

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW IN CHRISTIAN MIDDLE-SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

October, 2010

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Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA  
October, 2010

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## **ABSTRACT**

Cherie Elder Brickhill. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW IN CHRISTIAN MIDDLE- SCHOOL STUDENTS. (Under the direction of Dr. Clarence Holland). School of Education, October, 2010.

One of the important goals of Christian education is to train students to see the world through the lens of scripture. However, Christian schools are regularly graduating students who do not think from a distinctively biblical worldview. This study utilized comparative data analysis (Kruskal-Wallis test) to investigate the relationship between four independent variables and the biblical worldview of middle-school students as measured by the PEERS worldview test. The study examined the influence of type of elementary education, frequency of church attendance, personal faith commitment, and parent Christian belief on the PEERS test scores and religion subcategory scores of students enrolled in Christian middle-school. Results suggested significant relationships between frequency of church attendance and personal faith commitment and the PEERS composite scores and religion subcategory scores. Many of the students in this study demonstrated a commitment to faith-based practices, but their worldview was strongly secular humanist. The results suggest a gap between religion-based knowledge and practices and application of scripture to real life issues. The study concludes with implications for Christian educators including an outline of a curriculum strategy for biblical worldview development and suggestions for further research.

## **Acknowledgements**

It is with a humble and grateful heart that I offer my sincerest appreciation to those who walked with me on this journey. First and foremost, I am thankful to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who took a tragedy in my life and used it for HIS glory (Romans 8:28). May the work of this dissertation add to His Kingdom!

Thank you to the three most incredible children in the world, Micah, Daniel and Nathan, who patiently and graciously encouraged me through this process. You are mature beyond your years, and I am grateful that you are God-seekers!

I am especially appreciative of Dr. Chick Holland who chaired one more dissertation on my behalf. It was a blessing to work with a professor and committee who share my passion for Kingdom work. I cherished Dr. Holland's experience, wisdom, and kindness, but most of all, I just loved his "Amens!"

Thank you to Steve McDonald who generously and patiently guided me through the statistical analysis of this research. His presence in my life was another gift from God.

It is with a sad heart that I acknowledge Dr. Jill Jones who tragically died as I reached the end of this journey. She was an inspiration to me and a true "Princess of the King." I appreciated her spiritual guidance and admired her example of perseverance and excellence.

Lastly, I want to express my gratitude to Mom and Dad who believed in me and provided this opportunity for me. I dedicate this dissertation to you, two spiritual giants who have invested their lives in Kingdom work and never seem to grow weary of doing good!

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## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

A startling ninety percent of youth from Christian homes are abandoning a biblical worldview (Smithwick, 2008) and being ‘taken captive’ by hollow and deceptive philosophies “which depend on the human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (Colossians 2:8, NIV). The Nehemiah Institute predicts that the next generation of Christian adults will be committed secular humanists with leanings toward socialism between 2014 and 2018 (Smithwick, 2008). Worldview is the framework of beliefs that helps individuals interpret what they see and experience, and it gives them direction for the choices that they make (Dewitt, Deckard, Berndt, Filakouridis, & Iverson, 2003). Despite its importance in living out the Christian faith, only four percent of American adults and nine percent of born again believers have a biblical worldview as the basis of their decision-making (Barna, 2003). As a result of this lack of commitment to absolute truth and inconsistency in applying God’s Word, the influence of Christianity on society has been replaced by the bold humanist agenda (Noebel, 1991).

The future of this tumultuous nation will be determined by its young people. Since moral and ethical perspectives develop in most people by the age of nine, and spiritual beliefs and habits begin to solidify by age 13 (Barna, 2008), children and adolescents must be equipped with a biblical worldview at a young age. Research suggests that the church and Christian parents are failing at this task primarily because parents, teachers, and pastors lack a biblical worldview themselves or are unintentional in their efforts to influence young minds. Meanwhile, these impressionable minds are being

molded by the non-biblical messages of their peers, television, movies, books, and the internet (Barna, 2008).

### **Background of Study**

“Worldview refers to any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement or religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world, and man’s relationship to God” (Noebel, 1991, p. 16 ). Everyone has a worldview even though they may not consistently live it (Bahnsen, 1991). In recent years, the Christian community, especially educators, have become more interested in worldview formation. In particular, Christian educators want to know what can be done to reverse the lack of impact made by Christian schools and how much of one’s biblical worldview is determined by personal faith practices. And, are Christian schools fighting a losing battle in their efforts to shape worldview if there is lack of support at home? Much attention has been placed on the worldview development of high school and college students, but middle-school students have been overlooked in the research despite the fact that this is such a critical age of moral development and decision-making (Regnerus, 2003).

Worldview is not a new concept nor is the Christian community’s concern over society’s movement toward humanism. For 125 years following American independence, a biblical worldview was the prominent ideological framework in the United States (Autio, 2005). In fact, Christianity was a major influence on the first educational systems in the United States whose purpose was to produce literate, law-abiding citizens with an emphasis on Bible reading (Guttek, 2005). Writing over 150 years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville described America as a Christian nation, “There is no country in the whole world, in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men

than in America . . .” (as cited in Noebel, 1991, p.18). Entering into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, however, America found itself firmly planted in a humanist system of thought not only in the public schools, but also in nearly all power centers of society (Noebel, 1991).

In 1981, author and philosopher Francis Schaeffer blamed the rise of secular humanism on Christian educators, Christian theologians, and Christian lawyers who he believed were quietly watching the demise from the sidelines. Schaeffer concluded that one of the basic problems of Christians in America was that they saw everything in “bits and pieces” rather than in totals. Even though Americans had become concerned over specific areas of immorality such as homosexuality, pornography, and gambling, they failed to attribute this demise to the bigger picture, a shift in the worldview of the people. A decade later, Dr. James Dobson and Gary Bauer (1990) weighed in on the discussion concluding, “Nothing short of a great Civil War of Values rages today throughout North America. Two sides with vastly differing and incompatible worldviews are locked in a bitter conflict that permeates every level of society” (p. 14).

The battle for the minds of America’s young people has escalated, and Christians are currently on the losing side (Dobson & Bauer, 1990). Humanism is the enemy, and it has successfully infiltrated America’s public schools and has covertly engaged the Christian school by way of apathy and ignorance. In 1988, the Nehemiah Institute reported that 90% of youth from Christian homes were consistently abandoning a biblical worldview and were comfortably aligned with secular humanism. Barna (2003) reports that only 2% of born again teenagers have a biblical worldview. With an additional 20 years of data, the Nehemiah Institute (2008) added several thousand more test results and now projects that students from traditional Christian schools will score in the “socialist”

category by the year 2016.

Using similar data, the Nehemiah Institute (2008) also measured the scores of students in public schools, traditional Christian schools, and worldview Christian schools over a twelve year period beginning in 1988. A worldview school is one that is deliberate in its efforts to incorporate biblical worldview in all subjects and provides worldview training to teachers. From 1988-2000, Christian school students' average scores dropped by 30.3%, and scores of children from evangelical homes who attend public schools dropped 36.8% (Smithwick, 2008). Worldview schools typically held steady or showed slight increases in test scores. However, there are less than 500 worldview schools in the United States out of the 12,000 Christian and parochial schools in existence.

These school results should not be shocking considering the results of Barna's adult studies. Only four percent of American adults have a biblical worldview as a basis for their decision-making, and only nine percent of born-again believers view the world through the lens of God's Word (Barna Group, 2003). In fact, the outcomes of a post modern society are prevalent in both adults and youth. George Barna (2008) summarizes the practical path to this moral anarchy that Americans seem to be pursuing,

Moral and spiritual contradictions can exist because there are no absolutes—and there is little concern over reconciling logical conflicts. Change is desirable because nothing is pure or right, and relevance is constantly morphing. . . . Rules may make life more pleasant and productive, but rules can be ignored when they hinder the feeling a person has of what is right to him or her. Entertainment is a way of escaping reality and perfecting advanced technique rather than a way of

expressing beauty, creativity, and truth (p. 4).

The battle is not really over highly charged political and social issues like abortion and homosexuality as many people believe; rather, it is a culture war that must be fought in the minds of our young people. Christian leaders, educators, and families must understand this battlefield if there is any hope to reverse the anti-Christian trend that is so adversely affecting the American culture. C.S. Lewis (2002) warned that Christians too easily “make unnecessary concessions to those outside the Faith.” He encouraged, “We must show our Christian colours, if we are to be true to Jesus Christ. We cannot remain silent and concede everything away” (p. 262).

### **Research Problem**

The problem is that the Christian school movement of the past 40 years has had only a marginal impact on the formation of a biblical worldview in the next generation (Smithwick, 2008). As a result, Christian schools are regularly graduating students who do not think from a distinctively biblical worldview (Smithwick, 2008). The concern is that these students will graduate from Christian high schools without the solid foundation to hold to biblical truths outside of the classroom. Christian educators and families need a better understanding of factors that influence the development of a biblical worldview in adolescence, so that they can equip the next generation to transform and evangelize the world.

The purpose of this research project was to examine the relationship of four faith-based factors to the development of a biblical worldview in Christian middle-school students. These factors include type of elementary school attended, church involvement, personal faith commitment, and parent profession of faith.



By examining these four factors in relation to the student's worldview, it is hoped that Christian school educators and parents can gain greater insight into the development of a biblical mindset at this crucial age of development. Another goal of this project was to contribute to the growing body of research which will help Christian parents, teachers and administrators make decisions and implement strategies that will most likely facilitate a biblical worldview in middle-school students.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the writer in this research project:

1. Does the type of elementary school attended affect a student's biblical worldview in middle-school?
2. Does frequency of church participation affect a student's biblical worldview in middle-school?
3. Does time spent in personal prayer and Bible study affect a student's biblical worldview in middle-school?
4. Does a parent's Christian belief identification affect a student's biblical worldview in middle-school?
5. Does the type of elementary school attended affect a student's biblical worldview of religious-based issues?
6. Does the frequency of church participation affect a student's biblical worldview of religious-based issues?
7. Does time spent in personal prayer and Bible study affect a student's biblical worldview of religious-based issues?
8. Does a parent's Christian belief identification affect a student's biblical

worldview of religious-based issues?

### **Null Hypotheses**

There are eight null hypotheses that guided this research:

1. The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attended the following types of schools: 1. Christian schools, 2. private secular schools, 3. public schools, 4. home schools.
2. The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attend church two or more times per week, one time per week and not at all.
3. The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who read their Bibles and pray frequently, occasionally, and not at all.
4. The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who live with at least one Christian parent and those that do not live with a Christian parent.
5. The biblical worldview of religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attended the following types of schools: 1. Christian schools, 2. private secular schools, 3. public schools, 4. home schools.
6. The biblical worldview of religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attend church two or more times per week, one time per week and not at all.

7. The biblical worldview or religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who read their Bibles and pray frequently, occasionally, and not at all.
8. The biblical worldview of religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who live with at least one Christian parent and those that do not live with a Christian parent.

### **Significance of the Study**

Developing a biblical worldview is at the core of Christian education. The Christian school exists to help parents teach children to love the Lord their God with all their mind; however, many Christian schools are graduating students who lack the scriptural foundation to be able to apply God's Word to all aspects of life. The majority of Christian school students are becoming "intellectually schizophrenic" in their worldview because of this failure (Wilson, 1991). The result is Christian young people who act one way in church or Christian school settings and then behave quite differently in the world. In order to bring the corporate worldview of the nation's Christian young people back into focus, there is an urgent need to assess the worldview of Christian school students and begin to understand the most significant influences contributing to the formation of a biblical framework of thought.

Research has been conducted by other doctoral students investigating the relationship between teacher worldview and personal faith on the development of a biblical worldview in high school students. In addition, college students' worldview development has been investigated, and various worldview seminars and curricula have been examined. However, no one has studied the influences on biblical worldview

development among students in middle-school, a crucial time of maturity, decision-making, and moral reasoning. Although some worldview topics may appear too sophisticated for adolescent thinking, it is important that Christian schools begin laying the foundation for applying God's Word to real-life situations and issues.

This study is significant because it will help Christian educators redefine their curriculum priorities by suggesting the factors which most significantly affect biblical worldview formation. It is hoped that the results of the study will serve as a catalyst for encouraging Christian schools to implement strategies for biblical worldview development in middle-school students and encourage a more effective partnership between Christian schools and parents in formulating scripture-based thinking in students.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

There are three assumptions that the researcher made for the purposes of this study. The first assumption was that middle-school students have a worldview or a belief system that guides their decision-making. The study also assumed that the Christian school students in the sample will honestly and accurately report survey responses and will complete the worldview assessment to the best of their ability. It is also assumed that the two Christian schools involved in the study philosophically and practically desire to graduate students with a sound biblical worldview. As such, the faculty, curriculum and values are all in line with a biblical worldview.

### **Overview of Design**

This study utilized the Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) test to analyze the relationship between the PEERS scores and each of the four independent variables. The investigation examined the influence of type of elementary education, frequency of church attendance,

personal faith commitment, and parent Christian belief on the composite PEERS test scores and religion subcategory scores of students enrolled in Christian middle-school.

### **Study Sample and Population**

The population of interest for this study was middle-school students from Christian schools in the Southeast United States. The study utilized a convenience sample of all eighth grade students from two selected Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) Christian middle-schools in the state of Virginia. One hundred ninety-two students comprised this sample which represented various social, economic, denominational, and cultural backgrounds.

### **Definitions**

The review of the literature in Chapter 2 will include a thorough discussion of the construct of worldview and biblical worldview, and the PEERS survey tool will be fully discussed in Chapter 3. The following definitions provide a brief overview of these terms and the major worldviews of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Operational definitions are also provided for the study's four independent variables.

**Worldview.** Worldview generally refers to the overall perspective by which one sees and interprets the world and how he applies that knowledge to life. Specifically, it is how one understands God, the world, and man's relations to God and the world (Noebel, 1991).

**Biblical worldview.** A biblical worldview is a set of beliefs and assumptions about worldview questions that are consistent with an evangelical understanding of the Bible. These assumptions include a belief that absolute moral truths exist as defined by the Bible and that the Bible is accurate and authoritative in all its teachings (Nehemiah

Institute, n.d.).

**Moderate Christian worldview.** The Nehemiah Institute (n.d.) defines a moderate Christian worldview as one in which the individual sees God as supreme in religious matters but irrelevant in other areas of life. Man controls “temporal issues,” while God is concerned with spiritual matters.

**Secular humanism or humanist worldview.** This is the belief that humans are the highest of all beings. Truth and knowledge rest in human reason and science (Nehemiah Institute, n.d.).

**Postmodern worldview.** Postmodernism is an atheist view of the world in which there is no absolute truth or morality. The postmodernist is tolerant of all religious beliefs because no one religion can be true (Noebel, 1991).

**Socialist.** Mankind, not able to prosper acting alone, needs a ruling body to ensure that all areas of life are conducted fairly. The elite of society serve as leaders who determine the good of all (Nehemiah Institute, n.d.).

**Type of school attended.** The type of school attended for grades kindergarten through five was reported as Christian school, private/secular school, public school or home-school. This data was measured using a multiple choice question.

**Frequency of church attendance.** Frequency of church attendance was measured by asking each of the students to report whether he or she attends church activities two or more times per week, one or more times per week, or not at all. The data was reported using a multiple choice question.

**Personal prayer and Bible study.** Personal prayer and Bible study was measured by asking the students to report how often they spend time in prayer and Bible

study apart from school and church activities. The multiple choice answers were daily, occasionally, rarely and never.

**Parent belief identification.** Parent belief identification was measured by asking the students to report whether or not at least one parent is a born-again believer. This was a “yes” or “no” response.

**PEERS.** The PEERS worldview test was designed and published by the Nehemiah Institute in 1986. The instrument was developed to measure an individual’s basic worldview assumptions in five areas: politics, economics, education, religion, and social issues. The 70-item assessment utilizes a scale ranging from -100 to +100 to indicate a person’s basic worldview. An individual’s score is ranked into one of four categories: biblical theistic (70-100); moderate Christian (30-69); secular humanist (0-29); and socialist (less than 0). The PEERS has been through extensive validity and reliability testing which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3 (Smithwick, 2008).

### **Summary**

In 2 Chronicles 12: 32, the men of Issachar understood the times and knew what to do. Christian educators and parents must understand that there is a battle waging for the minds of today’s youth. As they prepare to defend their children and students from the mental and spiritual assault of competing worldviews, parents and educators must be armed with reliable information and tools to do battle. This study contributes to the arsenal of information by investigating the effect of four factors on the biblical worldview of middle-school students.

In Chapter 2, the literature review will examine the current state of worldviews in America. The Bible will provide the theoretical framework for this research project with support

from the field of developmental and cognitive psychology. Empirical studies concerning religiosity and moral reasoning in adolescence as well as relevant worldview studies will be discussed.



## CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

Human beings have a need to give meaning to their fragmented lives (Nash, 1992), and this meaning arises from a framework of beliefs. Everything from a casual thought to a profound question runs through a mental filter that has become known as one's worldview. Although the definitions of worldview range in depth and sophistication, it is widely accepted that worldview is the way one sees the world and his place in it. Sire (2004) contends, however, that worldview is more than the mind alone; it is also a spiritual orientation and a matter of the soul.

Theologians and philosophers also disagree slightly on the questions that define one's worldview. Nash (1992) lays out three philosophical foundations for worldview formation including metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology. Simply stated, the key questions are (a) what exists, (b) how humans should live, and (c) how human beings know. The lists of Noebel (1991), Sire (2004), and Barna (2003) differ slightly, but there is general agreement that worldview encompasses beliefs about God, reality, knowledge, morality, and humankind.

This chapter will review the literature with respect to the current state of worldview in America including the most prevalent worldviews, and it will lay out a biblical framework for the importance of worldview formation. The chapter will also examine psychological theory and empirical studies related to religiosity and moral development in adolescence. Chapter 2 concludes with a review of pertinent worldview studies.

## **State of Worldview in America**

Although everyone has a worldview, most Americans are somewhat unsound in their belief system. For example, 44% of Americans agree that the Bible, Koran, and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same truth, and 30% of all teenagers believe that all religions pray to the same god (Barna, 2003). This inadequate worldview is like wearing improper eyeglasses in which everything is out of focus (Nash, 1992). Moreland (1997) states it plainly contending that most people have little or no understanding of a Christian way of viewing the world. As a result, there has been a noticeable and inarguable shift from a Judeo-Christian worldview to a post-Christian understanding of reality. Americans have failed to connect the breakdown in morality to this shift in worldview. In fact, secular humanists would argue that by replacing Christian values, America is on a more pro-social, pro-human path to success (Noebel, 1991). Post modernist, Richard Rorty, brags that fundamentalist Christian students are lucky to be under his teaching in which he entices them to read Darwin and Freud without disgust. Rorty's goal, along with many other college professors, is that Christian students will leave college with more humanistic views of reality (1991).

The preceding paragraphs will provide the basic tenets of each of the major worldviews in America. The intent is not to discuss the pros and cons of each system of beliefs or provide an exhaustive summary; rather, it is to show the wide disparity of ideals that exist in America today and to lay the foundation for this research project. Table 2.1 summarizes the four most prevalent worldviews in America with an emphasis on key worldview topics including God, truth, government and man. The table reflects information obtained from the Nehemiah Institute (n.d.) and *Understanding the Times*

(Noebel, 1991).

Table 2.1

*Beliefs of Major Worldviews*

	God	Truth	Government	Man
Biblical Theism	All powerful, supreme Creator	Absolute truth revealed by God	Under the authority of God	Created good in God's image, sinned, will go to heaven or hell depending upon choice to accept salvation
Secular Humanism	Non-existent	Relative to each generation	Role of government is for human welfare	Autonomous, self-centered
Socialism	No use for God	Relative	All powerful	Inherently good
Cosmic Humanism/New Age	All is one, all is god	Relativism is key	Interested in a New World Government	Man is god; trying to discover their divinity

**Biblical Theism**

Biblical theism is also referred to as Christian theism. The key to both labels is the belief in one supremely powerful and personal God who exists as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God created the world from nothing, and He reveals himself through creation and through His divinely inspired Word. Biblical theism also attests to universal moral laws which govern behavior and order (Nash, 1992; Noebel, 1991).

From a practical standpoint, the biblical theist believes that God is sovereign over all areas of life, and civil government should be highly limited in purpose and under the

authority of scripture. Truth is absolute through all time and for all ages (Nehemiah Institute, n.d.).

### **Secular Humanism**

Secular humanists believe that man is supreme, and it is by chance that humans evolved to the highest form of life. Their belief system is based on the ideas outlined in the *Humanist Manifesto* published in 1933, 1973, and 2000 (Noebel, 1991). Knowledge is obtained solely by the senses and by science (Moreland, 1997), and ethics are relative to each generation. There is no biblical God, heaven or hell (Nehemiah Institute, n.d.).

Secular humanism is the most prevalent worldview on America's college campuses, and it is often used to demonstrate the flaws of other worldviews. The former "Humanist of the Year" list includes very influential people, especially in the field of psychology. Some of these include B.F. Skinner, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Carl Segan (Noebel, 1991).

### **Cosmic Humanism**

The New Age Movement, also known as Cosmic Humanism, is less organized than secular humanism, but it is estimated that 5 to 10 percent of the population refer to themselves as "New Agers" (Noebel, 1991). These individuals believe that truth resides with the individual, and they have the desire to create a "new age of human harmony." Individuals are God, and God is every individual is the cornerstone belief of the New Age movement (1991). Most followers of cosmic humanism also believe in reincarnation.

### **Post-modernism**

Post-modernists actually deny being a worldview and refer to their belief structure as a "narrative of reality." They do not believe in absolute truth; rather, "relativism" is

one of their defining characteristics. Another hallmark term of post-modernists is “deconstructionism,” which means that words do not represent reality, and concepts are arbitrary (Noebel, 1991).

### **Islamic Worldview**

Islam rejects Jesus Christ and His death on the cross for humanity’s sin. Although they accept Christ as a prophet, they also reject his claim as the Son of God, His virgin birth, second coming, sinless life, and performance of miracles (Noebel, 1991). The Islamic worldview is growing in power and influence, and their history continues to be marked with violence and hatred towards Christians and Jews.

The daily life of the Muslim centers around the “polygamous family, the mosque, and the state” (Noebel, 1991, p. 253). Although there are many similarities to Christianity, the worldview is fundamentally different.

### **Marxism-Leninism**

Based on the writings of Karl Marx in the late 1800s, Marxists can be described as atheistic and materialistic. They believe that humanity is evolving both physically and socially and ground these beliefs in Darwinism. The ultimate goal of Marxists is “an international communist family” (Noebel, 1991, p. 265). There is no absolute truth, and law must be based on human thinking. Marxism is prevalent on many American college campuses. According to *U.S. News and World Report* (Fischer, 2003), there are 10,000 Marxist professors teaching America’s next generation.

### **Socialism**

Believing that man cannot prosper acting alone, socialists contend that a ruling authority is necessary to ensure harmony in all facets of life. This authority is comprised

of elite leaders acting as civil authorities. The civil body-politic controls and redistributes wealth in the best interest of all (Nehemiah Institute, n.d.).

### **Biblical Framework of Worldview**

The Bible offers the perfect theoretical framework for studying the importance and influences of biblical worldview development. The following section of the literature review will rely on scripture to frame a discussion for the significance of the Christian mind, the relevance of Christ's example, the enticement of opposing views, and the necessity of diligence in formulating a biblical view of the world. The section concludes with an original model of biblical worldview development which summarizes the scriptural framework used in this research.

### **The Significance of the Christian Mind**

Harry Blamires (2005) asserts, "There is no longer a Christian mind" (p. 3). Blamires believes that the spirituality, practices, and ethics of the Christian are still intact, but that Christian thinking has been overtaken by secularization. Mark 12:30 (NIV) clearly includes the mind alongside of the heart and soul, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (NIV). Modern Christianity is losing its impact in the world and even contributing to the secularization of the culture because it has lost sight of the importance of cultivating the mind (Moreland, 1997). "An intellectually shallow, theologically illiterate form of Christianity" now defines the Christian religion (Moreland, 1997, p. 23). To be effective disciples of Christ, the Christian mind should not be isolated into a separate secular compartment; rather, it must be integrated with the spiritual.

There is a strong biblical basis for developing the mind and thinking from a

biblical perspective. Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (NIV). Transformation is akin to an “intellectual rebirthing” in which one sees everything in relation to an eternal perspective as a redeemed child of God (Barna, 2003). Because human beings almost always act based on what they believe, the apostle Paul deliberately penned the importance of the mind and an intellectual pursuit of God in one’s spiritual journey. Paul himself modeled reasoning and intellectual rigor as he persuaded people to accept the gospel message.

1 Peter 3:15 says, “. . . always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (NIV). The Greek words used in the original text are “apologia,” meaning to make a defense for or against, and “logos,” which means to provide a rational justification through argument. If people are going to invest their lives in following Christ, they need to be able to provide good reasons for building their faith (Moreland, 1997).

### **The Relevance of Christ’s Example**

Christians don’t act like God’s children because they don’t think like Jesus (Barna, 2003). A biblical worldview is making our faith practical in every situation. Philippians 2:5, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (NIV). The practical application of the “mind of Christ” is contrary to that of the world. To think like Christ is to be humble and consider others ahead of oneself.

Barna (2003) lays out four components of a biblical worldview taken directly from Jesus’ teaching and example. The foundation of a biblical worldview comes from

God's word which is "living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword . . ."  
(Hebrews 4:12, NIV). Jesus taught using scripture, he memorized scripture, and he  
challenged the spiritual leaders of the time using scripture.

Jesus' focus was on knowing and fulfilling the will of God. He spent time with  
His Father, he fasted, and he prayed. In John 6:38, Jesus says, "I have come down from  
heaven not to do my will but to do the will of the Father who sent me" (NIV). The  
scriptural foundation is not complete without the focus on doing the will of God. Jesus  
also had a filter that was different from the world. He thought about things that were true,  
noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).  
Finally, Jesus' faith gave him the power to act on his worldview. His weapons were not  
of the world, "On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2  
Corinthians 10:5).

### **The Enticement of Opposing Views**

The post-modern world is full of non-biblical worldviews whose goal is to replace  
Jesus Christ. It is important that Christians "understand the times and know what to do"  
(1 Chronicles 12:32). The battle is ultimately between the wisdom of God and the  
wisdom of man. 1 Corinthians 1:20 addresses this divergent thinking, "Where is the wise  
man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made  
foolish the wisdom of the world" (NIV)? The world deliberately seeks to turn the minds  
of its young people in a direction different from God's will. Paul warns in Colossians 2:8  
(NIV), "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive  
philosophies which depend on human tradition and the basic principles of this world  
rather than on Christ." Many Christians have been taken captive by opposing worldviews



rather than bringing “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). The world’s message is alluring, and a lack of truth makes an individual vulnerable to captivity.

### **The Necessity of Diligence**

To be firmly “rooted and built up in Christ” (Colossians 2:8) is not a passive activity. Proverbs 2:2-7 suggests the dedicated effort that is involved to keep rooted in God’s wisdom,

Turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding,  
and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you  
look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you  
will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God (NIV).

Human thoughts are not naturally in line with God’s thoughts (Isaiah 55:8), so developing a biblical worldview requires an intentional and deliberate endeavor. In 1 Kings 12, Jeroboam enticed the people to worship idols to save himself. He got away with this scheme because of the ignorance of the people; they didn’t know the truth of their own history, and Jeroboam used their lack of knowledge to lead them astray.

In Deuteronomy 6, parents are commanded to impress God’s laws on their children with consistency and diligence. In order to develop a biblical worldview, children need to be in an environment dominated by scripture (Wilson, 1991). It is impossible to achieve such a foundation in Sunday school once a week or even with a daily devotional at home (1991). As the Deuteronomy passage implies, children need to be immersed in God’s word and trained in His ways in every facet of their lives.

As only children, Daniel and his friends were forced to survive and grow amid the clash of worldviews of their day (Noebel, 1991). They were well-informed, intelligent, and diversified in their knowledge base. This intense mental preparation equipped them to influence the culture of their day rather than being influenced by it. They refused to blend in to a corrupt and immoral culture. Daniel and his friends stood on truth rather than caving in to the skillful training of their Babylonian teachers. Training in godliness must be an essential priority if one is to resist the indoctrination of worldliness (Moore, 2006).

### **Model of Biblical Worldview Development**

Figure 2.1 illustrates the scriptural foundation for the development of a biblical worldview. At the center of this model is the “Christian mind,” which is an often neglected part of the Christian walk. Scripture, however, points to the necessity of developing a uniquely Christian mind which has the intellectual capacity to reason and to defend one’s faith.

The Christian mind, which is distinctively different from a worldly mind, is achieved by following the example of Christ as depicted in the model. Jesus taught, memorized, and defended the scriptures. He spent time with God, and His thoughts were focused on what was true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).

The downward arrow labeled “diligent pursuit of truth,” suggests that the development of a biblical worldview is not a passive activity; rather, a biblical worldview is developed intentionally. The Christian mind must be cultivated by seeking godly

wisdom, training in godliness, and developing the intellect as well as following Christ's example of scriptural reliance and application.

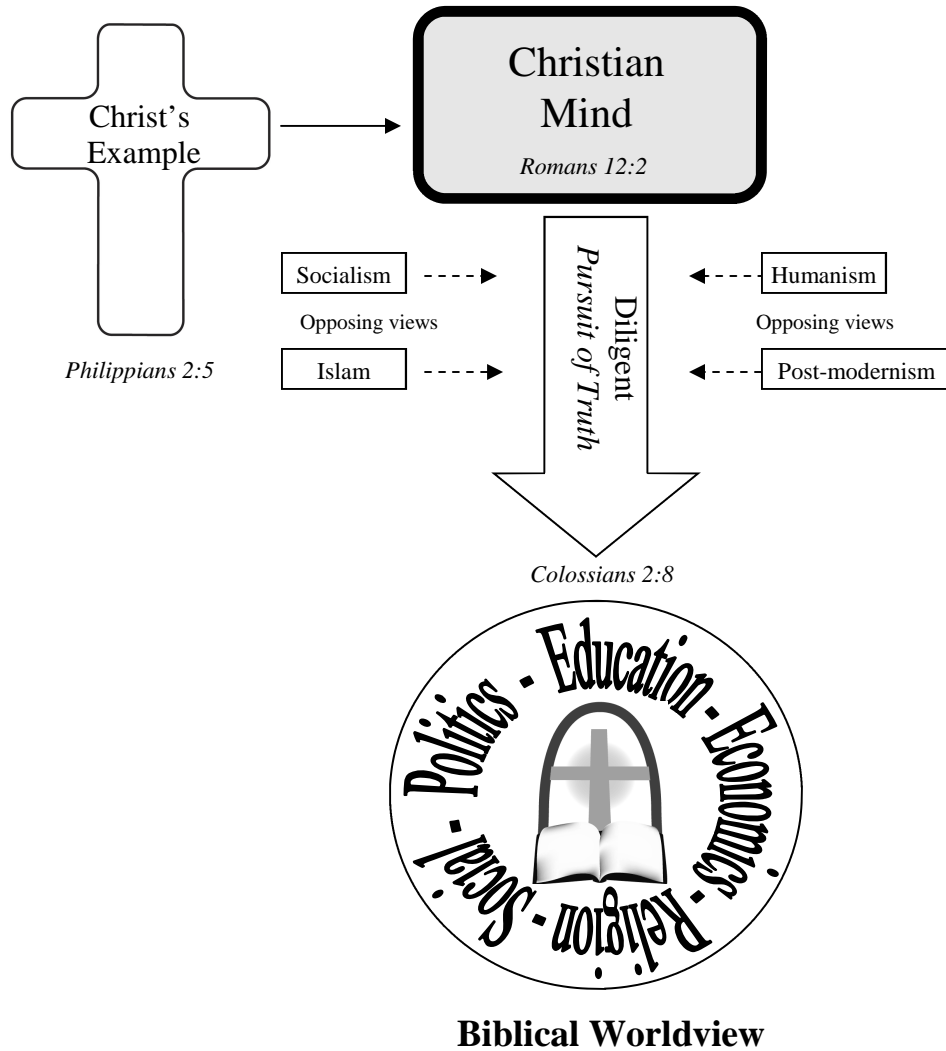
While pursuing a biblical worldview, opposing worldviews will seek to take hold of the Christian mind. This is depicted in the model by the dotted arrows pointing toward "diligence." Socialism, Islam, Humanism, and Post-Modernism are the predominant anti-Christian worldviews that seek to indoctrinate the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian mind. As the Christian seeks to develop biblical thinking, the lure of divergent thinking will be strong and require continued diligence.

The end result of following Christ's example and diligently developing the Christian mind will be a genuine biblical worldview which translates beyond religious issues to all matters of thinking about the world.

### **Religiosity and Religious Influences among Adolescents**

Most biblical scholars suggest that Daniel and his friends were at the vulnerable age of 15 when they were taken captive by the Babylonians. In today's terminology, they were adolescents. Although adolescent worldview studies are visibly lacking in the literature, there are numerous studies and theories related to religiosity and religious influences among teenagers. The preceding paragraphs will address the influence religion has on adolescents, predictors of religiosity in teens including school type and parental influences, and the nature of religious thinking and moral reasoning among this age group. The term religiosity is a sociological term which refers to numerous aspects of religious activity, commitment and belief in doctrine. It does not necessarily refer to Christianity, although many of the studies mentioned specify Christianity in their work.

Figure 2.1. Model of Biblical Worldview Development



### **Influence of Religion on Adolescents**

Religion affects beliefs, attitudes and behaviors through social control, social support, and values identity (Regenerus, 2003). Generally, more extensive religious involvement is associated with positive outcomes during adolescence. According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, religion plays a significant role in the lives of teens. Specifically, Smith (2003) reports nine positive influences that are present in

youth through involvement with religious organizations, and he concludes that the greater the level of religious association, the more that religion will positively influence outcomes in the lives of youth. In particular, a teen's progression into sexual activity is delayed when the teen is more "religious" (Burdette and Hill, 2009), and life satisfaction goes up when the teen regularly participates in church activities (Varon & Riley, 1999). The research also suggests that religious practices correspond to desirable educational outcomes (Regnerus, Smith, & Fritsch, 2003). Smith (2003) suggests that these pro-social influences of religion on youth lives are an outcome of American religions' particular theological, moral and spiritual commitment, not by chance or social process.

### **Predictors of Religiosity in Adolescence**

Data from the National Survey of Children (Gunnore & Moore, 2002) indicates that the best predictors of religiosity among youth aged 17-22 are ethnicity and peers' church attendance. The later suggests the strong influence of positive peer pressure among youth. Religious education during childhood and cognitive ability also ranked high in this survey. Additional data also supports the role education plays in shaping the religious beliefs of youth.

Social norms in schools have the potential to exert a strong influence on behaviors, values and attitudes during adolescent development. Religious beliefs, in particular, are systematically influenced by the type of religious climate within the school. For example, students do appear to change their public religious expressions and their private devotional activities based on religious practices in their schools (Barrett, Pearson, Muller, & Frank, 2007). Uecker (2008) compared the faith life and religious emphasis of Catholic, Protestant and home-school students. Protestant schools were generally more

concerned with the religious development of students, and their students reported a more active faith life than their Catholic and home-school counterparts.

The National Study of Youth and Religion (Regnerus, et al., 2003) was a comprehensive study conducted to research the shape and influence of religion and spirituality in the lives of American adolescents. Overall, the researchers found that 76% of American adolescents believe that a personal God exists. Even though students from religious families were not more likely to behave honestly than their secular counterparts, they were much more likely to be enrolled in religious schools. Of the many facets of religious influence studied, the survey found that Christian school students differed from public school students on issues of money, body, health, and sexuality. Additionally, parent influence was the strongest determinant of student religiosity. The researchers concluded that “parent-child religious identity is powerful, but not inevitable” (p.8).

Other studies support the strong role parents play in the religious involvement of their adolescents (Uecker, 2008). In particular, children who perceived their parents as accepting of them were more likely to internalize their parents’ religious beliefs and practices (Regnerus, et al., 2003). Researchers have also suggested that because religion shapes parenting behaviors, the role of religion in one’s life begins at birth (2003).

### **Religious Thinking and Moral Reasoning in Adolescents**

The teen years have long been considered a time for dramatic changes in religious beliefs and attitudes (Barrett, et al., 2007). In fact, Ozorak (1989) hypothesized that highly religious individuals become more religious during adolescent years, and those who have little interest in religious become less religious during adolescence. Research conducted by Nucci and Turiel (1993) suggest that youth as young as age 10 are able to

understand God separately from what is morally good. This same study suggests a declining tendency with age to apply God's law and a greater likelihood to justify actions based on intrinsic features and social consensus. There are many psychological theories and models that attempt to explain moral behavior; however, they all agree that a person's moral or immoral behavior is not determined by one single factor. The following sections will discuss the leading theories of moral reasoning beginning with Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral stages which has its roots in cognitive theory. The work of William Damon and James Fowler, who both extended the work of Kohlberg, will also be discussed.

**Kohlberg's stages of moral development.** Beginning in the 1950s, Lawrence Kohlberg (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977) identified six stages of moral development based on his research utilizing hypothetical dilemmas. He and his colleagues documented the responses of people to a series of dilemmas at various ages over the course of their lives. These six stages of moral development were more broadly classified into three integrated progressive levels.

Children are typically categorized at the pre-conventional level because they tend to make moral choices based on direct and external consequences. Adolescents are more likely to judge morality by comparing actions to the views and expectations of society, and Kohlberg labeled this level, "conventional." As a person matures to post-conventional level of moral reasoning, they make moral decisions based on individual principles of right and wrong. Kohlberg's theory is widely accepted in the literature and has served as the basis for additional research and theory development in the fields of education and psychology.

**William Damon's model of moral development.** Building on Kohlberg's six stages of moral development, Damon (2006) set out to answer the question, "How does a child develop a lifelong commitment to moral behavior?" In other words, he wanted to broaden the discussion of moral development to include the concepts of character and commitment. Although he believed that there were some elements of biological predispositions, intellectual development, and learning theory that contributed to moral development, Damon believed that it was not enough for a child to tell right from wrong; rather, children needed to develop a commitment to acting out their beliefs.

Damon and his colleagues devised an experiment to see if beliefs match behavior across several age groups including young children and pre-teens. The results suggested that ideals have an increasing influence on conduct as a child matures. The most significant conclusion drawn by Damon from this study and related endeavors, however, was that beliefs must be adopted as a part of one's identity if they are to consistently guide behavior. He labeled this concept, "moral identity," the resolve to act on ideals.

Damon also emphasized the importance of adolescence noting that by the onset of puberty, young people begin to speak in terms related to morality such as "fair-minded," "generous," and "honesty." Some adolescent youth also begin to describe themselves in terms of moral goals, suggesting that their moral identity is solidifying. Summarizing other research in moral development, Damon concludes that the key to developing moral identity in children and teens is the presence of "multiple social influences that guide the child in the same direction" (2006, p.7).

**Fowler's stages of faith development.** James Fowler (1981) extended the work of Kohlberg to the area of faith development, the process of finding meaning out of life in



which children and adolescents create loyalty to a set of values. During this quest for meaning, children and teens pass through stages similar to those in Kohlberg's moral development. Fowler believes that everyone has some basic level of faith, and the stages of progression are universal. In the first three stages individuals rely on authority for spiritual beliefs. Stage four is marked by the move away from dependence on others' beliefs and authority towards a motivation to make choices based on self-fulfillment. Individuals that progress to the fifth stage are more tolerant of others' views and not as preoccupied with their own beliefs. It is rare for someone to arrive at stage six, which Fowler refers to as "universalizing." During this highest level of faith, the individual is in search of and focused on universal values such as justice and unconditional love.

### **Empirical Studies of Biblical Worldview**

In recent years, research investigating biblical worldview formation has made it into the literature and has been the subject of several doctoral dissertations. The following section will review empirical studies investigating the influence of education on biblical worldview formation.

#### **Research on the Influence of Christian Education on Worldview**

In a doctoral dissertation project, Meyer (2003) compared the degree to which students demonstrate a biblical worldview with the factors that may have contributed to the development of that worldview. Using his own assessment instrument, Meyer concluded that the student's personal faith commitment had the greatest influence on biblical worldview formation. In addition, his study suggested that years of enrollment in a Christian school had no significant influence in a student's development of a biblical worldview. However, in a previous study conducted by another doctoral student, years

enrolled at a Christian school did correlate with a higher level of moral reasoning (Munson, 1988).

Bryant (2008) also chose to study factors influencing biblical worldview in his doctoral dissertation. He was unable to disprove any of his null hypotheses suggesting that years of attendance at a Christian school, denominational preference, and choice of Bible curriculum do not influence the students' worldview. Even though specific Bible curricula did not seem to have a significant impact on worldview formation, other studies have examined the effect of worldview courses and seminars on the worldview development. The subjects of these studies were college students or adults.

Davis (2004) studied the impact in the lives of graduates of the *Focus on the Family Institute* as a result of a one semester course taught from a Christian worldview. In the results of this qualitative study, the author suggests that the course fostered a change in attitude, knowledge, and worldview skills. Similarly, Olson (2003) developed an eight week worldview course at a Methodist church. He used a pre and post test instrument and found that the course increased biblical literacy and Christian worldview. Also concerned about the impact that can be made by a local church, Johnson (2004) offered a worldview course to high school students and surveyed them before and after instruction. He reported significant changes in the students' ability to apply biblical principles to contemporary issues. Cassidy (2001) took a different approach and studied the effect curriculum changes could have on increasing high school students' confidence when confronted with contemporary university worldviews. High school students were guided through a specific worldview-based series with the intent of raising their confidence levels. Results indicated a 29% rise in confidence levels and a 40% increase

in post test scores. These results suggest that subjective confidence regarding worldviews and Christian beliefs can be increased through education.

Henderson, Deckard, and DeWitt (2003) studied the impact of teaching a “young earth creationist worldview” apologetics course to college students. Utilizing the “creation worldview test,” an instrument created by Deckard, they found that when taught, student’s worldviews shift toward stronger beliefs in young earth creation. In ongoing research at this University, similar studies have also suggested that teaching a traditional science class from a young earth creationist perspective did not seem to have the same effect. These same researchers looked at the effect high school type (public versus Christian) has on the worldview of Christian college students. They found higher pre-test scores in graduates from Christian high schools (Henderson, et al., 2003).

### **Research on Teacher and School Leader Worldview**

Research shows that students are influenced by the moral character of a teacher, and sadly, there is no significant difference in moral self-concept of teachers in public schools and those in Christian schools (Brown, 2006). Recent research has examined the effect of the faculty’s biblical worldview on the worldviews of the students they teach over time.

In attempting to answer this question, Fyock (2008) conducted a causal comparative study of teacher and student worldviews utilizing the PEERS instrument. Results suggest that there is a relationship between faculty worldview and that of their students. Recognizing that a reason Christian students lack a biblical worldview is due in large part to Christian educators’ biblically devoid worldviews. In another doctoral dissertation, Elizabeth Moore (2006) investigated the consistency between the self-

reported biblical worldview of Christian educational leaders and their actual worldview score. Utilizing the PEERS instrument, she discovered that while 63.6% ranked their worldview as completely biblical, only 20% scored in the biblical theistic category of the PEERS. Moore's research also suggested that number of years in Christian education, matriculation into a Christian college, and level of education did not positively correlate with a higher biblical worldview score among the leaders she studied in Christian education.

Wood (2008) conducted a study in which he researched educators' worldviews in light of their upbringing, type of high school and college education, professional affiliation of the school, teaching experience, and grade level. The only significant relationship was noted between professional affiliation of the schools and teacher worldview. The other factors did not seem to significantly influence the biblical worldview of Christian educators. Additional research findings from higher education demonstrate a direct correlation between a teacher's worldview on evolutionary Darwinism versus creation and its influence on student beliefs (Deckard, Henderson, & Grant, 2002).

### **Summary**

The Bible provides a comprehensive framework for the importance of developing a biblical worldview, and it clearly points to Christ's example for mental preparedness. However, research suggests that Christians, specifically Christian educators, are losing momentum among today's youth who are consistently demonstrating a shift toward secular worldviews (Smithwick, 2008). The competing worldviews of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are enticing, and the Christian must be diligent in his pursuit of a biblical mindset.

Evidence from sociological studies of religiosity and psychological studies of moral development support the importance of studying worldview formation among adolescents. The teen years are a critical time of developing one's own "moral identity," and weaning away from the strong influence of authority. However, studies also support the continuing role parents play in religious thinking and behavior throughout adolescence.

Worldview studies are beginning to surface in the literature, but the worldview of middle-school students and related influences had not been reported prior to the current research. This project examined the influence of four variables on the biblical worldview of middle-school students and sought to begin the dialogue and inquisition into this important topic.

Chapter 3 will lay out the research design for this study. The chapter discusses eight research questions and related null hypotheses for the study. The site and sample for the study are described, and the data collection process and analysis procedures are outlined. The chapter also includes an in depth description of the PEERS worldview assessment instrument that was used by the researcher.

## CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research project was to investigate the relationship between four faith-based factors and the development of a biblical worldview in Christian middle-school students. Additional analysis focused on the relationship between students' religion worldview as indicated by the religion subcategory scores on the PEERS and the four independent variables. This chapter explains the design, methods and procedures that were used in conducting this study.

### **Research Design**

This study utilized comparative data analysis to investigate the relationship between four independent variables, type of elementary education; church involvement; personal faith commitment; and parent Christian belief, and one dependent variable, the composite PEERS test scores of students enrolled in Christian middle-school. The study further analyzed the relationship between each of the four independent variables and the religion subcategory scores of the PEERS test. Descriptive statistics provided additional data for understanding the worldview of Christian middle-school students in all five categories of the PEERS test.

Inferential statistics were based on the use of the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) test. The reason why the K-W test was used, in preference to a parametric test (e.g. ANOVA) is that the K-W test does not assume that the variables are normally distributed and measured at the interval level. It does not assume that the variances are homogeneous and it not so sensitive to outliers (unusual or extreme values). The main assumption of the

K-W test is that the dependent variable can be meaningfully ranked into a logical order. The null hypothesis of the K-W test is that there are no differences between the frequency distributions of the dependent variable with respect to two or more mutually exclusive groups in an independent variable. The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis if the p value of the K-W statistic is less than .05. The Kruskal-Wallis tests are performed using the “Non-parametric tests – K independent samples...” procedure in SPSS (Field, 2009).

A convenience sample of 192 eighth graders from two Christian middle schools were given the PEERS worldview test for middle-school students which also included four customized survey questions requiring multiple choice responses. The results of the PEERS test were paired with the survey question results to investigate the relationship between each of the variables and the worldview scores using the Kruskal-Wallis test. Religion subcategory scores were also paired with the survey question responses using the Kruskal-Wallis test to investigate the relationship between religion-based worldview scores and each of the four variables. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze each of the subcategory test results in relation to the survey question responses.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the writer in this research project:

1. Does the type of elementary school attended affect a student’s biblical worldview in middle-school?
2. Does frequency of church participation affect a student’s biblical worldview in middle-school?
3. Does time spent in personal prayer and Bible study affect a student’s biblical

worldview in middle-school?

4. Does a parent's Christian belief identification affect a student's biblical worldview in middle-school?
5. Does the type of elementary school attended affect a student's biblical worldview of religious-based issues?
6. Does the frequency of church participation affect a student's biblical worldview of religious-based issues?
7. Does time spent in personal prayer and Bible study affect a student's biblical worldview of religious-based issues?
8. Does a parent's Christian belief identification affect a student's biblical worldview of religious-based issues?

### **Null Hypotheses**

There are eight null hypotheses that guided this research:

9. The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attended the following types of schools: 1. Christian schools, 2. private secular schools, 3. public schools, 4. home schools.
10. The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attend church two or more times per week, one time per week and not at all.
11. The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who read their Bibles and pray frequently, occasionally, and not at all.



12. The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who live with at least one Christian parent and those that do not live with a Christian parent.
13. The biblical worldview of religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attended the following types of schools: 1. Christian schools, 2. private secular schools, 3. public schools, 4. home schools.
14. The biblical worldview of religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attend church two or more times per week, one time per week and not at all.
15. The biblical worldview or religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who read their Bibles and pray frequently, occasionally, and not at all.
16. The biblical worldview of religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who live with at least one Christian parent and those that do not live with a Christian parent.

### **Designation of Variables**

This comparative study relied on data obtained from a convenience sample of eighth grade students from two similar Christian schools. The dependent variable was the worldview of the middle-school students as measured by the PEERS worldview test including the composite scores and the religion subcategory scores. The independent variables were type of elementary school attended, frequency of church attendance, time spent in personal prayer and Bible study, and parental profession of faith as measured by

student responses to four questions.

### **Site**

Two Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) schools in the state of Virginia were chosen for this study. The schools have similar mission statements, curricula, and statements of faith. Each of the schools has over 500 students enrolled in grades 6-12. Both schools accept new students into middle-school, and the student population is represented by home-school, public school, and other private school transfers. The administrators of these schools have a strong desire to solidify a biblical worldview among their students, and they are interested in knowing the strength and consistency of the worldviews of their students. All teachers are ACSI certified and born again believers as a prerequisite for employment. Both schools strive to integrate the Bible into all subjects, teach Bible as a core subject, and provide worldview and Christian philosophy of education training for faculty.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of interest for this study was middle-school students from Christian schools in the Southeast United States. The study utilized a convenience sample of all eighth grade students from two selected ACSI Christian middle-schools in the state of Virginia. One hundred ninety-two students comprised this sample which represented various social, economic, denominational, and cultural backgrounds. Parental permission was obtained prior to administering the test (See Appendix A). Only three students from both schools chose not to participate in the study. Students did not provide their name on the test so that anonymity was guaranteed throughout the study.

## **Data Collection Process and Methodology**

The PEERS worldview assessment was administered to the sample population during a predetermined class time. Prior to completion of the assessment instrument, the participants completed a brief profile survey located in Appendix B. The Nehemiah Institute allows for four questions to be included in the test administration booklet. The survey was used to report type of elementary school education, frequency of church attendance, frequency of personal Bible study and prayer, and parent profession of faith. The specific procedure for collecting data is discussed in the following section.

### **Procedure**

The Nehemiah Institute provided the test booklets and scoring for the project. The researcher worked with each school's administrator to set the time frame for administering the test and to ensure that parental permission was obtained prior to the test administration date. In addition, IRB approval was obtained prior to conducting this research (Appendix C). The researcher requested that the appropriate classroom teacher monitor the test utilizing instructions provided by the Nehemiah Institute. Students were not allowed to receive any explanation or outside help while taking the test, and there was no specific preparation for taking the test.

The PEERS worldview test was administered along with the four-question survey located in Appendix B. The results of these questions provided the data for each of the four independent variables. Question one of the survey asked the student to indicate whether he or she attended Christian school, private/secular school, public school or were home-schooled for grades kindergarten through five. Question two asked the student how often he or she attends church activities. This data was reported in times per week

including 0, 1, or 2. Question three asked the student how often he or she spends in personal prayer and Bible study. This data was reported as everyday (4), occasionally (3), rarely (2) or never (1). The fourth question was a “yes” or “no” question which asked the student if at least one parent is a born-again believer. Since the responses were not on an interval scale, they were represented as “2” for “yes” and “1” for “no” for purposes of statistical analysis.

### **The PEERS Instrument**

The researcher utilized the PEERS worldview test for middle-school students to assess the worldview of the students (See Appendix D). The PEERS test reflects an individual’s basic worldview position in five areas which gives the test its acronym: politics, economics, education, religion, and social issues. It is a 70 item test, and results are ranked in four categories as depicted in Table 3.1. Respondents answer statements using a five point Likert scale (strongly agree; tend to agree; neutral; tend to disagree; strongly disagree). Scores are generated from each of the subcategories, and a total composite score is determined on a scale from -100 to +100 (Nehemiah Institute, n.d.).

The PEERS worldview test was developed based on the beliefs of biblical scholars and secular humanist scholars. The Bible was the primary source for the biblical Christian statements reflected in the PEERS survey, and the *Humanist Manifesto*, published in 1933 and updated in 2003, was used to develop the humanist worldview statements for the test.

In 1995, the PEERS test successfully underwent a professional validity and reliability study conducted by Dr. Brian Ray (1995). Ray used a panel of Christian biblical worldview experts and non-Christian worldview experts in his commissioned

study. The results revealed that 70% of the experts agreed that 83% of the seventy items identified the construct worldview. At least 60% of the experts agreed that 93% of the items would identify worldview. Ray was able to conclude that the general agreement among the worldview experts supported the validity of the PEERS test instrument.

Ray determined that the instrument was reliable using Cronbach’s internal consistency alpha method of analysis. Cronbach’s alpha is a measure of the homogeneity of the test items that is widely used for opinion and attitude surveys (Ary, et al., 2006). Attitude scales typically have reliability coefficients in the .60s to the .80s (Borg & Gall, 1989). The alpha rating for the Total Score was .94 which indicates that the reliability of the PEERS test is very good. The sub-set scores were as follows: Politics=.83, Economics=.80, Education=.82, Religion=.65, and Social Issues=.78. The PEERS test has been used by churches, Christian schools, families, and researchers as a tool to assess worldview. The adult and high school versions of the test are available in hard copy and online; however, the middle-school test is only available in a written test booklet. The Nehemiah Institute provides the scoring for all tests (Smithwick, 2008).

Table 3.1

*PEERS Worldview Assessment Scale*

Worldview	PEERS Test Score
Biblical Theism	70-100
Moderate Christian	30-69
Secular Humanism	0-29
Socialism	< 0

Note. Retrieved from [www.NehemiahInstitute.com](http://www.NehemiahInstitute.com)

## **Data Analysis**

All raw data was obtained from the PEERS test and accompanying survey questions. To ensure confidentiality and participant anonymity, no personal identifying information was included on the tests, and all raw data was sent directly to the Nehemiah Institute via certified mail. The results were returned to the researcher in Microsoft Excel format. The Nehemiah Institute also provided results to the individual schools.

Data was analyzed using SPSS to generate the descriptive statistics and subsequent comparative analysis. Inferential statistics were based on the use of the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) test. Data analysis focused on the relationship between the composite PEERS scores and each of the four independent variables including type of elementary school, church attendance, personal prayer and Bible study, and parent Christian belief identification. The relationship between religion subcategory scores was further evaluated in respect to the four variables identified in the study. The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis if the p value of the K-W statistic was less than .05. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the mean scores of each sample group and to analyze the results from the subcategories of the PEERS test (politics, economics, education, religion, and social issues). The researcher used this data to describe the results in terms of the PEERS scoring scale (see Table 3.1).

## **Summary**

Chapter 3 outlined the comparative research design for this project which examined the relationship between four independent variables and the development of a biblical worldview in Christian middle-school students. One hundred ninety-two students from two schools completed the PEERS worldview test and a four-question

survey which provided the data for this project. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there was a significant relationship between variables. Descriptive statistics supplied additional data for understanding the worldview of Christian middle-school students in each of the five PEERS subcategories.

Investigating the influences of biblical worldview formation is an important issue for Christian school educators. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between four variables on the PEERS worldview scores of middle-school students. While this chapter described the methods and design utilized to carry out this study, Chapter 4 presents the results of the project.

## CHAPTER FOUR DATA ANALYSIS

As stated in Chapter 1, the study reported here examined the relationship between four independent variables and the development of a biblical worldview among middle-school students attending Christian schools. Religion subcategory scores were further analyzed for differences between the four variables identified in the study including type of elementary school, church attendance, personal prayer and Bible study, and parent Christian belief identification. This chapter is organized in terms of the null hypotheses posed in Chapter 1. The comparative data analysis focuses on the relationship between the composite PEERS scores and each of the four independent variables. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze results from each of the subcategories of the PEERS test which include politics, economics, education, religion and social issues.

Inferential statistics were based on the use of the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) test. The reason why the K-W test was used, in preference to a parametric test (e.g. ANOVA) is that the K-W test does not assume that the variables are normally distributed and measured at the interval level. It does not assume that the variances are homogeneous and it not so sensitive to outliers (unusual or extreme values). The main assumption of the K-W test is that the dependent variable can be meaningfully ranked into a logical order. The null hypothesis of the K-W test is that there are no differences between the frequency distributions of the dependent variable with respect to two or more mutually exclusive groups in an independent variable. The decision rule is to reject the null hypothesis if the p value of the K-W statistic is less than .05. The Kruskal-Wallis tests were performed



using the “Non-parametric tests – K independent samples...” procedure in SPSS (Field, 2009).

### **Analysis of Null Hypotheses**

There were eight research questions and related null hypotheses that guided this research study. Each of the following null hypotheses will serve as the framework through which the resultant data will be viewed and reported:

H<sub>01</sub>: The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attended the following types of schools: 1. Christian schools, 2. private secular schools, 3. public schools, 4. home schools.

H<sub>02</sub>: The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attend church two or more times per week, one time per week and not at all.

H<sub>03</sub>: The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who read their Bibles and pray frequently, occasionally, and not at all.

H<sub>04</sub>: The biblical worldview (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who live with at least one Christian parent and those that do not live with a Christian parent.

H<sub>05</sub>: The biblical worldview of religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attended the following types of schools: 1. Christian schools, 2. private secular schools, 3. public schools, 4. home schools.

H<sub>06</sub>: The biblical worldview of religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who attend church two or more times per week, one time per week and not at all.

H<sub>07</sub>: The biblical worldview or religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who read their Bibles and pray frequently, occasionally, and not at all.

H<sub>08</sub>: The biblical worldview of religion sub-scores (as measured by the PEERS instrument) will not be significantly different for middle school students who live with at least one Christian parent and those that do not live with a Christian parent.

### **Null Hypothesis One**

Students were asked to report the type of school they had attended for elementary school years. Choices included Christian school, private secular school, public school and home school. These results paired with their composite PEERS test scores provided descriptive data as a first step in analyzing the relationship between type of elementary school attended and biblical worldview. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between school type and a biblical worldview as measured by the PEERS test results.

**Descriptive analysis of PEERS scores and school type.** An overview of Table 4.1 indicates only small differences in the mean worldview scores based on type of school attended. Means for all four school types fall in the secular humanist range for PEERS scoring (0-29) with mean scores from the private secular school group slightly higher than the other three groups. Public schools students had the lowest mean score of 17.07. It is also noted that the number of students who attended Christian elementary

school (n = 109) far exceeds the other three school types.

Table 4.1

*Comparison of PEERS Composite Mean Scores and School Type*

	n	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Christian School	109	21.29	15.91	18.27	24.31
Private Secular	9	26.62	14.32	15.60	37.63
Public School	67	17.07	13.49	13.78	20.36
Home School	7	24.17	11.51	13.52	34.82
Total	192	20.17	15.01	18.03	22.31

Table 4.2

*Comparison of Composite PEERS Scores and School Type using the Kruskal-Wallis test*

Dependent variable	Independent variable	n	Mean Rank	K-W statistic	df	p
PEERS Composite Score	Christian School	109	100.03	5.758	3	.124
	Private Secular	9	121.44			
	Public School	67	85.40			
	Home School	7	115.64			

**Comparison of PEERS composite scores and type of school attended.** The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test ( $K-W(3) = 5.579, p = .124$ ) does not indicate a significant difference between the PEERS composite scores with respect to the type of school attended (Table 4.2). The null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and it is concluded that there is not a significant relationship between type of elementary school attended and biblical worldview as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

## Null Hypothesis Two

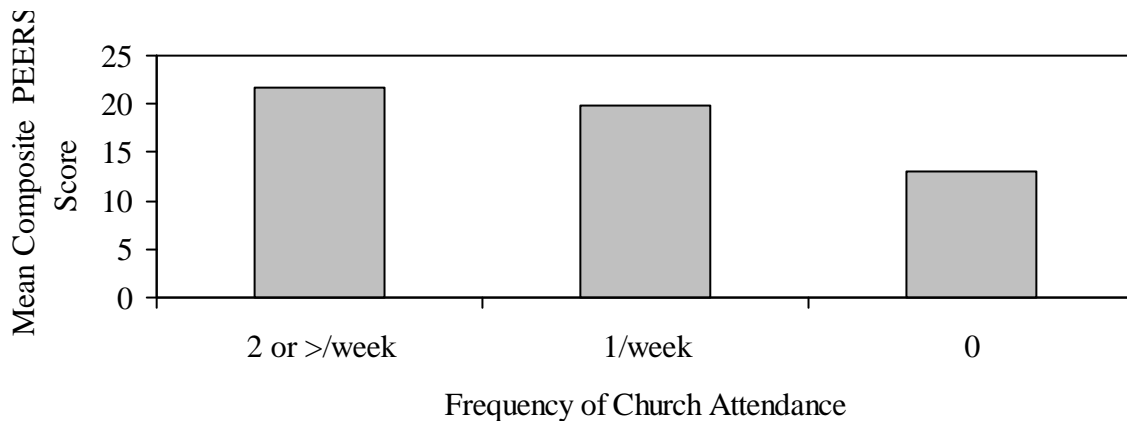
Students were asked to report the frequency which they attended church activities in number of times per week. These results paired with their composite PEERS test scores provided descriptive data as a first step in analyzing the relationship between frequency of church attendance and biblical worldview. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between church attendance and a biblical worldview as measured by the PEERS test results.

Table 4.3

*Comparison of PEERS Composite Mean Scores and Church Attendance*

	n	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Church 2 or more times per week	97	21.76	12.70	19.20	24.32
Church 1 time per week	76	19.92	17.33	15.96	23.88
No church attendance	19	13.07	14.61	6.03	20.11
Total	192	20.17	15.01	18.03	22.31

Figure 4.1. PEERS Composite Test Scores and Frequency of Church Attendance



### **Descriptive analysis of PEERS scores and frequency of church attendance.**

An examination of Table 4.3 and Figure 4.1 reveals a difference in the mean PEERS composite scores for those who attend church and those who do not for the participants in this study. The difference between those who attend church two or more times per week and those who attend an average of once per week is not as noticeable as the difference between those that attend regularly and those who do not attend church at all. All three groups scored in the secular humanist scoring range (0-29).

Table 4.4

*Comparison of Composite PEERS Scores and Church Attendance using the Kruskal-Wallis test*

Dependent variable	Independent variable	n	Mean Rank	K-W statistic	df	p
PEERS Composite Score	2 or more times per week	97	103.94	7.146	2	.028
	1 time per week	76	94.33			
	No church attendance	19	67.18			

### **Comparison of PEERS composite scores and frequency of church attendance.**

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test ( $K-W(2) = 7.146, p = .028$ ) indicates a significant difference between the PEERS composite scores with respect to church attendance (Table 4.2). The null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between frequency of church attendance and the biblical worldview of Christian middle school students as indicated by the PEERS worldview instrument.

### **Null Hypothesis Three**

Students were asked to report the frequency which they participated in personal

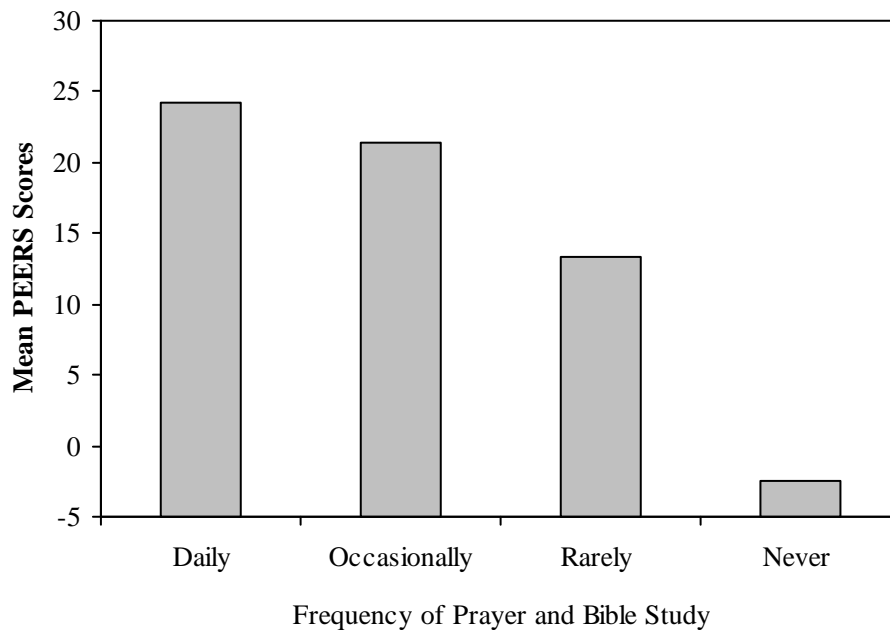
prayer and Bible study. These results paired with their composite PEERS test scores provided descriptive data as a first step in analyzing the relationship between personal faith practices and biblical worldview. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between time spent in prayer and Bible study and a biblical worldview as measured by the PEERS test results.

Table 4.5

*Comparison of PEERS Composite Mean Scores and Personal Prayer and Bible Study*

	n	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pray and read Bible every day	40	24.15	17.92	18.41	29.88
Pray and read Bible occasionally	113	21.41	13.87	18.82	23.99
Rarely pray and read Bible	37	13.32	12.29	9.22	17.43
Never pray and read Bible	2	-2.40	.56	-7.48	2.68
Total	192	20.17	15.01	18.03	22.31

Figure 4.2. PEERS Composite Test Scores and Frequency of Prayer and Bible Study



**Descriptive analysis of PEERS scores and frequency of prayer and Bible**

**study.** Table 4.5 and Figure 4.2 reveal a difference in the mean PEERS composite scores of those who pray and read their Bibles regularly and those who do not for the participants in this study. Groups who pray and read their Bibles occasionally and rarely scored in the secular humanist category of PEERS scoring (0-29) as did the participants who read their Bibles and prayed daily. However, the daily group scored just below the moderate Christian range (30-69) with a mean score of 24.15. Only two students in this study report never reading their Bibles or praying, and their mean score was in the socialist scoring range (<0). Eighty percent (n = 153) of Christian middle-school students are praying and reading their Bibles independently at least occasionally according to the results of the survey question.

Table 4.6

*Comparison of Composite PEERS Score with Personal Prayer and Bible Study using the Kruskal-Wallis test*

Dependent variable	Independent variable	n	Mean Rank	K-W statistic	df	p
PEERS Composite Score	Every day	40	106.54	15.459	3	.001
	Occasionally	113	102.81			
	Rarely	37	71.14			
	Never	2	8.75			

**Comparison of PEERS composite scores and personal prayer and Bible**

**study.** The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test (K-W (3) = 15.459, p = .001) indicate significant differences between the PEERS composite scores with respect to time spent on personal prayer and Bible study (Table 4.6). The more time spent in personal prayer

and Bible study, the higher the mean rank of the PEERS composite score. The null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between time spent in personal prayer and Bible study and the worldview scores of middle-school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

**Null Hypothesis Four**

Students were asked to report if at least one parent was a born-again believer. These results paired with their composite PEERS test scores provided descriptive data as a first step in analyzing the relationship between parents’ Christian belief identification and biblical worldview. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between parent profession of Christian faith and biblical worldview as measured by the PEERS test results.

Table 4.7

*Comparison of PEERS Composite Mean Scores and Parent Belief Identification*

	n	Mean	SD	<u>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</u>	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
At least one parent is born again	183	20.63	14.91	18.46	22.81
Neither parent is born again	9	10.84	4.97	-.63	22.32
Total	192	20.17	15.01	18.03	22.31

**Descriptive analysis of PEERS composite mean scores and parent belief identification.** An examination of Table 4.7 reveals a difference in the mean PEERS scores for participants in this study living with at least one Christian parent. There is a



notable difference in the sample sizes between the two groups with most students (n = 183) reporting to live with at least one Christian parent. The mean scores of both groups were within the range for secular humanist worldview (0-29).

Table 4.8

*Comparison of Composite PEERS Score and Parent Belief Identification using the Kruskal-Wallis test*

Dependent variable	Independent variable	n	Mean Rank	K-W statistic	df	p
PEERS Composite Score	At least one parent	183	98.06	3.078	1	.079
	Neither parent	9	64.78			

**Comparison of PEERS composite scores with parent belief identification.**

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test (K-W (1) = 3.078, p = .079) indicates no significant difference between the PEERS composite scores with respect to parent belief identification (Table 4.8). The null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and it is concluded that there is not a statistically significant relationship between parent Christian belief and the worldview scores of middle-school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

**Null Hypothesis Five**

Students were asked to report the type of elementary school they attended. These results paired with their religion subcategory PEERS scores provided descriptive data as a first step in analyzing the relationship between years in Christian school and biblical worldview of religious-based issues. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between school type and religion subcategory scores as measured by the PEERS instrument.

Table 4.9

*Comparison of PEERS Religion Scores and Type of Elementary School*

	n	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Christian School	109	48.86	24.75	44.16	53.56
Private Secular	9	48.00	29.41	25.39	70.60
Public School	67	41.43	25.51	35.20	47.65
Home School	7	66.00	22.44	45.23	86.76
Total	192	46.85	25.48	43.22	50.48

**Descriptive analysis of religion scores and type of elementary school.** An examination of Table 4.9 reveals that most Christian middle-school students in this study also attended Christian elementary school (n = 109). These students performed in the moderate Christian worldview range (30-69), but it was the students who were home schooled for the elementary years that had the highest mean score in the religion subcategory. These seven students scored in the high end of the moderate Christian worldview range of the PEERS instrument in the religion subcategory.

Table 4.10

*Comparison of PEERS Religion Scores with School Type using the Kruskal-Wallis test*

Dependent variable	Independent variable	n	Mean Rank	K-W statistic	df	p
PEERS Religion Score	Christian School	109	100.45	7.167	3	.067
	Private Secular	9	101.61			
	Public School	67	85.14			
	Home School	7	137.07			

**Comparison of religion score with school type.** The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test (K-W (3) = 7.167, p = .067) indicates no significant difference between the PEERS composite scores with respect to school type (Table 4.10). The null hypothesis

cannot be rejected, and it is concluded that the type of elementary school attended is not significantly related to the biblical worldview of religion-based issues as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

**Null Hypothesis Six**

Students were asked to report the frequency which they attended church activities in number of times per week. These results paired with their religion subcategory PEERS scores provided descriptive data as a first step in analyzing the relationship between frequency of church attendance and biblical worldview specific to religion issues. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between church attendance and a biblical worldview of religion-based issues as measured by the PEERS test results.

Table 4.11

*Comparison of Religion Scores and Church Attendance*

	N	Mean	SD	<u>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</u>	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Church 2 or more times /week	97	50.14	23.21	45.46	54.82
Church 1 time per week	76	47.78	28.07	41.83	53.74
Do not attend church	19	26.31	26.04	13.76	38.86
Total	192	46.85	25.48	43.22	50.48

**Descriptive analysis of religion scores and church attendance.** Table 4.11 indicates that most participants in this study do attend church on a regular basis (n=173). Students attending church two or more times per week had the highest mean score on the religion subcategory of the PEERS test, but this score still fell short of the biblical theistic

worldview range (70-100). Students who reported attending church one time per week scored slightly below those attending at least twice as often. Christian school students in this study who do not attend church regularly scored in the secular humanism range in the religion subcategory of the PEERS test with a mean score of 26.31.

Table 4.12

*Comparison of PEERS Religion Scores with Church Attendance*

Dependent variable	Independent variable	n	Mean Rank	K-W statistic	df	p
PEERS Religion Score	2 or more times per week	97	102.73	12.060	2	.002
	1 time per week	76	98.97			
	No church attendance	19	54.84			
	Total	192				

**Comparison of religion scores with church attendance.** The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test ( $K-W(2) = 12.060, p = .002$ ) indicates significant differences between the PEERS religion scores with respect to church attendance (Table 4.12). The null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between frequency of church attendance and the religion-based biblical worldview of middle school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

**Null Hypothesis Seven**

Students were asked to report the frequency which they participated in personal prayer and Bible study. These results paired with their religion subcategory PEERS scores provided descriptive data as a first step in analyzing the relationship between personal faith practices and a biblical worldview of religion-based issues. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship

between time spent in prayer and Bible study and a biblical worldview in the religion subcategory.

Table 4.13

*Comparison of Religion Scores and Prayer and Bible Study*

	n	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pray/read Bible every day	40	52.85	23.76	45.25	60.44
Pray /read Bible occasionally	113	49.94	24.42	45.38	54.49
Rarely pray/ read Bible	37	33.35	24.44	25.19	41.50
Never pray/ read Bible	2	2.00	19.79	-17.88	19.88
Total	192	46.85	25.48	43.22	50.48

**Descriptive analysis of religion scores and time spent in prayer and Bible**

**study.** Table 4.13 indicates that most participants in this study (n = 113) pray and read their Bibles at least occasionally. The mean religion category score for these students was in the moderate Christian category of PEERS scoring. Students who reported daily prayer and Bible study (n = 40), had the highest mean score, but the mean still fell well below the 70 point threshold for a biblical theistic worldview. Eighty percent of the middle-school participants in this study are reading their Bibles and praying at least occasionally.

Table 4.14

*Comparison of PEERS Religion Scores with Prayer and Bible Study using the Kruskal-Wallis test*

Dependent variable	Independent variable	n	Mean Rank	K-W statistic	df	p
PEERS Religion Score	Every day	40	107.99	17.474	3	.001
	Occasionally	113	103.21			
	Rarely	37	68.03			
	Never	2	14.25			
	Total	192				

**Comparison of religion scores with prayer and Bible study.** The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test ( $K-W(3) = 17.474, p = .001$ ) indicates significant differences between the PEERS religion scores with respect to church attendance (Table 4.14). The null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that prayer and Bible study are significantly related to the religion-based biblical worldview of middle school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

**Null Hypothesis Eight**

Students were asked to report if at least one parent was a born-again believer. These results paired with their religion subcategory PEERS scores provided descriptive data as a first step in analyzing the relationship between parents’ Christian belief identification and biblical worldview of religion-based issues. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between parent profession of Christian faith and biblical worldview as measured by the PEERS religion subcategory scores.

Table 4.15

*Comparison of Religion Scores and Parent Belief Identification*

	n	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
At least one parent is Christian	183	47.10	25.22	43.42	50.78
Neither parent is Christian	9	41.77	31.64	17.45	66.10
Total	192	46.85	25.48	43.22	50.48

**Descriptive analysis of religion scores and parent belief identification.** Table 4.15 indicates that most of the students participating in this study (n = 183) live in a home where at least one parent identifies him or herself as a born-again Christian. The mean religion scores for both groups of students were situated in the middle of the moderate Christian worldview range (30-60). Students with at least one Christian parent in the home scored slightly higher than those who live in a home without a Christian parent.

**Comparison of religion scores with parent belief identification.** The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test (K-W (1) = .535, p = .464) indicates no significant difference between the PEERS religion scores with respect to parent belief identification (Table 4.16). The null hypothesis is not rejected, and it is concluded that there is not a statistically significant relationship between religion-based worldview scores and parent Christian faith identification.

Table 4.16

*Comparison of PEERS Religion Scores with Parent Belief using the Kruskal-Wallis test*

Dependent variable	Independent variable	n	Mean Rank	K-W statistic	df	p
PEERS Religion Score	At least one parent	183	97.15	.535	1	.464
	Neither parent	9	83.28			
	Total	192				

### **PEERS Subcategory Score Analysis**

The PEERS test produced a composite worldview score for each participant, and it provided subcategory scores for politics, economics, education, religion and social issues. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the participant results in each of these

categories. Student scores in each of the categories ranged from just above the socialist scoring to the moderate Christian range.

### **Descriptive Analysis of Subcategory Scores**

Analysis of Table 4.17 and Figure 4.4 indicates differences in the mean scores for each of the PEERS five subcategories. None of the mean scores were in the biblical theistic worldview range which would be a score of 70 to 100 using the PEERS scoring ranges. Participants scored highest in the religion subcategory, demonstrating a moderate Christian worldview with a mean score greater than 29. The religion subcategory mean of 46.854 was also well above the PEERS composite mean of 20.177 reported earlier in this chapter. The participants' mean scores for politics, economics, education and social issues were situated in the secular humanism scoring range (0-29). Education subcategory scores were just barely above the socialist range of scoring (Less than 0).

Table 4.17

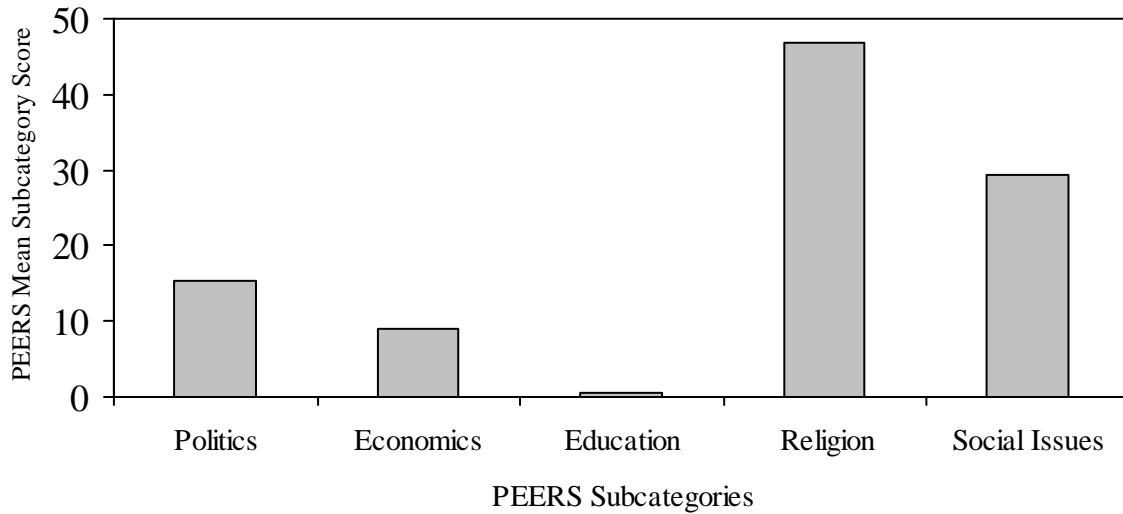
#### *Comparison of PEERS Subcategory Scores*

	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Politics	15.292	21.3	12.26	18.33
Economics	9.0625	25.0	5.505	12.62
Education	0.4270	21.4	-2.619	3.473
Religion	46.854	25.5	43.23	50.48
Social Issues	29.250	21.6	26.18	32.32

Note.  $n = 192$



Figure 4.4. Comparison of PEERS Mean Subcategory Scores



### Summary

The findings presented in this chapter are the result of research conducted to examine the relationship between elementary school type, church attendance, personal faith practices, and parent Christian beliefs and the biblical worldview of Christian middle-school students. The general findings from this research indicate the following:

#### Null Hypothesis One

- There were only small differences in the composite PEERS mean scores based on type of elementary school attended.
- Mean scores for all school types were in the secular humanist range of PEERS scoring.
- The null hypothesis was not rejected, and there was not a significant relationship between school type and PEERS composite scores.

#### Null Hypothesis Two

- Students who attend church one or more times per week had higher PEERS composite scores than those who do not attend at all.

- The mean score for all attendance groups was in the secular humanist range of PEERS scoring.
- There was a difference indicating that attending church does have a positive influence on worldview score. The null hypothesis was rejected.

### **Null Hypothesis Three**

- Eighty-percent of participants pray and read their Bibles independently.
- The scores of students who read their Bibles and pray daily were higher than those who do not, but the scores still fell in the secular humanist scoring range.
- Students who never read their Bibles and pray scored in the socialist category.
- There was a statistically significant difference between PEERS scores with respect to time spent in prayer and Bible study, and the null hypothesis was rejected.

### **Null Hypothesis Four**

- Ninety-five percent of participants in this study live with at least one Christian parent.
- Mean PEERS scores for students living with a Christian parent and those who do not were in the secular humanist range of PEERS scoring.
- Participants who live with at least one Christian parent scored higher on the PEERS test than those who do not.
- There was not a statistically significant difference between the PEERS scores and parental Christian belief, and the null hypothesis was not rejected.

### **Null Hypothesis Five**

- The type of elementary school attended did not appear to be related to higher

religion worldview scores. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

#### **Null Hypothesis Six**

- Religion worldview scores increased with frequency of church attendance.
- The null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between church attendance and religion-based worldview scores.

#### **Null Hypothesis Seven**

- Prayer and Bible study had a positive influence on religion worldview scores.
- The null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that time spent in personal prayer and Bible study is significantly related to religion-based worldview scores.

#### **Null Hypothesis Eight**

- Parent's Christian beliefs did not appear to influence religion worldview scores.

#### **Subcategories**

- Participants scored highest in the religion subcategory with mean scores in the moderate Christian worldview range.
- All other subcategory scores for economics, education, politics, and social issues were in the secular humanist scoring range.

#### **Conclusion**

This study was designed to examine the effect of four variables on the development of a biblical worldview in Christian middle-school students. The purpose of chapter four was to present the findings of this research study. Chapter five presents a more detailed discussion of these results including the researcher's insights, implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER FIVE SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

One of the important goals of Christian education is to develop a biblical worldview in the minds of its students. However, data from the Nehemiah Institute (Smithwick, 2008) and the Barna Group (2003) suggests that Christian schools as well as Christian parents and churches are failing to teach the next generation how to see the world through the lens of scripture.

This study examined the effect of four factors on the development of a biblical worldview in Christian middle-school students. This final chapter of the dissertation endeavors to make sense of the research findings from the previous chapter. It will begin by restating the research problem and reviewing the methods used in the study. The majority of the chapter will focus on a discussion of the research results, their implications for Christian education, and recommendations for future research.

### **Research Problem**

The problem is that the Christian school movement of the past 40 years has had only a marginal impact on the formation of a biblical worldview in the next generation (Smithwick, 2008). As a result, Christian schools are regularly graduating students who do not think from a distinctively biblical worldview (Smithwick, 2008). Traditional faith-based practices do not appear to be contributing to the formation of a biblical worldview among evangelical Christian young people. Christian educators and families need a better understanding of factors that influence the development of a biblical worldview in adolescence, so they can better equip the next generation to impact the

world for Christ.

The factors examined in this study include type of elementary school attended, church involvement, personal faith commitment, and parent profession of Christian faith. By examining these factors in relation to the student's worldview, it is hoped that Christian school educators and parents can gain greater insight into the development of a biblical mindset at this crucial age of development. The goal of this project is to contribute to the growing body of research which will help Christian parents, teachers and administrators make decisions that will most likely facilitate a biblical worldview in middle school students.

### **Review of the Methodology**

As discussed in chapter three, the purpose of this investigation was to examine the relationship of four independent variables, type of elementary education; church involvement; personal faith commitment; and parent Christian belief, to one dependent variable, the PEERS test scores of students enrolled in Christian middle-school. In order to accomplish this, a convenience sample of 192 eighth grade students from two similar Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) were administered the Junior High version of the PEERS worldview instrument. In addition to completing the Likert-scaled worldview assessment, students also answered four brief survey questions. These questions were designed to frame the four independent variables for the study by asking students about the type of elementary school attended, frequency of church attendance, time spent in personal prayer and Bible study, and whether at least one parent was a born-again Christian. There were eight null hypotheses that guided the research:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between type of elementary school

attended and the biblical worldview of Christian middle-school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

H<sub>O2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between frequency of church attendance and the biblical worldview of Christian middle-school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

H<sub>O3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between time spent in personal prayer and Bible study and the biblical worldview of Christian middle-school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

H<sub>O4</sub>: There is no significant relationship between parent Christian faith and the biblical worldview of Christian middle-school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

H<sub>O5</sub>: There is no significant relationship between type of elementary school attended and the religion-based worldview scores of Christian middle-school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

H<sub>O6</sub>: There is no significant relationship between frequency of church attendance and the religion-based worldview scores of Christian middle school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

H<sub>O7</sub>: There is no significant relationship between time spent in personal prayer and Bible study and the religion-based worldview scores of Christian middle-school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

H<sub>O8</sub>: There is no significant relationship between parent Christian faith and the religion-based worldview scores of Christian middle-school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument.

The data was compiled by the Nehemiah Institute who is the publisher of the PEERS test. The test was scored as indicated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

*PEERS Worldview Assessment Scoring*

Worldview	PEERS Test Score
Biblical Theism	70-100
Moderate Christian	30-69
Secular Humanism	0-29
Socialism	< 0

Note. Retrieved from [www.NehemiahInstitute.org](http://www.NehemiahInstitute.org)

The comparative data analysis focused on the relationship between the composite PEERS scores and each of the four independent variables. Inferential statistics were based on the use of the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) test. Descriptive statistics provided additional analysis of each of the variables in relation to the PEERS composite scores and the mean scores of the five subcategories offered by the PEERS test. Upon completion of the initial analysis, the researcher decided to further analyze the religion subcategory scores using the Kruskal-Wallis to determine if there was a significant relationship between the mean religion subcategory scores and the four independent variables.

### **Summary of Results**

Research findings from this study supported rejecting four of the eight null hypothesis based on evidence of statistical significance obtained through comparative data analysis. Students scored highest in the religion subcategory (moderate Christian), but the PEERS composite scores and all other subcategory scores were in the secular

humanist or socialist scoring range. In addition to PEERS scores and comparative analysis, the results from the survey questions provided a descriptive profile of Christian middle-school students participating in this study. These findings will be summarized prior to a discussion of the study's implications.

### **Null Hypothesis One**

- There were only small differences in the PEERS composite mean scores based on type of elementary school attended.
- Mean scores for all school types were in the secular humanist range of PEERS scoring.
- The mean scores were highest for students who had previously attended private secular schools.
- There was not a strong relationship between type of school attended prior to middle-school and the PEERS composite scores.

### **Null Hypothesis Two**

- Students who attend church two or more times per week had higher PEERS composite scores than those who attend one time per week or who do not attend at all.
- The mean score for all attendance groups was in the secular humanist range of PEERS scoring.
- Based on the p value of the Kruskal-Wallis test, it is concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between frequency of church attendance and the biblical worldview of Christian middle school students as indicated by the PEERS worldview instrument, and the null hypothesis is rejected.



### **Null Hypothesis Three**

- The PEERS composite scores of students who read their Bibles and pray daily were higher than those who do not, but the scores still fell in the secular humanist scoring range.
- Students who never read their Bibles and pray scored in the socialist category.
- Based on the Kruskal-Wallis test, it is concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between time spent in personal prayer and Bible study and the worldview scores of middle-school students as indicated by the PEERS instrument. The null hypothesis is rejected.

### **Null Hypothesis Four**

- Participants who live with at least one Christian parent scored higher on the PEERS test than those who do not.
- Mean PEERS scores for students living with a Christian parent and those who do not were in the secular humanist range of PEERS scoring.
- There was not a statistically significant relationship between parent Christianity and a higher PEERS composite score.

### **Null Hypothesis Five**

- The type of elementary school attended did not appear to be related to higher religion worldview scores.

### **Null Hypothesis Six**

- Religion worldview scores increased with frequency of church attendance. There was a statistically significant relationship between church attendance and religion-based worldview scores.

### **Null Hypothesis Seven**

- Prayer and Bible study had a positive influence on religion worldview scores.

### **Null Hypothesis Eight**

- Parent's Christian beliefs did not appear to influence religion worldview scores.

### **Descriptive Profile of Christian Middle-school Students**

- Eighth grade students in this study have a secular humanist or socialist view of the world in all areas except religion-based issues according to results from the PEERS worldview test. The mean composite score for the sample was 20.18 which is well below the 30-69 range for moderate Christian worldview (see Table 5.1).
- Eighth grade students in this study have a moderate Christian worldview in the religion subcategory of the PEERS test with a mean score of 46.85.
- Ninety percent of Christian middle-school students in this study attend church at least one time per week.
- Eighty percent of Christian middle-school students in this study pray and read their Bibles independently at least occasionally.
- Twenty percent of Christian middle-school students in this study pray and read their Bibles daily.
- Ninety-five percent of Christian middle-school students in this study live with at least one born-again Christian parent.

### **Discussion of Results**

This study was designed to investigate the relationship of four variables on the development of a biblical worldview among Christian middle-school students. However,

based on the PEERS test results, it became evident that the majority of the students in the study did not have a biblical worldview. The descriptive statistics and comparative analysis did provide support for relationships between two of the variables and worldview scores and the religion subcategory scores. Frequency of church attendance and time spent in personal prayer and Bible study were both positively related to a higher PEERS composite score and to a higher score on the religion subcategory.

Interestingly, even though all of the students in the study currently attend Christian middle-school and most reported attending Christian elementary school, going to church regularly, reading their Bibles and praying at least occasionally, and living with at least one Christian parent, they still scored in the secular humanist range of the PEERS test. The students did seem to possess a much stronger biblical worldview when it came to questions of a religious nature such as the trinity, creation, and salvation. For example, The PEERS test asks the student's level of agreement with the following statement, "There is a supreme being known as God, all powerful and all knowing, who created and sustains life" (Nehemiah, n.d.). The majority of students in this study agreed with this statement.

These stronger religion-based scores suggest that students from traditional faith-based lifestyles are being taught the fundamentals of Christian doctrine. In particular, the significant relationship between church attendance and both religion scores and composite scores indicate that churches are taking the lead in doctrinal education. However, it is important to recognize that even though there was a positive correlation between church attendance and a higher worldview score, the mean scores still fell short of the biblical theistic range of the PEERS test.

In the other subcategories of politics, economics, education, and social issues, the students scored extremely low. All of the mean scores for these categories were in the low range of secular humanism. Of particular note was the mean score for the education subcategory which was just above zero (0.4270). Questions related to education on the PEERS test ask students about government's role in education, the purpose of education, and the role of parents in educating their children. It is possible that the students were confused by the wording of the questions, but it is more likely that they have not been exposed to biblical principles related to educational issues.

Political, economic and social issue questions fared slightly better than education, but it was apparent that the students either did not have a grasp of many of the concepts or that they simply did not have a consistent biblical worldview that could be applied to the questions. In either case, the results suggest glaring weaknesses in the ability of Christian young people to apply scripture to current and relevant issues.

The type of elementary school attended did not seem to have any influence on the worldview of these students. There were only slight differences in the mean scores for all four school types (Christian, private/secular, public, home school). This should be alarming data for elementary Christian school educators who are charged with the responsibility to begin laying scriptural foundations for the very young. Even though many of the questions from the test are not "elementary" in nature, it is disappointing that early Christian education does not seem to make an impact on worldview thinking.

Most of the students in this study reported living with at least one born again parent. This is not unexpected considering the students in the sample were all attending Christian middle school. However, what was surprising is that the results of the study did

not suggest a positive relationship between parent profession of faith and a higher worldview score. Based on the work of the Barna Group (2003), this result can be most likely attributed to the fact that only 9% of born again adults have a biblical worldview. Even in a traditional Christian home, biblical worldview is most likely not being taught and talked about to the next generation.

Personal prayer and Bible study were positively related to both higher PEERS composite scores and to religion subcategory scores. It is difficult to know whether this relationship is a result of increased amount of time spent in prayer and Bible study or whether it simply reflects a student's overall commitment to Christianity. Regardless of the motivation, the results of the study offer support for the role one's personal faith commitment plays in developing a biblical worldview.

### **Relationship of the Current Study to Prior Research**

Although no previous studies have examined influences on the development of a biblical worldview in middle-school students, several prior dissertations have focused on worldview influences in high school students. These studies found similar results to the present study.

Meyer (2003) used an original instrument to measure worldview in high school students and concluded that a student's personal faith commitment had the greatest influence on biblical worldview formation. Like the present study, he also found that years of enrollment in Christian school had no significant influence on biblical worldview development in high school students. Bryant (2008) and Moore (2006) both used the PEERS instrument in correlational studies similar to the present study. Bryant concluded that years of Christian school, denominational preference and choice of Bible curriculum

did not influence the student's worldview. Moore studied the worldview of leaders in Christian education and also found that the number of years in Christian education was not positively correlated with a higher biblical worldview score.

The current study also supported prior research from both the Barna Group (2003) and the Nehemiah Institute (Smithwick, 2008) who have reported on the status of biblical worldview thinking among Christian teens and students attending traditional Christian schools. All of these studies describe a generation of young people whose thinking is more in line with secular humanist thought than with scripture despite their enrollment in Christian school. The current study went a step further in defining more characteristics of Christian school students including frequency of church attendance, personal prayer and Bible study, and parent profession of faith.

### **Explanation of Unanticipated Findings**

The results of the study provided valuable insight and implications for Christian school educators. However, upon completion of data collection, the researcher identified a problem with the research design and with the instrument used in the study which may have altered the results.

### **Problem with Research Design**

A more diverse population of Christian school students may have provided fewer extremes in sample sizes for each group tested. The researcher may have considered using a convenience sample of middle-school students from church youth groups rather than from Christian schools or seeking out Christian schools with a more heterogeneous student body.

### **Defects in the instrument**

The Nehemiah Institute provides three levels of PEERS testing including adult, high school, and middle-school (junior high) versions of the instrument. The researcher used the middle-school version of the test for this project, but there were still concerns from the schools' leadership and the researcher that the wording of the questions may have been too sophisticated for eighth graders. The possibility exists that students' answers may not have accurately represented their actual worldview if they did not understand some of the wording or terminology used in the questions.

The design of the PEERS instrument provided by the Nehemiah Institute also limited the number and type of survey questions that could accompany the test. It may have added to the depth of this research or contributed to future research if more descriptive data could have been gathered at the time of testing. In particular, the researcher would have been interested in the student's grade point average, time spent watching television and playing video games, and church denomination.

### **Implications for Christian Education**

A common result of this study and other biblical worldview studies is that Christian education does not influence the formation of a biblical worldview even when students have an active faith life and at least one Christian parent. This conclusion is consistent with a growing voice in Christian literature urging decision-makers and leaders to take the threat of secular humanism and socialism to our nation's youth seriously. In particular, Christian educators must reevaluate their priorities and strategies so that graduates of Christian education will have a distinctively biblical worldview. There are five practical implications that can be drawn from the results of this study. Additionally, based on the results of this research and findings from previous studies, the author

includes a section which describes a curriculum strategy designed to cultivate biblical worldview thinking in middle-school students attending Christian middle-schools.

### **World-View Based Instruction**

Christian educators need to begin worldview-based instruction in elementary school and continue it through all grade levels. The results of this study suggest that attending Christian elementary school has no effect on the development of a biblical worldview in middle-school. The process of developing a distinctively biblical view of the world cannot start in middle-school or high school; rather, the way a child sees the world must begin to be shaped early. Christian educators must join with parents in a methodical and deliberate effort to teach elementary age students to examine everything through the lens of God's word. The focus of worldview development in the elementary years should be training students to think critically and apply God's word through questioning and group discussions. Even the minds of the youngest students will be shaped by someone or some thing, so it is imperative that Christian teachers take advantage of the time they have with the future generation to begin equipping them with the foundations of biblical worldview thinking.

### **Application of Scripture in Curriculum**

Christian educators need to broaden the application of scripture throughout the curriculum. In addition to examining the PEERS composite scores, this study also analyzed the religion subcategory scores using descriptive statistics and comparative analysis. The results of this analysis indicated that students scored much higher on the religion-based questions of the PEERS test than any other subcategory. In fact, mean scores for the religion subcategory were in the moderate Christian scoring range which



was well above the secular humanist composite scores. Frequency of church attendance and time spent in prayer and Bible study were positively correlated with the higher religion scores. Although it is encouraging that these students demonstrated a stronger worldview in questions related to religion, it also demonstrates a gap in their ability to apply scripture to real life issues and situations. Churches, families, and Christian schools need to continue with the solid biblical instruction, but they must do a better job at integrating scripture throughout the curriculum. Students must be challenged to think, question the status quo, and be confident in their understanding of truth.

### **Parent Training**

Christian educators need to assist parents in developing a biblical worldview and teach them how to facilitate a scriptural view of the world in their children. Ninety-five percent of the participants in this study reported living with at least one Christian parent; however, the mean PEERS scores of the participants were in the secular humanist scoring range. This is not too surprising considering Barna's (2003) report that only 9% of born-again adults have a biblical worldview. Christian schools have a unique opportunity to educate parents and in turn, help facilitate the formation of a biblical worldview in multiple generations. Schools can offer worldview seminars, communicate biblical worldview positions on key issues, and adopt a common priority and strategy for worldview education. One simple opportunity to educate parents and staff is to offer a monthly worldview newsletter that tackles current events and issues and places them in the context of biblical thinking. Parents should also have the opportunity to submit topics to be covered in the monthly "worldview update."

### **Teacher Training**

Christian educators need to develop and use worldview-based curricula in the classroom and provide worldview training and assessment to teachers. According to this study and other previously mentioned research (Bryant, 2008; Moore, 2006; & Meyer, 2003) Christian education is not affecting the formation of a biblical worldview in students. The descriptive data indicated that these students attend church, pray, read their Bibles at least occasionally, and are being raised by at least one Christian parent. However, Christian educators must ask why they are not making a difference in the worldview of their students. One possible conclusion is that the teachers do not have a biblical worldview, or they do not have an understanding of how to integrate scripture into the curriculum. School leaders can begin by facilitating the development of a biblical worldview among teachers through training and assessment and by providing resources to promote worldview-based instruction. Christian book publishers need to develop curriculum materials that encourage worldview thinking and application of scripture in all subject areas. Simply attaching a scripture verse to a lesson does not promote biblical worldview thinking.

### **Development of Critical Thinking**

Christian educators must cultivate the Christian mind by promoting critical thinking and reasoning skills. The Christian mind, as discussed in chapter two, must be cultivated so it will not be vulnerable to divergent and deceptive philosophies of the world. This training must extend beyond scripture memorization and biblical instruction to include intellectually rigorous expectations in all content areas. In particular, Christian educators must rely less on rote memorization and worksheet driven curricula and focus more on developing higher level thinking skills. Students who can analyze, evaluate and

synthesize information will find it easier to apply God's word in all areas of life, and they will have the intellectual confidence to communicate their worldview.

### **A Curriculum Strategy for Biblical Worldview Development**

Results of the current study and research conducted by the Nehemiah Institute (Smithwick, 2008), the Barna Group (2008) suggest that students attending Christian schools are not developing a biblical worldview. Although many students seem to have a strong grasp of biblical principles and demonstrate active faith lives through prayer, Bible study and church attendance, there is a gap in their ability to understand and apply scripture to real life issues. As a result, Christian schools are graduating students who lack the intellectual finesse to take Christianity into the world. When Ronald Reagan became President of the United States, he specifically sought qualified evangelical Christians for high level cabinet positions. Unfortunately, he was only able to find one qualified person – C. Everett Koup (Moreland, 1997). Imagine the impact that Christianity could have on the world if Christian young people were trained as thinkers rather than passive learners. Imagine the sphere of influence that Christians could have in all disciplines and professions if they were equipped to confidently take God's Word into the workplace and into the marketplace of ideas.

The confidence to transform the world begins with an understanding of how the scriptures apply to real life issues and situations, a biblical worldview. Christian schools often give this construct a mention in the school's handbook or brochure, and many Christian curricula claim to teach from a biblical worldview. However, evidence from this study and related studies suggest that Christian education is falling short of equipping the next generation of Christians with the knowledge base and intellectual skills to impact

the world for Christ. As a result, the researcher developed an instructional strategy to assist middle-school teachers focus on worldview development with their students. The program, “Get Real,” is currently being piloted in one Christian school.

The purpose of “Get Real” is to help teachers and students focus on applying scripture to real life issues. “Real” is an acronym for relate it, explain it, apply it, live it. At the start of the program, students and teachers are instructed on the specifics of each component, and “Get Real” posters serve as a constant reminder to relate it, explain it, apply it and live it.

The program is a simple strategy that involves a designated instructional time and is also integrated throughout all subject areas as opportunities arise. A minimum of two class periods per week are scheduled for “Get Real” time. Each student is provided with a “Get Real” journal. Students research current events and relevant issues from the internet, newspaper, or nightly news. These topics are brought to the class for discussion and journal writing topics. The focus of the discussion and journal writing follows the “REAL” acronym.

Initially, students relate the topic to scripture, asking questions like, “What scripture relates to this topic?” “Did Jesus teach about this?” “Is there an example of this in the Bible?” Students then explain the issue, focusing on defining terms and understanding concepts related to the topic. Additional research may be needed here since middle-school students lack life experience, and sometimes, students will need to “explain it” before they can “relate it.” One of the most significant parts of “Get Real” is the step in which students “apply it.” During this stage of the strategy, students must think about how the issue applies to them, their faith, their school, their community, and

their country. Questions may include, “What does this mean to me?” “Why is this important?” “Who are the decision-makers?” “What biblical principles apply?” Finally, students are asked to “live it.” They are challenged to think about what their response should be to the situation now and in the future. “What is my role?” “If I were the decision-maker, what would I do?” “What makes this situation difficult?”

In addition to designated “Get Real” class time, teachers are encouraged to “interrupt” social studies, science, Bible, and literature lessons with the phrase, “Let’s get real.” This becomes the catch phrase which signals to both students and teachers that it’s time to connect content areas to scripture.

The “get real” strategy is designed to connect scripture to real life issues and to promote active student thinking. The combination of bridging the gap between biblical knowledge and application and promoting independent thinking will hopefully cultivate a biblical worldview and train these young Christian minds for a lifetime of diligent worldview study.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

As with any study of this nature, one of the most important results is the recommendations for further research. Since the current study was the first known research project to examine the biblical worldview of middle-school students, another study of similar design may be useful. Although this study had a large sample size (n =192), any future study may benefit from using a more diverse student population and adding additional survey questions. In particular, the researcher could analyze the relationship between the amount and type of entertainment and media in which a student engages and worldview scores of the students. Since the time and type of media

consumption would be self-reported, it may be difficult to obtain an accurate assessment. However, time invested in modern media is certainly a powerful influence over today's teens and is worthy of investigation related to worldview formation. A correlational study of student grade point average or standardized test scores and worldview scores may also provide valuable data in understanding the role intellect plays in developing a biblical worldview.

A longitudinal study designed to assess the worldview of students from elementary school through high school would also provide valuable data for understanding factors that influence biblical worldview formation. Specifically, this study could focus on one group of students or follow two groups from two different school types. In addition to administering the PEERS test at each grade level, various descriptive data could be gathered to analyze the relationship between any number of variables and worldview formation.

Results from the National Survey of Children (Gunnore & Moore, 2002) suggest that one of the best predictors of religiosity among youth is peers' church attendance. Correlating peer group scores of the PEERS test would be complicated but may provide additional data concerning the role adolescent peers play in worldview formation.

Qualitative studies designed to examine student groups with high PEERS scores or to describe worldview schools may also provide some valuable data for Christian schools as they work toward reshaping curriculum and priorities. An analysis of these schools was not found in the current literature.

Christian schools may also benefit from further studies to understand the relationship between the strength of the teacher's biblical worldview and their ability to

communicate this to students. Multiple studies could also be done to evaluate the effectiveness of parent and teacher worldview training and whether this has a positive impact on the worldview formation of students.

Possessing a biblical worldview is a function of applying one's knowledge and thinking in a unique way. As such, biblical worldview development may be related to a person's ability to think critically. Further research may be warranted which investigates the relationship between critical thinking and biblical worldview formation.

Lastly, the PEERS instrument is widely accepted for high school and adult worldview assessment. However, the "junior high" version of the PEERS test may include wording and topics that are too sophisticated for middle-school students. Research to develop a more age-appropriate test for elementary and middle-school students may be warranted. Formulating a worldview test based on situational analysis may prove beneficial for this age group.

### **Summary**

Training students to think biblically should be a goal for Christian educators. However, the current study and research results from the Barna Group (2008) and the Nehemiah Institute (Smithwick, 2008) continue to reveal a nation of Christian young people who cannot clearly articulate the reasons for their beliefs or apply scripture to worldly issues. The concern is that these students will graduate from Christian high schools without the solid foundation to hold to biblical truths outside of the classroom. Christian parents and educators are wrongly assuming that traditional faith-based practices of attending church and Christian school are equipping students to hold up under the mental assault of divergent worldviews. Biblical worldview is given mention

in school mission statements and handbooks, but research suggests that few Christian schools are taking this mission seriously. As a result, the influence of Christianity in society is being silenced by the much louder voice of humanism and socialism.

Francis Schaeffer accurately labeled this lack of attention to the big picture as apathy. In 1981, he placed the blame squarely on Christian educators and leaders who sat quietly by and surrendered to the rise of humanism in American society. Over the last two decades, Christianity has continued to lose influence in society in large part because a once uncompromised biblical worldview has been replaced with a culturally sensitive and relative version of truth. Divergent ideologies are firmly rooted in the American culture with little protest or defense from Christianity. Parents, Christian educators, and church leaders must recognize that there is a very real battle for the minds of America's young people (Dobson & Bauer, 1990), and they can no longer sit passively by and give the spoils of victory to the enemy.

This study began with a discussion of the major worldviews in America with an emphasis on the secular humanist movement and the impact it is making among the nation's young people. It was followed by the formation of a biblical framework for the study which explored the significance of the Christian mind, the relevance of Christ's example, the enticement of opposing views, and the necessity of diligence. This model stresses the uniqueness of the Christian mind and the importance of intentionally developing the mind to think biblically.

Religious thinking and religious influences among adolescents were discussed with particular attention to moral reasoning during the teen years. Kohlberg's stages of moral development, Damon's model of moral development and Fowler's stages of faith



development all suggest the importance of the adolescent years in establishing a lasting worldview. Despite the convincing support from the fields of psychology and sociology, worldview research concerning middle-school students is absent in the literature.

There were several empirical worldview studies related to high school and college students that were discussed. Meyer's 2003 study had similar results to this research suggesting that personal faith commitment had the strongest influence on worldview development. His results further supported this study's suggestion that years in Christian school had no significant effect on a student's biblical worldview development. In 2008, Bryant also studied factors influencing the worldview formation in high school students and found that denominational preference, choice of Bible curriculum, and attendance at Christian school were not significant. Studies of specific worldview programs and curriculum in high school and college students reported a more significant impact of biblical worldview development. Christian teacher and school leader worldview has also been studied (Moore, 2006; Fyock, 2008; and Wood, 2008) with little success at identifying significant relationships between biblical worldview and a variety of factors.

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of four independent variables, type of elementary education; church involvement; personal faith commitment; and parent Christian belief, on one dependent variable, the PEERS test scores of students enrolled in Christian middle-school. In order to accomplish this, a convenience sample of 192 eighth grade students from two similar Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) were administered the Junior High version of the PEERS worldview instrument. In addition to completing the Likert-scaled worldview assessment, students also answered four brief survey questions which were designed to frame the four

independent variables for the study.

The study found that this sample of Christian middle-school students had a secular humanist worldview despite the fact that most of them demonstrate strong faith-based practices in their lives. Findings further suggested that the biblical worldview of Christian middle-school students is not affected by type of elementary school or parent Christian faith. However, there was a positive relationship between church attendance and worldview score and between personal prayer and Bible study and worldview score. Subcategory scores were also very low (secular humanist to socialist results), but the religion subcategory scores fell within the moderate Christian range and were also related to church attendance and personal prayer and Bible study. These results suggest that Christian middle-school students are receiving sound biblical instruction, but they are unlikely to apply this knowledge to real-life issues.

The study provided valuable information on the worldview of Christian middle-school students and suggests that society is having a greater impact on Christians than Christians are having on society. In particular, Christian schools are failing to educate a future generation that will reclaim politics, economics, education, and all disciplines for the sake of Christ. The only protection from the demise of our culture is a biblical worldview firmly rooted in the minds of the next generation of artists, lawyers, doctors, teachers, and laborers. This will only be accomplished when Christian schools join with parents and churches in a deliberate effort to teach young people how to critically analyze all facets of life through the lens of God's word.

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## Appendix A

### **NOTIFICATION AND CONSENT FORM**

#### **A Comparative Analysis of Factors Influencing the Development of a Biblical Worldview in Christian Middle-School Students**

Cherie Elder Brickhill, Doctoral Candidate  
Liberty University School of Education

Your child is invited to participate in a research study on factors that influence the biblical worldview of middle-school students attending Christian school. He/she was selected as a possible participant because this study is concerned with middle-school students who attend Christian schools.

The study is being conducted by Cherie Brickhill, a doctoral student in the School of Education at Liberty University, under the direction of Dr. Chick Holland, Professor of Education.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate.

#### **Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of certain factors on the development of a biblical worldview in middle-school students attending Christian school. A worldview is the framework of beliefs that guide an individual's decisions and actions. One of the goals of Christian education is to train students to see the world through the lens of God's Word.

#### **Procedures**

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, he/she will be asked to take the PEERS survey and answer four brief questions. This should take between 30 and 45 minutes, and time will be allotted during a normal class period for taking the test.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study**

The risks involved in this study are no more than an individual would encounter in everyday life. There is no individual benefit to participating in this study.

#### **Confidentiality**

All records and tests for this study will be kept private, and any published data will not include the school's name or the name of any individual. Students will not provide their names on the test. To ensure confidentiality, raw data will be coded and analyzed by the

survey's publisher, the Nehemiah Institute, and provided to the researcher in Microsoft Excel format.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your class grade or any future relationship with Liberty University or your school. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

**Contacts and Questions**

The researcher conducting this study is Cherie Brickhill. You may contact her at cbrickhill@gmail.com or by phone at 434-969-2021. Dr. Chick Holland can be contacted at cholland@liberty.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 2400, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

IF YOU DO **NOT** WANT YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT, PLEASE WRITE HIS/HER NAME BELOW AND RETURN THIS FORM TO HIS/HER TEACHER. An alternative activity will be provided during this test time.

I do **NOT** want my child, \_\_\_\_\_, to participate in this study.

---

**Parent Signature**

**Date**

**IF YOU DO CONSENT TO YOUR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY, YOU DO NOT NEED TO RETURN THIS FORM.**

## Appendix B

### Survey Questions

1. Which of the following best describes the type of school you attended in grades kindergarten through five? (If you attended more than one school, select the school which you attended for the most amount of time.)
  - a. Christian school
  - b. Private, secular school
  - c. Public school
  - d. Home-school
  
2. Please indicate how often you attend church and church-related activities? (This includes youth group, Bible study, worship service, etc.)
  - a. I attend church activities 2 or more times per week.
  - b. I attend church activities 1 time per week.
  - c. I do not regularly attend church activities.
  
3. Which of the following best describes the time you spend in personal prayer and Bible study? (Do NOT include church-related activities or required school reading.)
  - a. I pray and read my Bible every day on my own.
  - b. I pray and read my Bible occasionally on my own.
  - c. I rarely pray and read my Bible on my own.
  - d. I never pray and read my Bible on my own.
  
4. Would you describe at least one of your parents as a born again believer?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

Appendix C



The Graduate School at Liberty University

IRB Approval 826.031210: Cherie Brickhill

A comparative analysis of factors contributing to the Biblical worldview of middle school students enrolled in Christian school

April 14, 2010

Dear Cherie,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must resubmit the study to the IRB. See the IRB website for appropriate forms in these cases.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fernando Garzon".

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.  
IRB Chair, Liberty University  
Center for Counseling and Family Studies  
Liberty University  
1971 University Boulevard  
Lynchburg, VA 24502-2269  
(434) 592-4054  
Fax: (434) 522-0477

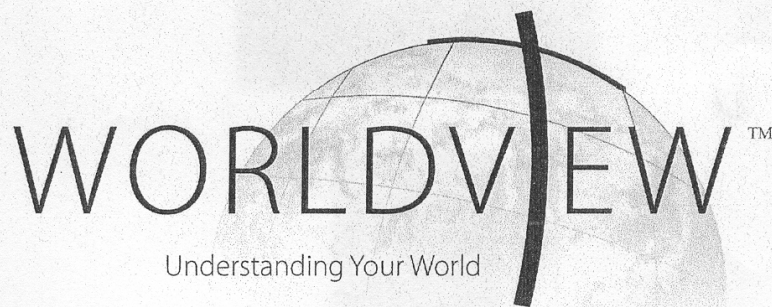
address 1971 University Boulevard  
Lynchburg, VA 24502

phone 434-592-4044  
fax 434-522-0506

web [www.liberty.edu/academics/graduate](http://www.liberty.edu/academics/graduate)

Appendix D

# The PEERS<sup>®</sup> Test



**in- Politics, Economics, Education, Religion, and Social Issues**

**A Nehemiah<sup>®</sup> Publication**

Version: BA12

Junior High Grade Level

**Reprinted with permission from the Nehemiah Institute.**

# The PEERS® Test

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Your name

A Nehemiah® Publication

Nehemiah Institute, Inc.  
3735 Harrodsburg Road, Suite 150  
Lexington, KY 40513

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**NEHEMIAH** and **PEERS** are registered trademarks with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, No's 1,970,502 and 1,919,636 respectively.

## General Instructions

### *Purpose of Test*

This version of the PEERS Test is recommended for grades 7 and 8. Higher grade levels should use versions AA11 or AA12

The PEERS Test is designed to measure what you believe to be correct views in five primary areas of life: Politics (civil government), Economics, Education, Religion and Social issues (**PEERS**). The test also reflects your opinion regarding the purpose of government in these areas.

PEERS results are rated on a scale from -100 to +100 with the following categories:

<u>Scale</u>	<u>Worldview Philosophy</u>
70 - 100	Biblical theism (conservative Christian views)
30 - 69	Biblical theism (moderate Christian views)
0 - 29	Secular Humanism (Darwinism)
< 0	Socialism (Marxist/Leninism )

*Note: It is important that you honestly record your personal views of the statements listed the best that you can. Do not attempt to guess what is the proper conservative or liberal position.*

*Also, teachers and group leaders are not permitted to assist you in taking the test. Do not ask them to define terms or explain the meaning of the questions.*

### *Results of the Test*

A PEERS Scorecard will be sent to you within a few weeks of receipt of your Answer Sheet. The results will provide a numerical rating on each of the five subject areas, a Limited-Government rating, and a Composite Score rating. The report will also show which questions you missed.

Be sure to keep this test booklet for review when you receive your test results.

**The PEERS Test**  
Version: BA12 - Junior High School

*Nehemiah Institute, Inc.*

No.	Question	(Place an "x" in your choice)				
		SA	TA	N	TD	SD
Q01	The main reason unemployed people don't have jobs is that there is not enough demand for products or services.					
Q02	Human beings have an unlimited potential for mental and moral development.					
Q03	Belief about religion is personal; parents should not impose their beliefs on their children.					
Q04	Human life came into existence less than 10 thousand years ago.					
Q05	In order for a nation to be financially strong, it must allow people to become very rich, if they have the ability to do so.					
Q06	The government should decide what is right for the country based primarily on what the majority of the people think is best.					
Q07	There is perfect truth for all areas of life that doesn't change over time, and this truth can be learned.					
Q08	There is a Supreme Being known as God, all powerful and all knowing, who created and sustains all life.					
Q09	Education programs must be supervised by the government to make sure that all students are treated fairly and have equal opportunity.					
Q10	Parents have a greater responsibility for the education of their children than do schools or government agencies.					
Q11	Having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is one way, but not the only way, that people can join with the divine nature of God.					
Q12	Free-enterprise (people having their own businesses) is the best economic system and should be used in all countries.					
Q13	The government should run the Social Security program to be sure that everybody will have enough money to live on when they retire.					
Q14	The best kind of government guarantees the citizens a minimum income, health insurance and housing.					
Q15	The main purpose of education, in all subjects and in all schools, should be to glorify God.					
Q16	Schools with elementary through high school grades should not get any money from the government.					



# The PEERS Test

Nehemiah Institute, Inc.

Version: BA12 - Junior High School

No.	Question	SA	TA	N	TD	SD
Q33	All people start life with a sinful nature which creates desires in them to commit evil deeds.					
Q34	The best form of government is the one where everyone would vote on everything.					
Q35	The church and the government should be working together to strengthen the family.					
Q36	Even though all nations can now easily work together because of world-wide communication technology, it would not be good to have one government for the whole world.					
Q37	The best way to keep the economy fair is for the government to determine wages and prices for all companies.					
Q38	Because human nature is constantly changing, each generation should be free to make moral standards appropriate to their preferences.					
Q39	The Bible provides the foundation of civil law and should be the primary source for establishing government in all nations around the world.					
Q40	Capital punishment (executing people for certain crimes) was done in Bible times and should still be done in our time.					
Q41	Women should not function as pastors of churches; it is against God's will.					
Q42	Most children have an infinite potential for learning but they are prevented from learning by a bad environment or faulty institutions.					
Q43	Education should be conducted such that students understand the need for a gradual change to a world government.					
Q44	Each person has an immortal spirit which will live forever after death either in happiness with God in heaven or in torment with the devil in hell.					
Q45	Day-care schools for infants and toddlers will improve the educational process of children and will produce better citizens.					
Q46	All governments everywhere should be based on the principle of individuals governing themselves under God's laws.					
Q47	Governments should provide financial help to industries that provide the main services to people, (e.g.: food, housing, and medical care).					

# The PEERS Answer Sheet

*Version: BA12*

(Fill in bubble for your choice)					
No.	SA	TA	N	TD	SD
Q01	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q02	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q03	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q04	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q05	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q06	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q07	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q08	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q09	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q10	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q11	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q12	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q13	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q14	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q15	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q16	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q17	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q18	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q19	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q20	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q21	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q22	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q23	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q24	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q25	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q26	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q27	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q28	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q29	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q30	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q31	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Q36	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q37	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q38	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q39	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q40	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q41	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q42	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q43	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q44	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Q46	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q47	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q48	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q49	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q50	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Group Code:**

**School:**

**Research Profile: (Brickhill Study)**  
 (Enter ONE number in each box)

Set A	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	(1, 2, 3 or 4)
Set B	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	(1, 2 or 3)
Set C	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	(1, 2, 3 or 4)
Set D	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	(1 or 2)

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