual foundation, Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey direct attention to Matthew 7:24-27; Jesus cautioned the dangers of constructing a house on sand. He specified that if you construct a house on sand, its foundation will weaken when the rain falls, and when the rivers rise and the wind blows and beats against the house, the house will collapse. The cause of the collapse relates to an unstable foundation.[71]

Therefore, through the brother's keeper concept and positive actions of love, the hope established within spiritual leaders can be shared with African-American male youths. This hope for a better life was adopted by African ancestors and remained deeply rooted in the culture and lifestyles of many African Americans. As big brothers keep watch over youth, brothers can use engrained hope to establish relationships with youth. Consequently, it forms a bridge of hope. This bridge is constructed for the future, and each building block of hope cements a robust platform for a good life for male youths.

The future of hope should be centered on brotherly love for African-American male youth. The tools are available in an inherited spirit to keep hope alive in challenging situations. African Americans have a rooted nature of hope, which, in some respects, migrated down through history. This temperament creates an attitude of believing the spiritual reality that God is in charge of their lives. Hope in the future includes God, which promotes enduring hope for

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[70] Jim Wilhoit and Evan B Howard, "The Wisdom of Christian Spiritual Formation," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 13, no. 1 (May 2020): 5.

[71] Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is…,* 21.

tomorrow. Jeremiah substantiates God's meaning of hope controlled by His power. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer 29:11, NKJV).

God is deemed a brother's keeper and, with His infinite dependability, carried His people from the shackles of the Egyptians and eventually into the land of freedom. God proclaimed that He had specified ends in sight for His people and invited them to believe in Him with all their hearts. Through Christ, a future of mentoring hope should be shared from generation to generation. John L. Mackay advises, "A shaft of light pierces the gloom of their present situation when the Lord says he has plans for their future. But the realization of these plans was contingent upon their attitude."[72]

The future of hope will not be a prophecy of singular yearning but something divinely determined. This sacred undertaking facilitates an enhanced relationship with Jesus Christ. Adults should base their brotherly love on the foundational name of Jesus Christ. So, just as God led His people to the Promised Land, adult African Americans must follow suit and lead African-American male youth from the bondage of worldly troubles to spiritual opportunities. Demonstrated by the work of Jesus Christ, brotherly love is shared and applied to those needing spiritual guidance. Particularly those who are missing the chance to know eternal life through the gospel of God.

Jesus Christ constantly coached His followers on the principle of brotherly love. He affirmed that the second great commandment is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31, NKJV). To sum up brotherly love, Tony Evans advises, "Jesus connected the

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[72] John L. Mackay, *Jeremiah: An Introduction and Commentary: Chapters 21-52*, vol. 2, Mentor Commentaries (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2004), 166.

vertical (love of God) with the horizontal (love of others). The two necessarily go together. To love God is to passionately pursue his glory with your total being. To love your neighbor is to decide to compassionately and righteously seek his or her well-being."[73]

Finally, brotherly love sums up the brother's keeper concept. Paul concurs, "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Rom 12:10, NKJV). Based on Warren W. Wiersbe's view, there is an agreement that love is the circulatory system of a celestial society, which empowers each member to serve spiritually and sensibly.[74]

<div align="center">An Offer to Expand Relationship</div>

There are reasons why youth should be steered in the steps of a good man. The reason relates to the development of a relationship with God. They were blessing the Lord's children by facilitating their life's journey to include Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ firmly demanded that His disciples not interfere with children and their relationship with Him. John reports, "Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matt 19:13- 14, NKJV). It is a regular parental responsibility to choose the best for their child. The point is that some spiritual leaders may not agree with the importance of youth in the spiritual reign of Jesus Christ. This attitude is the same as the disciples, who believed youth were not as significant as grownups, so they were a waste of Jesus' precious time. Therefore, the disciples admonished those who brought them to see Jesus. However, Jesus held a different opinion than His disciples.

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[73] Tony Evans, *The Tony Evans Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible, 2019), 1165.

[74] Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 555.

Jesus valued a child's relationship with Him and expressed that every person was of great value irrespective of age.[75] Jesus was not in approval of denying spiritual contact to anyone. Jesus orders the disciples to discontinue their hindrance to those who require the presence and know Jesus is readily available for everybody.

Jesus emphasizes the continuation of His Father's mission to expand the kingdom, and He expands on His yearning to be grateful for children. Jesus conveyed a unique reception to those who come to Him in innocence, whether youths or grownups, without excessive egotism. Those who acknowledge their dependency on Christ and His compassion will acquire the kingdom of heaven.[76]

The state of some African-American churches and communities needs awareness to address devastating issues faced by youth. God demands the youth be led to the kingdom of heaven. It will take togetherness to provide a safe surrounding to generate spiritual growth in the community. The church's working relationship with the community can offer a caring partnership that teaches youth to follow Jesus.[77]

Relationships established with adults extend opportunities to advance the gospel into the future. When applied properly, an offer to expand African-American male youth at New Canaan Baptist Church is a good mitigation tool. In 1 Timothy 4:6-11, Apostle Paul's instructions to Timothy form a good example for spiritual leaders to follow. Paul's philosophy relates to being a good servant of Jesus Christ. Paul passed down spiritual wisdom and instruction to Timothy, which set into action a hope for tomorrow in Jesus Christ. Through this gesture of hope, Paul

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[75] Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, vol. 1, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 313.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Eddie Taylor, *Restoring the Mind of Black America* (Chicago. IL: African American Images, 2008), 127.

ensures a lasting relationship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, mentoring young servants is a good philosophy as spiritual leaders learn to adopt the Good Servant of Jesus Christ motto. The effort has the potential to lay the roadmap for a spiritual growth process that could be repeated from one generation to the next generation. Suppose there is a failure to fill the mind of youth with holy things. Then, there might be a failure to form a relationship with Jesus Christ. The Word of God is available to nourish youth and build them up with faith and trust, which promotes each concerned youth to develop an ever-growing relationship with God through His son, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Paul encourages servants of God to spiritually run with a lasting vision of salvation. Paul advises, " For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of what is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." (1 Tim 4:8-9, NKJV).

This effort to coach youth to obtain a godly relationship with Jesus Christ could be approached similarly to coaching in an athletic environment. In sports, coaches meticulously develop specific relationships with athletes. Coaches and athletes bond and become partners by forming a trusting relationship, producing maximum outcomes. Paul confirms that Timothy's spiritual coaching is appropriate for every generation's Christian servant. Paul's message to Timothy encouraged training in godliness. Physical exercise results in tangible outcomes and adds some benefit; energetic training in godliness is considerably more precious and prepares one for everlasting life. Paul included more guidance to Timothy by demanding that he be a model servant for the entire church.[78]

Spiritual leaders should embrace the responsibility for coaching and teaching youth by conditioning them to capture an extensive spiritual relationship. Acquiring these skills places

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[78] John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 413.

spiritual leaders closer to the mandate of Paul's demand to Timothy to be a model servant. However, the example of coaching and teaching others goes higher than Timothy's. The most outstanding example of all is Jesus, the great teacher. The actions of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus, confirm that Jesus Christ was a teacher. John advises, "This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (John 3:2, NKJV).

The example of Jesus Christ seizing the opportunity to teach and create disciples is significant in training the youth on the way to go. Matthew advises, "Seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He sat down, his disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs, is the kingdom of heaven'" (Matt 5:1-3, NKJV).

This offering to expand spiritual relationships sets into motion the actions of Jesus Christ. Teaching and coaching were the purposes He gathered with the crowd and His disciples. The model of His work stands available when leading African-American male youth back to church.

The leadership of Jesus Christ made Him the master of disciple-making. Just as a coach looks for a team member to coach to shape into a winner, Jesus Christ demands that spiritual leaders do the same when the opportunity arises. Jesus Christ is the spiritual head coach and leaves many examples of His methods of expanding spiritual relationships, which help people to live robust spiritual lives. Suppose a spiritual leader neglects to develop and cultivate crucial relationships that prepare others to follow Jesus Christ. In that case, leaders need to do what Jesus Christ demonstrated for them to perform.[79] In the effort to expand the opportunity for

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[79] Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert Coleman, *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 119.

spiritual relationships, spiritual leaders must cast a vision that constantly works to safeguard the future of the church and community with a lasting disciple-building culture.[80]

New Canaan Baptist Church's vision seeks to stay with the discipleship modeling of Jesus Christ. When taught and coached, youths are the spiritual leaders of the future, and without them, the church will eventually be empty, and discipleship will be dead. The mindset to inform and equip African American male youth remains a goal to satisfy the needed spiritual relationship. Furthermore, Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, with Robert E. Coleman, illuminate, "The goal of a church is to equip people so that the body of Christ can be built up and we all reach unity and spiritual maturity. Being a church leader is much more like being a great coach."[81]

Focus on the Goodness of God

God's goodness is available for everyone. Grant M. Sutherland advises, "The goodness of God can be conceived in terms of God in himself and God's work in creation. God is infinite; his goodness is as immeasurable as his being and nature."[82] God always emphasizes that youth serve Him based on the gospel and not serve the world based on covetousness. To redirect this style of life, the responsibility falls upon mature leaders who should lead and guide them to make good decisions and the best in their lives rather than choosing the path of evil and destruction. An unknown author states, "But the sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice" (1 Sam 8:3, NKJV). Samuel's children overlooked the

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[80] Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *DiscipleShift*,126.

[81] Ibid., 129.

[82] Grant M. Sutherland, "God's Goodness," *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 86.

importance of belonging to God's grace. There is a lesson to be learned on parental trials from the illegal actions of Samuel's sons.

Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah, did not choose to walk in the ways of their father. Their father offered them good guidelines on life and the proper way of living for God. Joseph S. Excell advises, "They misimproved the bright example they had before them at home, where they saw little that would tend to blind their minds or pervert their hearts. When we consider Eli's softness and incapacity for command, we do not wonder at his sons going astray."[83] Samuel was so solid but substantial that it suggested good immorality in his sons to neglect the example of their father's spotless life. Their behavior revealed that they had pursued no individual relationship with God. But they put faith in materialistic things and had no faith in God. Upon leaving the guidance and sight of their father, they forgot about the principle of control taught to their father. The sons lived with no guilt and sorrow even though their Christian parents daily sought a personal relationship with the Savior; they sought none.[84]

The mentality of the disobedient saturated the priest Eli's sons. His sons were wicked in the eyes of the Lord, and Eli neglected to correct them. The focus should constantly be on the goodness of God, which encourages good secular and spiritual decision-making. By faith, a parent must tell their children about God's goodness. D.L. Moody advises, "Faith is a belief in testimony. It is not a leap in the dark, as some tell us. That would be no faith at all. God does not ask any man to believe without giving him something to believe."[85]

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[83] Joseph S. Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator: I Samuel*, The Biblical Illustrator (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), 195.

[84] Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator: I Samuel*, 195.

[85] D. L. Moody, *The Way to God and How to Find It* (New York; Chicago; Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1884), 46.

Unlike Eli, spiritual leaders must lead in mentoring youth to serve God for His goodness. Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross recommend, "Children and teenagers need parents and other adults in their lives who have a genuine, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. They need adults to have such a kingdom faith because they will grow up to be much like them."[86]

For some African American male youth, the attraction to ungodly things may appear suitable for a period, but the repercussions from ungodly actions can be deadly. So, guiding youth to do what is suitable for the goodness of God is the task at hand in today's society.

The task starts with teaching youth confidence that God's goodness is stored up for those who trust Him. The psalmist advises, "Oh how great is Your goodness, Which You have laid up for those who fear You, Which You have prepared for those who trust in You, In the presence of the sons of men" (Ps 31:19, NKJV). With certainty and courage, David applauds the goodness of God. The reality is that God's goodness is placed at the fingertips of all those who fear and trust God. This realism of God's goodness becomes active when people do their part in believing and trusting in Him. Like evil, the goodness of God is something that all can see. God's goodness generates a spark of hope through Jesus Christ.[87] With Jesus Christ, there is hope. David's actions are emphasized in Psalm 31:19; instead of surrendering to anxiety or hopelessness under his troubles, David relied on his beliefs of the goodness of the Lord concerning those who fear and trust in Him.[88] Commencing today, every spiritual leader can begin to produce an atmosphere of hope and enthusiasm concerning following the ultimate mentor, Jesus Christ; with

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[86] Hemphill and Ross, *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose*, 50.

[87] Philip Eveson, *The Book of Psalms: From Suffering to Glory*, vol. 1, Welwyn Commentary Series (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP, 2014-2015), 203.

[88] Matthew Henry and Thomas Scott, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), Ps 31:19.

hope through Him, there is a conquering of the most significant challenges in life, and that is eternal salvation.[89]

<div align="center">The Authority to Know Jesus Christ</div>

The desire for youth to seek good news in all situations is not possible since they are only human. But there is hope for those who struggle with right and wrong. God shows a good perspective for His people, optimized by their acceptance of God's goodness and forgiveness. Through Jesus Christ, there is authority to become children of God. Apostle John advises, "But as many, as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13, NKJV). This Scripture secures hope as an option for all who know Jesus Christ. As John moves forward into his book, he characterizes the heart of the gospel as a renewal of life. Similar to most things in life, there is a right and wrong way to respond to God. The right way is to trust the Word of God, receive Jesus Christ, and acknowledge new birth as a consequence. The unacceptable approach somehow connects an association to God with human attributes such as natural birth, self-determination, or another person's choice.[90]

An advanced glimpse into the authority to know Jesus Christ generates an occasion to perform as a spiritual leader based on John's sacred appointed duties. D.A. Carson advises, "The purpose of John the Baptist's witness, though of course not its result, was so that through him all men might believe."[91] In the current state of New Canaan Baptist Church, there is a need to take

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[89] Hemphill and Ross, *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose*, 92.

[90] Kenneth O. Gangel, *John*, vol. 4, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 12-13.

[91] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 121.

ancestral spiritual hope in the future. African-American male youth require guidance to obtain the full knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ set examples and provided guidelines for righteousness. Therefore, it is through His actions that authority is substantiated, and there is a responsibility to lead people to God.

The chance to utilize spiritual authority is available forever. Jesus Christ stands at the door of life and knocks, and no doubt He is waiting for many youths to acknowledge Him as their Savior. John, the disciple who loved Jesus, advises, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:6-8, NKJV). John's purpose could be understood as a task for spiritual leaders to glorify God by mentoring male youth. Jeremiah K. Garrett defines knowledge as "Knowing carries the sense of relying on what has been experienced in the past, discovering the experiences of the present, and hoping upon promise for the future."[92] Knowledge is the key to increasing the authority that God gives everyone through Jesus Christ. John the Baptist came with God's authority and bore witness as the forerunner for Jesus Christ. The duty of spiritual leaders should be as a forerunner to bear witness when leading youth back to church. In doing this, youth can better understand their godly authority, including their freedom to God's grace. These words are not a testimony that each spiritual leader is as great as John the Baptist; as a servant of God, it should be an effort to spread the gospel by all means, thus motivating a mindset for hope for tomorrow.

Jack Wilson Stallings clarifies children's authority to be in Christ. "To those who do receive Jesus, God gives the power to become His children. God simply 'gives' this blessing of

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[92] Jeremiah K. Garrett, *Knowledge*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Theological Wordbook, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 120.

His own free grace. It cannot be earned or merited. Receiving Jesus is an occasion for God's grace, not a meritorious claim upon His justice. Yet He gives to those who receive Him an authority."[93] Additionally, the fundamental concept is that individuals who accept and trust in Christ are spiritually "begotten" of God. The idea is that such people have their situation drastically transformed by the spiritual power of God.[94]

Theoretical Foundations

Studies reflect that numerous African-American male youths are barely attending church. In some churches, no African-American male youth is in attendance. New Canaan Baptist Church's African-American male youth attendance is in decline. There is a great cry from the congregants calling on God to calm the troubling water and, through the work of his servant, build a bridge for male youth to return to Sunday worship services. As researchers approach this major issue, there is work available to leverage. For starters, Samuel White, III, in his book *My Brother's Keeper: Church Ministry for Young African American Males,* attempts to resolve problems applicable to male youth attendance in many churches today. White draws from his personal experiences as a pastor. This book is devoted to resolving Cain's question, "Am I My Brother's Keeper," and understanding the community, emotional, and spiritual aspects that build young African American male drug dealers, substance abusers, gang members, and social deviants. Seeking answers to satisfy "Am I My Brother's Keeper," White investigates the complexities of African American male youth depravity and captivity. His determination for truthful research is built upon biblical significance. The Bible affirms, "You shall know the truth,

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[93] Jack Wilson Stallings, *The Gospel of John*, ed. Robert E. Picirilli, First Edition., The Randall House Bible Commentary (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 1989), 21.

[94] Ibid., 21.

and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32, NKJV). White emphasizes the fundamental topics that impede spirituality in African-American male youth.[95] White gathered empirical data about church youth by using surveys and interviews of African-American male church members, which uncovered their opinions on church values. His collected information was used in training sessions for the laity to highlight social factors that led black boys into social slavery. White's vow to know the truth extends to the church realizing the truth. White enlightens, "Therefore, the social factors experienced by Black boys must be addressed in the church's ministry to them."[96] The church can address the topic of African American male youth's absence from church with a Christian mentoring program intended to guide young males into productive men.[97]

White devised his research schemes based on the thoughts of my brother's keeper. Next, he structured his strategy to solve the problem using mentorship programs designed with three tiers: Liberation Lesson, Peacemaker Training, and Christian Conflict Resolution Class. The three tiers tie together to shape a stable mentoring program. White reveals additional details about My Brothers' Keeper Mentoring Program by clarifying his strategy's objective for others to repeat. His approach provided possibilities for discovering new perspectives and a stronger relationship with God. The Christian mentor's principal objective is to lead young men to an awareness of Jesus Christ. Also, mentors can help expand careers for youths centered on practical guidance.[98]

New Canaan Baptist Church was built on a foundation of hope for current and future brothers and sisters. This hope is intended to be passed down to generations by parents. The

[95] White, *My Brother's Keeper*, n/p.

[96] Ibid., 17.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid., 94-95.

approach to improve African American male youth church attendance takes a joint venture with

parents. Parents must contribute to the spiritual transformation of their youth. Christian Smith

and Amy Adamczyk, authors of the book *Handing Down the Faith: How Parents Pass Their*

Religion on to the Next Generation, advocate parental partnership with the church. Parents

should train youth to navigate their life's journey from within the home and throughout daily

activities. A youth life's journey yearns for robust family unity. Smith and Adamczyk write:

> Conversations with religious parents about passing on religion to children brought to the surface a distinct cultural model with its own beliefs and associated feelings about the importance of family solidarity, which we must grasp in order to understand how parents think about the intergenerational transmission of religious faith and its relative priority among the demands of family life.[99]

The effort to work with parents must be approached with serious consideration and

without an overbearing manner. Spiritual leaders must seek opportunities for partnership with

family while maintaining a godly attitude that reflects hope for the upcoming generations. Smith

and Adamczyk made their research useful by inquiring about parents' religious priorities for

children. Their use of a survey presented a question to American parents on the significance of

their youth growing up to develop a solid spiritual belief. A different question underlined the

necessity for God's will in the lives of youths. Parents were asked to rank the relative importance

of raising children based on God's will, which stresses that children know God through Jesus

Christ.[100] Smith and Adamczyk acknowledge that their question phrasing was slightly biased

toward conservative Protestantism. The outcomes responses revealed "that about three in ten

American parents (29 percent) say that raising children of strong religious faith is essential or

very important to them. Black Protestants, Mormons, and conservative Protestants were much

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[99] Smith and Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith*, 27.

[100] Ibid., 97-98.

more likely than the average to value raising children of strong religious faith."[101] Smith and Adamczyk's approach to mitigating the lack of African-American male youth in the church yields a solution that includes the participation of youth parents. Parental buy-in is essential in guiding youth back to church worship services.

Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, the authors of *Disciple Making Is..: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence*, substantiate the theoretical and theological aspects of growing the kingdom of God with discipleship. Helping others go to the next level is their approach to making disciples. Continuous spiritual development must occur as the commitment to Jesus Christ builds up, which means one disciple should make other disciples. Therefore, Earley and Dempsey's overall theoretical and theological perspective maps out the groundwork to enhance African-American male youth church attendance. The authors confirm, "New believer needs to be established in faith and taught to obey everything Jesus commanded, and they need to be discipled. There is no single method to mentor multiplying disciple-makers, but the ministry of Jesus remains a helpful paradigm."[102]

Almeda M. Wright, the author of *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans*, reveals the theoretical foundation she calls fragmented spirituality among African-American youth. Wright advises, "Fragmentation is antithetical to the most understanding of Christian Spirituality. Similarly, my understanding of integrating spirituality emphasizes that there is or should be a connectedness to the Christian life, and youth will need to discern how they work

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[101] Smith and Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith*, 98.

[102] Earley and Dempsey, Disciple Making Is..., 147.

and live this out."[103] Wright's method was intended to meticulously interlink the knowledge and wisdom of youth with the insight and traditions of scholars and theologians.[104]

The theory brought forward by authors inspires more actions to enhance practices surrounding African-American male youth church attendance. Teaching African-American male youth with caring attitudes could start a positive trend toward spiritual formation. The facilitation of the spiritual formation of youth generates a healthier relationship with Jesus Christ and adults. Taking action to facilitate the spiritual growth of youth has been recognized to mitigate worldly issues youths face. Specifically, mentoring relationships are demonstrated to be efficient in spiritual growth and secular life. When delineating the range of mentoring relationships in Scripture, Moses and Aaron, Jesus Christ and His disciples, and Paul and Timothy would be on the list. These mentoring relationships are a valuable and established model for mentors and mentees in the quest for secular and spiritual youth growth in the church and the community. When pursuing predominant mentoring practices, Steven Emery-Wright and Ed Mackenzie offer substantiated testimony in their book *Networks for Faith Formation Relational Bonds and the Spiritual Growth of Youth*. The authors built their sentiments on mentoring on a scriptural aspect and then guided readers to the theoretical foundation. The authors reflect on mentoring and faith as good recipes for spiritual growth among youths. Emery-Wright and Mackenzie highlight, "Mentors, however, remain crucially important for young people. Mentors help young people in their development and play a key role in modeling and passing on the belief or value of a community."[105]

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[103] Wright, *The Spiritual Lives*, 8.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Steven Emery-Wright and Ed Mackenzie, *Networks for Faith Formation Relational Bonds and the Spiritual Growth of Youth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 64.

Fostering young Christians remains a commitment of the church and spiritual leaders. The church and its mentors' support can inspire youth to live out their lives positively from a spiritual and secular perspective. Tangible and intangible means to aid youths in spiritual growth already exist in the behavior of true Christians. Modeling faith with youths starts with casual mentoring that happens when youth perceive the dedication or passion of an elder Christian, and watching it has encouraged them to strengthen their faith and love for Jesus Christ.[106] Wright and Mackenzie summarize this practice by confirming that mentoring is crucial to faith formation. The church should constantly reshape to pursue a superior degree of cultivating youth relationships through informal or formal methods.[107] Consequently, modeling to meet Jesus Christ's goal for Christians to spread the gospel is proven effective when properly utilized. Mentoring in youths' spiritual development presents an opportunity for modeling.

Nathan Hussaini Chiroma, the author of the article "The Role of Mentoring in Adolescents' Spiritual Formation," confirms in his study that modeling is an essential educational strategy in the life of youths. According to Chiroma, this mentoring method yielded lasting conclusions in spiritual matters. Chiroma validates, "The respondents in the current study indicated that they learned spiritual matters best through modeling, especially by observing what spirituality looked like in the lives of adults. They noted that they looked up in admiration to adults in high positions or celebrities because of their proclaimed success."[108]

Chiroma shares more of his research findings and provides evidence that the primary concept for the modeling role in youths' spiritual growth is utilized by people in the form of

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[106] Emery-Wright and Mackenzie, *Networks for Faith Formation*, 66.

[107] Ibid., 69.

[108] Chiroma, Nathan Hussaini, "The Role of Mentoring in Adolescents' Spiritual Formation," *Journal of Youth and Theology,* 14, no. 1 (2015): 84.

"looking over the shoulder of one another." The thought of looking over a mentor's shoulder indicates time spent together, establishing a trusting partnership with one another, and discussing life experiences. In the modeling process, a youth witnesses a mentor's journey and is coached with a propensity critical for their journey. The final result here is that individuals are enthused by those they devote time to in a constructive way.[109]

The researcher will leverage the facts and data within this theoretical foundation to close the gap on the matters causing the lack of African-American male youth at New Canaan Baptist Church worship services. The main objective remains focused on the command of Jesus Christ to fulfill The Great Commission. Every effort toward this spiritual commitment paves the way to diligently spread the gospel of God to every generation worldwide.

Conclusion

The literature assessment relevant to concerns associated with rural African-American youth's lack of church attendance consists of five key sections. The first section explains the challenges faced by African-American youth and will help assess the overall degree of the problem. In the second section, a literature review evaluated the African-American church leadership role and its responsibility to recognize the need for the spiritual development of youth in the church. The segment confirms that action is needed within the church to spark the spiritual growth of African-American male youth. The third section of the literature review expanded on the documented reactions of African-American male youth and church attendance. The author's focus on spirituality magnified the need for an atmosphere in the church and community where young people feel recognized and welcomed. That section supports the voice of the youth as a

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[109] Chiroma, "The Role of Mentoring," 84.

tool to enhance relationships and improve church attendance. The fourth section ratified the need to highlight the effects of modern culture and its contribution to the decline of youth church attendance. Also, this literature review section supported the concept of a village-minded community that influenced African-American male youth to increase church attendance. Finally, the fifth section of the literature review exposed divine support as a necessity for spiritual growth and support of the rural African-American male youth.

The first theological foundation for this thesis is based on the analogy that caring for God's children could be associated with being a brother's keeper and shaping and directing brothers and sisters by presenting a godly attitude. A brother should have a religious perspective that emulates Psalm 37:23-24: "The Lord instructs the actions of a good man, and God blesses such a man" (NKJV). The next theological aspect for supporting this thesis relates to Jesus Christ's demand to allow youth to have a relationship with him. Based on Matthew 19:13-14, there shall be no dissuading children from coming to Jesus Christ. The next theological foundation used was to focus on the goodness of God. In 1 Samuel 8:3, Samuel's sons were utilized as an illustration for not choosing to walk in the will of God. Accepting grace is an option for all who want to serve God. Lastly, this section presents a theological foundation that stresses the youth's authority to know Jesus Christ. John 1:12-13 emphasizes a youth's divine right to receive the Word of God.

The theoretical foundations to support this thesis include research from Dr. Samuel White, III. His philosophy is based on "my brother's keeper" perspective, and he encourages mentorship programs that seek to solve problems relevant to male youth attendance in churches today. The next applicable theoretical foundation relates to Smith and Adamczyk's methodology

to alleviate the shortage of African-American male youth in the church with the contribution of the youth's parents. Collaboration with parents is crucial in directing youth back to church.

Next, Steven Emery-Wright and Ed Mackenzie offer theoretical evidence in their book *Networks for Faith Formation Relational Bonds and the Spiritual Growth of Youth*. The authors reveal that mentoring and faith are a good combination for spiritual development among youths. Furthermore, Emery-Wright and Mackenzie underline the crucial role of a mentor in assisting youth in their development. They emphasize that mentors play a significant part in modeling and passing on the faith or value in the church and the community.

Subsequently, Nathan Hussaini Chiroma, the author of the article "The Role of Mentoring in Adolescents' Spiritual Formation," corroborates in his research that modeling is an indispensable learning strategy in the life of youths. Chiroma's theoretical foundation advocates mentoring practices that yield healthy results in spiritual matters. Chiroma validates that youth looked up with admiration to adults in productive positions because of their proclaimed success.

Lastly, Almeda M. Wright, the author of *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans*, unveils the theoretical foundation she calls fragmented spirituality among African-American youth. This attempt focuses on peer power, trials, and tribulations that youth live through daily. The experiences from this research are used within mentorship programs to minimize hindrances and could open doors for more youth to attend church.

Each section of this thesis project is essential in designing and implementing the M-Fayes Spiritual Mentorship program. The foundation of this mentoring program will be situated in the midst of a historically African-American community. This method of strategically locating the program aims to attract young males in the neighborhood seeking mentorship. M-Fayes Spiritual Mentorship program should be successful in offering secular and spiritual guidance, assisting

youth with academics, and helping them by partnering with them to design personalized plans for a successful future. This philosophy provides reasonable options to triumph in this world of trouble. Personalized plans will include steps to complete academics, plans to obtain successful employment after high school, plans to have more clarity with the church, plans to include a pathway to college, a pathway to a military career, enlisted or commissioned, and certified guidance related to mental health awareness.

M-Fayes Spiritual Mentorship Program

To define the substance and usefulness of the name M-Fayes Mentorship Program, it comprises the characteristics of the researcher's mother. Her sense of love and compassion for others stood out in the midst of her everyday endeavors. The word Fayes includes the researcher's mother's and sister's middle name. Both were instrumental in grooming the researcher for a godly and prosperous life. The nature of L. Faye was modeled similarly to M. Faye's mentoring ability. Their contribution to godly attributes influences the researcher's approach to sharing God's goodness by mentoring with spiritual love and care.

Six Traits of the M-Fayes Mentorship Program

M-Fayes displayed a willingness to provide genuine advice to all of her children. She stated that the truth hurts once received, but it gets better with time when one is true to oneself. The breakdown of the six letters in the title of the mentorship program represents M-Fayes' blended attitude to see others succeed and provide direction when someone is lost. The letter M stands for merciful. Believers should be compassionate. Luke advises, therefore, to be merciful,

just as your Father also is merciful (Luke 6:36, NKJV). Mercy is a greeting and a blessing to others.

The letter 'F' denotes mother's display of fellowship. Mother and sister, combined love for sharing lessons learned, can be used as a model for mentors. Believers have fellowship with one another based on their common fellowship with God. True fellowship is demonstrated in the concern for and the practical commitment to others. Fellowship can be the lasting effect of mentoring others, similar to the endless reflection on God's holiness and love.

The letter 'a' means abundantly. The Turner family was poor and did not own much of anything. But, through the researcher's mother's motivation and positive thinking, there was abundant happiness in the midst of difficulties and tribulations. The family was content and worked together to gain more comfort in life. Mother's guidance encouraged a constant emphasis on God's abundant goodness. Mother taught all her children to trust God when attempting every activity. Faith in God and trust in Jesus Christ are required to deliver needs on time. Apostle Paul advises, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph 3:20, NKJV).

The letter 'y' in the title represents the mother's inspiring duties as the yoke of strength that leads her children, even if it means carrying the yoke of others encouraging them to endure. Mother was known as the backbone of her family. Her sisters and brothers benefited from her mother's yoke-bearing attitude. The researcher recalls his mother's encouragement to respect and learn from those who offer positive directions. Acknowledge hope in challenging situations and accept that God controls all things. So, let Him lead daily decisions and actions. There must be a personal duty to be at peace with life, with Jesus Christ. In other words, do not worry about it if

you will pray about it. Jesus Christ said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matt 11:29, NKJV).

The letter 'e' in the title of the M-Fayes Mentorship Program expresses enlightenment—the willingness to share personal experiences that guide others to solutions. Mother used many situations to teach that with inner hope and faith, one should remember that learning is a lifetime journey. Mother was an excellent cook, always ready to share her baked goods, dressing, and salads. Mother enlightens her children by teaching each child to cook, clean the house, and wash clothes. In preparation, mother's expertise was passed on to the next generation. This mentoring style prepared the children for survival and an opportunity for a more successful life. Enlightenment illuminates the mind's spiritual and worldly need to share knowledge with others. This knowledge-sharing leads to opportunities to share the Word of God, leading to delight and increased pleasure in God. Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life " (John 8:12, NKJV).

Lastly, the letter 's' in M-Fayes signifies the researcher's mother's effort to guide her children to seek God for security. So that there is trust in Him when the time arrives. The mindset is that with Christ and belief, there is a victory in all things. Mother's desire for her children to seek God is in line with the passion of God, for all people should seek after Him and find Him. Those who seek God with all their heart are rewarded, but those who fail to seek God can accomplish nothing. Matthew adds meaning to the researcher's mother's guidance to seek God. Jesus said, "For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matt 6:32-34 NKJV).

In summary, the proposed mentorship program, the M-Fayes Mentorship Program, goes into action upon completion of the thesis research project. M-Fayes' primary objective is restoring hope among African-American male youth. Similar techniques from the researcher's mother will be applied to the program to ensure mentees' success. The mentor and mentee partnership will show mercy to those who need guidance. Also, it promotes fellowship among mentors and mentees, which will establish lasting lessons learned. Like the researcher's mother, mentors restore hope abundantly by guiding youth through worldly and spiritual lives. The yoke of confusion youth face in modern society must be mitigated by a mentor and mentee partnership that offers enlightenment in times of darkness and misperception. Most of all, in everything, there must be God. Youth must know that God has a plan for everyone. Therefore, in every undertaking, one must first seek God, focus on now, and stay clear of worrying about uncontrollable things.

The intervention project will focus on exposing the principles of mentorship to participants and ultimately strengthening African-American male youth attendance in church. This proposition will come to terms with engaging single parents, married parents, community leaders, church leadership, and certified professors from the surrounding counties.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The mission of the intervention design relates to lecturing on the need for a community-based mentoring program designed for African-American male youth. The approach for this program design is qualitative. During the research period, this project will issue surveys, collect data, analyze data, and train attendees to create a male youth mentoring program in Chester, Georgia, and the surrounding neighborhood. The program proposes partnerships with New Canaan Baptist Church and the township of Chester and the vicinity. The intervention design includes a series of mentorship meetings of no more than seven training meetings. The meetings are geared to train and redirect a focus on improving youths' thought processes and developing positive relationships with adults. Introducing a community-based mentorship program could invite adults to partner with youth and then guide youth to spiritual and secular options. Therefore, the methodology is designed for training in preparation for implementing a permanent program. Training in essential aspects of mentoring should generate potential mentors and mentees. Also, training provides some understanding and transparency in establishing a future mentorship program. The intervention design consists of six lecturing sessions, and then a final questionnaire will measure comprehension of the proposed mentoring program. For a hypothesis project timetable, refer to Appendix A.

Intervention Design

The intervention design was modeled to identify and lessen the problem associated with New Canaan Baptist Church's lack of African-American male youth church attendance. Therefore, plans to resolve the problem consist of a project defining, measuring, and analyzing

the simple bits and pieces that may create the problem. Then, use the gained data to educate attendees to aid the proposed intervention.

The intervention design will take a step-by-step approach to mitigate the problem. Currently, through observations and assumptions, there appears to be a problem. But without data, there is no proof of the problem. The first step of intervention design relates to collecting data associated with the proposed problem. The duration of data collection is two weeks. The method of collecting data will be in the form of surveys, which may expose beneficial data for the intervention. In an attempt to clarify the design of the intervention, it is essential to note the details which may lead to the problem. Figure 3.1 reflects a cause-and-effect chart, which should help evaluate the problem and create a survey to gather data to acquire an intervention to mitigate the lack of African-American male youth at New Canaan Baptist Church. For the intervention design, surveys are the triangulation method. Surveys were established around the cause-and-effect illustration. The focus is on data related to the environment, people, current programs, and spiritual material. The cause-and-effect diagram will be the roadmap that guides the researcher in identifying, organizing, displaying, and documenting possible causes that may contribute to resolving problems.

Figure 3.1. Probable Causes of Low Church Attendance.

The methodology for this research is qualitative. The researcher will survey no more than

thirty participants, which include parents, male youth, and church leaders, to gather data. Each

participant must be associated with the town of Chester, Georgia, and this means participants

should live in Chester, Georgia, or be a New Canaan Baptist Church member. Appendix B

reflects three proposed church attendance surveys: one for male youth, one for parents, and one

for church leaders. The participants will be briefed on the confidentiality of their responses to the

survey.

The intervention aims to strengthen youth to improve their mind, body, and soul. The

program's primary partner will be New Canaan Baptist Church. It will be an intervention

working outside the church setting to address the lack of attendance for African-American male

youth. The intervention is geared toward a mutual acceptance of this problem from within the

church's congregation. Therefore, it is essential to highlight the church crisis and share it with

the proposed participants. Refer to Appendix C for a request for partnership, a permission

request letter to access New Canaan Baptist Church's historical records, and the use of the

fellowship hall for project meetings. Historical data will be gathered and displayed via a time

series and Pareto charts. Refer to Appendix D for the record of male youth attendance. These

charts can be helpful in recording and tracking the project's progress.

God's work is required beyond the doors of New Canaan Baptist Church. So,

emphasizing mentorship within the Chester, Georgia, community is the start of something new to

mitigate the problem of missing African-American male youth in church. The researcher

currently has a personal mentorship program at work, and training potential participants on the

need for youth guidance will enlarge this program to a more significant vicinity to accommodate

at least twelve community youths.

The intervention is designed by following a project checklist containing critical steps

from the beginning to the end of the project. Refer to table 3.1 for a list of tasks to be

accomplished to promote the design of the intervention. The sequence of factors from this table

should occur to secure a good intervention design.

Table 3.1. Intervention Design Checklist.

Task	Method	Date of Completion
Mission Statement	Written	
Project Process Map	Cause- and Effect Chart	
Visualize Yes/No Survey	Table	
Consent Forms	Verbal and Letter	
Eligibility criteria youth	Letter	
Eligibility criteria mentor	Verbal and written	
Recruiting plans	Verbal and written	
Mentor interview	Instruction letter	
Mentee interview	Instruction letter	
Training plan mentor/mentee	Table	
Matching strategy and agreement	Table	

The next step in intervention design is incorporated as a method to recruit volunteers to complete surveys. An announcement such as the one listed in Appendix E, Youth Participant Recruitment Verbal, and Appendix F, Parent/Church Leaders Participant Recruitment Verbal, will be used to obtain survey participants. This announcement will be made after receiving project approval from the Institutional Review Board during Sunday worship service, Sunday school, and weekly Bible study. Those interested will be given a survey before leaving the church with instructions to return the completed survey within two days. Others interested but not immediately sure will be given the researcher's contact information and will be directed to call within two days to discuss this issue further. The ideal number of survey participants is thirty: ten youths, ten parents, and ten church leaders.

The next step in the intervention design is collecting and analyzing data from survey participants. Refer to figure 3.2 for sample data analysis. This hypothetical pie chart represents a sample of the survey responses from one male youth. This data will be compiled and analyzed using the Minitab Statistical Software applications to examine current and previous data to uncover trends and find and predict patterns. The plan is to utilize normal probability plots to assess that the data follows a normal distribution. Normal distribution approximates the competence of the process using a normal distribution, and if the p-value exceeds 0.05, there is an assumption that the data follows the normal distribution.
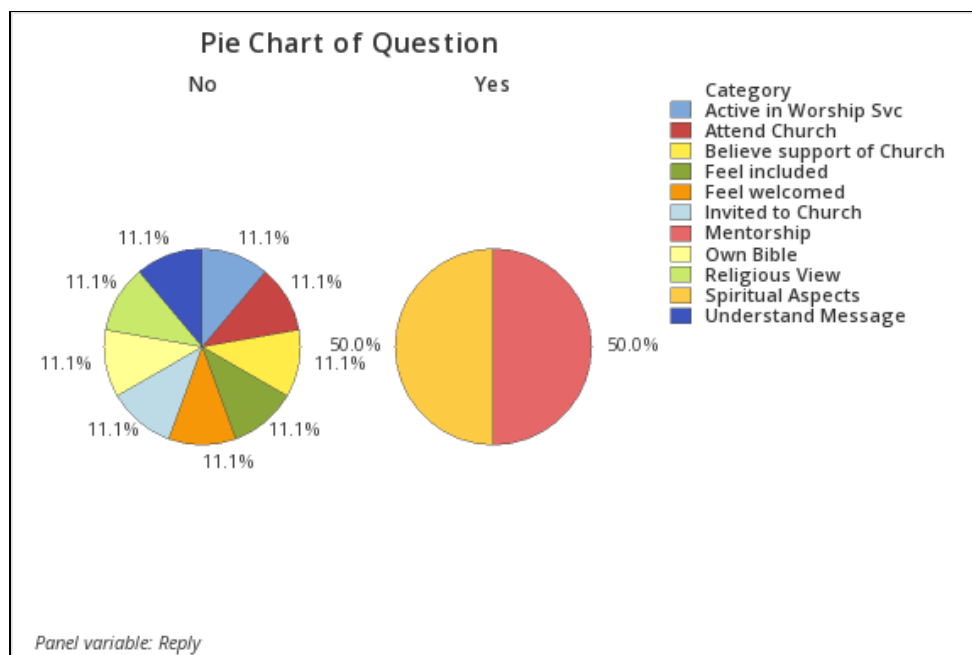
Figure 3.2. Survey Question Response: Church Attendance.

The intervention design's mission statement relates to the following. "Striding to mitigate the absence of African American male youth at New Canaan Baptist Church by offering uplifting community support and directions to an array of quality choices that will spiritually and secularly enhance thinking."

The next step in the intervention design leads to creating seven mentorship project meetings. These meetings will be designed to lecture on the concepts of youth mentorship. Before attending mentorship meetings, the first two weeks of the invention were used for the preparation, including recruiting survey participants and collecting surveys. This intervention design will employ the survey data to introduce a mentorship project. Through lecturing mentorship benefits, the intervention expects to attract ten African-American male youths eight to eighteen years old. The intervention design is based on the attitude of the willing and able. The willingness to approach changes benefits the youth and mentor's partnership. Those male youths deemed unwilling and unable will be reevaluated within two weeks after the initial parent

and youth interview. This reconsideration will be centered on their parent's request. The behavioral background of the youth will not be a factor in the acceptance process. However, each youth will be allowed to demonstrate that they are willing and able to remain part of the mentoring program. Later in the series of project meetings, the willing and able approach will be explained to potential participants. Refer to Appendix G for youth mentorship participant recruitment. Parents and youth participants who showed interest in the mentoring program by responding positively to the survey question "Are you interested in a community-based mentorship program?" in Appendix A will have a follow-up interview with the researcher. The interview will be held at the New Canaan Baptist Church fellowship hall. The 30-minute interview asked the questions in table 3.2. Furthermore, for youths to participate in the mentorship program, parents must complete a consent form in Appendix H.

Table 3.2. Parent and Youth Interview Questions.

Parent/Youth Interview Questions
Which skills are you looking to grow and develop through this program?
Which skills are your greatest strengths?
What goal do you hope to achieve through this program?
What is your plan for the future, and where do you need help fulfilling this plan?
How do you feel about attending church with your mentor?
Why do you think you would like to have a mentor?
What hobbies or interests do you have?
Are you willing to attend church with a mentor?
Will you be able to fulfill the commitment of the program?

The intervention design applies to a big brother concept. In "big brother's" terms, a mentor is a male adult twenty-five and older who devotes time to youth to support their secular and spiritual development, provide a relationship and guidance, and offer a different viewpoint on the world. New Canaan Baptist Church leaders will be encouraged to be volunteer mentors. A lecture will be completed to provide a clearer insight into the "big brother" concept.

Refer to Appendix I for mentor volunteers' proposed recruitment letter and survey. Ten mentors are needed for the project. Each mentor volunteer will undergo an interview and provide the time available for volunteering with youth. Refer to Appendix J for the mentor interview. Each mentor volunteer must consent to a background investigation. There will be a lecture on the importance of background investigation. Refer to Appendix K for the background check consent form.

The intervention design will offer traditional one-to-one mentoring to achieve a close bond between youth and adults. This faith-based initiative supports spiritual growth and provides worldly guidance. These services are provided with the consent of the parents or guardian. Through the interview process, services are accessible to those youth with a willing and able attitude to work toward positive changes in their life. Consequently, an interview with parents and youth will be conducted regarding the needs of the youth. Plus, the program will encourage the youth to talk about their needs related to living socially and spiritually so they can be better assisted. Based on interview information, a reconstruction plan will be created. The intervention design will present education related to the mentor and mentee matching process. This training includes the youth's compatibility with a spiritual or professional mentor.

Next, the intervention design required mentor and mentee matching. The process of matching a mentor to a mentee is a crucial step to mitigate the fallout from the program. Refer to Appendix L for the mentor and mentee matching process. Systematic screening enhances the value of mentors and helps safeguard the well-being of youth involved in the program while also controlling the level of risk and legal responsibility.[1]

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[1] *MENTOR: How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program Using the Element of Effective Practice* (Boston, MA: MENTOR, 2005), 96, assessed December 3, 2022, www.mentoring.org.

The next step in the project relates to an intervention design with an established lesson plan to train mentors and mentees. Within the scheduled project meetings, the researcher will teach line items in table 3.3 to mentors and mentees. The researcher will use pertinent training resources to train mentors and mentees. For example, the U.S. Department of Education's *Ongoing Training for Mentors: Twelve Interactive Sessions for U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Programs,*[2] and *Training New Mentors: Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities*[3] will be used as training guides.

Table 3.3. Training Plan Mentors and Mentees.

Mentor /Mentee Training	Date of Training	Date of Recurring Training
How to be an active listener		
Communication Skills		
How to assist mentees in identifying goals		
Help mentees work toward their goal		
Expectations of the mentors in the program		
Subjects to discuss with mentees		
What good mentoring looks like		
Tips for building an effective relationship		
The spiritual aspect of mentoring		
Matching with mentee		
Guidance on how to engage with parents		
Safety and ethical decision-making		

The intervention design used training guides previously listed to offer mentoring activities such as skill-building classes focused on goal setting, training sessions on diversity and cultural sensitivity, conflict resolution, problem-solving skills, communication skills, and skills for setting limits. These topics aim to develop interpersonal skills and a spiritual foundation for

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[2]*Ongoing Training for Mentors: Twelve Interactive Sessions for U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Programs*, assessed December 4, 2022, https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resoures.pdf.

[3]*New Mentors: Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities Training*, assessed December 4, 2022, https: educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/training.pdf.

dealing with matters such as peer pressure. This research project desires to leverage the centralized location to provide a positive environment where care for others is the mission to ignite curiosity, thus leading to a more structured life that includes spiritual growth and secular progress. The mentorship thesis project acceptability is measured by group discussions after lectures and observations from each meeting. This event occurs as the project evolves and will be completed in six thesis project meetings. Ultimately, a final group discussion and survey will be conducted at the seventh and final thesis project meeting to confirm understanding of the lectured subjects. This data will be used to determine the feasibility of the thesis project.

Lastly, the intervention design required a location to work on this project. Refer to Appendix M for the gymnasium permission letter. A permission letter will be submitted to the town of Chester, Georgia, to utilize the Chester Elementary School gymnasium. This building is in the middle of Chester for easy access to African-American youth. The aim is for this building to serve as a beacon of hope, having a social impact. This faith-based mentoring program will be a focal place for youth to gather with others looking to do better in life's journey. Ultimately, success equates to an increase in African-American male youth attendance, which is more than 10 percent of New Canaan Baptist Church's entire congregation. This expectation will be based on youth partnerships and the mentoring project. Daily or weekly entries in a reflective journal hold the researcher accountable for integrity. The researcher will take full advantage of the reflective journal and learn from the entries by reviewing them each week as the intervention design progresses through the project's duration.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The implementation of the intervention design yielded various behaviors from those presented with an opportunity to participate in the research project. The researcher will list

observations and not judgments on the outcome of any surveys. When the announcement of the thesis project was communicated to the church and community parents, there was initial excitement for an approach that could influence young African-American males to recognize various life choices. This project outcome could assist parents' efforts to guide their youth to better opportunities, and of course, this project would create choice within the lives of some youth who did not have it. The previously listed positive aspects of this project were used to gain buy-in from participants.

Project surveys were issued to prospective participants, and numerous observations will be highlighted. This section will describe behaviors and reflections related to spiritual leaders, parents, and youth. Plus, there will be some feedback associated with each group, their responsiveness to the survey, and their attitude to contributing to these surveys. This feedback is based on their perception of the newfound ideal to foster a pathway to lead male youth to the church. Also, feedback related to the overall implementation of the intervention will be highlighted.

The project's announcement in the church was received with what appeared to be an optimistic attitude. Some church leaders were slow to respond; some requested a survey but never asked additional questions, and neither did they return the survey to the researcher. Some came to the researcher later to question the purpose, method, and how the research project is associated with the church. There is visual proof that young black males are not attending church. So, observing the leader's reactions could relate to their desire to do things the same way. From the researcher's experience, the old-fashioned way of controlling everything and having total authority was still in the mindset of the New Canaan Baptist Church leaders. Some church leaders gladly accepted the survey but were hesitant about filling it out and returning it to

the researcher. Even to the point of not communicating further on the progress of implementing a community-based mentor program that will increase church attendance by giving youth various options other than worldly options. The church has little to no eight to eighteen-year-old youth. This fact has gained their attention, so there should have been much action around those surveys. Ten surveys were issued to prospective leader participants; seven were completed and returned to the researcher. There was an observation that most of their attitude was open to the research project. However, some openly mentioned there is a need to gain youth attendance, but this practice seemed to be out of the norm based on old customs and courtesies of New Canaan Baptist Church and the community. Feedback from those who responded promptly was in favor of a go-forward plan. Those who remained confused seemed to keep the option to stay in their lanes and to see what would happen.

Surveys associated with the parent did not create a need to venture out further to solicit more participation. In this research project, parents are defined as dual parents, single parents, and grandparents. The parents' response to participate in the survey was good. Their responsiveness in returning completed surveys was well within the requested time. One observation worth noting was that most of the prospective participants were female. To be more specific, the parents were single or divorced. This will be highlighted in more detail in the next chapter. Some parents happily offered suggestions about their desire to include females and why the survey age was geared toward male youth eight to eighteen years old. Why not have a more significant margin of age groups? Some parents alluded to the opinion that many African-American males needed a structured way to live a life beyond what the world has to offer. But when will the African-American female youth be included in the proposed intervention?

Regarding prospective African American male youth participants, it was difficult to obtain the correct number of surveys to substantiate the implementation. This slow response could be the result of other underlying issues. However, those youth who responded were very excited about the research project and appeared to be anxious to participate in the research project. In the effort to examine what may be initiating the slow response of African-American male youth, data from the United States Census Bureau related to the age range of African-American males in Chester, Georgia, will be informative. The population pyramid correlated to the population by age and sex highlights a small number of males eight to eighteen years old.[4] The breakdown and explanation of this population chart will be highlighted in the next chapter.

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[4] "American Community Survey: Info Section Age and Sex," United States Census Bureau, last modified July 7, 2022, accessed June 2, 2023, https://data.census.gov/vizwidge.html.
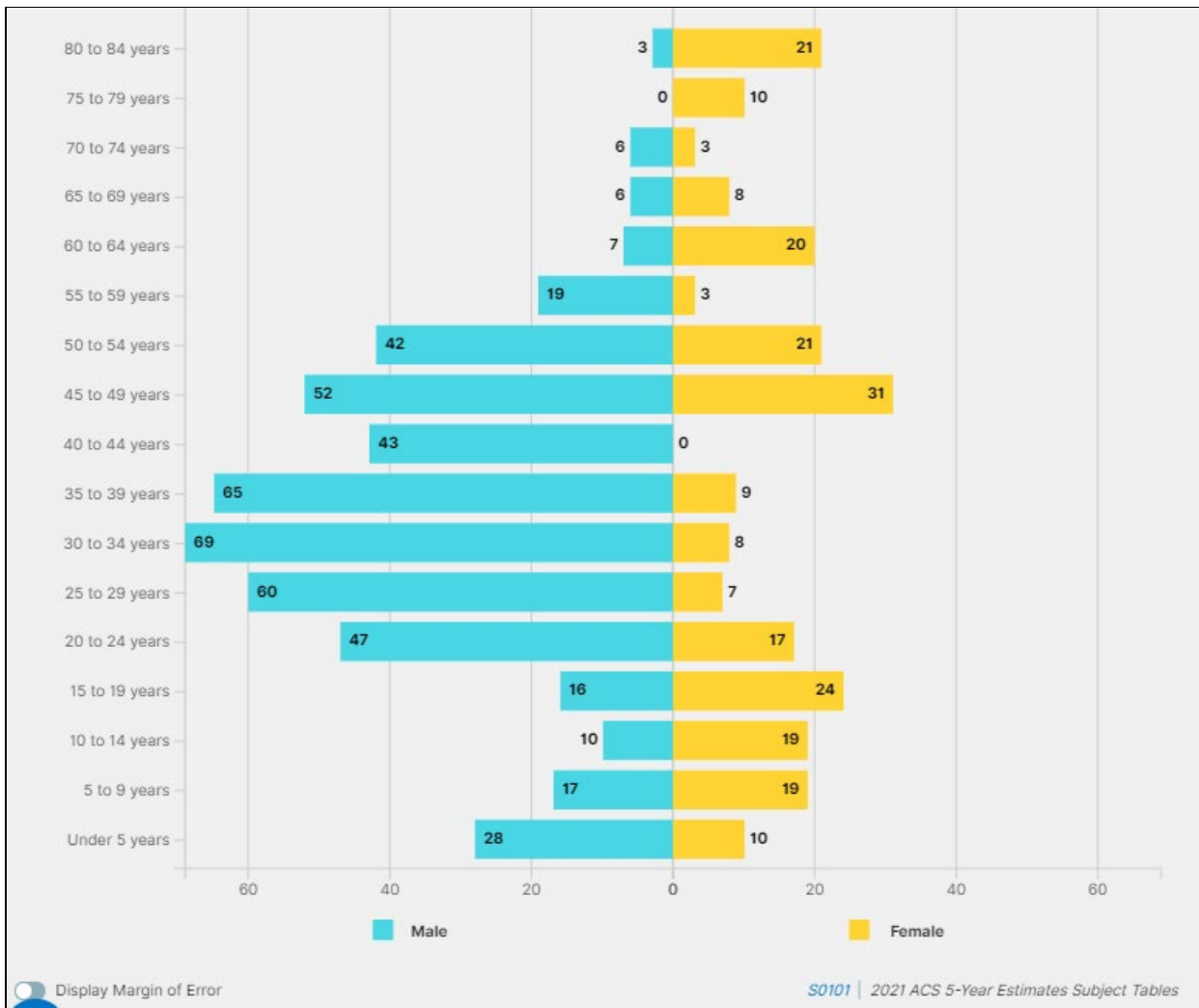
Figure 3.3. Population Pyramid: Population by Age and Sex.

In conclusion, the unsurpassed observation is associated with those leaders and parents who recognized their godly leadership and would not simply stand by silently. At the same time, this research project offered an opportunity for youth spiritual growth. To ensure there would be less room for potential failure, some attempted to respond with every fiber of their physical and spiritual realities to promote potential growth in youth church attendance.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Results from this research will be utilized to implement a community-based mentorship program. The speculation of a reasonable outcome was based on periodically evaluating the progress of the thesis project meeting. Progress is measured by group discussion after each mentoring lecture session. The final thesis project meeting will include a group discussion on each subject presented during the last six sessions and one final questionnaire to collect the level of subject comprehension. The number of youths recruited for the mentoring project versus the number of youths who started the project and dropped out or those who chose to attend church will indicate the mentoring program's usefulness. Understanding the meaning of the study undertaken assists in judging how the intervention will be compatible with solving the widespread problem of African-American male youth not attending New Canaan Baptist Church. There was an assumption that the cycle count (church attendance record) would change upon the completion of the thesis project, and this change was reflected in the conclusion.

At the onset of the project, the researcher surveyed the mindset of adults during Bible study on their readiness for a mentor relationship. Figure 4.1 reflects the researcher's approach to the mentorship subject with an open engagement exercise rendered in the adult Bible study session. The question responds to the range of readiness and familiarity with the concept of spiritual and worldly mentorship. Nine members of the Bible study session willingly shared their level of preparedness to mentor others. The exercise resulted in one member stating he was not ready for mentoring, and he rated himself two on a scale of one to ten. Level one denotes not being prepared to mentor, and level ten symbolizes readiness. Any level of readiness beyond level five represents an inclination to participate in mentoring. Furthermore, the exercise resulted

in one member rating themselves at level five on the scale of willingness to mentor. Three

members were level six on the readiness to mentor scale. One member was on level eight, and

one was on level nine of the mentor's readiness scale. The final two members rated themselves

as ten on the mentor readiness scale. Figure 4.1 supports the result of the engagement exercise

with adult members in Bible study. As a result, six out of nine members were at levels beyond

five, which means almost 80 percent of members at several degrees were ready to mentor. This

data displays levels of readiness based on a group of adults that includes church leaders and

parents.
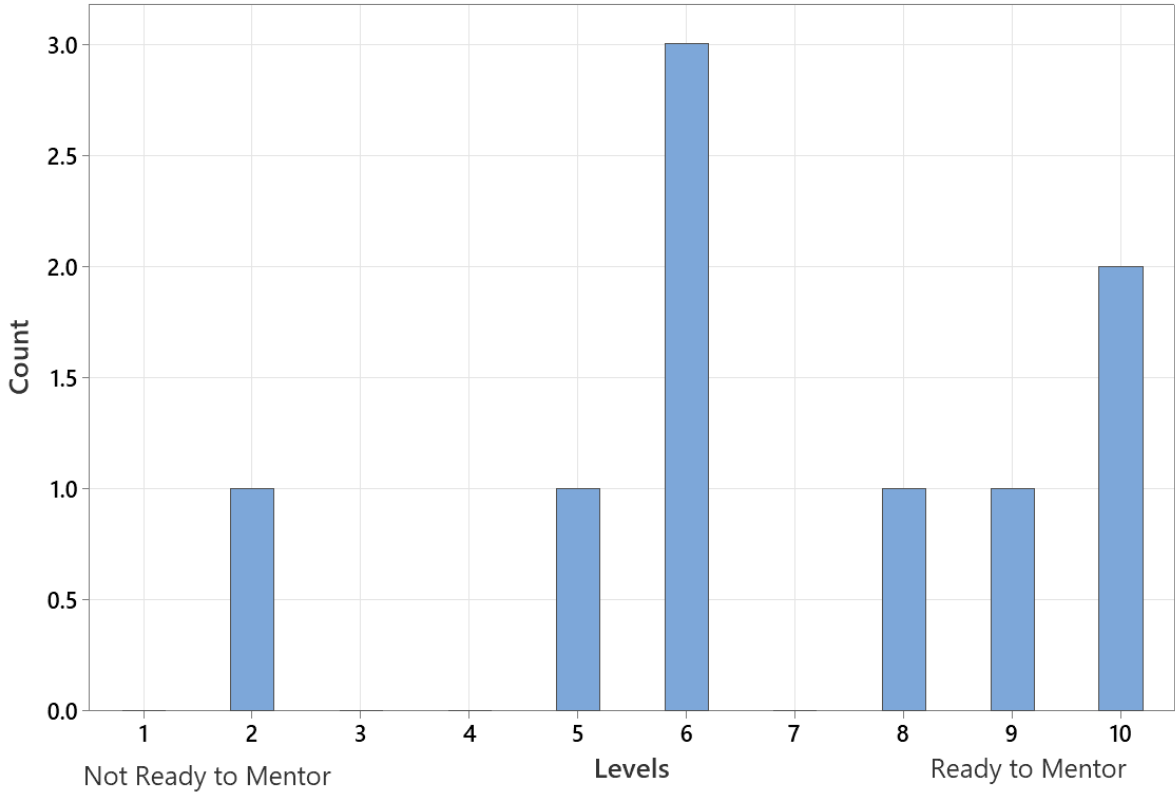
Figure 4.1. Level of Readiness to Mentor.

The next process within the project is related to the history of male youth. Preserving

hope through youth attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church required visualization of the

historical attendance of African-American male youth. Therefore, New Canaan Baptist Church's historical attendance records were analyzed, and the review of records reflects a constant downward trend over the last ten years.
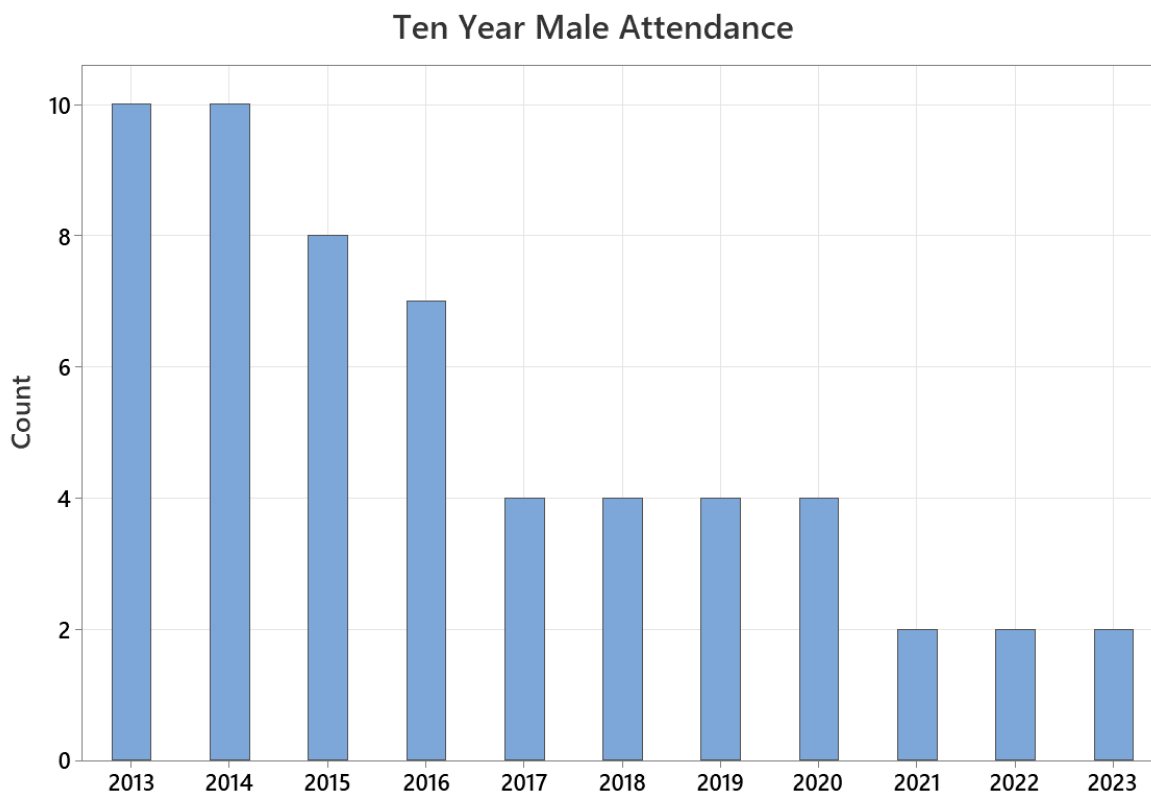
Figure 4.2. Ten-Year Youth Male Attendance.

The results of figure 4.2, Ten-Year Youth Male Attendance, set into motion the dilemma New Canaan Baptist Church faces today. The figure shows a significant crisis in male youth attendance years before this research project began. The question presented relates to the declining trend. As youth mature into young adults and leave home, they do not return to church as often as they did as a youth. Figure 4.2 reflects that in 2013, ten male youths were attending New Canaan Baptist Church. The downward trend was put into motion in 2015. One probable cause associated with the decline relates to the sudden death of the senior pastor during that time.

The senior pastor and his wife had two male youths, so when the pastor passed, the two male youths ceased attending New Canaan Baptist Church.

However, between 2016 and 2017, there was a decrease in male youth. The results reflect no endeavor to increase male youth at New Canaan Baptist Church. The year-over-year results of male youth attendance reflect a constant decline. The year-over-year decline may be linked to high school graduates leaving home. Male youth attendance held firm, with three male youths in 2018. Male youth attendance for 2019 and 2022 was affected by the national pandemic coronavirus disease. This data draws the researcher to investigate various methods to gain traction on church attendance. As for the current status of African American male youth, two are in attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church, and their attendance is irregular. They attend with their grandparents.

This data conveys an essential point that New Church Baptist Church leadership may have been unaware of as the number of male youths attending church declined. The researcher's survey collected participants' beliefs from specific groups, including church leaders, parents, and youth. The survey results will be used as proof when presenting the need to implement a mentorship program for discipleship.

Church Leaders Youth Attendance Survey Results

The survey was designed for prospective church leaders, and its purpose was to gain specific responses on a youth mentorship program and youth church attendance. The survey is illustrated in table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Church Leaders Survey.

Church Leaders	1. Yes	2. No	3. Maybe	4. N/A	Reply
Have you previously invited a community youth to come with you to church?					
Have you asked youth how they enjoyed the church service in the last year?					
Have you ever asked youths what can be done to serve them better?					
Are there various versions of the Bible available in church for youth?					
Do you have a worship service strictly designed for youth programs?					
Are you comfortable with hearing contemporary gospel music in the church?					
Are there plans to increase the attendance of male youth?					
Are you aware of the number of male youths attending each church service?					
Will there be more programs in the future to attract youth to the church?					
Do you have a youth ministry program?					
Are you interested in mentoring youth?					

The church leaders' survey results produced reasonable data to promote the thesis project intervention. Initially, twelve church leader surveys were issued to potential participants. Sixty-seven percent of church leaders' surveys were returned. Therefore, eight of twelve church leaders participated in the research project survey. Figure 4.3 will be the source used to analyze the church leaders' survey conclusions. Results align with the participant's response to specific questions associated with the church, youth attendance, and mentorship. The number of participants is listed on the right side of the chart, and the question concerning youth church attendance is listed in the bottom area of the graph.

Leadership Response
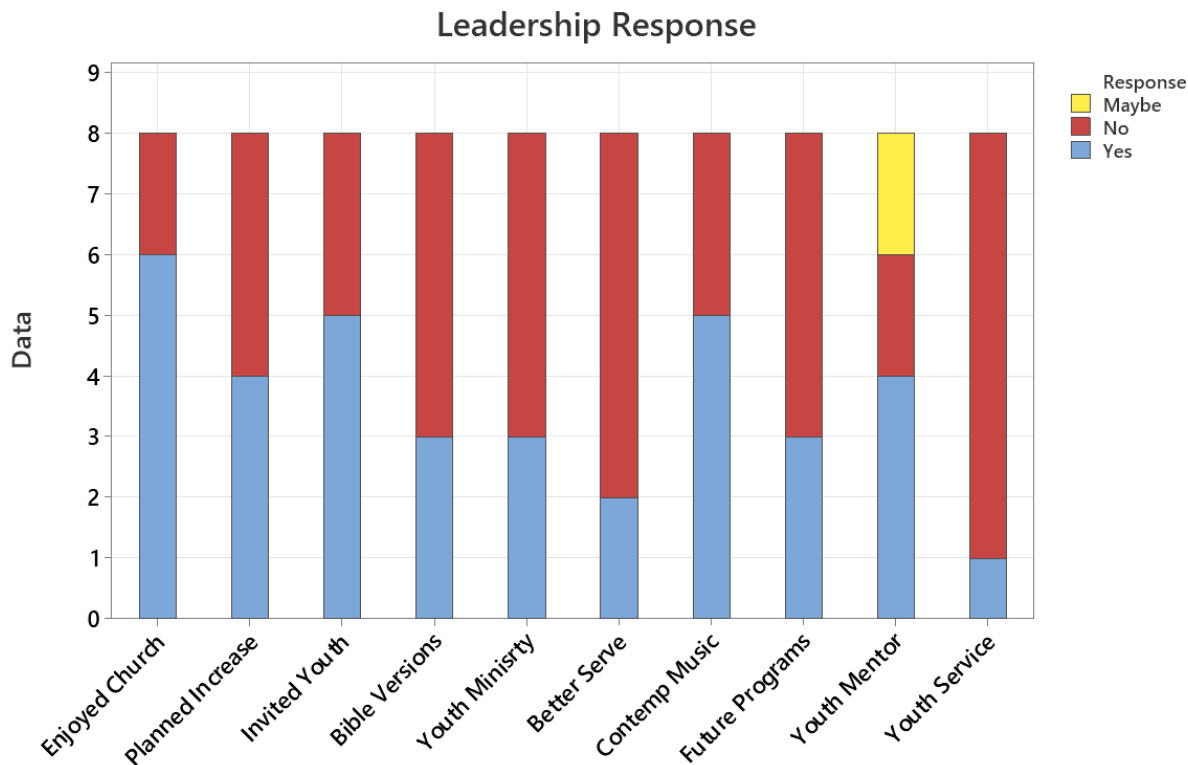
Figure 4.3. Church Leaders Survey Responses.

The church leader's attendance survey results contain opinions from male and female participants with an average age of forty-five. The central thought remains in keeping hope alive in today's youth through mentoring from generation to generation.

Figure 4.3 will be expanded to capture results from each category. Survey results will be communicated to help develop an argument to promote the principle of spiritual mentorship. The design to acquire at least ten church leadership participants was not achieved. The failure to reach ten participants was linked to a slow response from those who volunteered to conduct the survey. Some church leaders projected a negative attitude toward some aspects of the project. They offered the researcher no feedback.

Seven participants were acquired for the survey from the bar chart. Fifteen church leader surveys were issued to those interested in the thesis project. The reasons for not returning the

survey ranged from being too busy or forgetting the due date. Some took the survey to be curious and voice their opinion about the project based on factors from the church's history. Pessimistic feedback from some church leaders made the researcher wonder about their ability to enlarge the gospel. The new mentorship concept presented through a thesis project was hard for some to accept.

The data in figure 4.3 that relates to the first subject within the stacked bar chart reflects responses from participants on communication with youth concerning their enjoyment of church service. Within the last year, six out of eight participants asked the youth about their opinion on church service. From the results, there appears to be an effort from church leaders to communicate with youth in the church setting. As the bar chart reflects, 75 percent of the participants responded with a positive outlook associated with communicating with youth to check the youth's enjoyment of church service. Overall, this question ranked number one of ten among the most positive responses from church leaders.

Consequently, as it relates to the inquiry associated with the church leaders' knowledge of a plan to increase youth attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church, the bar chart reflects a 50 percent response between yes and no. This result targets a need for church leaders to clarify the strategy necessary to structure a more united thought process that recognizes an obligation for more youth attendance.

Data from the bar chart supplied data to assess the willingness of church leaders to invite family and community male youth to attend church. The data resulted heavily in the positive direction, with 62.5 percent of church leaders on the positive side and 37.5 percent on the negative side. As a result, five church leaders out of eight invited youth to church.

Figure 4.3 reflects church leaders' results of an inquiry regarding the availability of different versions of the Holy Bible in the church. New Canaan Baptist Church is known to supply the King James Version of the Holy Bible in the pews. The results from the survey revealed that 62 percent of church leaders' response was a no as it related to different versions of the Holy Bible in the church. In addition, data reflects that 38 percent of church leaders responded yes, meaning these participants thought that more versions of the Holy Bible were available for youth in the church. In essence, the survey question yielded that minimal effort and opportunities are applied to provide a variety of Bible versions that would assist the youth in understanding the biblical text better.

Youth ministry response from the survey resulted in an opportunity that directed needed attention for increased youth ministry within New Canaan Baptist Church. To define youth ministry a bit more, church leaders must have a ministry program strictly for youth, including a youth choir, youth Bible study, community volunteer, and other basic youth programs. Based on the results of data in the bar chart, three participants out of eight were aware of certain types of youth ministry in the church. This fact results in 38 percent of church leaders answering with a yes that there is a current youth ministry. But comparing the present condition at New Canaan Baptist Church to the past, today, there are no activities for youth ministry.

The next question in the survey for church leader participants concerned communication with youth to provide an environment of acceptance. The results generated a weakness in offering the best provision for youth in the church. Two participants out of eight acknowledged asking youth what can be done better in church service. This topic falls into the second lowest among the ten questions. Therefore, 75 percent of church leader participants said they had not asked the youth how to serve them better.

The next issue in the survey for church leader participants was contemporary gospel music. New Canaan Baptist Church was formed on old-fashioned hymns and traditional Black gospel music. Based on the survey results, church leaders responded well to their acceptance of contemporary music in the church. The survey showed that five participants out of eight, 62.5 percent, were okay with contemporary music in the church. The remaining 37.5 percent were not ready to accept contemporary gospel music.

Future programs for youth at New Canaan Baptist Church were the next item on the survey. The responses for this resulted in 38 percent of church leaders answering yes, meaning there are plans for future youth programs. Sixty-two percent of church leaders selected no and felt there were no plans for a future program for youth in the church. From the results, there is an opportunity to increase hope for tomorrow. Three church leaders out of eight seem to have a mindset for future programs for youth. This minimal hope presented in the data is enough to spark an initiative to communicate the importance of planning for the future.

The following survey focused on the interest in a community-based mentorship program. The chart reflects responses from three choices: yes, no, and maybe. The chart reveals that 50 percent of church leaders have a positive mindset about a community-based mentorship program, 25 percent are negative about their involvement, and 25 percent are unsure of their position on a mentorship program.

The last survey question reflected a meager positive response of 12.5 percent in youth services. The awareness of youth services, as they were in the past at New Canaan Baptist Church, is almost nonexistent. The time when youth were invited to conduct the majority of church services has diminished. The negative response of 87.5 percent from church leaders has substantiated the need for more youth involvement in church services designed for them to lead.

This data emphasizes the current opinion of church leaders and is somewhat grim and should be addressed immediately. The need for youth services at New Canaan Baptist Church ranked last out of the ten categories provided on the church leaders survey. It is important to know that youth services were the lowest rate category in the survey.

At first glance, figure 4.3 displays more red, representing a no response. Overall, there were a total of eighty church leader survey responses. The survey resulted in forty-four no responses and thirty-six yes replies. No responses represent 55 percent, and yes, responses represent 45 percent. There are several valuable points when considering male youth growth at New Canaan Baptist Church. On a positive note, 75 percent of church leaders encourage youth by asking how they enjoyed church service. Another area worth noting is better service to youth. The fact that church leaders are not communicating with youth must be mitigated by a plan to greet and inform them that they are welcome at church. Church leaders should welcome youth to share opinions on how to meet their needs in the church. Church leaders' reply revealed a low view in their response to youth services. These results highlight that work must be in place to strengthen youth services in the church. Services can include programs led by youth and church services conducted by youth. Church leaders' opinions are essential when enhancing male youth attendance is needed. The survey results reflect that church leaders are out of touch with community youth. Resolutions for this issue will be provided at the conclusion of this research. The parents' views will be evaluated in the next section of this research.

Parent Youth Attendance Survey Results

This survey is constructed for prospective parent participants, and its objective aims to obtain specific attributes of church attendance and participants' responses concerning a mentorship program. Parents were instructed to read each question, respond to each question by

selecting a number one through four, and then place their response in the "Reply" column. Refer

to table 4.2 for an illustration of the survey.

Table 4.2. Parent Survey.

Parent	1. Yes	2. No	3. Maybe	4. N/A	Reply
Did your parents discuss the spiritual aspects of life with you?					
Have you attended church within the last six months?					
Do you have a religious view?					
Do you share your religious views with youth?					
Do you encourage your child to attend church?					
Are you interested in being a part of a community-based mentorship program?					
Have you brought a child or grandchild to church in the last six months?					
Do you feel comfortable giving a child responsibility during church service?					
Do you feel out of cultural background when youth sing modern gospel songs instead old fashion hymns?					
Are you willing to discuss the historical background of the church with the youth?					
Within the last year, have you told a youth how important it is to attend church?					
Have you read the Bible to your children?					
Have you ever recommended and explained supportive Bible verses to youth?					

Figure 4.4. Parent Survey Response.

The findings in figure 4.4 will entertain a perception of African American parents as they ponder youth church attendance and response to mentorship opportunities. The initial view of this figure highlights a willingness to participate. Sixteen parent surveys were issued to potential participants, and thirteen surveys were returned to the researcher. Based on the responses from parents, there are some positive outlooks in guiding youth back to church. The blue bars in the stacked bar chart represent positive actions toward enhancing youth attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church. Twelve particular categories were conveyed in the survey. Each one of these categories will be addressed to analyze data from the survey.

The parent survey participants answered confidently when discussing the spiritual aspect with their parents. As a result, twelve out of thirteen participants responded yes. In essence, 92.3 percent of participants stated that their parents discussed the spiritual aspect of life with them. The survey results reflect an excellent representation of communicating details concerning spiritual life. Also, based on the significant positive numbers of responses, participants' parents may have embedded an attribute that will possibly expand into the subsequent generation.

When parent survey participants were asked about their church attendance in the last six weeks, 100 percent answered yes. The results of this inquiry serve as a reference point highlighting parent church attendance versus youth church attendance. With the number of parents attending church, the survey results provide hope that parents would encourage their youth to attend church.

The ability to encourage youth to attend church comes with having a religious view. The owners of a religious view can reflect a strong belief in the supernatural power that controls human destiny. Results of the parent survey generated positive reactions, which correlates with sharing the parent's religious views. The results establish a beneficial foundation that promotes

interaction with youth related to church and secular aspects of life. The results revealed from the bar chart show that 100 percent of parents shared their religious views with the youth. The information offers hope for the parents involved in the survey. This increment of hope can start as the beginning of a youth's spiritual growth.

The next topic presented to parents during the survey was encouraging a child to attend church. Based on the results displayed in the bar chart, parents acknowledged in the affirmative that encouraging a child to attend church was an acceptable action. Furthermore, the bar chart results show that 100 percent of participants, thirteen of out thirteen, submitted a positive response to encourage a child to attend church. The results of New Canaan Baptist Church's youth attendance history prove that parents generally care about youth attendance. But through their efforts, there has never been a fortified plan to maintain the presence of youth once they decide to come to church. The results of this subject show the researcher that parents are prepared to communicate with youth concerning their presence in the church.

When the opportunity to be part of a community-based mentorship program was presented to parents in the survey, there were mixed reactions based on the responses displayed in the parent survey bar chart. Eight out of thirteen participants, 61.5 percent, responded confidently and wanted to be involved in the mentorship program. The remaining five participants, 38.5 percent, did not disagree with their involvement in the mentor program but were undecided on their position.

The next subject in the survey was presented to gain an understanding of the parents' effort to increase church attendance. Plus, the results can reflect the willingness to spread the gospel from within the family circle. When asked about bringing a child or grandchild to church in the last six months, 84.6 percent of the participants responded yes, and 15.5 percent responded

no. These results reflect the parents' efforts to attempt to mitigate the shortfall of youth in the church.

To ensure the spiritual growth of youth, youth should be allocated various functions within the church. Nine parents out of thirteen, 84.6 percent, responded positively to giving a child responsibility during church service. The survey result validates a good factor of the parents' commitment to structure the lives of youth for the next generation of church leaders. The chart showed that 15.4 percent of participants did not favor appointing youth responsibility within the church. However, a small fraction of participants reflects the mindset of hindering change within the church. The results forecast that some parents do not trust the younger generation with church work for one reason or another. There must be change within the church to attract and keep the younger generation.

The next subject within the survey targeted assessing cultural background as it relates to youth singing modern gospel music versus old-fashioned hymns. As the world is in constant motion, generational issues may become a factor within the church. The survey results help identify if parents felt out of their culture when the church sang the modern gospel. The bar chart in figure 4.4 reflects nine parents out of thirteen; 69.2 percent felt comfortable with modern gospel music in the church. The results showed that 30.8 percent felt out of place when youth sang modern gospel music. These results prove that accepting change benefits attracting and maintaining youth in the church.

The following two subjects within the survey sought to substantiate a sense of pride associated with the church's history and the willingness to share opinions on the history of the church. The desired mindset is that if parents are proud enough to discuss the church's history, youth may feel comfortable about attending church to gain a perspective of history. The survey

revealed that 100 percent of the participants were willing to share their experiences linked to church history and the importance of church attendance with youth. The result of these inquiries is beneficial, as parents can continue to be the front runner in the campaign to strengthen youth church attendance.

The next subject within the survey was proposed to examine the commitment of parents to spend time reading the Bible with youth. Results from the bar chart reflect that 100 percent of the participants have read the Bible to their children. The results show that parents are eager to do their part in introducing their youth to the Bible. This mindset can help promote attention to the Bible and accomplish quality spiritual time with youth.

The last subject in the parent survey queried participants on their inclination to direct youth to specific Bible verses for spiritual support. The survey yielded nine out of thirteen participants, 69.2 percent, who favored recommending and explaining supportive Bible verses to youth. On the other hand, four out of thirteen, 30.8 percent, saw this action as unfavorable.

In summary, the results of the complete parents survey mainly favored better choices for youth. At first glance, in figure 4.4, responses exhibit a lot of blue within the bar chart, resulting in positive replies involving subjects in the survey. When evaluating positive responses and negative responses, the bar chart displays a total of 156 responses. Most survey answers resulted in 138 positive responses, equating to 88.5 percent of the participants. The remaining responses, 11.5 percent, were other than positive, no, or maybe. The findings from the survey reflect parents' readiness to provide further grooming for youth. When comparing the church leader survey to the parent survey, there is a significant difference in the colors of the bar chart. Church leaders have much work to do to match the efforts of parents in attracting youth to the church. The results also denote the willingness to be involved in youth's spiritual and secular growth.

Consequently, the results of this survey will be beneficial in addressing problems related to youth attending church. The next session will venture into surveying youth and then examining their thought in search of increasing youth church attendance.

Youth Survey Responses

The researcher recruited youth participants to answer the following questions listed in table 4.3. The youth attendance survey is designed for prospective youth participants, and its purpose is to acquire certain aspects of church attendance and how participants feel about a mentorship program. Strive for the mentoring movement to be an inclusive space where every young person feels valued and respected. In the survey below, the youth were asked to read each question, respond to each question by selecting a number one through four, and place their response in the "Reply" column. Fifteen youth surveys were issued to prospective participants, and eight surveys were completed and returned to the researcher.

Table 4.3. Youth Survey Questions.

Youth	1. Yes	2. No	3. Maybe	4. N/A	Reply
Do your parents discuss the spiritual aspects of life with you?					
Have you attended church within the last six months?					
Do you have a religious view?					
If invited to go to church, would you attend?					
Are you interested in a community-based mentorship program?					
When you last attended church, did you understand the message?					
When you attend church, did you feel included in the service?					
Have you ever been asked to participate in worship services?					
Do you own your own Bible?					
Do you feel welcome when you attend church?					
Have you been taught that there is support, comfort, and hope in the church?					

Figure 4.5 will be used to highlight reactions from youth using a simple questioning technique. Each category will be evaluated and explained in ways associated with increasing youth church

attendance. Questions aimed at spiritual relationships initiated by parents are presented to the

youth. The results from this inquiry will substantiate whether more work is needed to draw

parents and youth together to talk about the spiritual aspects of life.
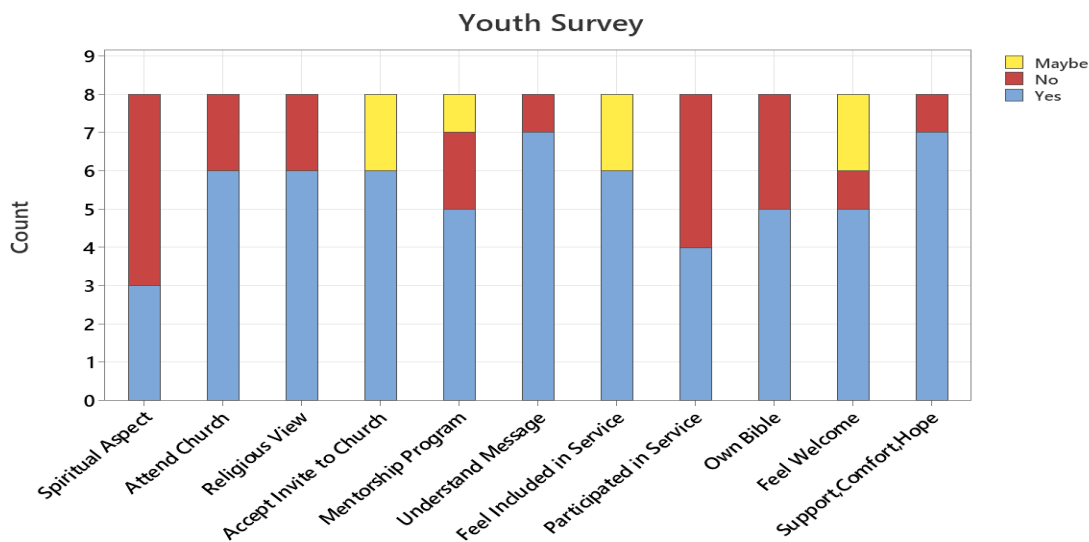
Figure 4.5. Youth Survey Responses.

The bar chart presents the first concern in the survey related to a religious viewpoint. The

youth were asked whether their parents discussed the spiritual aspects of life with them. The

survey showed that three out of eight youth participants replied positively, and five replied

negatively. The results of 37.5 percent positive versus 62.5 percent negative appear somewhat

different from the results of the parents' survey, which reflected that of most parents, 92.7

percent admitted to sharing their spiritual aspects with youth. Since the parent and youth survey

results did not match closely, there may be an opportunity to mentor the parent and youth toward

an improved communication method. Therefore, the result of this subject reveals the importance

of two-way communication between parents and youth.

The next topic in the youth survey was generated to understand the effort put forward by youth to attend the church of their own will. The bar chart shows that 75 percent of six youths out of eight attended churches within the last six months. The survey results create an approach to examine what could be causing the remaining 25 percent to attend church. The survey results from the parents reflected that 100 percent of the participants invited youth to attend church. This situation propels the researcher to look beyond the youth and parents' endeavor to support youth attendance in church and lean more toward church leaders creating programs to attract youth and keep them in the church.

The next tactic in the survey was to offer an approach to increase youth church attendance related to youth having a religious view. When asked whether they have a religious view, the results show that six participants out of eight, amounting to 75 percent, stated they had a religious point of view. The remaining 25 percent of participants admitted they had no religious view. The results from the survey let us know that better relationships between parents and church leaders must be formed among youth. Plus, the commitment to communicate regarding the goodness of God should not go sparingly with youth.

The bar chart in figure 4.5 reveals outcomes from youth participants to measure their opinion about an invitation to church and when asked if they would attend. Six out of eight participants replied positively to accept an invitation to church. In essence, 75 percent of youth were okay with accepting a church, and 25 percent were doubtful of their decision to accept an offer to the church. Several points can be learned from these results. First, the results clear the confused belief that youth will not accept invitations when asked. Some youth have a deep desire to feel wanted and the need to be a part of something genuine. Also, the results offered a sense of satisfaction to know that youth favor attending church when asked. Therefore, effective

communication and the willingness to provide youth with spiritual opportunities can increase youth church attendance.

The next element of discussion within the survey was the mentorship program. The survey yielded good results. Five out of eight youths were sure about their need for a mentor, while three said they were interested in the mentorship program, and one was skeptical. With 62.5 percent of the youth prepared to be part of the mentorship, the results of this survey item serve as the launching point to increase youth church attendance. Those youth that are doubtful could be pursued with positive outcomes of mentorship. With anticipation, the word about mentorship will reach youth looking to belong to a program that generates optimistic choices.

The next topic exhibited to the youth was directed to assess their comprehension of the preached Word of God. The survey sought findings from youth related to their understanding of the message within the Word of God. Results in the bar chart revealed that seven out of eight youths, 87.5 percent, understood the message preached during their last church visit. These results favor the pastor and other spiritual leaders of New Canaan Baptist Church. Furthermore, the current approach for delivering the word is accepted by youth since only 12.5 percent disagreed with understanding the message.

The next subject listed on the youth survey was a feeling of inclusion during church service. Based on the survey results, 75 percent of participants agreed with feeling included in the service. This meant that some parts of the service affected them in some way or another. Two participants out of eight felt overlooked and not included in the church service. The management of the all-inclusive church service is essential to the constant development of the gospel of God. The mindset of no child left behind regarding the spiritual aspects of the youth's life is obedient to the Great Commission.

Next, the youth survey reflected on actual participation in church service. The survey results showed that 50 percent of participants were asked to participate in worship services at one time or another. The strategy to rebuild the presence of youth in the church is one of the mechanisms that may lead to spiritual longevity and hope among youth. On the other hand, for the other 50 percent of the participants who have never been asked to participate in church service, this situation generates a task for church leaders to keep in mind an ongoing determination to mentor the next generation. Youth church participation reflects a sense of love and outreach between one generation and another, with the primary purpose of maintaining spiritual and secular hope for each generation.

Next, the survey element within the bar chart touched on personal ownership of the Holy Bible. This inquiry was centered on acquiring knowledge of how many youths owned the Holy Bible. The results of this inquiry exhibited that five out of eight participants proclaimed owning the Holy Bible. Considering that 62.5 percent of youth participants owned Holy Bibles and 37.5 percent did not, church leaders missed the opportunity to supply the proper spiritual tools to extend hope to the next generation. Based on the church leader survey results and the youth survey regarding Bibles in the church and ownership of Bibles, an opportunity is there to fill in the gap and be more supportive of the spiritual growth of youth. This opportunity comes with a collaboration of church leaders, parents, and youth, which promotes a persistent emphasis on cohesive hope for today and tomorrow.

The next youth survey component in figure 4.5 addressed enhancing church youth attendance by inquiring about feeling welcome in the church. Participants replied that five out of eight feel welcome when they attend church. One participant was unsure of being welcomed in the church, two were uncertain, and one felt unwelcome. The fact that 62.5 percent of

participants felt welcome in church and 31.5 percent felt negative about their welcome sets up an existing problem that demands a show of spirituality displayed by Jesus Christ.

The last elements of the youth survey dealt with support, comfort, and hope in a relationship with the church. So, what are church leaders and parents doing to reduce the turbulent lifestyle thwarting youth church attendance? When youth were invited to respond with their feelings about being taught that the church offers support, comfort, and hope. Seven out of eight, 87.5 percent, were positive in their responses. With only one, 12.5 percent, participant responding with displeasure related to this inquiry, it appears that parents and church leaders are using the church as a support beacon based on this sample. But there is more work to complete in this aspect. The visual evidence is hard to overlook. After all, traditional African American culture has loaned it to care about the youth in the neighborhood, and that same mentality should be utilized today. The result of this survey is beneficial because the youth should know the supportive nature of the church.

The entire youth survey generated positive results related to factors already being done to enhance youth church attendance. There was a total of sixty yes responses and twenty-eight no responses. This amounts to 68 percent of positive things occurring, and 32 percent of actions are not occurring currently to increase youth church attendance. There is much work to do when discussing the spiritual aspect of life with youth. The spiritual aspect of life was the least needed factor in the youth survey. The survey also revealed goodness in the task of sharing the goodness of the church as it relates to support, comfort, and hope.

In any struggling situation, knowing the problem's details is the beginning of understanding how to approach it and seek methods to fix it. Therefore, the researcher will use seven thesis project meetings to lecture participants about the problem at New Canaan Baptist

Church and the benefits of mentoring male youth. In the same lecture, the researcher will advocate that participants join in to support as a parent, church leader, or mentee.

Teaching and Discussing the Necessities of the Mentorship Project

Thesis project meetings lectures are based on Appendix N. The researcher will present six lectures to give project meeting attendees an overview of mentorship and how it can be used to disciple youth.

First Thesis Project Meeting

The first meeting with church leaders, parents, and youth to discuss implementing the community-based mentorship project resulted in nine people. A sign-in roster was used to secure the names of attendants. Nine potential participants were present at the project meeting. The majority of those present were church leaders interested in becoming mentors. Five church leaders attended: two ministers, two deacons, and one deaconess. The remaining attendees were parents and others interested in the mentorship project. There were no youth in attendance at this meeting.

The objectives of this meeting are concentrated on presenting more project details to church leaders, parents, and youth. The researcher shared the mission, problem, and thesis statement of the thesis project. The researcher executed a lecture on the mentor and mentee consent forms and mentorship eligibility for potential mentors and mentees. After the one-hour presentation, the researcher fielded questions about the youth participants' age. The primary issue to clarify was why such a tight age range existed. One church leader felt the project should include African-American males beginning at the age of five. Additionally, the question of why not included females in the project had to be clarified.

Meeting participants were interested in the project's benefits and inquired about when the mentorship thesis project would become a permanent mentorship program. Some attendees were looking far beyond the project and asked questions about the permanent location of the mentorship program. One minister shared his observation. The minister conveyed that the commitment of parents and grandparents is essential. Group discussion led to other attendees voicing that parents' commitment is the key to mentor and mentee bonding and forming a lasting and trustworthy relationship. Commitment is one characteristic that must be practiced not only by both the mentor and mentee but also by the parents. While sending and receiving responses to invitations to the informal mentorship project meeting, several parents responded that their children needed secular and spiritual guidance in a mentorship program. On the other hand, the parents assert that their children appear to feel better participating in baseball and football. One parent shared that when their child is happy, there is a feeling of accomplishment, and at least the child is not out in the street.

To summarize, persuasion toward participants was the primary undertaking in the first meeting. This meeting was initially devised to recruit mentors and mentees. Participants showed an upbeat attitude during the first meeting. But no male youth attended. The look of uncertainty on the faces of participants turns out to be an indication of their interest and readiness to learn more about the project. This situation creates an occasion to solicit participants further and promote the community-based mentorship project. The researcher shared the thesis project's mission statement, problem statement, and thesis statement. The researcher accomplished a lecture on the mentor and mentee consent forms and mentorship eligibility for potential mentors and mentees.

As the meeting ended, several parents requested parent consent forms to review. Some said they would attempt to bring a male youth to the next meeting. Church leaders were interested, and four requested mentor consent forms. When issuing parents' and church leaders' consent forms, the researcher instructed them to return them regardless of their decision. There would be two weeks between this project meeting and the next, which seemed like sufficient time to respond.

<center>Second Thesis Project Meeting</center>

The second project meeting generated eleven attendees. There were two ministers, three deacons, two deaconesses, one parent with two youths, and one other potential mentor. Once more, church leaders were the most in attendance, and this meeting's primary discussion was related to describing the benefits of mentor and mentee relationships. Mentor and mentee recruitment was presented with an open forum method. Since the last project meeting, there has been no response relative to mentor and mentee consent forms from church leaders or parents. During the dialogue, an attendee volunteered to convey his experience in the mentorship program. The participant talked about the cache of knowledge acquired from his mentor. The attendee stated that trust developed in mentorship relationships is lasting. The relationship led to discovering hidden attributes within oneself. The attendee elaborated on the welcoming feelings experienced around the mentor, which stimulated self-esteem. The understanding that mentorship is founded on trusting relationships was the utmost observation. The attendee closed by stressing that both mentor and mentee must be committed. The researcher observed that the youth in attendance was alert throughout the participant's testimony.

The duration of this project meeting was an hour and a half. Four church leaders confirmed their readiness to be mentors and were ready to complete a mentor's consent form.

Also, two youths were excited and prepared to attend scheduled mentorship project meetings with their parent's approval. The youth's parents spoke up and lauded the attendee, who shared the benefits of mentorship. Next, the parent questioned the absence of other parents and youth. Furthermore, this parent requested mentee consent forms and committed that youth in the area would benefit from the mentorship project's overview.

The limitation of the mentorship thesis project raised inquiries about African-American female youth. The researcher explained that restrictions were only applicable during the current research, and there is a high possibility that the thesis research will generate momentum to continue expanding this mentorship project into an actual mentorship program with broad limitations.

To summarize the second meeting, eleven potential participants attended the project meeting. Most participants were church leaders, ministers, deacons, and one deaconess. There was one potential mentor who showed up and met the qualifications. And, there was one parent that showed up with two young males. The highlight of this meeting was related to the testimony from a previous mentorship program participant. This attendee gained the attention of adults and youth attending. The shared experiences of building a trusting relationship are the characteristics each participant sought in the group. This testimony altered the mindset of one parent to allow the youth to be among the first two mentees to join the project meetings. In addition, there were additional questions on the limitations of the project. Some attendees' point of interest was on the expansion for youth of different ages and females.

<div align="center">Third Thesis Project Meeting</div>

The third mentorship project meeting was comprised of ten attendees. The breakdown of attendees was as follows: two ministers, two deacons, one deaconess, one parent, one

grandparent, two youth, and one adult church member. The attendance breakdown proves that church leaders remain interested in learning more about the community-based mentorship project. The slight increase in parents and grandparents may indicate that the news of the mentorship project is starting to spread. The purpose of this meeting was to follow up on the previous meeting's subject items and drive toward gaining buy-in from others to become participants in the mentorship project. The researcher began the meeting by recapping mentorship benefits and fielding questions from attendees. The uncertainty seems to push church leaders to wonder how the project would survive without attracting more parent involvement. The conversation led to the subject of parental commitment. One deacon stated that commitment should be a compelling element in offering parents a choice for selecting a mentorship program for their youth. One of the parents agreed and added that the decision rests in the hands of every parent or grandparent to convince their youth that there is help for planning a productive future.

This meeting exhibited the progress and confidence gained since the first mentorship project meeting. In general conversation, attendees conducted problem-solving and presented ways to move forward with the mentorship project. The researcher, with caution not to interfere with the flow of participant feedback, encouraged interaction to establish a scenario in which everyone could continue to participate. There was plenty of discussion on mentorship benefits for youth mentees. The few parents at the meeting voiced their opinions on commitment and the attitudes of parents, grandparents, and guardians. The researcher was asked a question based on what it would take to accept mentees and mentors to the mentorship program or project. So, based on the participant's attitude, there needs to be a sense of willingness and ability in every case. The researcher lectured on the scenario of capable and willing parents supporting a child in a state of readiness to learn and thrive in the secular and spiritual worlds. In addition, in the

following scenario, willing and unable means capable pairs supporting a youth. However, the youth may be skeptical of the program, or the parents may be wary of the program. The following scenario is that the unwilling and unable parents are unsure or hesitant, and the youth is unwilling or uncertain. Still, they are ready to try the program anyway with guidance. An unwilling and unable situation can sometimes be manipulated into a more favorable condition for the prime candidate or participant who would become willing and able. The last scenario presented to the attendees was the unwilling and unable. This is a situation where there is no effort from the participant based on the parents or grandparents, even based on the child's agreeable ability to be involved in the program that would lead and guide them to various opportunities in the world. The willing and unable utilize excuses or may use examples of mentorship programs because of the likelihood of failure. Therefore, bringing different types of leaders into the community offers the opportunity to see each one of these scenarios: willing and able, unwilling and unable, willing and unable, and unwilling and able.

The third meeting concluded with a prayer. As the participants departed, several church leaders requested a mentorship consent form. To display their readiness to become a mentor to youth, the church leaders read the consent form in its entirety, signed the consent form, and returned it within fifteen minutes.

Summarizing, the third meeting came together with spiritual leaders again leading the way. Parents' attendance and youth attendance increased, and there was one potential mentor. The meeting got off to a great start with the discussion of commitment and the participation of parents reflecting sponsorship for youth. The meeting led to a debate on the youth's attitude and their ability, character, and competency, which is driven by the parent and starts at home. The third meeting finally brought forth three new mentors who signed their forms to show their

readiness to be a part of secular and spiritual hope for youth. Some attendees' opinions stemmed from beliefs that some parents would rather avoid asking their children to participate in anything that would bring heartache to the child even though it is an excellent opportunity. But it will not create a happy home or a good relationship in their homes. Therefore, the parent's attitude to having something more significant than what this world is demonstrating now may be a challenge. However, reflection on the attendance and interest showed that this project will offer optimism once it becomes a program. Most participants mentioned that assistance and opportunities for youth were their primary reasons for attending the meeting. The researcher observed precise determination in the mindset of most participants. From this meeting observation, they are equipped with God's gift of HOPE!

Fourth Thesis Project Meeting

The fourth meeting aimed to lecture the mentor and mentee pairing process and explain training requirements for mentors and mentees. Another purpose of this meeting was to provide an overview of the mentorship program. This task is constant to keep attendees on track in building integrity and trust. The accurate picture is designed so that attendees understand the project clearly. This is a routine to reach new attendees among the participants during each session. The researcher used guidance material from the U.S. Department of Education and *MENTOR*: *How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program* for training new mentors and mentees.

The breakdown of the group was as follows: six church leaders, two parents, four youths, two youths who were already approved to begin participating in mentorship project meetings, and one community leader who was a potential mentor. Thirteen attendees marked the highest turnout rate out of all meetings thus far. The fourth meeting's duration was an hour and a half. During the lecture and group forum, the researcher observed the attendees. For new youth, the

researcher provided supporting details on mentorship as it relates to the lives of African-American males. The researcher highlighted that this project was a needs analysis to formulate a permanent mentorship program. To gain more mentors, the wisdom of Solomon was used as a base to achieve the spiritual aspect of what parents, guardians, and church leaders must follow. Train the child the way that they should go (Prov 22:6). Afterward, some church leaders wanted to know why more youth were not at the meeting. A grandparent who brought two grandchildren stressed that availability and commitment are issues that must be addressed with a collaborative effort.

As the meeting ended, the researcher offered mentor and mentee recruitment letters to potential mentorship participants. The mentorship project agenda was shared to regulate the project management and share the influential details of the mentorship project for those previously absent. This task was completed in anticipation of new attendees realizing that church, parents, and community commitment create a process to build trusting relationships with youth to guide their spiritual and secular lives.

This meeting was a positive step toward gaining more mentors and mentees. Two new mentors completed and returned their mentor consent forms. The parents of two potential mentees requested mentee consent forms and gave a verbal commitment to participation in the mentorship project meetings. The matching process was initiated because two youths were in attendance and had already been approved to participate by their parents. Mentor and mentee training will be launched as the project progresses to design a community-based mentorship.

The accomplishment of four mentorship project meetings in several months has given the project an excellent foundation to continue building the knowledge associated with mentorship. Introducing mentorship as a method to restore youth to the church seems to be bringing attention

to the church and community's mission to care more for the livelihood of the future of youth. So far, the lectures have exposed the lack of leaders reaching out to African-American male youth. Plus, reaching males must be completed using a collaborative and caring approach. The lecturing of new mentoring ideas with church leaders, parents, and youth may be an appropriate method to fulfill godly duties to strengthen male youth in the church. Investing in today's youth is essential in growing the body of Christ.

<div align="center">Fifth Thesis Project Meeting</div>

The fifth thesis project meeting was comprised of lecturing participants on what makes a mentorship relationship successful. This meeting consisted of ten attendees. The meeting included two ministers, three deacons, one deaconess, two community leaders, one parent, and one seventeen-year-old youth. In this meeting, lecturing and group discussion will aim to expose fellowship as an essential part of developing relationships. The lecture and discussion were instituted from the US Department of Education *Ongoing Training for Mentors* training guide and *MENTOR: How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program*.

Previous meetings have exposed the lack of commitment from church leaders and parents. Therefore, the first line of discussion queried commitment and building a foundation. The primary topic of commitment relates to developing good relationships within mentorship, and attendees were open to learning more. As the lecture on commitment progressed, attendees were informed that commitment builds trust in male youth. One participant stated that trust is needed to lead youth back to church and possibly to a relationship with Jesus Christ. The fact that adults must be leaders cannot be overlooked. Mentors should recognize that fulfilling commitments indicates showing up and leading the relationship to succeed and directing youth through challenging circumstances. As an adult, the mentor will regularly have to take the lead

on discussions, initiate phone calls, set boundaries, stay close to the mentee when times are not suitable, and pace the growth within the relationship. The researcher highlights the mentor's role as a compassionate advisor, a sensible consultant, a supporter on a life's journey, and a reliable ally.

Since the environment in the room was more relaxed than in previous meetings, attendees readily listened and took notes in preparation for the group discussion. This meeting allowed the researcher to enhance the meaning of good communication. Parents and church leaders should prepare themselves to hear the conversation's contents. Several attendees shared that bad communication hinders relationships. Parents and church leaders echoed that communication is a daily skill, but it has been perfected.

As the lecture on the characters of commitment and relationships ended, the floor was open for group discussion. Attendees spoke of specific skills that were missing in the lives of modern youth. Communication with African-American male youth seems to be a challenge. One attendee shared that African American families may be single-parent households, and young males may not adapt well to adult male guidance. Another attendee directed attention to the parents responsible for preparing their youth for mentoring and inviting them to attend church. Therefore, if the parent or parents are offered a special lecture and gentle guidance, the lessons learned by the parents can be used to groom youth from within the home.

Attendees added to the discussion on communication that the biggest issue is not simply communicating. Still, the problem applies to exercising the full definition of communication, which is missing the mark in society. Many fail to listen to hear in a conversation. Instead, they ready themselves for a quick response without analyzing the essence of the message, leading to miscommunication and unsuccessful relationships.

The group discussion transitioned to trust, which was introduced as essential in forming a solid relationship with youth and then enlisting young members to the kingdom of God. One attendee shared her experience as a teacher. A teacher's relationship with youth is based on the adult's willingness to slow down and show concern for youth. The teacher continued sharing the experience by saying that the child who received just a little attention seemed to perform well in the classroom. The teacher feels this happens because youth yearn for slight hints of encouragement from someone they have grown to trust. So, using care to build trust can guide God's youth into the body of Christ.

When summarizing the fifth thesis project meeting, it is clear that church leaders are well informed on the problem of young African-American males missing from the church. This observation is substantiated by their readiness to listen and discuss the lecture subjects. So far, in each thesis project meeting, church leaders outnumbered other attendees. When the church leader survey results were examined, it seemed that church leaders were unsure of details related to a mentorship program and how it could be a tool to disciple youth. Based on their attendance, church leaders seem ready to form a team to resolve the problem of missing male youth in New Canaan Baptist Church.

The researcher observed a more relaxed environment in the fifth meeting. Most of the attendees were present for all five meetings. Feedback was associated with the project's advancement, and there was also a sense of achieving something new in the community and the church. Many agreed that lecturing brought understanding to mentorship as a way to guide youth to church. Through group discussion, attendees agreed that communication skills and relationships are critical to mentoring youth. This method builds an excellent foundation to lead male youth to live a good life, including spiritual and worldly options.

Sixth Thesis Project Meeting

There was a pleasant atmosphere as the meeting commenced. Each participant seemed relaxed and open to receiving more lectures related to mentorship. The arrival of participants was timely. Fourteen participants were present for the meeting: six church leaders, four parents, and four youths. The meeting began with a prayer from one of the church leaders. Next, the researcher reiterated the importance and benefits of mentorship. Youth having access to healthy choices is the point of the opening statement for this meeting.

Effective communication was the first subject lectured. Some attendees took notes, especially when discussing the delivery of a message. A message delivered with a negative attitude is not welcomed. A compassionate delivery reflects a philosophy of caring. One attendee shared experiences related to her youth life and her parents' communication style. She shared that there was no gentle approach to communication for some African-American youth who grew up working on farms. There is no choice but to do as they are told. Yet this taught youth to be obedient to parents and other adults. Today's society has brought about change, and there must be a gentle approach to communicating with youth.

One parent stated that her children demand respect without giving anything back in return. This situation makes it hard to mentor youth. Nevertheless, most attendees agreed that effective communication is more than talking; active listening is crucial. As the group discussion progressed, more experiences were shared by attendees. One attendee stated that his approach needs to be addressed. There are times when adverse feelings get in the way of effective communication.

The next subject lectured was related to setting goals within a mentorship program. This was a good opportunity to highlight the relational aspect of mentorship. One example was linked

to listening and providing honest feedback as the mentor and mentee discussed the plan to make healthy life choices. The oldest attendee interjected experiences of setting goals that facilitated college completion at age fifty. This happens because of a trustworthy relationship with a mentor. One church leader added to the discussion by sharing that recording goals and placing them where they can be seen daily is a motivator. Furthermore, the church leader shared that goal setting should include room to add details and steps to obtain the objective. Some goals are achieved by taking baby steps. When the researcher asked how many attendees had written goals and maintained a current list of goals. Two of the fourteen attendees raised their hands. This example was used to show attendees that mentorship can be used to provide life-guiding tools that could last a lifetime. Setting goals can be diverse as worldly and spiritual needs vary. Goal setting is a shared agreement between mentor and mentee. This agreement can be used for bonding and building a trustworthy and lasting mentorship relationship.

Problem-solving skills are a necessity in mentorship. Lecturing on this subject was well received by attendees, and some requested a more refined lesson that included other members of the church and community. The researcher emphasized that when problem-solving, the problem must be understood, and solutions can be presented from that perspective. An attendee was outspoken about his experience as a youth. The attendee stated that many people are ready to hear problems, but only some are prepared to help solve problems. He welcomed more lectures on problem-solving. His opinion stems from the need to set a good example for the next generation. He concluded that youth will eventually trust adults who honestly provide feasible choices to solve their problems. Christian adults must have faith in Jesus Christ as a problem solver. This is true for youth; they must be mentored to believe in Jesus Christ as a problem solver. He declared that Proverbs 3:5 is a mindset worthy of mentoring and leading youth to

Jesus Christ. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your understanding" (Prov 3:5, NKJV).

Diversity and cultural sensitivity were the last subjects lectured during this meeting. The researcher shared that mentorship must be open to include participants of different cultural, ethnic, and income groups. Youth are unique based on generational habits and fashions. The commonality of youth and adults must be acknowledged and appreciated. Respecting the exceptional attributes that different cultures bring into the mentorship relationship is the start of a lasting relationship.

During group discussions, attendees were very candid about youth culture and styles. Attendees agreed that the most challenging issue faced relates to adults' efforts to fit into the youth's way of thinking. Once this is achieved, it would be the key to forming a balanced mentorship relationship. A church leader spoke about respecting everyone regardless of their appearance and background. His philosophy relates to treating everyone the way he wants to be treated. He went on to say that as adults, there must be time allotted in day-to-day activities to gain knowledge from younger cultures, especially in this ever-changing world of electronics. He confirmed that his aim in spiritual leadership was to use commonality to form a mentorship relationship. As the group discussion closed, the oldest attendee shared that without the attitude to accept the youth's culture, how would adults help lead them back to church? There seems to be much work ahead based on what was learned today about mentorship.

The meeting ended with a prayer by the researcher. As attendees left the room, there were sidebar conversations about the subjects presented. The researcher overheard several church leaders agree that mentorship is overdue in the community, and they felt positive about the unfamiliar idea of mentorship.

Seventh Thesis Project Meeting

The seventh thesis project meeting concluded the series of meetings with attendees. The number of attendees overshadowed the previous thesis project meetings. There were sixteen attendees. Two ministers, two deacons, one deaconess, two other church leaders, two attendees interested in the project, three parents, and four youth.

Introducing an unfamiliar method to disciple youth requires a structured way of informing church leaders, parents, and youth. Over the last six meetings, lectures were presented to attendees interested in learning about mentorship as a tool to guide youth back to church. These lectures consisted of crucial subjects related to mentoring. This lecture and group discussion were completed in an hour and a half. This lecture session was composed of a summary of subjects discussed in past thesis project meetings. Group discussion was welcomed as each topic was covered. At the end of the group discussion, the researcher asked volunteers to complete a mentoring lecture final questionnaire. This questionnaire is available in Appendix O. The results will serve as a tool to measure comprehension of the subjects presented.

This thesis meeting ended on a high note. One of the youths volunteered to pray. The contents of this youth's prayer signified that an adult's show of love can ignite the youth's interest in Jesus Christ. This ten-year-old prayer proves that mentoring is a verified approach to assisting youth in all circumstances. However, adults must set positive examples and support and guide youth to make healthy choices.

There is an observation that continued reinforcement of mentorship is essential to youth discipleship. From experiences as a child growing up in Chester, Georgia, there is knowledge that some African Americans prefer to stay on a well-beaten path. Maybe it is their fear of accepting something new or of the unknown.

The open discussion and the questionnaire served as an after-action exercise to measure attendees' acceptance and understanding of the six mentorship lectures. Fourteen out of sixteen completed the final questionnaire. Questionnaire statements one through nine offered responses such as strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The first statement inquired about mentorship lectures to give a better understanding of the meaning of mentoring youth. The majority of attendees strongly agreed to understanding the meaning of mentoring. The majority strongly agree with the second questionnaire statement. Attendees expressed that mentoring youth is a method to guide them back to church. The third statement, "Lectures draw my attention to the importance of youth mentoring," was strongly agreed by most of the attendees. The overall responses were positive. The fourth questionnaire statement was utilized to evaluate the comprehension of the benefits offered through mentorship lectures. Attendees strongly agreed that lectures were explained clearly to understand the benefits. Statement five of the questionnaire pursued attendees' opinions regarding youth in a church atmosphere. Attendees strongly agree that lecturing facilitated clarity of the needs of youth in a church environment. The sixth statement surveyed the clarity of the lecture and brought the realization of youth missing in the church. Most attendees strongly agreed that lectures brought about recognition of the problem. The seventh inquiry in the mentoring lecture final questionnaire explored lecturing on mentorship opportunities in the community. The majority of attendees strongly agreed mentorship would create opportunities for the community. The eighth statement within the questionnaire was strongly agreed upon. Almost all attendees concurred that mentorship awareness training rendered a positive feeling to participate in a community-based mentorship program. The ninth statement of the questionnaire evaluated attendees' acceptance of lectures related to the care and commitment to youth development. Each attendee strongly agreed to the

value of lecturing on mentoring youth to demonstrate respect and commitment to overall youth development.

The next series of statements in the questionnaire can be answered to reflect a degree of value for mentorship lectures. The following responses, important, worthwhile, medium, unimportant, and worthless, are responses offered to express the attendee's opinion. The tenth statement asked attendees, "How would you rank the training in value to you?" The majority of the attendees selected important to the value of training received through lectures. The eleventh statement asked attendees, after receiving six sessions of mentorship lectures, how would you rank using mentorship to lead youth to church? Attendees responded positively, and most selected important. The twelfth questionnaire inquiry was, "How do you value inspiring youth to live out their God-given identity and calling?" This question received mostly important responses. The thirteenth questionnaire statement related to how one values receiving additional mentorship lectures. The question was answered with an important response. Hopefully, this response highlights the willingness to continue training in mentorship to disciple African-American youth. Finally, question fourteen asked, how do you value youth in church? Most of the attendees believed this was important. Through group discussion, the researcher observed indications that mentoring was accepted. Many attendees voiced the need for the church to lead the way in youth discipleship.

The final questionnaire was completed by most of the adult and youth attendees. The feedback section of the questionnaire invited attendees to provide feedback and express their opinions on mentorship lectures. The oldest attendee, AH, provided feedback as a 75-year-old pastor's wife. She wrote, "I think this program is a very good mentorship program for not only just children but everyone that comes to the project meeting." New Canaan Baptist Church

chairman deacon WW wrote, "We enjoy the mentoring aspect of this program. This program gave us the opportunity to experience the youth and be open to the community. Being a good listener and being committed leads to trust and committed to being willing and able." Attendee PB provided the following feedback. "My feedback is definitely outreach to the young mothers and fathers as mentees because the young are having children at an early age and fail to develop their parenting skills were interrupted due to unforeseen pregnancies." Another attendee provided this feedback on mentorship, "Thank you for stepping out on faith because this is a need. Blessings to this award-winning program that is going to change life for the better." The next attendee expressed feedback that follows. LB wrote, "The youth of today definitely needs urgent guidance from parents and leaders of this society. This is a great program to utilize, not only in this community but all over all areas of the county." RD wrote the next attendee's feedback, "I think mentorship is very important. We need a lot of help and understanding. So excited about this program in our community." Lastly, the following feedback was provided by a church leader. "Thank you, Rev. T, for being a great leader and for guiding me the right way and mentoring me to be a better person and helping these youth and to guide them and show them a better way in life in Jesus' name. Amen."

The seventh thesis project meeting was a good point to measure attendees' acceptance of mentoring youth. The final questionnaire served a good purpose and confirmed lectures were received and comprehended. Many positive responses opened doors to further mentoring efforts until the community-based mentoring program is established. Lecturing served as an approach to introduce prevailing points of mentoring youth. As an observation, lecturing on mentoring youth as a means of youth discipleship received positive responses from thesis project meetings. The effort to constantly mentor youth must continue. It is not about self-gratitude. It is all about the

Great Commission. One attendee summed it up as well. "You led and guided us to understanding the youth church attendance problem. So, that is half of the battle. We must overcome fear, step out in faith in Jesus Christ, and get our children back in the church."

Highlighting beneficial observations from the teaching and discussing the necessities of the mentorship project will perhaps promote a clearer view of the acceptance of a mentorship program. The first meeting included defining mentorship to attendees. This meeting set the tone for the remaining thesis program meetings. One crucial factor was related to the eligibility of mentee and mentor. The explanation of the mentee went smoothly. The reason for the mentor came with the need to provide more details about the eligibility. The researcher set specific characters that the mentor should meet. Youth discipleship and mentoring require godly characteristics such as the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Love is that friendly, self-giving action in line with God as He gave his only son. Goodness involves the belief in generosity. All characters of the fruit of the Spirit should be integrated into the mentor's ability. Behavior such as this displays evidence of a Spirit-controlled life.[1]

The second meeting sparked hope of interest as more attendees were present. The number of church leaders was excellent. The highlight of the meeting related to a testimony from a young man who was part of a mentorship program. His testimony was a show of evidence that mentorship is a valuable tool to use in discipleship. As the meeting ended, two youths confirmed their interest in the actual mentorship program once it was formed. The primary subject lectured was the benefits of a good mentor and mentee relationship. The researcher utilizes the example

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[1] Wesley L. Gerig, "Fruit of the Spirit," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 818.

of Paul and Timothy's mentor/mentee relationship. Paul's purpose for Timothy serves as a resolution for church leaders and parents. Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Hall proclaim, "Paul's purpose is to instruct his young protégé in the way of his religious practices and public life befitting the spiritual director of God's sacred family."[2]

The third meeting sought to gain more buy-in from attendees. The researcher recapped the benefits of mentorship. There was an opportunity to highlight the willing and able attitude of mentors, mentees, parents, and church leaders. The lecture on how to build a successful mentoring program mainly discussed attitudes and character that make a good mentorship program. Attendees started a group discussion stressing the need for commitment from parents. This meeting produced three church leaders interested in becoming mentors.

The fourth meeting focused on lecturing on how to build a successful mentorship program by discussing the mentor/mentee pairing process and lecturing training required to become a mentor. Church leaders were high in numbers during this training. At this point in the thesis project meetings, it became clear that lecturing mentorship is effective. This conclusion is based on the attendees' relaxed posture and willingness to participate in group discussions. Further discussion of the researcher method of mentor and mentee matching process was offered. The researcher stated that when matching youth and mentors, make sure to take each party's preference into account. Also, consider the background of the match and make sure the mentor and mentee are informed individually who their mentor and mentee are before they are introduced. This method allows the opportunity to process any concerns. The researcher highlighted important characters for matching mentors and mentees. There has to be a shared

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[2] Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall, *Called to Lead: Paul's Letters to Timothy for a New Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 73.

interest in one another. Mentor and mentee must feel at ease with one another. Mentor and mentee should have compatible personalities, which allows smooth interaction. The mentor must lead the way and provide mentees with their availability. The matching process may not be effective, so there will be time set aside to reassess the mentor and mentee relationship. The mentor and mentee match must be adequately formed to achieve a lasting positive relationship.

The fifth thesis project meeting produced highlights about forming a relationship with youth. The atmosphere of the room was relaxing. Parental commitment was a topic of group discussion. Building a foundation for youth was lectured. This subject produced good feedback on how the youth's successful foundation should start at home. The lecture on effective communication in mentor and mentee relationships was accepted. Attendees agreed that it is about how the message is delivered and received. Some attendees admitted there are times when your attitude hinders good communication. By the time this meeting ended, attendees were at a good comfort level and realized that the idea of a mentorship program at New Canaan Baptist would be worthwhile.

The sixth meeting thesis meeting was fun as those in attendance were more involved in discussions. The researcher lectured on the importance of approaching youth in a calm and caring manner. Next, goal setting, problem-solving skills, diversity and cultural sensitivity, and mentor background checks were lectured. The subject of problem-solving skills was the topic during the group discussion. Attendees agreed that training would help them remove barriers when communicating with youth and others. This meeting yielded useful observations to substantiate the acceptance of mentorship. When the meeting ended, there were sidebar conversations related to sharing the importance of the project meetings with the community.

The seventh thesis project meeting was an excellent stage for recapping each subject lectured and measuring the effectiveness and comprehension of the subjects taught during the last six meetings. After summarizing the previously taught subjects, a questionnaire was offered to volunteers. The Mentorship Lecture Final Questionnaire consisted of 14 simple questions. This meeting ended on a high note as one of the youths volunteered to pray. Everyone was so surprised, and his action showed how mentorship can be used to mentor youth disciples. Positive responses and positive feedback from the questionnaire summed up success. It was a pleasant feeling to know that the idea of mentoring was needed and was accepted at New Canaan Baptist Church in Chester, Georgia.

The combined summary of thesis project meetings was used to generate an awareness that new concepts must be completed in stages. As lecturing progressed, so did the belief within the attendees. The fact that God allows us to progress in our relationship with him is a blessing. We must progressively grow the kingdom of God. Some may say through mentorship, and others may say through discipleship. The blend of spiritual mentorship and discipleship strengthens servants' work to increase the kingdom of God. "Youth mentoring is characterized by a personal relationship in which a caring individual provides consistent companionship, support, and guidance aimed at developing the competence and character of a child or adolescent."[3]

Discipleship implies obtaining knowledge from and following a teacher. Making disciples does not include converting others to believe in a philosophy. Instead, the Great Commission gives the authority to launch a spiritual rescue mission. "Discipleship involves

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[3] *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring: A Multiple Perspectives Approach*, edited by Tammy D. Allen, and Lillian T. Eby, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing), 2007, 23.

saving people from themselves and eternal oblivion, permitting the transforming power of God to change them from the inside out."[4]

The overall outcome of this thesis project leads the researcher to believe the role of a spiritual coach was assumed to teach project attendees. As we seek ways to recruit more youth into discipleship, the spiritual coach could be more appealing to youth based on their familiarity with the word coach. A spiritual coach would denote the blended duties of spiritual mentorship and discipleship. A coach partners with people to undertake challenges to become competent through persistent training in their lives, school, and jobs. The coach's sole ambition is to motivate the person to reach their full potential.[5] "Coaching African-American male youth to trust in God to be spiritually and worldly successful. We must be role model coaches By using the best playbook in existence, the Bible, to mentor African-American males to succeed in educational and social needs.[6] This illustrates the full job description of a mentor mentoring youth for discipleship in Jesus Christ.

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[4] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing, 2006), 20-21.

[5] Jennifer Roger, *Coaching Skills: A Handbook* (New York, NY: Open University Press, 2008), 7.

[6] Marcus W. Johnson, Anthony L. Brown, and Louis Harrison, "Troubling the Waters: A Critical Essay on Black Male Role Models and Mentors," *The Urban Review* 52, no. 3 (2020): 418.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The thesis project proposal produced a positive result when four male youths began attending New Canaan Baptist Church. When comparing the current state of New Canaan Baptist Church African American male youth attendance, the research project provides awareness that a partnership with community male youth would increase church attendance.

The thesis project proposal has little resemblance to the old youth programs at New Canaan Baptist Church. The old approach consisted of spiritual leaders managing and directing youth while participating in prayer service, singing, and worshiping. Benchmarking from the old approach was not useful since this method is no longer used at New Canaan Baptist Church. The project proposed a faith-based community mentoring program. The thesis project proposed a mentorship program to work within the community to shape African-American male youth. The objective is to build a brotherly relationship with youth and then casually invite them to attend the church with their mentoring partner.

Spiritual mentoring comes full in the lives of spiritual leaders. David took a hard stance in 1 Chronicle 28:9-12. David charged Solomon to pass on all the strategies and gold and finally insisted he be strong and of good courage and do the will of God. He advises Solomon not to fear or be discouraged since God is with him. He presents the organizational structure and people considered in the previous chapters. It is suitable for a father to encourage his son, and it is even better for him to work for God and honor Him. Mentoring youth embraces presenting lessons learned satisfactorily so that the children can acquire and profit from them. This does not imply avoiding reality or expressing what the youth want to hear. The theory of composing an acceptable philosophy genuinely extends through the middle phrase of Proverbs 22:6. The author

says to start a child out "on his way." Another interpretation is "according to his way," that is, according to each child's exceptional temperament.[1]

Patrice M. Buzzanell affirms, "Spiritual mentoring transcends conventional mentoring forms and functions through inner and good work, embodiment of spiritual values, and enactment of everyday spiritual practices."[2] Spiritual mentoring can help improve youth development. It offers lifelong relationships that encourage constant growth. Also, putting awareness of youth growth with spiritual mentoring builds hope for the future.[3]

Regarding the thesis statement of this project, cultural hope appears to have flowed down through African ancestors to the modern generation. This proves spiritual mentoring should be made available. By managing and training mentors to guide community youth for discipleship, the project thesis statement, "If the M-Fayes Spiritual Mentorship program is developed for rural African American males, then there will be growth in church attendance," is answered in the affirmative. After seven thesis project mentorship meetings, New Canaan Baptist Church has added four African-American male youths to its congregation.

Research Implications

The research project sought to substantiate a spiritual mentorship program in Chester, Georgia, for African-American males. At the beginning of this research, the researcher briefed the participants on the importance of a community-based mentorship program. Nevertheless, there was much hesitation in joining such a program that had never been in the community. Through a series of meetings, some participants stepped up and volunteered to be mentors.

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[1] Tony Evans, *The Tony Evans Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible, 2019), 733.

[2] Patrice M. Buzzanell, "Spiritual mentoring: Embracing the Mentor-Mentee Relational Process," *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 2009, no. 120 (2009): 22.

[3] Ibid.

Conversely, based on the data gathered from church leaders' surveys, the number of church leaders attending mentorship project meetings seemed small. The church leader's survey data contradicts the project meeting attendance roster. Church leaders outnumbered parents, grandparents, or potential mentors. This shows leadership integrity and, hopefully, a yearning for change. John Maxwell advises, "For the church leader or pastor, there is a specific calling from God; a deep, innate feeling or desire that causes him to do what he is called to perform."[4]

Participants also included some church members who fell short in taking the youth church attendance survey. This fact will require additional studies, maybe by the church leaders who need leadership relative to youth church attendance and mentoring. This convinced the researcher to recognize and consider that the existing church leadership team and the community were waiting for a forerunner to guide and mentor young generations back to spirituality. Even after analyzing surveys, the researcher needed to be more cautious about the mentor and mentee matching process. The availability of mentorship training for church leaders and mentees should mitigate the anticipation. The opportunity to announce persistent reminders of the benefits of spiritual mentoring played a positive role in acquiring participants for the thesis project. Weekly announcements in New Canaan Baptist Church and other community churches were beneficial in spreading the good news concerning spiritual mentorship. Seven mentorship project meetings were held. This process proved valuable in acquiring church and community involvement. Yet most project meeting attendees committed to the mentorship project. Some attendees preferred not to get too involved in project meetings but helped in other ways. For example, a deacon

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[4] John C. Maxwell, *Be a People Person: Effective Leadership Through Effective Relationships* (Colorado Spring, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 67.

would transport youth attendees to and from meetings. Others would offer meeting attendees drinks and snacks.

The researcher's momentum to gain mentors and mentees remains focused on the "my brother's keeper" concept. Previously, several recruitment presentations described the method of supporting youth to potential participants. This concept has a lasting effect on youth, not only for worldly things but also for secular and spiritual things. A relationship with the youth creates an opportunity to have an increased connection not only with the youth but with the parents of the youth. This method of holistic partnership is a segment of the organized effort from church leaders and community leaders to lead youth to secular and spiritual success in the community. The potential gain of skills that would advance worldly and spiritually would be a developmental journey for youth and would be kept in the heart and mind of a child above what the world has to offer and on hope believing in something that is not seen.

During one of the mentorship project meetings, a parent asked what would make their child any different from other children not a part of this project. The idea is to give the youth various opportunities to face realism and know that being 98 percent of society is not the way to go. The researcher stressed that being 2 percent of society means being a part of something that adds volumes to your lifestyle. A determined lifestyle that belongs solely to the youth. To make it that way, youth must have hope. Parents play their role by ending their habits of satisfying youths with worldly things and replacing that action with paying attention to the youth's spiritual and mental well-being. Some youth desire to express themselves and communicate love rather than being tossed something worldly, like a cell phone. Optimism, joy, and opportunities are everlasting and are good explanations of hope as leaders guide youth through the frustrated world to clarity and envision success.

Sincere leaders must display concern and love for others every day. Observations from the seven mentorship project meetings show that the intervention achieved its goals. Lecturing on spiritual mentorship for seven meetings produced four mentees and six mentors. What was learned from these meetings is that once the community saw progress and activities with the youth, potential youths requested to be part of the mentorship program. This project is implemented in the small community of Chester, Georgia. So, one should realize that a small portion of the participants are available due to the population of male black youth. Therefore, more research and expansion of this program are necessary. One of the things that can be an effective tool is expanding the age group from five to twenty-one years old. Also, to increase church attendance, there is a need to develop a mentorship plan for females from age five to twenty-four. Also, include non-African American males and females to add a diversity of youth. God has no preference for people. Therefore, training and motivating children generationally should be led by the spirit and with hope. There is no need to be concerned with skin color but with the content of the youth's heart, mind, and soul.

This thesis project offers principles that will help assess the need for youth discipleship and guidance. Church leaders must be holistic toward God's people, especially youth. Youths are the future for growth in God's kingdom. As a church leader, take the opportunity to form relationships with youth. These opportunities may lead to a caring and lasting relationship. As communication occurs, with youth, one must be slow to talk and actively listen. There could be cries for help in a youth's conversation. The need for positive development is reflected in youth behavior. Behavior could be not attending church because of a false perception. This is an opportunity to venture into the street to present the love Jesus Christ offers to everyone. Church leaders must lead change through good communication. Synergy is the final tool to use when

examining the needs of youth in the church and the community. It will take church leaders, parents, and youth working together to create an environment that offers mentorship and discipleship. Ann A. Michel declares, "Synergy is a powerful force because it's part of God's plan. Indeed, synergy is part of the very essence of our triune God. Divine power and energy emanate from the relational character of God, from the interplay between Father, Son, and Spirit."[5] The positive unified force of synergy creates a relationship with strength and efficiency. An effective team is comprised of commitment and gratitude for one another's distinctive role. This powerful team should work together, applying their combined talents to influence spiritual growth for community youth.[6]

Research Applications

At this point in the thesis project, where should research go regarding this problem? As this project concludes, it is necessary that it expands to a larger geographical area that offers a mentorship opportunity for every child and young adult.

Enhanced methods to gain parental permission must be established. This method may include educating parents and guiding them to their needs to seek better opportunities. Awareness of life's journey can be brought forward by individually creating a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis for each parent. Then, hopefully, there will be more youth mentorship buy-in from parents, guardians, and grandparents. As church leaders seek knowledge, they must continue to teach knowledge. Taking on the task of teaching parents to apply discipleship from within the home is essential for building God's kingdom. Since many homes may be single-parent homes, attention must be focused on them. When Jesus demanded

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[5] Ann A. Michel, *Synergy: A Leadership Guide for Church Staff and Volunteers* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017), 16.

[6] Ibid.

his disciples to go and make disciples of all lands, he established a mission statement for the church. Training parents to apply discipleship in the home "ensures that the gospel is embedded deeply in the lives of believers who serve as links to the future."[7]

In addition, look at how generational hope came down through the years through ancestors from Africa. Their degree of God-given hope could not be taken away from them. No one wants to be enslaved. The worst master could be ignorance of God's everlasting hope, which is the good news of Jesus Christ allowing freedom from the chains and shackles of a doomed world.

Concern still lies in the reasons for the disconnect between church leaders and community youth. There will be church leadership training on methods to stay in touch with youth within the community. Training will include group discussion to help gain insight into church leaders' opinions. Church leaders should not be out of touch with community youth. There must be a desire to know the needs of community youth. So, interpersonal relationship training would be first on the training list. This training would increase church leaders' skills and ease interaction with community youth. But maybe the disconnect is related to the generational gap. An effort to close the generational gap comes with building relationships with community youth. Church leaders working together to campaign spiritual mentorship is the key to fulfilling God's plan for discipleship. From this thesis project, the researcher observed that some church leaders sought a strong leader who leads beyond regular church duties.

There will be additional research expanded over several counties equaling almost a fifty mile radius of Chester, Georgia. This expansion broadens the miles of coverage to increase the

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[7] Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 20-21.

probability of more mentors and mentees. With the population of youth and parents in this proposed geographical area, more potential participants will be interested, which will eventually stimulate the growth of this program for multiple communities.

How do the research project results compare to the information gleaned from previous studies or the published work analyzed in the literature review? The implementation of this project offers lessons learned, which can be shared with others interested in mentorship programs for the church and the community. The researcher discovered that what appears to be a simple task becomes challenging when battling against a mindset that first seeks failure in everything. Some ministers and deacons were cynical of the idea of a mentorship program and initially refused to assist in the thesis project. One church leader confirmed that there were enough problems with adults in the church and how one can deal with other people's youth. Some feel that parents in today's society need to be more skeptical to accept others to develop their youth through mentoring.

The researcher realized that rural churches may lack proper leadership. Ministers are known as preachers rather than responsible pastors. Preach on Sunday and back the following Sunday and rarely accomplish pastoral care duties throughout the week. This appears to be a problematic trend to resolve since some churches do not have church service every week, and the pastor might live out of town. The desire is for a healthy church. Healthy churches need healthy leaders. Just as Jesus engaged in a hands-on relationship in mentoring his disciples, there should be mentoring for church leaders. "The life-on-life relationship of mentors with trainees centered local communities of Christ-followers remains the best way to shape a new generation of healthy

Christian leaders."[8] Parents leading their families like Jesus is essential. The researcher desires

to design a lesson plan to teach to instill mentoring for discipleship in family values. Parents

ensure youth has all the necessities to live life. In parallel, there must be a mindset to foster

servant hearts in the family. Hearts that will commit to serving and caring for others.[9]

The thesis project results may apply in other settings. The development of the thesis

project can be applicable in more extensive settings relative to a big brother and big sister

program. This type of program is not available in this area. However, its existence would offer a

broader opportunity to reach more participants.

Research Limitations

Regarding limitations faced during this thesis research project, the age group restrained

the number of African-American male youth. Males aged nineteen to twenty-one heard about the

project and desired to be participants. Their effort to become a mentorship member led them

back to church. Over the last several months, this increase in interest has spread beyond the

radius area of the project. This movement includes male youths not associated with Chester,

Georgia, and its vicinity.

Further Research

Youth mentoring is not a widespread experience within the geographical area of research.

There must be a sound effort to educate and lead the church and the community in mentoring

youth. The obligation to inspire the hopeful maturity of youth commences with portraying just

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[8] Phil A. Newtown, *The Mentoring Church: How Pastors and Congregations Cultivate Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2020, 22.

[9] Ken Blanchard, Tricia Goyer, and Phil Hodges, *Lead Your Family Like Jesus: Powerful Parenting Principles from the Creator of Families* (Colorado Springs, CO: Focus on the Family Publishing, 2013),49.

how mentoring interactions might employ a progressive inspiration on youth. The challenge remains, and more research should be aimed at teaching the African-American community to understand methods at work in youth mentoring.

New thoughts emerged during the research that merit future research. The emergence of the idea that more than just youth desire mentoring. The fact that young black females aged eighteen to twenty-five were seeking spiritual guidance and directions opened up another opportunity to research approaches to embrace hope in their lives. Some young females inquired about the mentorship project and desired to be participants. Just being a part of something positive sparked their attention to the point that several young adult females approached the researcher's study, seeking a trustworthy professional female church leader to shadow for spiritual growth and secular knowledge. New Canaan Baptist Church does not have a women's ministry. Women's ministry guides women to live constantly with their faith. Unlike the current situation at New Canaan Baptist Church, a women's ministry would provide women with opportunities to support one another, pray together, and grow in righteousness as they engage with God through His Word. The women's ministry program would be good to research, especially for small rural churches. In the past, African-American women would come together for matches at the church, but they would come together at one another's houses to make quilts. Of course, there was gossip, but most of all, a significant relationship was built in the community. Within the community, some strong African-American women had hope and could share that hope with other African-American women by coming together in one central location. Their togetherness in the church was apparent because the researcher witnessed during childhood that women form a tight bond, and the tribal effect of caring, sharing hope, and guidance was relevant to treating each neighborhood kid as if they were their own.

Another research opportunity relates to a project aimed at building self-esteem. During this project, there were indications that the church leaders and parents were uncomfortable speaking out with ideas. They had experience and expertise, but some felt inadequate speaking out. But once they are encouraged, they seem to feel more comfortable. When the researcher mentions interpersonal relationship skills to church leaders, it is met with a look of confusion. As spiritual leaders, spiritual growth should be constantly promoted within the church and the communities. With the skills to communicate comfortably, this mission will happen. Therefore, building better servants for God is essential, especially when having a diverse church. The ability to say the right things in the right tone of voice is important. Research on the need for interpersonal relationship classes will be a good start. To prepare others to lead spiritually and secularly, church leaders should be equipped. Therefore, research is needed to conduct a needs analysis based on the church leaders' knowledge, skills, and abilities to reach today's culture. If this training is established, it will lead church leaders to be influential in guiding by preparing, arming, improving, and investing in the work of the church and the community and life in the world. Being an interpersonal church leader indicates pursuing to stimulate others to pleasantly labor simultaneously to undertake the aspirations set for the glory of God.

This research validates the perception that the value and durability of the mentoring affiliation and the attribute of preceding relationships portray influential intervening and facilitating roles in the effectiveness of mentoring.

APPENDIX A

16 WEEK PROJECT TIMETABLE

Project Timetable 16 Week		
	Start Date	**Method**
Approval from IRB	TBD	
Reflective Journal entries began	Week One	Document (weekly entries)
Announcement of Research Project	Week One	Church Announcement
Recruitment for youth volunteers	Week One	Church Announcement
Recruitment for parent/ Church leader volunteers	Week One	Church Announcement
Permission Letter to Church	Week One	Letter
Parent consent form	Week One	Letter
Surveys to volunteers	Week One	Doucment
Commence of Collection of Data	Week Two	Doucment
Use Minitab to collect and Analyze Data	Week Two	Application
Interveiw of mentors and mentee	Week Two	Meeting (Screening)
Selection of mentors and mentees	Week Two	Meeting
Parent consent for youth mentorship	Week Two	Document
Notify selectees for research project	Week Two	Telephone call
Mentor Background investigation	Week Two	Online Background Check (Truthfinder)
Gym use permission Town of Chester	Week Two	Letter
First meeting of Mentor/Mentee	Week Three	Invitation via notification of selectees (Phone Call)
Training Mentor/Mentee	Week Three	Training Plan
Mentor/Mentee Matching	Week Three	Matching process
Project research program schedule	Week Three	Meeting every Saturday 8AM -12 from Week Three to Week Fifteen
Review of reflective journal to seeks improvement	Week Six	Document (Monitoring)
Progression Interview with Mentor and Mentee	Week Six	Meeting
Review of reflective journal to seeks improvement	Week Nine	Document
Progression Interview with Mentor and Mentee	Week Nine	Meeting
Review of reflective journal to seeks improvement	Week Twelve	Doucment
Progression Interview with Mentor and Mentee	Week Fifteen	Reflect on the progress of partnership
Research project concludes	Week Fifteen	
Gather Results of Research Project	Week Fifteen	Document
Notes:		
The research Project starts on the week of IRB approval.		
Research Project is aimed for completion within 15 weeks after approval from IRB.		

APPENDIX B

CHURCH ATTENDANCE SURVEY

Youth	1. Yes	2. No	3. Maybe	4. N/A	Reply
Do your parents discuss the spiritual aspects of life with you?					Yes
Have you attended church within the last six months?					No
Do you have a religious view?					No
If invited to go to church, would you attend?					No
Would you be interested in a community-based mentorship program?					Yes
When you last attended church, did you understand the message?					No
When you attend church, did you feel included in the service?					No
Have you ever been asked to participate in worship services?					No
Do you own your own Bible?					No
Do you feel welcome when you attend church?					No
Have you been taught that there is support, comfort, and hope in the church?					No

The stacked bar chart represents the actual data sample of the survey responses from ten male youths who participated in gaining data for intervention design.

Parent	1. Yes	2. No	3. Maybe	4. N/A	Reply
Did your parents discuss the spiritual aspects of life with you?					
Have you attended church within the last six months?					
Do you have a religious view?					
Do you share your religious views with youth?					
Do you encourage your child to attend church?					
Are you interested in being part of a community-based mentorship program?					
Have you brought a child or grandchild to church in the last six months?					
Do you feel comfortable giving a child responsibility during church service?					
Do you feel out of cultural background when youth sing modern gospel songs instead old fashion hymns?					
Are you willing to discuss the historical background of the church with the youth?					
Within the last year, have you told a youth how important it is to attend church?					
Have you read the Bible to your children?					
Have you ever recommended and explained supportive Bible verses to youth?					

Church Leaders	1. Yes	2. No	3. Maybe	4. N/A	Reply
Have you previously invited a community youth to come with you to church?					
Have you asked youth how they enjoyed the church service in the last year?					
Have you ever asked the youth what can be done to better service?					
Are there various versions of the Bible available for youth?					
Do you have a worship service strictly designed for youth programs?					
Are you comfortable with hearing contemporary gospel music in the church?					
Are there plans to increase the attendance of male youth?					
Are you aware of the number of male youths in attendance at each service?					
Will there be more programs in the future to attract youth to the church?					
Do you have a youth ministry program?					

APPENDIX C

PERMISSION REQUEST LETTER

05/10/2023

█████████████

Chairman Deacon
New Canaan Baptist Church

█████████

Dear Deacon ███████,

As a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is Preserving Hope Through Youth Attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church. My research project aims to improve church attendance by instituting a community mentorship program for rural African American male adolescents.

I am writing to solicit a partnership with New Canaan Baptist Church Baptist in this research project. Also, I am requesting the use of the fellowship hall to conduct interviews. And finally, I am requesting your permission to conduct my research by utilizing historical church records. Records will be reviewed to gather data on male youth attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church. Also, records will be examined to identify past youth programs.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

████████████

Pastor
█████████████

APPENDIX D

RECORD OF MALE YOUTH ATTENDANCE

Pareto Chart of Year

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2002	2007	2003	2006	2004	2005	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Other
M/Y Count	14	14	14	14	13	13	12	12	11	11	10	9	8	8	6	5	4	3	8
Percent	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	4
Cum %	7	15	22	30	37	43	50	56	62	68	73	78	82	86	89	92	94	96	100

Time Series Plot of M/Y Count

The proposed method of capturing a count of past male youth attendance is reflected in the above charts. Also, the Pareto chart can be used to track attendance to reflect changes as the program progresses beyond implementation. Male youth (M/Y) and "Index" represent years.

APPENDIX E

YOUTH SURVEY PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT VERBAL

Hello, Parent/youth,

As a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. My research project aims to improve church attendance by instituting a community men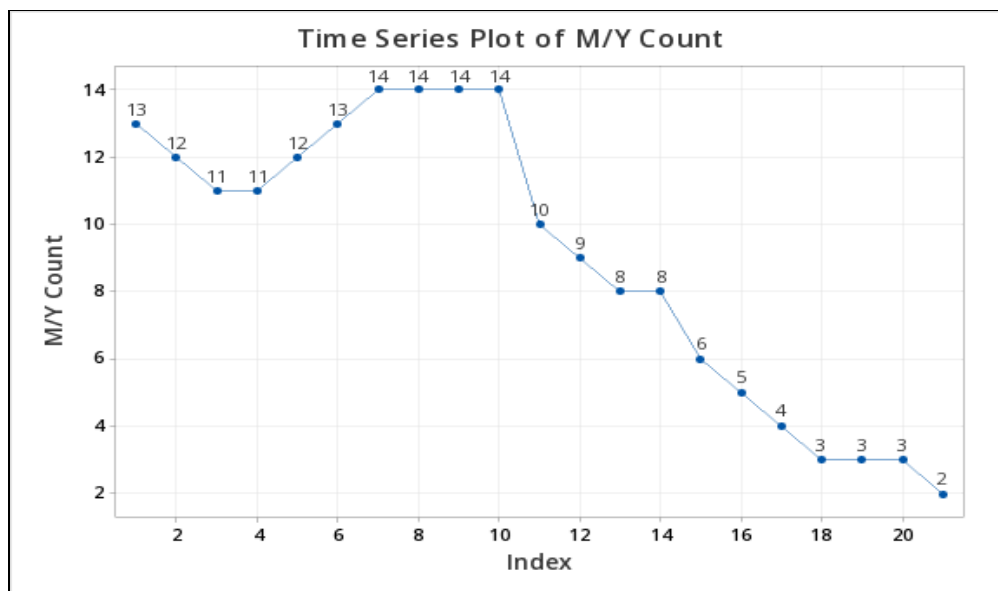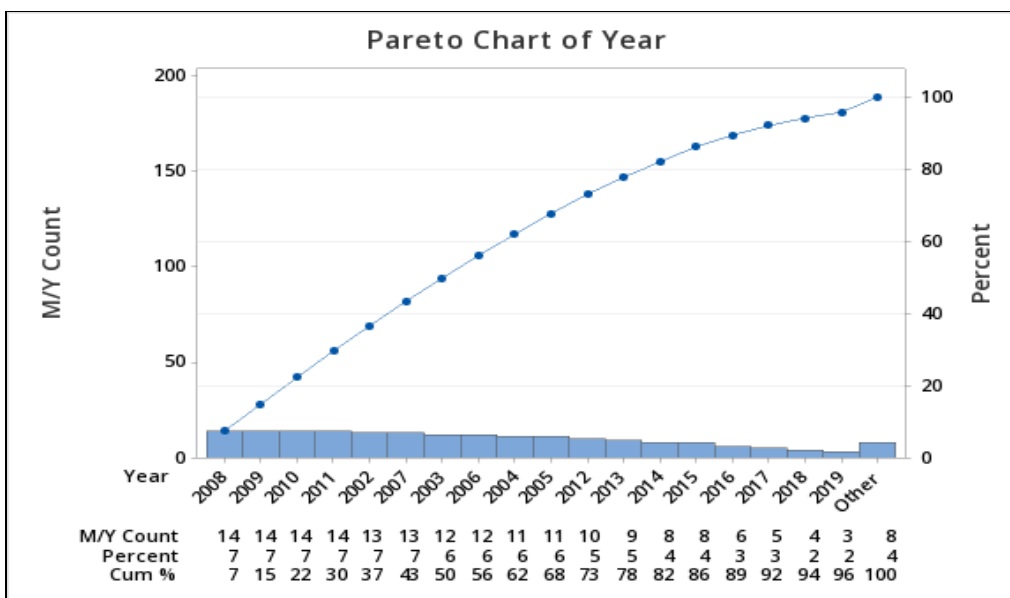torship program for rural African American male adolescents. As a youth, do you feel welcomed at Church? Do you understand the spiritual meaning of attending Church? Why are African American male youth not attending church? What are some approaches to guide male youth back to church? and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Youth participants must be from the town of Chester, Georgia community or youth from the vicinity (5 Mile Radius) of Chester, Georgia. Youth participants must be eight to eighteen years old to participate. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a survey of no more than ten questions related to mentoring African American male youth. The research method is in the form of a survey, and it should take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete the procedure listed. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. Parents are encouraged to assist youth.

Would you allow your child/student to participate? [Yes] Great. Could I get your email address so I can send you the link to the survey? [No] I understand. Thank you for your time.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please complete and return the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to participate in the study.

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

APPENDIX F

PARENT/CHURCH LEADER SURVEY PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT VERBAL

Hello parents/church leaders,

As a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. My research project aims to improve church attendance by instituting a community mentorship program for rural African American male adolescents. The research process will consist of a survey containing the following questions: As a parent and church leader, do you feel that youth are welcomed at Church? Do you think youth understand the spiritual meaning of attending Church? Why are African American male youth not attending church? What are some approaches to guide male youth back to church? and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants (Church Leader and Parents) must be from the town of ███████████ community, be a member of New Canaan Baptist Church, or live in the vicinity (5 Mile Radius) of ██████ ██████. Participants must be eight to eighteen years old to participate. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a survey of no more than ten questions related to mentoring African American male youth. The research method is in the form of a survey, and it should take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete the procedure listed. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

Would you allow your child/student to participate? [Yes] Great. Could I get your email address so I can send you the link to the survey? [No] I understand. Thank you for your time.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please complete and return the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to participate in the study.

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

APPENDIX G

YOUTH MENTORSHIP PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT VERBAL

Hello parents/youth,

As a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. My research project aims to improve church attendance by instituting a community mentorship program for rural African-American male adolescents. As a youth, do you feel welcomed at Church? Do you understand the spiritual message of African-American male youth not attending church? What are some approaches to guide male youth back to church? and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Youth participants must be from the town of Chester, Georgia community, or youth from the vicinity (5 Mile Radius) of Chester, Georgia. Youth participants must be eight to eighteen years old to participate. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a survey of no more than ten questions related to mentoring African-American male youth. The research method is in the form of a survey, and it should take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete the procedure listed. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. Parents are encouraged to assist youth.

Would you allow your child/student to participate? [Yes] Great. Could I get your email address to arrange an interview? [No] I understand. Thank you for your time.

A consent document is provided during the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. My contact details are as follows: Phone number: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮ and email address: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

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

APPENDIX H

COMBINED PARENTAL CONSENT AND STUDENT ASSENT

Title of the Project: Preserving Hope Through Youth Attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church
Principal Investigator: Rev. David C. Turner, Student/Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University School of Divinity

Your child is invited to participate in a research study. To participate, he must be a resident of Chester, Georgia, or live within five radius of the town. African American Male youth aged eight to eighteen are encouraged to participate in this study. Please note that 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.

The purpose of the study is to explore the need to improve youth church attendance by instituting a community mentorship program for rural African American male adolescents. Currently, there are no programs to offer male youth secular and spiritual guidance in the area of Chester, Georgia.

If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, I will ask him to do the following:
1. Complete a church attendance and mentoring survey, which will take fifteen to twenty minutes to complete.
2. Be part of the mentor/mentee pairing process, which will take one to two hours.
3. Attend mentor/mentee training. Initial training should take one hour.
4. Participate for seven weeks in a mentoring program study.
5. The child will meet with the researcher, parents, and potential mentors for several hours for seven thesis project meetings.
6. Participate in 15 to 30-minute group discussions, which will be held during each thesis project meeting; no more than seven meetings will occur. Each meeting might be audio recorded.

The direct benefits participants should expect from participating in this study are the benefits of mentorship experience, which offers a glance at the big brother concept, which may yield a lasting relationship. Another benefit relates to an opportunity to enrich relationships with a parent, parents, and community leaders. There could be a benefit to gaining skills that would stimulate secular and spiritual development.

Benefits to society include better decision-making based on the availability of improved life choices. Through the guidance of a mentor, the youth can gain abilities to see beyond the norm and trends and explore other productive avenues to include spiritual growth.

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks your child would encounter in everyday life. The risks involved in this study include

psychological stress from meeting and developing a relationship with different people and stress about opening up to strange and new ideas. To reduce risk, I will allow extra time as needed for the mentor and mentee to become comfortable with one another. Also, there will be a weekly discussion with the mentor and mentee to maintain attention on the progress of their bonding. From this process, I can establish additional measures to mitigate risk, even to the point of discounting the mentor and mentee partnership.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

The records of this study will be kept private, and published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher[s] will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer/in a locked [drawer/file cabinet. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for five years and then erased. The researcher and members of his doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

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

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

The researcher conducting this study is Rev. David C. Turner. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at ███████████ and email at ███████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, ███████ ██████, at ███████████████.

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 IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, █████████████████████████████, ████; our phone number is █████████, and our email address is █████████.

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.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to allow your child to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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

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

_____
Printed Child's Name

_____
Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

_____
Minor's Signature   Date

_____
Printed Child's Name

_____
_____
Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

APPENDIX I

MENTOR RECRUITMENT LETTER

5/10/2023

███████████

Chairman Deacon
New Canaan Baptist Church
███████████████

Dear Deacon Blackshear:

As a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. My research project aims to improve church attendance by instituting a community mentorship program for rural African American male adolescents. Why are African American male youth not attending church? What are some approaches to guide male youth back to church? I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be a member of New Canaan Baptist Church, a member of the town of Chester, Georgia leadership team, a member of the Chester, Georgia community, or a parent/youth from the community of Chester, Georgia. Participants must be 25 years of age or older to participate. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete the questions listed below related to mentoring African American male youth. It should take approximately ten minutes to complete the procedure listed.

Mentor Recruitment Questions	Respond
What time commitment can I make?	
What age of youth would I like to work with?	
Do I want to help a youth learn a specific skill?	
Can you attend church with the mentee at least once a month?	
How can you add value to the mentee?	
What are your most vital skills?	
How well do you communicate with male youth?	
What is your ideal of a good mentor/mentee relationship?	
Can you identify failure in the matching of mentor/mentee?	
Are you willing to be a mentee's big brother, secularly and spiritually?	
What would prevent the mentee from providing candor feedback?	
Would there be an issue with completing a background investigation?	

To be selected as a mentor, please complete the mentor recruitment document and return it by handing it to me in person or scan it and email it to the email address provided. Please contact

me at ██████████ or email ████████████. A 30-minute interview to discuss your response will be scheduled in the next several days.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey will be given to you at the time of the 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 the interview. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to participate in the survey.

Sincerely,

David C. Turner
Pastor
██████████

APPENDIX J

MENTOR INTERVIEW

Applicant Name: _____ Date: _____

Interviewed by: _____

I need to ask a number of questions about you that will help me in matching you with a mentee. Some of the questions are personal and this interview is confidential. However, I am required to report anything that indicates you have done or may do harm to yourself or others. Some information, like personal qualities and what you would like to do with a mentee or things you are interested in, may be shared with a prospective mentee and their parents. Do you understand?

1. Why do you want to become a mentor?

2. Why do you think you can help a youth by mentoring? (if not answered in question #1)

3. What do you think are your strengths?

4. How about your weaknesses?

5. What type of child would you like to be matched with?

6. Will you be able to fulfill the commitments of the program – eight hours per month with weekly

contact for one year?

7. What was your own childhood like?

8. Have you ever abused or molested a youth?

9. Have you ever been arrested? If so, when and for what?

10. Do you currently use any alcohol, drugs, or tobacco?

11. Have you ever undergone treatment for alcohol or substance abuse?

12. Have you ever been treated or hospitalized for a mental condition?

13. Do you have any experience of working with children? If so, how will it help you in working with your mentee?

14. What challenges do you think young people face today that they need help with the most?

15. Mentoring a young person is a big responsibility and can change the lives of both the mentor and the mentee. What do you hope to gain from the experience and what do you hope the mentee gains from the relationship?

16. What are some of the biggest problems in the world or in your community that concern you?

17. What types of activities would you do with a mentee?

18. Who else in your household might be present at any given time when you are with your mentee?

19. What hobbies or interests do you have?

20. At this point, clarify any questions of concern that arose from the written application.

21. Do you have any questions about the program that I can answer for you?

APPENDIX K

BACKGROUND CHECK CONSENT AND RELEASE WAIVER
National Background Screening Consent Form

Applicant's Legal Name (printed)

_____

Applicant's Address:
Social Security Number_____Date of Birth _____

City: State: Zip Code:

I, _____, authorize and give consent to the organization named above to obtain information regarding myself. This includes the following:

- Local and National Criminal background records/information
- All 50 State Sex Offender Registries

I, the undersigned, authorize this information to be obtained either in writing or via telephone in connection with the application. Any person, firm, or organization providing information or records in accordance with this authorization is released from all claims of liability for compliance. Such information will be held in confidence in accordance with the organization's guidance.

By signing this document, I am providing the organization named above with my consent for an initial background check deemed necessary throughout the length of my volunteer agreement with this organization.

Print Name: Date:

Signature:

APPENDIX L

MENTOR AND MENTEE MATCHING PROCESS

When matching youth and mentors, make sure you are taking each party's preferences into account. Also, consider the context of a match. Make sure mentors and mentees are informed individually about who their mentor and mentee are before they are introduced. This method allows the opportunity to process any concerns.

First, advise the mentors about the youth that they have been matched with and make sure they feel peaceful and interested in being matched with this youth. This is to prevent the disappointment of a youth whose mentor pulls out of a match after they have already been told about it.

Then, find out if the youth is pleased with the mentor. If they are not, work to resolve the problem, or if required, use a different mentor. To ensure the mentor/mentee match is effective and creates a comfortable situation for both participants, during the matching process, refer to the table of essential characters to increase the chance of forming a positive and lasting connection.[1]

Important Characters for Matching Mentor to Mentee		
Interests	Proximity	Availability
Expressed preference	Goals	Strengths
Previous experiences	Personality	Age

---

[1] *MENTOR: Training and Support for Success Mentors* 15, assessed December 7, 2022, https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Training-and-Support-for-Success-MentorsFINAL.pdf.

APPENDIX M

GYMNASIUM PERMISSION REQUEST LETTER

5/10/2023

████████████

Mayor
City of Chester
███████████████

Dear Mayor Pittman and City Council Members,

As a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is Preserving Hope Through Youth Attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church. My research project aims to improve church attendance by instituting a community mentorship program for rural African American male adolescents.

I am writing to request your permission to utilize the Chester Elementary Gym to accomplish my research with a community youth mentorship program. The gym will be used every Saturday from 8 AM-1200 noon for 16 weeks beginning in April 2023.

This project will partner with parents, youths, and church leaders to form secular and spiritual relationships that enhance the livelihood of community youth, thus increasing church attendance.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

David C. Turner
Pastor
██████████████████

APPENDIX N

Introduction to Mentorship Training Plan		
Meeting	**Lecture Subjects**	**Reference**
1	**1.** What is Mentoring? **2.** Why a Mentorship Program? **3.** Types of Mentoring **4.** Potential Mentor and Mentee Consent Forms and Mentorship Eligibility **5.** Mentor/Mentee Recruitment	**1.** MENTOR " How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program Using the Elements Effective Practice. " **2.** Thesis Project: a. Thesis Problem Presented b. Purpose Statement c. Thesis Statement d. Mentor /Mentee Letter
2	**1.** Benefits of Mentor and Mentee Relationships **2.** Paul and Timothy's Example of mentorship	**1.** MENTOR " The Mentor's Guide to Youth Purpose: "The Art of Helping a Young Person Find Meaning **2.** MENTOR " How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program
3	**1.** Recap of Mentorship benefits, spiritual and worldly **2.** The Willing and Able	**1.** MENTOR " How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program" **2.** Thesis Project
4	**1.** Recap of Mentorship Benefits, spiritual and worldly **2.** Mentor/Mentee Pairing Process **3.** Training Requirements New Mentors and Mentees	**1.** MENTOR " How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program" **2.** U.S Department of Education Mentoring Programs "Ongoing Training for Mentors"
5	**1.** Commitment **2**. Building a Foundation **3.** Effective Communication in Mentor/Mentee Relationship	**1.** U.S Department of Education Mentoring Programs "Ongoing Training for Mentors" **2.** MENTOR " How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program
6	**1.** Goal setting **2.** Problem Solving Skills **3.** Diversity and Cultural Sensitivity **4.** Mentor Background Checks	**1.** MENTOR " How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program
7	Final Group Discussion of Lectured Subjects	None
		Mentorship Tool Kit https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Full_Toolkit.pdf

APPENDIX O

Mentoring Lectures Final Questionnaire

Mentoring Lecture Final Questionnaire

1. Mentorship lectures give me a better understanding of the meaning of mentoring. (Please circle your choice)

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

2. Lectures presented the need for mentoring youth as a way to guide them to church.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

3. Lectures drew my attention to the importance of youth mentoring.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

4. Lectures explained the benefits of mentorship in a worldly and spiritual aspect.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

5. Mentorship awareness lectures helped to understand the need for youth in the church environment.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

6. The lectures had clear objectives, which brought clarity to the issue of youth missing from church.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

7. I feel mentorship opportunities and benefits for the community and church were explained.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

8. After receiving mentorship awareness training, I want to participate in a community-based mentorship program.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

9. Mentoring youth is a way to show care and commitment to overall youth development.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

10. How would you rank this training in value to you?

Important	Worthwhile	Medium	Unimportant	Worthless

11. After six sessions of mentorship lectures, how would you rank using mentorship to lead youth to Christ?

Important	Worthwhile	Medium	Unimportant	Worthless

12. How do you value inspiring youth to live out their God-given identity and calling?

Important	Worthwhile	Medium	Unimportant	Worthless

13. How do you value receiving additional mentorship lectures?

Important	Worthwhile	Medium	Unimportant	Worthless

14. How do you value youth in church?

Important	Worthwhile	Medium	Unimportant	Worthless

Use the space below to provide any feedback. Thank you for your participation.

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IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 14, 2023

David Turner
William Crawley

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY22-23-1066 Preserving Hope Through Youth Attendance at New Canaan Baptist Church

Dear David Turner and William Crawley,

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 that your study does not meet the definition of 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 project is not considered human subjects research because it 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. 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.

Sincerely,

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